

George A. Brereton - Mystery Man

by Mike Herbold

Titanic Research

Sunday 28 January 2001

New research reveals the tragic fate of one of the Titanic's notorious gamblers.

George M. Behe wrote an excellent two-part article for "The Titanic Commutator" in 1982 called "Fate Deals A Hand." The story is told of George "Boy" Bradley and other gamblers aboard Titanic. Their activities on the evening of April 14, 1912, before and after the ship hit the iceberg, include attempts to draw unsuspecting victims into card games. Details are given of the many newspaper interviews they gave after the rescue ship Carpathia landed in New York. Bradley identified himself to reporters as George Brayton and George Braden of Los Angeles. On the Titanic passenger list, in the first class section, he was listed as "Brayton, Mr. George."

In his second great Titanic book, Walter Lord retells some of those same April 14th and 15th incidents. He then goes on to tell how George Brayton tried to swindle wealthy survivor Charles Emil Henry Stengel in a horse racing scam a few weeks after the disaster.

No matter how much was written about him, George Bradley was always elusive. Unlike most passengers, especially those in first class, you will find no record of a birth date, birth place, or date and place of death. It turns out that George had one more card up his sleeve -- his last name was not Bradley or Brayton or Braden.

In the May 1998 Kenneth C. Schultz catalog of ocean liner memorabilia, the following description appeared about an item that was for sale: 'Titanic: And another truly spectacular piece! Her 1st class color portrait passenger list -- The former property of 1st class passenger and survivor, Mr. George Brayton. The list was folded in his pocket as he escaped the Titanic that memorable night and is to the best of my knowledge one of the only existing lists to actually have been aboard. The previous 2 I've sold were both advance copies as is Walter Lord's.'

'This list was acquired from Mr. Brayton's great niece who in a letter to me -- that will accompany the list -- gives us some new information. "My great uncle was one of the surviving passengers of the Titanic. His name was George Brereton and is misspelled on the list. He is listed as Mr. George Brayton..... I was always told he was on his honeymoon though there is no mention of a Mrs. on the list. I suspect there were many errors overall, not just the misspelling of Brereton. My grandmother Emily Brereton Lathrop, her brother George, and several other siblings were from Los Angeles."

'The list is folded and both covers are off but present, else sound. The list has been kept for years in a World War II bonds envelope with "Titanic passenger list" written on it. You, of course, get that and the letter along with the list. Another super opportunity to own a piece of history. \$25,000.00.'

Kenneth Schultz sold the letter and list and can't find a copy of the niece's address. But luckily Brereton is not a very common last name, and there were not many Emily B. Lathrops in California. With help from Phillip Gowan, death certificates were found for both George and Emily, and the true story of George

Andrew Brereton is starting to unfold.

George (Nov. 11, 1874) and his sister Emily Barbara Brereton (Dec. 13, 1876) were both born in Minnesota to Daniel Brereton of Ireland and Mary Rohe Brereton of Germany. George's birth city was Medelia. At some time, George had a wife named Grace and Emily was married to Horace Newton Lathrop. They all lived in Southern California together. George was a car salesman and Emily a housewife.

George and Emily were close. In later years they both lived at the same address, 7021 Miramonte Blvd., in Southeast Los Angeles. In its day it was probably very nice, with tall palm trees lining either side of a wide street. The house still stands today, but the area is now a crowded working class Latino neighborhood.

Much information is still being learned, but we do know that in 1942 George was a widower. Tragically, on the morning of July 16, 1942 at 7:40 am, George Brereton raised a 12 gauge shotgun to his head and pulled the trigger. He was 67.

The Breretons and Lathrops were close in death as in life. There are a total of 8 of them buried together in Block J, Section 9592 of Valhalla Memorial Park in Burbank, California (just north of Los Angeles). There are only six gravesites, however. The numbers given are the lot numbers. In the top row are:

1. Paul B. Lathrop, 1878-1934
2. George Andrew Brereton, 1874-1942
3. John A. Brereton, Sept. 12, 1878--Jan. 22, 1951

On the bottom row, the grave markers read like this:

4. Horace Newton Lathrop, 1871-1944.

In between the name and the dates is the following inscription: Horace B. Lathrop, May 3, 1913--Oct. 19, 1984.

5. Emily Barbara Lathrop, Beloved Mother, Douglas-Eugene-Horace B.,1876-1970.
6. Eugene W. Lathrop, 1907-1989.

Two other family members are listed in the same section. William Edward Brereton was cremated. His ashes were apparently buried with John. Horace B. Lathrop died in 1985 and was also cremated. His ashes were apparently buried with his father.

The search for information regarding George Andrew Brereton is just beginning. Phillip Gowan has discovered that his father Daniel Brereton was also in California in the early 1900's, in the Northern California town of Sausalito. It turns out that William Brereton was born in Medelia, Minnesota -- lengthening the time that we can prove the family was there. With help from Phillip and George Behe, we are looking for more information about George's wife Grace, his other brother John, and his in-laws. If we are really lucky, maybe we'll even find one of his old decks of cards.

© Mike Herbold 2000

Courtesy of Mike Herbold

© Encyclopedia Titanica (www.encyclopedia-titanica.org) 1996-2011 and third parties (ref: #1483)
URL : <http://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/george-brereton-mystery-man.html>

PDF edition provided for personal reference only.

