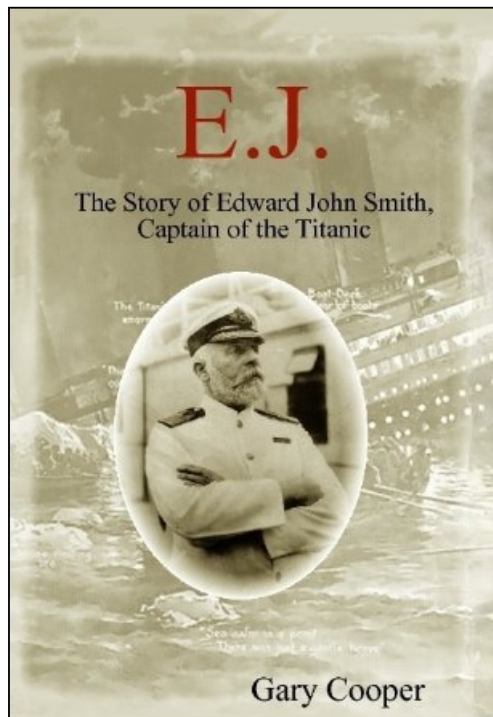


E.J. The Story of Edward J. Smith. Captain of the Titanic

Reviewed by Brian J. Ticehurst

Titanic Review

Tuesday 5 May 2009



THIS is Gary Coopers second book on the RMS Titanic's Captain. His first book *The Man Who Sank the Titanic? The Life and Times of Captain Edward J. Smith*, was a very good read and is now complimented by this excellent follow up.

One of the first things put to rest is the question of what house number the good captain lived, in Well Street. Painstaking research by both the author and Ernie Luck has shown that Captain Smith and family lived at not number 51 or number 17 but at number 86 Well Street. Which begs the question 'what has happened to the Blue Plaque that was reportedly put on number 51 Well Street?'

Personally, and I am not alone I have wondered and wondered just how a man who lived miles from the sea and with scant maritime connections ever became one of the most famous sea captains. The author tries to answer the same question and I quote from page 30

"But what kind of future typically awaited a child of the Victorian Potteries? Unfortunately it wasn't good and for a baby born here in the mid-nineteenth century life could often be hard and very short. In as late as 1900, one in four children died in infancy and the local burial registers make for pitiful reading with infants being carried away by a host of diseases such as cholera, diphtheria, typhus, pneumonia and other pulmonary disorders, all caused by either unsanitary conditions or the effect of the sulphurous atmosphere.

Even if they survived early childhood, most local children were destined to start work at some grindingly

hard jobs at a very early age. In 1861, eleven years after Edward John Smith was born, there were 4,065 children under 10 years of age working in the pottery industry and 593 were 5 years old"

The education he received (from the Etruria British School) was very good, and thorough but nothing exceptional, however the man must have had something to make him the man that he became.

After leaving school and joining ship, life was not in any way made easy for him and - I quote from page 59

"Working aloft could be a terrifying experience for those new to the job, but the time-served sailors knew their duty and took a sort of pride in the speed and ability of furling. They also knew that despite being suspended several storeys above the rolling deck, or hanging over an angry sea, being aloft for all the perils it engendered did have advantages over being down on the storm lashed deck where towering waves could engulf the ship and pick a man off the deck for him never to be seen again."

Starting on page 205 there are over 30 pages of photographs which give a very good picture of Captain Smith and his life.

There are two Appendix's, on page 401 (note the number!) in the second Appendix there is a list of all of Captain Smith's White Star Line voyages from 1880-1912 - thereby giving the answers to many of the oft asked questions about his journeys.

There is an excellent Bibliography on page 417 that lists all the major sources of information.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and I would strongly recommend it to anyone interested in the Titanic and her people.

Brian J. Ticehurst

E.J. The Story of Edward J. Smith. Captain of the Titanic

By Gary Cooper.

(Note: This book has been published on a print-on-demand basis and will not normally be sold through shops or other retailers. Copies of this book can, however, be purchased online.

Courtesy of Brian Ticehurst

Copyright Encyclopedia Titanica - www.encyclopedia-titanica.org 1996-2012 and third parties (ref: #10073)

URL : <http://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/ej-the-story-of-edward-j-smith-captain-of-the-titanic-10073.html>

PDF edition provided for personal reference only.

