

# Lest We Forget : Part 1

by Jim Kalafus & Michael Poirier

## ***ET Research***

Tuesday 3 May 2005

This May marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of one of the 20th century's most notorious events; the sinking, by torpedo, of Cunard Line's *Lusitania* off the coast of Ireland with the loss of 1198 lives. While she lived, *Lusitania* was known as one of a pair of outstandingly beautiful record breakers, and after her death she became best known as a symbol; first of "*Hunnish brutality*" or "*English duplicity*" depending upon which side of the fence one stood, and, more recently, of intrigue, conspiracy and governmental wrongdoing. The human element of this most horrible of events has been largely overshadowed, and to commemorate the anniversary we are offering a selection of favorite, lesser known, human interest stories of May 7, 1915. Some have happy endings, others are relentlessly bleak, and most fall somewhere in the middle: one passenger who lost her entire family recovered, remarried, and lived well into the 1970s; another was so devastated by his experience on the *Lusitania* that he had a series of breakdowns, spent the better part of a decade drifting, and died in early middle age. There is one mother who entrusted her child to a stranger with terrible results, and another who was forced to watch as her 2 year old faded away and died on a debris raft while awaiting rescue. There is a family who set out to claim a large inheritance, and a family who were returning to England in despair; neither family survived intact. There are some that lived long, full lives after the disaster, and there are several young male survivors who did not outlive 1918. With two exceptions, all of the *Lusitania* biographies have now reached their conclusions, but it is our sincere hope to keep as many of the stories alive as possible. It is also our sincere hope that the stories in this first installation prove to be as interesting to the casual reader as they did to us.



Jim Kalafus Collection

We begin with the biography of an extended family all but destroyed on that sunny afternoon 90 years ago...

**Cecelia “Cissie” Owens**, of Ellwood City Pennsylvania, boarded the *Lusitania* on May 1 1915, with her sons Reginald, 10 and Ronald, 6, her brother Alfred Smith, sister-in-law Elizabeth Jones Smith, and nieces Helen and Elizabeth “Bessie” Smith. The extended Smith family had immigrated to the United States from Swansea, Wales, piecemeal over the prior ten years. They settled first in Yonkers, New York and later in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area, and that May two branches of the family were returning to the United Kingdom. It would later be said that the Alfred Smith family had grown disillusioned with American life and were permanently resettling in Wales: the reason for Cecelia Owens’ voyage is less clear, but since her husband, Hubert, remained behind in Ellwood City is it possible that she and her sons were simply returning to her ancestral home for a visit. The afternoon of May 7<sup>th</sup> found Cecelia Owens minding Bessie Smith in her cabin, while Reginald and Ronald Owens played on deck with their cousin Helen. Shortly after two, the boys appeared at the door to request an extension of their play time. Cecelia would later recall their last words as being “ *we are playing*



**Cecelia Owens.**  
Courtesy of Carol Keeler

*on deck and we are enjoying ourselves. Helen is with us, and it is such fun!"* and so she granted them permission for another half hour of play.

Cecelia interpreted the initial blast as being the ship running aground or perhaps striking a rock, but there was no mistaking the second stronger explosion for anything other than what it was. Joining a crowd of 'scampering' passengers, and carrying Bessie Smith, she climbed upward to the open second class decks hoping to find her sons. She encountered, instead, her brother and sister in law who were searching for their missing daughters. Cecelia returned Bessie to them, and then the Smith family and Mrs. Owens parted, each setting off separately to find the missing children. Cecelia moved around the deck calling for her boys and Helen. At some point a stranger stopped her and affixed a lifebelt, and after that Mrs. Owens was tossed into a lifeboat. It capsized, and she was thrown into the ocean along with the other occupants. Cecelia swam with two men to a swamped collapsible, from which she was rescued some hours later by a fishing trawler.

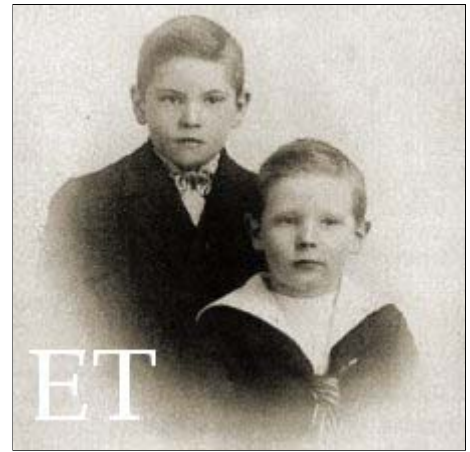
Reginald and Ronald Owens died in the disaster, as did Alfred and Elizabeth Smith and their daughter Bessie. None of the bodies were ever recovered or, if recovered, identified, and for Cecelia the only consolation came when she was reunited with Helen Smith at her hotel in Queenstown: Helen had seen her at a distance and called out "*why, here is auntie!*"

Mrs Owens traveled on to Swansea, where she was described as being in a very nervous, "shocked" state. She composed a letter to Arthur Smith, back in Yonkers, in which she said:

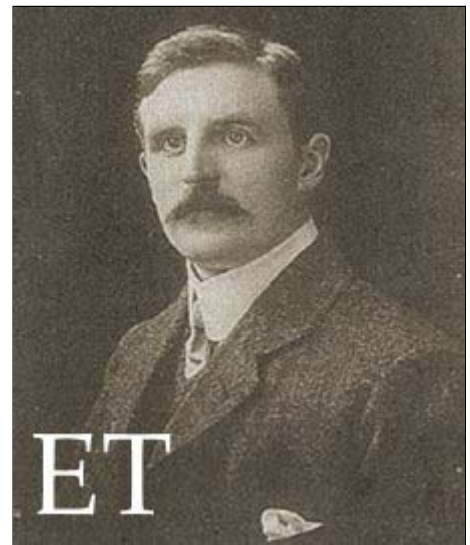
I will try and write a few words to ease your mind & my own. You know of my dreadful trouble. I am thankful to God I am alive & no limbs are broken. My darlings are gone, also dear Alf Bessie, Baby. Helen & myself left...I swam for my life & was picked up by some fellow pulling me on a collapsable boat (I cant spell today) I had a terrible experience. I am thankful I have my mind also limbs which are bruised all over. I am under a doctor's care and feel better than I did, but oh my heart aches & will always. My dear boys were with me five minutes before it happened but I never saw them again.....Oh Arthur this is a dreadful blow. Everything I possess is gone and my darlings as well. Also our dear Alf and his lot.....I am trying to be brave. God will still give me strength to overcome this as he saved me for some purpose.

Your broken hearted sister.

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**Ronald and Reginald Owens.**  
Courtesy of Carol Keeler



**Alfred Smith.**  
Courtesy of Carol Keeler



**Cecelia and Hubert Owens.**  
Courtesy of Carol Keeler

How must dear Hubert feel? I have not heard yet. Only cablegrams.

Cecelia Mildred Owens did not return to Pennsylvania. In a letter written in late 1915 she mentioned that she was still depressed and unable to concentrate. Her husband, Hubert, eventually joined her in Swansea, where she died of complications of cancer on July 20 1966 at the age of 87

The photograph of Cecelia Owens' niece, Helen Smith, 6, wearing her white hat and holding her doll remains one of the most frequently reprinted, and best known, of the *Lusitania* disaster images. In its day, the photo charmed royalty, and induced a substantial number of adoption attempts in the weeks following its initial publication: 90 years later it retains much of its original power to charm and elicit sympathy for the young orphan.

Alfred and Elizabeth Smith likely remained aboard the *Lusitania* to the last. It is reasonable to assume that after parting company with Cecelia Owens they continued to search for their missing daughter until time- and escape options- ran out. They died not knowing that Helen had been rescued, with relative ease, in one of only six lifeboats successfully lowered.

It is difficult to imagine what Helen Smith must have experienced that afternoon. Alone on deck, awaiting the return of her cousins, she would have heard, and possibly seen, the explosions forward on the starboard side. She would have felt the ship beginning its first roll to starboard, and may have witnessed the first lifeboat to upend and eject its passengers. She would definitely have seen the waves of passengers coming up from below, many orderly, others beginning to show the signs of panic and demoralization described by some survivors. What she did not see in the mass of people, was any sign of her parents or extended family. Fate interceded, and Helen's life was saved by the appearance of Toronto newsman Ernest Cowper:

I was chatting with a friend at the rail about two o'clock...we both saw the track of a torpedo, followed almost instantly by an explosion.

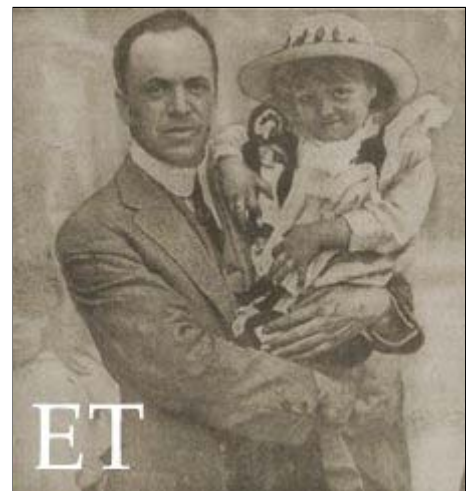
Portions of splintered hull were sent flying into the air...

A little girl, whose name I later learned was Helen Smith, and whose age is only six, had become separated from her parents in the rush and appealed to me to save her. I put her into a lifeboat and looked for her parents but could not find them. Whether they were saved or not I do not know.

Survivor Elizabeth Hampshire recalled being with Helen in the lifeboat. *"I had a little girl on my knee in the lifeboat. She told me she was called Helen Smith."* As they waited for



**A page from the Helen Smith scrapbook** kept by the Arthur Smith family of New York, showing the most widely reprinted photo of Helen.



**Helen Smith and Ernest Cowper**

rescue, Helen turned to Elizabeth and her foster sister, Florence Whitehead, and said, *"If I can't find my Mamma and Daddy, I'll go with you ladies."*

It seems that Ernest Cowper served as Helen's unofficial guardian in Queenstown. A photograph of him holding the child was printed in papers across the UK, Canada, and US. He was mentioned, and quoted, frequently in newspaper columns and through him it is possible to document much of Helen's immediate post-sinking experience:

Ernest S. Cowper, a Toronto journalist who saved Helen Smith...said that he had given her up in Queenstown to a well-dressed woman whom asserted that she was the child's aunt:

"I think that it was just simply a wealthy woman who read the story and wanted to adopt her," he added, "because later I had twenty two offers in Liverpool through the Cunard Line, from people wanting to take Helen Smith.

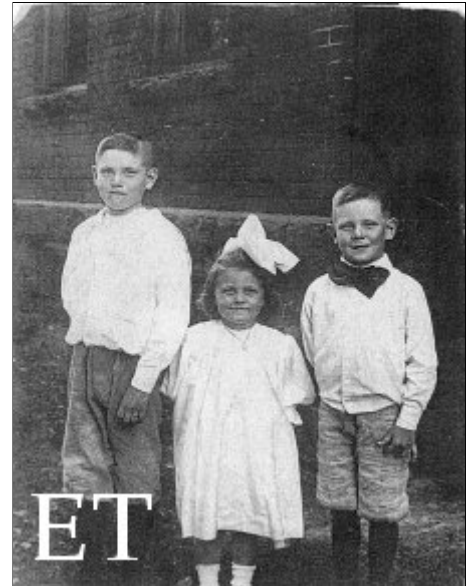
"Before I left London I received a letter from Queen Dowager Alexandra, asking me to take her to Sandringham, but I could not go as I did not know where the child was, and my wardrobe was not exactly fit for making calls on Queens living in royal palaces."

Though the Royal Invitation story seems, at first glance, to be a newspaper fabrication, a letter from Queen Dowager Alexandra inquiring about Helen survives in the Smith file in the Cunard Archive.

There was at least one Helen Smith newsreel produced during the week after the sinking.

Helen was claimed by her grandfather, Captain Smith, and returned with him to Swansea, where she was allowed to fade from the limelight and lead as normal a life as possible under the circumstances. A clipping from the 1920s quoted Ernest Cowper as saying that he kept in touch with Miss Smith and that he was proud that she had received an award for academic excellence. A 1925 anniversary article revealed that Helen was living with another family, presumably after the death of her grandfather, and was doing well in school.

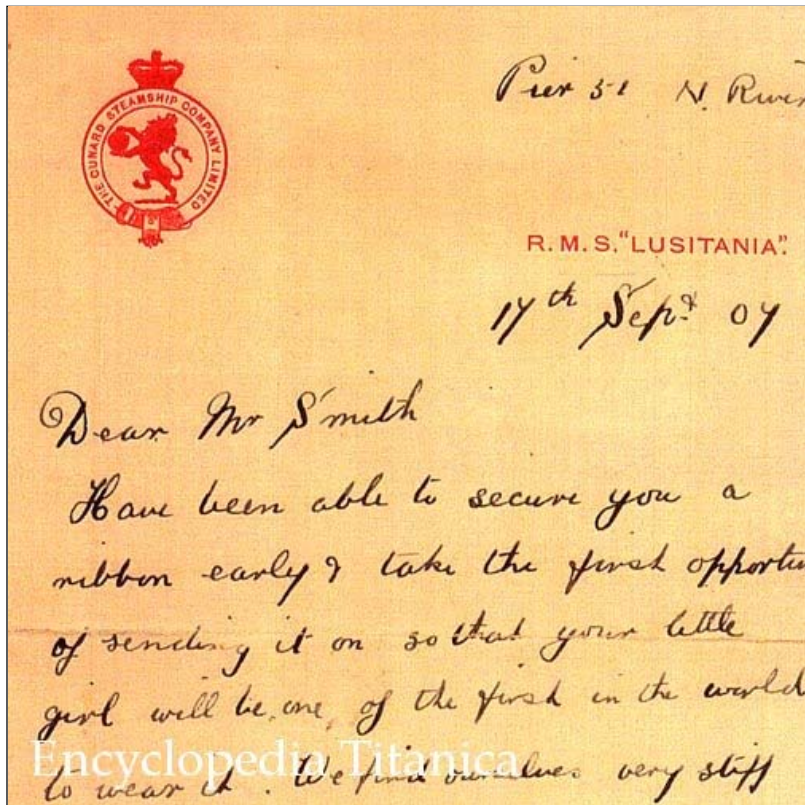
A bizarre footnote to Helen's tale appeared in the early 1930s. A female *"Lusitania* orphan" close in age to Helen, had been murdered and cemented under a garden pool by her adoptive father, who committed suicide by jumping from a ferry the day the bodies of the girl and her mother were uncovered. Whether the girl truly was a *Lusitania* orphan as early press accounts claimed, and what her true identity was remains to be discovered. However, it can be said with



**Helen Smith and The Owens Brothers.**

Courtesy of Carol Keeler

assurance that she was not Helen Smith. Helen had married John Henry Thomas, a wholesale department manager, in Swansea in late 1931. They had at least one child- a daughter- and continued to live in peace and comfortable obscurity for the remainder of their lives. She was interviewed by Hickey and Smith (credited as Helen Thomas) for their book, and survived more than a decade beyond that, dying in Swansea (where she had been born in October 1908) on April 8, 1993.



#### SMITH LETTER

Preserved in the scrapbook of the Arthur Smith family is a letter written from the Lusitania, immediately after her maiden voyage on September 11th 1907, by one of her junior officers. Addressed to their home on Oliver Street in Yonkers, the letter reads in part:

***Have been able to secure you a ribbon early & I take the first opportunity of sending it on so that your little girl will be one of the first in the world to wear it.***

The officer spoke informally, and fondly of a vigorous game played between himself and Mr. Smith which left him aching after the "unaccustomed exercise" and extended a (qualified) invitation for Smith to tour the ship again, but preferably after a later voyage when things were less rushed. The Smith family evidently had a cordial and personal relationship with Cunard Line, which may well have been the deciding factor in their choosing The Lusitania for what proved to be her final voyage.

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**Mrs. Walter Tijou**, of Bromley, spent the latter half of Friday May 7 anxiously awaiting word of her husband, Walter, and son, Howard both of who were returning from the United States aboard the *Lusitania*.

Howard Tijou had enjoyed an adventurous, and fortunate, life until that afternoon. The previous summer, while away at school in Europe, he had been trapped by the outbreak of war and, according to his mother's account, escaped aboard the last train after his father went behind enemy lines to recover him. A few years prior to that, while accompanying his father on a business trip, he had been caught in Mexico during Pancho Villa's revolution. He had made eleven transatlantic crossings. Now, returning from another business trip with his father, Howard's luck ran out.

Walter Tijou returned, alone, to Bromley, his 43<sup>rd</sup> crossing at a tragic end. Sick from his experience, and full of regret at not finding his son before the ship sank, he spoke to the press through his wife:

Walter was in the bathroom when he heard the explosion. He found the door jammed, but by his strength and three pulls he got the door open and ran with two lifebelts on deck shouting 'Howard! Howard!' But there was no answer, and Walter waited until the boat turned over and he had to jump into the sea. Some man pulled him on an upturned boat, then a small fishing smack brought them to land.

The Tijous would learn that their son had been playing on deck with some other boys when the ship was torpedoed. His body was never identified. Walter was awarded \$5,000 for his injuries and \$500 for lost possessions. He was advised by doctors to move to a "*warm and dry climate*", so on November 19, 1919 he moved to the United States. Walter Edgar Tijou passed away in Van Nuys, California on July 21, 1941.

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**Walter Tijou**



**Howard Tijou**

Newsclipping, paper not identified, collection of Mike Poirier

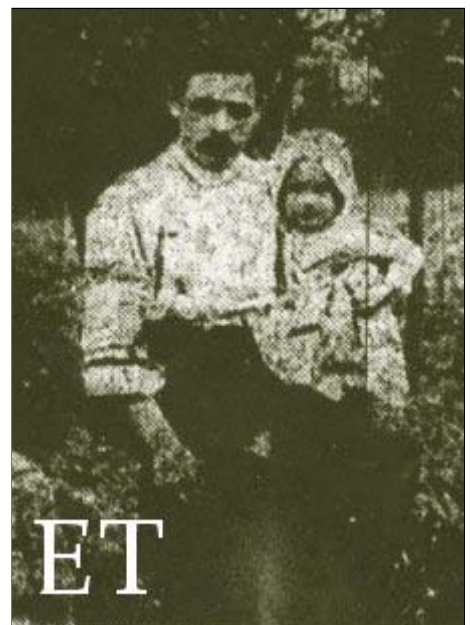
**Joseph Frankum** walked ashore *“a broken man.”* He had seen his wife and three children swept away when the *Lusitania* went down. He was wet, and he wore only a pair of pants, a slipper and one sock. In his pocket, he had his money, papers and a water stained watch stopped at 2:22. *“I thought I had lost my whole family.”* He was *“billeted”* in a private home, but instead of sleeping, immediately began his search and examined body after body as they were brought ashore, with no success. The next morning he began again and *“met some people who told me they thought my boy was at the Rob Roy Hotel... I came across my oldest boy, seven years of age, in the hotel.”* Joseph was overjoyed and immediately woke his son. *“How did you come here Dad,”* a bleary-eyed Francis asked. At first, the father was *“too full to answer,”* but finding his voice he said, *“You see Francis, I told you God would take care of you, and He has- hasn’t He?”* The boy replied, *“Yes Dad, He has.”*

Shortly thereafter, Joseph and his brother met. They made their way first to Liverpool to inquire about Joseph’s missing family and then to Aston, Birmingham where their mother lived. It was a sad reunion for there was no word about his wife Annie or their two children, Frederick and Winifred. Reporters soon made their way to 55 Webster Street to interview Joseph. He was somewhat reluctant at first. *“The whole story, I will tell voluntarily, but not now.”* He had left England and initially lived in Canada where his wife gave birth to Frederick and from there they relocated to Detroit, Michigan, where Winifred was born. *“You know, in America my wife and I were Sunday school teachers.”* Believing that moving back to England would be good for the family, they booked third class passage on the *Lusitania*. On the day of the disaster, *“We were all having a cup of tea for’ard, just after getting our baggage ready for shore... something went bang. I knew what it was immediately. The vessel at once heeled over to starboard, and my little boy turned and said, ‘What’s that, Daddy?’ I didn’t answer him... As soon as the explosion occurred, I gripped my two boys while my wife took charge of the little girl... I wouldn’t wait to get lifebelts, as I was afraid we should get trapped below.”*

He said they made their way aft, hurrying three-parts length of the ship. *“In the hurry, I dropped my little boy who fell about six feet, but I picked him up again and we made our way towards one of the boats... I pushed the wife and kiddies into a boat and said, ‘You stay there while I try and get a lifebelt... I shall be alright.’ Then I made for the second cabin saloon and got a couple of the lifebelts.”* As he made his way back on deck, he met a man who had no lifebelt and thrust it into his hands. *“Remembering that my people were already in the boat, I said, ‘Here, old man, take this.’ When I got back to the deck, I found the missus and the children had got out of the boat.”* They stood on deck



**Joseph and Francis Frankum**



**Joseph Frankum with his daughter Winifred**

Newsclipping, paper not identified, collection of Mike Poirier

deciding what to do. *"The steamer had got a heavy list, but just then she steadied a bit and I thought she might right herself... She started to heel over again. I said to my wife "Oh my God, it's all over. Get back into the lifeboat again."* The lifeboat they were in was on the portside and due to the starboard list, the boat did not get away. Joseph held onto his family as the water came closer. *"I hoped that as she sank the lifeboat might rise in her chocks, but whether it did or not I don't know, for the next instant I was wrenched from my hold and hurled into the water... I stuck to my wife and children as long as I could, but as we sank, we were separated... I was sucked down very deep but came to the surface again. I could find no traces of my wife nor any of the children."*

Swimming around he came across an overturned boat. He climbed aboard the keel and helped pull others aboard. *"A young gentleman who was on the boat tried to comfort me for the loss of my family, and while he was so engaged a man's body floated alongside us. The young gentleman picked up an oar and lifted the head of the dead man. 'Good God,' he cried, 'It's my own father.' And then I had to comfort him."*

They were picked up by a torpedo boat, which Frankum claimed was seeking out the submarine when it heard that the *Lusitania* had sunk, and went to search for survivors. He said that a woman died on the torpedo boat before they landed. Francis was also interviewed, briefly, and said that as the ship sank, their lifeboat capsized. He clung to an overturned boat and managed to hold on until he was rescued.

A few years later, Joseph and his son moved to Scotland and in 1920, he married Jessie Elizabeth Mitchell in Kelvin, Lanark. They later moved to Dunoon, Argyll where Jessie died in 1952 and Joseph died the following year in 1953.

Francis married and also worked closely with the Church of Scotland, St John's Dunoon as a clerk. He died in 1985.

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The ladies of The English Ivy Lodge, Daughters of St. George held a Bon Voyage Reception for club officer **Lydia Grandidge** on April 27<sup>th</sup> 1915 at the Richard Armistead residence on Cedar Street in Yonkers New York. Lydia and her three year old daughter, Eva Mary, were to depart aboard the *Lusitania* on May 1<sup>st</sup> for an extended visit to the United Kingdom, and the party was of enough social significance in the Yonkers English community to be covered by the city press.



**Arthur and Lydia Grandidge**  
Copyright Yonkers Herald  
Jim Kalafus Collection.

Lydia and her husband Arthur had emigrated from Leeds, Yorkshire, England to Yonkers in June 1912 aboard the *Caronia* (Lydia entering the United States under the name of "Nancie" Grandidge- perhaps Lydia was a nickname by which she preferred to be addressed?) where she joined her father, Nathan May, and her sisters, Mrs. Richard Armistead and Mrs. Samuel Dawson.

Arthur Grandidge, although a coachman by profession, found work as a janitor in the Weller Building in Yonkers, and as jack-of-all-trades in their neighborhood. Their home was at 8 Highland Avenue, at the corner of Broadway, in what was then a solidly working class and predominantly English section of Yonkers.

Lydia's sister Mrs. Elizabeth Stead of Leeds had visited with her extended family in New York during the winter of 1914/1915, returning to the United Kingdom "in poor health" aboard the *Lusitania* on her February crossing. Lydia, with Eva Mary, was travelling to Leeds that May to pay a nursing visit to Mrs. Stead. They were to return to Yonkers in September. Neither survived the voyage and, as far as we can determine, no one who did survive left any record of how Lydia and Eva spent their final week. What remains from that time is a sympathetic record in the Yonkers press of Arthur Grandidge's efforts to learn anything of his family's fate.

On May 8<sup>th</sup>, the shaken Mr. Grandidge informed the press that neither he nor Lydia had seen the German warning. On the 9<sup>th</sup> it was reported in Yonkers that Mrs. Grandidge had been saved, but on the 10<sup>th</sup> it was revealed that friends of the Grandidges had read the name "Mrs Candlish" on the list of survivors and had been struck by the (admittedly slight) similarity between the two names, raising the hope

that she was still alive. Arthur Grandidge and Nathan May continued to inquire at the Cunard offices throughout the month, but no trace of Lydia was ever found. Eva Mary's body was eventually identified, after having been buried in the mass grave in Queenstown, and her personal effects were shipped back to her father via the *Carpathia* in July 1915.

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**Sarah Lund**, of Chicago, her husband, Charley Lund, and father, William Mounsey, were aboard the *Lusitania* on a mission that they hoped would reunite their family.

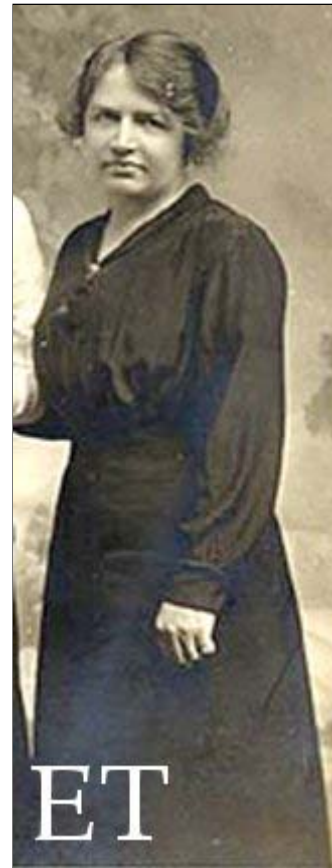
The previous year, William Mounsey's wife, Fanny had set out aboard the *Empress of Ireland* to visit relatives in Keswick, England whom she had not seen in more than thirty years. She was aboard what proved to be the fatal voyage and was lost. Her body was not recovered and her family was left to grieve and to wonder.

In 1915, a woman by the name of Kate Fitzgerald surfaced in an almshouse in Ormeskirk, England. She had an intense fear of water and kept muttering the name "Mounsey." Word of Miss Fitzgerald reached the Lunds and Mr. Mounsey in the United States, and so they booked passage aboard the *Lusitania* hoping that, perhaps, after a year of mourning a happy resolution to their family tragedy might be possible. It is known that they received at least one warning, from a Doctor Roberg, which pointed out that given the danger of a wartime crossing it might be better to solve the mystery by letters and photographs, but the group departed as scheduled.

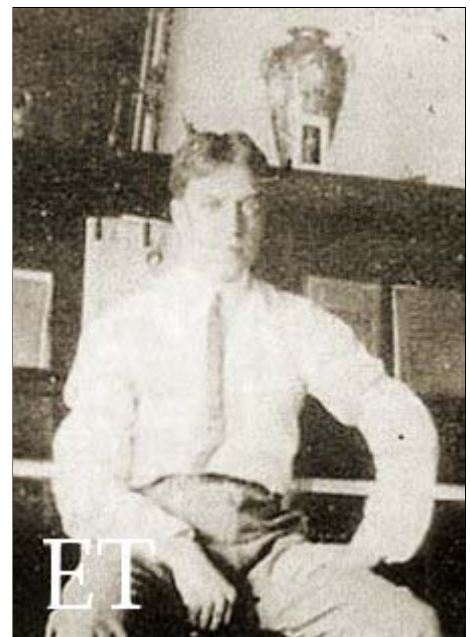
Sarah and her acquaintance Eunice Kinch were on the starboard side of the *Lusitania* when the explosions came: *"We were sitting facing where it struck, and the minute it struck we were covered with water."* She ran to the lounge in time to meet her father, and Mrs. Kinch's son William Mustoe, coming up the stairs, but there was no sign of Charley Lund in the crowd. The group went to the port side boat deck where they entered, and were ordered out of, a lifeboat by crewmen who said the *Lusitania* would not sink. Sarah turned despairingly to her father and said, *"Pa, I know it will sink."* Robert Timmis, standing nearby, heard the order, and encountered Mr. Mounsey and Mrs. Lund after they evacuated the boat. Sarah pleaded *"Sir, I've no lifebelt"* and Timmis removed his and strapped it on her.

Sarah and her father spent their last minutes together struggling to climb a staircase, as she recalled, or perhaps a ladder between the boat deck and the deck surrounding the funnels:

"I found bits of remembered Sunday School lessons flitting



**Sarah Lund**  
Courtesy of Joy Hill



through my head; I tried hard not to think of Mama."

"There was a big explosion, and down he went head first right in front of me, and the boat seemed to fly to pieces and I went right after him. We went whirling 'round and 'round. The sensation was awful. It seemed as if we would reach the bottom of the ocean."

"As I floated around in the water before being rescued, I could hear people calling and swimming; I heard a baby cry. I could feel people grabbing at my long hair and at my legs. "

Sarah clung to a board for what seemed like hours before being pulled into a lifeboat. There she met Robert Timmis who had surrendered his lifebelt to her, and he bent down to shake her hand as she lay cold and exhausted in the bottom of the boat. Timmis later described Sarah's rescue:

"There was a woman further on I thought might be alive, she was face down with a belt on, but seemed shoulders high out of the water. Her golden hair which was loose over her shoulders showed up well..."

Neither William Mounsey nor Charley Lund survived the disaster. Their shipboard friends Eunice Kinch and William Mustoe were lost as well. Only Charley Lund's body was recovered. Sarah completed her trip alone and, to compound the futility of her experience, Kate Fitzgerald proved not be her mother.

I have only one thing to regret and that is to have to part with my husband and father. My husband and I were very much devoted to each other and it is a terrible blow to me to be in England so far from home and such a bereavement to bear, I feel I could not stand it if Almighty God was not with me to bear all my sorrow.

Sarah returned to the United States where in October, she initiated a lawsuit against Cunard due to a *'conspiracy'* between Dudley Field Malone and Captain Turner. She alleged that there was a large cargo of explosives illegally in the hold. She sued for \$40,000 and said that she was deceived by Cunard by making statements that it was fully provided with safety devices. In August 1916, she married George Hornberger whose job was to investigate Lusitania claimants. She was awarded \$5000.00 in 1925 for the loss of her husband and personal injury, and an additional \$288 for lost property. Although she had no children of her own, she proved to be a favorite aunt within her extended family and is still fondly remembered. She died at the age of 92 on April 2nd 1978 in Nilas, Illinois.

### **Charley Lund**

Courtesy of Joy Hill



### **William Mounsey**

Courtesy of Joy Hill

**Angela Pappadopoulo**, of Athens, remains one of the best-remembered *Lusitania* survivors. She was a striking woman, and a number of different photos of her taken in Queenstown ran in newspapers across the UK and US. This letter, written just over a week after the sinking is the best surviving account of Mrs. Pappadopoulo's experiences, and provides a touch of gallows humor as well:

15 May 1915

Dear Timmis,

I have been so full up with callers and letters and having Mrs Pappadopoulo to look after that I have not been able to write you...

I had a call yesterday from Bistis' brother. He had been over to Queenstown but found no trace of his brother. He saw a steward who informed him that both Bistis & Pappadopoulo were in a boat that was being lowered just as the ship was sinking. The boat was smashed and they were upset and thrown into the water and were struggling in the water. Bistis tried to help Pappadopoulo to get into the boat, they held on for a while and disappeared.

I have had a pretty bad time with Mrs. Pappadopoulo. I took her home at first, and then some friends of his offered to take her, but, as she grew worse, would eat nothing and had hysterical attacks I decided to put her into a nursing home, and am glad to say that she is now quite calm, but very weak. I hope that by Tuesday she will be well enough to start for Paris and Athens...

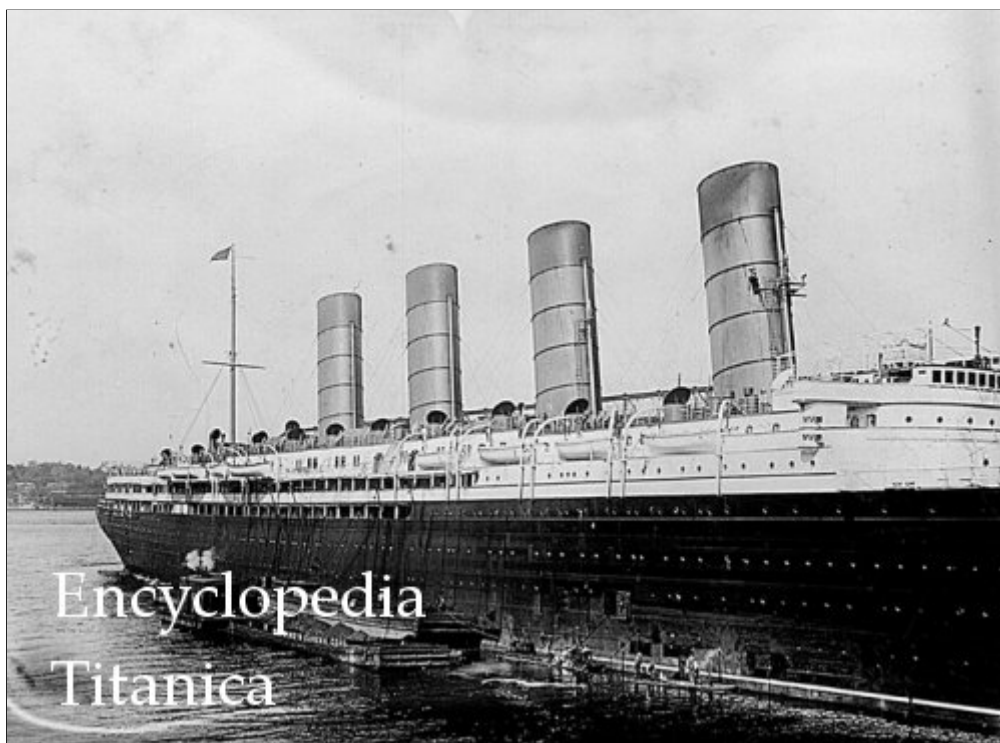
P.S. Since dictating the above, Mr. Baker has heard that the body of Mr. Pappadopoulo has been recovered and had to leave the office to go and see Mrs. Pappadopoulo and learn her wishes. He is therefore unable to sign this letter himself.

The gallows humor comes, of course, from the time frame in which the events in the letter took place: Angela Pappadopoulo's breakdown, hospitalization, recovery and anticipated train-and-ship journey back to Greece, took place between her arrival in London on May 9<sup>th</sup> and the dictating of this letter on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Reading between the lines, it does not seem that she was spoiled with excessive sympathy.

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**Angela Pappadopoulo**  
*The Daily Sketch*  
Jim Kalafus collection



Jim Kalafus Collection

**Belle Saunders Naish**, of Kansas City, personified several aspects of the emerging 'new woman' of 1915. Although neither a suffragette nor a businesswoman, Belle was about as far from the Victorian "Cult of the Female Invalid" as it was possible to get. She had waited until well past 40 to marry, itself hardly common at a time where the average female life expectancy was less than 65 years and to be unmarried at 30 put one perilously close to the title of Old Maid. Her husband, Theodore Naish, (55 when they married in 1911, and ten years her senior) was a civil engineer of comfortable income, who had done well in real estate and who shared with his wife a love of the outdoors and physical activity. In an era where many women still carried smelling salts, 49 year old Mrs Naish was able to accompany her husband on ten mile hikes without flagging, and their lifestyle was described as "*remarkably wholesome.*"



**Belle Saunders Naish**  
Mike Poirier collection

May 1<sup>st</sup> found the Naishes aboard the *Lusitania*, booked in Second Class. Friends had accompanied them to the ship, and one left with them a copy of a newspaper in which the German Embassy's warning had been run. Mr. Naish declared to his wife:

We will not worry. No reputable newspaper would accept an advertisement of that Cunard Line size and in it put another in direct opposition. It would be like advertising 'John Taylor Dry Goods Kansas City Missouri' and then inserting 'The Peck Dry Goods Company warns patrons of John Taylor

Company as said goods are worthless or stolen.' If that were official, the notice would have been posted in glaring signs, and each American passenger would have had warning sent and delivered before boarding the vessel.

Despite his robust physical state, Mr Naish fell victim to *mal-de-mer* and was cabin bound for much of the voyage. Belle would later write that she spent most of her waking hours tending to her husband and therefore, except for at meals, did little mingling on board. He did walk on deck with Mrs Naish on the morning of May 7<sup>th</sup>. Both noticed the slow speed at which the *Lusitania* was travelling, with Theodore Naish commenting "*I do not like this; it is too much like calling for trouble.*" When the fog burned off later in the morning both observed a British War vessel and assumed that it was an escort sent out to meet *Lusitania*: "*We had all been told that we were protected all the way by warships, wireless and that submarine destroyers would escort us in the channel. A lovelier day could not be imagined.*" Evidence suggests that Mr Naish returned to his bed, and that he and Belle managed to make it to open deck quickly after the torpedoing:

We had heard the vessel people telling us "She's alright, she will float for an hour." I could see the horizon and told Mr Naish to look ahead at it and the rail and said 'it is not true, we are sinking rapidly we are turning very fast, it cannot be long.

The Naishes remained with the *Lusitania* until the end:

We watched the water, talked to each other; there seemed to be a great rush, a roar and a splintering sound, then the life boat or something swung over our heads. I threw up my left hand to ward off a blow and then the water was up to my waist. I thought about how wondrously beautiful the sunlight and water were from below the surface. I put up my right hand, saw the blue sky and found myself clinging to the bumper of lifeboat 22... I finally sat down cold and shivering, but we were all with chattering teeth, and I remembered that deep breaths of cold air suddenly expelled will keep a person warm in very cold weather, so we all tried it to our great comfort...

While we sat on overturned no. 22 the men told us to take off our shoes and stockings as we should not then feel the cold so much. I asked the man who first reached out his hand to help me out of the water to write his name on the lining of my shoe, lest in the experience to follow I might forget. He wrote 'Hertz'. (Douglas Hertz)

Later that evening, it was Belle Naish who observed some small sign of life in the form of Theodate Pope as she lay, presumably among the dead, on the deck of the trawler

*Julia.* By Miss Pope's own account, it took nearly two hours of artificial respiration to fully restore her. It is not known in how close or constant contact the women remained after the disaster; however, Theodate demonstrated her life long gratitude by providing for Mrs. Naish in her will.

In Queenstown, Belle shared a hotel room with Robert Kay, a little boy sick with measles who had seen his heavily pregnant mother swept away as the *Lusitania* sank beneath them. She praised him for his bravery, for he only cried for his mother once, and was grateful to him for 'sustaining' her during the early days of her mourning, Theodore Naish having been lost.

Mrs. Naish was awarded \$12,500.00, for the loss her of husband, by the Mixed Claims Commission in 1924. She continued to live in the Kansas City area until her death at age 84, on August 25<sup>th</sup> 1950. Camp Theodore Naish, a Boy Scout Camp named in honor of her husband and endowed by Mrs. Naish still exists outside of Kansas City.

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**Mrs. Phoebe Amory** of Toronto booked herself aboard the *Lusitania* at the last minute. In her published 1917 account, she claimed that her five sons were in military service – two in training, three already in service overseas – and that on April 27<sup>th</sup> she made up her mind to visit them *"probably for the last time on earth."* She decisively booked passage on the May 1<sup>st</sup> sailing for an extended vacation in England. Here she stretched the point a bit: one son, in fact, was neither in training nor in service, and she had planned on going over a bit earlier to care for her mother but received a cable informing her of her mother's death. She was to have been accompanied on board by her daughter, Beatrice, who changed her mind and did not book passage. Mrs. Amory was descended from a long line of sailors, and although she knew the general risk of a wartime passage, and knew specifically of the German warning, she would later declare that *"...it is only natural, and not to be attributed to a desire to boast, that I should have made the voyage warning or no warning."*

Phoebe's cabin mates in her Second Class room were Mary Higginbottom (sometimes listed as Higginbotham) of Fall River, Massachusetts, *"A handsome girl, with beautiful fair hair. When I first saw her she was wearing a perfect fitting dress of black velvet, and I was so impressed with her beauty and her frank, straightforward manner of introducing herself to me, that I felt I had indeed been fortunate in having such a charming young lady for a voyage companion"* and Martha Whyatt (whom Phoebe referred to as Mrs. Whiret) who until recently had been nursing a relative in the United States *"This uncle left her considerable property and she*



**Phoebe Amory** in her *Lusitania* lifejacket, ca. 1915-1917

*was returning to her native land to spend the remainder of her life among relatives and friends. I believe I have never known a more kindly woman, nor one who seemed to be more ready in a case of emergency to lend a helping hand."*

Mrs. Amory was here confused: Mrs. Whyatt had lost her husband, Aaron, not an uncle. Miss Higginbottom and Mrs. Amory dined together on the first night, and Mrs. Amory was particularly impressed with the dining saloon:

Such a beautiful dining-room I had never seen, either aboard ship or in the magnificent hotels that I have visited on both sides of the ocean. The pillars, extending from floor to ceiling were as snowy white as the linen that covered the long tables. The walls and ceiling were frescoed in delicate tints, and in the centre there was a round, open, balcony which permitted one to stand above and gaze down upon a spectacle that I believe could not be duplicated elsewhere.

In her long account, Mrs. Amory spoke only briefly about her seven days aboard the ship. Miss Higginbottom disappeared from the account after the first evening, but Phoebe mentioned, in passing, that Mrs. Whyatt carried with her a large supply of medicine, which she dispensed among those suffering from seasickness. Phoebe sold programmes for the Charitable Concert, and was allowed access to first class in order to do so. One man paid for his programme with a Five Dollar bill after claiming to have already purchased one ("*he could not resist my good natured smile*") and allowed her to keep the change: she would later claim that the generous purchaser was Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt. "*I met with similar success in nearly all of the cabins and on the decks and soon had realized well on my programmes.*"

May 7<sup>th</sup> found Mrs. Whyatt ill. She had been indisposed the night before and was still nauseous that morning. Phoebe prevailed upon her to dress and go out on deck for fresh air: Martha Whyatt found herself in an ideal position to escape and was, in fact, saved, but the younger Mary Higginbottom was never seen again. Phoebe had arranged for a bath, planning on attending lunch immediately afterward, and so was in the dining saloon in the unusual outfit of negligee and raincoat when the *Lusitania* was torpedoed.

...as it was permissible to go to the dining room at lunch hour clad in negligee, I slipped on my raincoat and hurried to lunch. The bath had improved my appetite, and I was feeling as though I could go through the meal at will. I took my place at the table, and had given my order. It then occurred to me that I would like a salad and as the steward placed the soup before me I was on the point of ordering the salad when there came the most terrible crash... There was a rush for the stairs, and everyone was trying to ascend the narrow stairway. Realizing that something of a terrible

nature had occurred, I seemed to be possessed of super-human strength and was able to push through where stronger persons were held back.

Mrs. Amory emerged on deck and later described, at length, a demoralized mob *"The screams of the women and children were terrible to hear...women were fainting and falling to the deck, only to be carried overboard by their own weight."* But a hero appeared just as Phoebe began to despair: a young man said *"Here, mother, take this belt"* and helped her into a lifebelt. *"I did not see him among the survivors, I believe he was lost and never will forget his brave deed, for I feel certain he gave his life to save mine."*

Phoebe, like so many others, was placed into a lifeboat, only to be thrown out as it capsized. *"We were brought up against the side of the ship with an awful crash and were thrown into the water. Fortunately we were nearly down when the accident occurred and had not far to fall, but the confusion was great. Those who did not have lifebelts sank almost immediately. On every hand were floating bodies, their upturned faces showing white and ghastly."* She was pulled into a second lifeboat, where she hung for a time with her upper body over the boat's edge and her legs and lower body still in the water; eventually space was found and she was dragged all the way in. That evening her boat was picked up by a fishing vessel:

*"...as soon as they lifted me aboard I fell to the bottom of the boat and lay there until one of the men in charge came and lifted me up and offered me hot tea. The tea helped warm me up considerably, but my teeth chattered and my limbs shook as though afflicted with the ague."*

Although she had lost all but the clothing in which she was rescued, and her lifebelt, Phoebe Amory considered herself lucky. She had lost no one, other than cabin mate Mary Higginbottom, in the sinking, and she was uninjured (a claim she made in 1917, contradicted by her later case against Germany) and able to resume her journey to England after a short rest in Queenstown.

Mrs. Amory's 1917 account ends with a long, chest beating, call to arms:

*....The greatest of all punishments we can give these murderers and baby killers is to stand organized to the last man if necessary...and force them to their knees, begging for mercy at their impotence. Our men will treat their women with respect, and well they know that no man who belongs to the Army of the British would loose a torpedo to murder their wives and mothers.*

The last lines of which seems both painfully naïve and sad

when one reads of what a Man of the Army of the British did to Mrs. Amory:

Mrs. Amory Loses Jewels

Befriended Returned Soldier and He Takes Lusitania Survivor's Medal.

Misplaced confidence in the probity of a returned soldier to whom she extended the hospitality of her home cost Mrs. Phoebe Amory of 10 Beaconsfield Ave, Lusitania survivor, \$200 worth of jewels. It was after service on Sunday last that the returned soldier was introduced to Mrs. Amory, who gave him work in the garden. He came every day until Thursday, after which he did not return. Then it was discovered several rings, a gold watch, and a medal were missing. The police were put on the case and in a short while recovered part of the jewels. Among the lost valuables is a gold medal, which was presented to Mrs. Amory by the Duchess of Marlborough in recognition of recruiting achievements in England two years ago.

One wonders if she slipped into "Lost Generation" cynicism afterwards.

Seeking reparations at the close of the war, Mrs. Amory filed a claim for \$12,720. Only \$1,660 of that was for loss of personal possessions. She claimed that her left side "has been almost paralyzed since then" and that she suffered a rupture in her right lower abdomen. The court decided \$6,650 was fair compensation. Despite such injuries, Phoebe lived to be 92 and died on April 17, 1942 in Welland, Ontario.

Phoebe Amory, like many educated women of her generation, dabbled in poetry, and we shall end her segment with her *Lusitania* memorial poem.

## THE DEATH OF THE LUSITANIA

O LUSITANIA, Empress of the Sea  
Art thou dead and buried in the deep.  
With all thy freight of human souls,  
Victim of the Huns 'most Hellish darts.

Come nations! Rise, avenge this hideous crime.  
Avenge the cries of English hope,  
now lying cold and dead in ocean deep.  
Come nations! Rise and crush

This hideous foe: this vampire of the world, who  
is no man  
but just a beast of prey respecting nothing.  
Laying waste to works of centuries.  
Breaking hearts and homes on every side.

Come quickly, come, o'er England's blood  
Be shed in vain, her noble sons all dead  
And lying on the plains. Come, nations,  
Crush this vampire into dust; come quickly,  
come.

O Lusitania, my tears are falling for thee  
Fair village of palaces, gone for evermore  
Beneath the cold blue waters.

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**The Lusitania's Starboard Boat Deck** (looking forward).  
From a negative in the Jim Kalafus Collection.

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**Katherine Gleason** of Chicago was returning to Ireland that May to visit her family in Killmallock, County Limerick. She wrote to her extended family in Yonkers, New York that "I'm sure you'll want to come to the pier to see me off." None came: Kate Gleason accidentally addressed the letter to Mrs. Johanna Murphy of 48 Yonkers Avenue, New York City, and by the time the letter was forwarded to the proper address the *Lusitania* had already sailed. Miss Gleason died never knowing that it was by accident and not intent that her family did not accept her invitation.

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**The Mainman family**, of Edmonton, Canada, was on a journey described by the press as being “*associated with a great deal of romance.*”

Alfred Reid Mainman, aged 55, received word in early 1915 that his parents, John and Mary, had passed away in Exeter, England. He was their only child and he inherited their considerable estate. The press reported that his parent’s solicitors had found over \$10,000 in cash in the house. He realized that with the cash on hand, money in the bank, and the sale of the estate, it would be to his family’s advantage to relocate to England. He resigned from his job with the City of Edmonton’s Treasurer’s Office, and made arrangements to dispose of any household items from their Jasper Street home not needed in England. There were formalities of course, and his employers forwarded a sworn photograph of Mr. Mainman to the solicitors to assist in identification. The Mainmans were used to moving. As a young man, Alfred Mainman had settled in Victoria, Australia, in 1882. He married Elizabeth Sarah Dowsett in 1893. She gave birth to her first three children in Victoria; John, ‘Jack,’ 1894; Alfred Shaw, ‘Alf’, 1895; and Mary Frances, ‘Molly’, born September 1, 1898. The young family then immigrated to Canada and first settled in Fort Saskatchewan before establishing their permanent home in Edmonton. Elizabeth gave birth to twins on October 4, 1907; Edwin Richard, ‘Teddy,’ and Elizabeth Sarah, ‘Betty’. The family of seven booked second class passage on the *Lusitania*’s May 1<sup>st</sup> voyage...

There is little mention of the family’s shipboard activities. Herbert Ehrhardt talked about a girl of 16 with a large family who helped him keep a group of children entertained during the voyage. Based on his description of the girl’s family, he may have been describing Molly Mainman. He recalled encountering the girl’s family on deck, at which time one of her brothers was missing. Molly gave brief account in which she said that she and the twins were able to get in a starboard lifeboat. She was handed an infant about three months old just as the boat was lowering, and she held on to it until they reached Queenstown. Commander Chaytor of the *HMS Ariadne* and his wife then took charge of the three. An acquaintance who visited them said, “*nothing can equal the love and tender care which this worthy couple are bestowing upon these bereaved children who are now most comfortably housed and clad and I am sure that the little ones appreciate, in their own way, the great kindness of their new friends.*” Molly had the responsibility of searching the temporary morgue in Queenstown for her family, where she found only her brother Jack.

He was buried in Queenstown on May 13<sup>th</sup>. The rest of the family was not recovered.



**A.R. Mainman.**



**Alf Mainman.**

When the Mainman children arrived in England, they were housed with Mr. and Mrs. Ellison of Liverpool. John Mainman's personal effects were forwarded to Mr. Ellison who returned them to the family. They also received a 25 pound grant from the *Lusitania* Relief Fund. Their final destination was the home of Mrs. Clarence Merrett, a relative, who lived at Montrose, St. Thomas's Hill, Canterbury. Mr. Brown, the family solicitor from Exeter, oversaw their inheritance. Molly Mainman was now the matriarch of the decimated family. She saw to the care of her siblings, and never married, dying in late 1973, at age 75. Elizabeth and Edwin settled in the Liverpool area. Elizabeth was wed to John Kennedy in 1936 and Edwin to Doris Holmes in 1937. The twins lived long lives. Edwin Mainman passed away in January 1976 in Beccles, Suffolk and Elizabeth Mainman Kennedy died in late 1983 in Lancaster.



**John Mainman.**

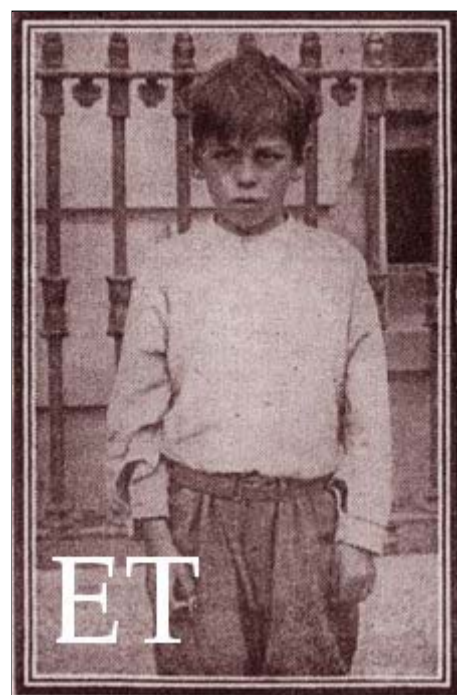
All above courtesy of Mr. Paul Latimer

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In contrast to the Mainman family who set out for England with bright prospects, **Annie Williams** and her six children boarded the *Lusitania* in defeat, facing an uncertain future.

John and Annie Millman Williams were married in Manchester, England in 1896. They emigrated to the US in April 1904, settling in New Jersey. The record of the William's suit against Germany claimed that their infant, David, was their ninth child, but only six are named in the case; Edith; John Edward; George Albert; Ethel; Florence and David. John Williams was employed as a groom until early 1915, when he entered service for Cunard as a steward and departed NYC aboard the *Lusitania's* final completed eastbound crossing. Edith, in later years, said in interview that he was deserting the family; Williams, in his testimony, claimed only to be traveling on ahead to set up a home for his family in England. According to Adolph Hoehling, Annie Williams' financial situation was such that her neighbors in Plainfield, New Jersey, "passed the hat" to raise funds to return her, and her children, to her paternal home in England.

Edith later recalled taking a walk with her mother the evening before the disaster. The following day, Edith would remain aboard the ship until the last and would be swept from a ladder connecting the boat deck to the funnel deck as the ship sank under her. She held on to her sister Florence until the suction described by many other survivors pulled the child away.



**Edward Williams**, who along with his sister Edith, was one of only two of Annie Williams' children to survive.

*The Daily Sketch*  
Jim Kalafus collection.

She was rescued by passenger Rose Howley, whose detailed account follows. Edith and her brother John were the only members of the Williams family to survive. Neither Annie, nor any of her other children, were recovered or identified.

Later, an attempt was made to engineer a reunion between Edith and Mrs. Howley, but Rose said that she had only done her duty as a Christian, was not a hero, did not see the need for such a get together, and would not participate

Edith and John were taken back to the US by their father briefly in 1916, and settled once again in New Jersey, but soon returned to the United Kingdom. An account in Dunsmore's book claims that Edith ran away upon her father's initial reappearance in England which, if true, would suggest that this move was not a happy interlude for Miss Williams.

John Williams filed suit in the United States, requesting from Germany \$40,000.00 for the loss of his wife and four children, and \$250.00 for the loss of their personal effects. His suit was dismissed, for as a UK national he was not entitled to make his claim in the US courts.

Edith and John Edward Williams' suits in the US and UK both failed on the same grounds: pain and suffering caused by the loss of a loved one was not, by 1925 standards, cause for a financial settlement. Neither child could prove direct financial support provided by Annie, and their father who was suing in the same court system would not have been likely to admit desertion at the possible cost of his \$40,000.00

... the record is barren of any statement of fact which would enable this commission to measure the damages, if any, sustained by the two surviving children of Mrs. Williams and resulting from her death. There is not a scintilla of evidence in the record throwing any light on Mrs. Williams' character, pursuits, habits, relations to and influence over her children, or any fact on which the commission could base a conclusion that the surviving children had suffered pecuniary damages resulting from her death. It must be assumed that no such evidence of damages exists. At all events the claimants have wholly failed to discharge the burden resting on them to prove their case.

It seems that a grant of 5 pounds John Williams received from the *Lusitania* Relief Fund was the extent of their financial settlement.

Edith Williams completed 15 years of schooling. She eventually married and divorced, and she retained her married surname, "Wachtel," for the rest of her life. She

lived in Carmichael, CA, and worked as a registered nurse for 49 years. She died of cardio-respiratory arrest on May 12, 1992, and was cremated, with her ashes scattered at sea near San Francisco.

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**How the U.K. and much of the U.S. viewed the disaster.**

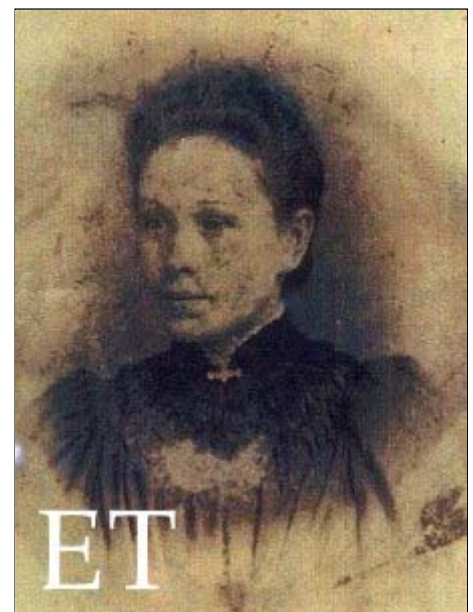
Under the headline are shown (left to right) child survivor Elsie Lohden; a photo taken at one of the morgues in Queenstown showing the remains of waiter Charles Gilroy, infant Sheila Ferrier (on Gilroy's chest) and infant Walter Dawson Mitchell Jr, and the omnipresent photo of Helen Smith. In the cases of Sheila Ferrier and Walter Dawson Mitchell, the children were survived by a mother widowed by the sinking.

Copyright *The Daily Sketch*. Jim Kalafus collection.

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**Rose Howley**, Edith's rescuer, had been visiting her niece, Mrs. Leary, in New Rochelle, New York in the weeks before the disaster. Concerned with the German threat, she made inquiries and was assured that the ship would not have any trouble with submarines. Her hometown paper gave this detailed account worth quoting in whole:

There were quite a number of Irish people on board and they naturally became very friendly. On getting within sight of their homeland Mrs. Howley remarked, "Look at the green hills of Ireland. God save Ireland." and they with one broke out with "God save Ireland" and "The Land of the West." After this, Mrs. Howley and another woman were walking along the deck when they heard a tremendous explosion and felt that something had struck the side of the ship... The two women promptly made for the bow, but there was a rush of passengers, who tumbled over each other and knocked the two down. Mrs Howley shouted, "Be quiet; better be drowned than killed on board." ... Mrs. Howley



**Rose Howley**  
Courtesy Cathy Higgs

and her companion managed to get to the spot where the sailors were launching the boats. An officer behind her, whom she recognised as the captain was appealed to for assistance, and he replied, "You must do what you can for yourself. Go into that room and get a lifebelt." A man was just coming out of the cabin and put a small belt round Mrs. Howley's neck. She felt disinclined to join in the rush for the boats. The people around her were saying, "She's sinking fast." She turned to the other woman and said, "Well what are we going to do?" "I don't know," came the anguished reply and Mrs. Howley rejoined, "Well let us stand here and die together." Just then, Mrs. Howley caught sight of a rope hanging over the ship's side and as people were jumping overboard, she seized the rope and slid down into the sea. By this time the ship was sinking rapidly and almost as soon as she entered the water there was a big explosion as if the ship's boilers had blown up. People were blown into the air and the sight was a terrible one. When the ship went down Mrs. Howley- she had by this time lost her companion- was drawn under by the suction but through her lifebelt came to the surface and all around people were struggling and calling for help... For a second time Mrs. Howley was drawn down and on rising again she touched a hard substance, which proved to be an upturned boat, to the keel of which two or three men were already clinging. She appealed to them for help and they encouraged her to retain her hold. She did so, and eventually one of the men managed to pull her partly in the boat. While she had been endeavoring to get a firm hold of the boat, Mrs. Howley felt something tugging at her dress and looking around she noticed it was a small girl. She exclaimed, "Oh, it is a child" and with the assistance of the men, the girl was pulled up as well. Mrs. Howley then recognised her as Edith Williams, one of a family whom she had become acquainted on the ship. They were the mother, five girls (sic), and a boy and only the boy and Edith were saved. They clung to the boat for four hours before assistance reached them.

Little Edith was in an exhausted state when she was pulled onto the upturned boat but one the men spared no pains in rubbing until she was revived. At Queenstown, the streets were lined with sympathetic crowds like on Parish Feast Day at Keighly, and some of them were so touched on hearing Edith's plaintive inquiries, "Where's Mother? Where's baby?" The rescued survivors were taken to hotels and well cared for and the American Counsel made inquiries whether any were American citizens. Mrs. Howley calling his attention to the fact Edith Williams was born at New Jersey, he took charge of the girl and on Saturday morning a lady came from Cork to relieve him of his charge. It transpired that the Williams family were going to rejoin the father who was in the neighborhood of Manchester.

Rose Howley is remembered by her family as a stern, but

loving, woman, who would bless each room in her house with Holy Water during thunderstorms. She died on December 23, 1945 in Yorkshire, England, at age 79.

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**The Gardner family** embarked on the *Lusitania* as the first stage of a trip that would bring them most of the way around the world. James Andrew and Annie Gardner and their three sons had lived in North America for several years, and were returning to Nelson, New Zealand, where they planned on establishing a market garden. Their eldest son, Leonard, had traveled to New Zealand in advance, and James, Annie, Eric Clarence and William Gerard, sailed aboard the *Lusitania* to join him.



**The Gardner Family.**  
Courtesy of Alison Glenie

James and Annie Gardner died on May 7<sup>th</sup>. According to Eric Gardner, Annie fainted when the ship was torpedoed and could not be revived, and she and her husband were pulled down with the *Lusitania* when it sank. Annie may well have been the fainting woman whom Archie Donald helped carry from the second class dining saloon. Eric and William survived, with Eric swimming to an upturned lifeboat across the bottom of which he found his father, dead.

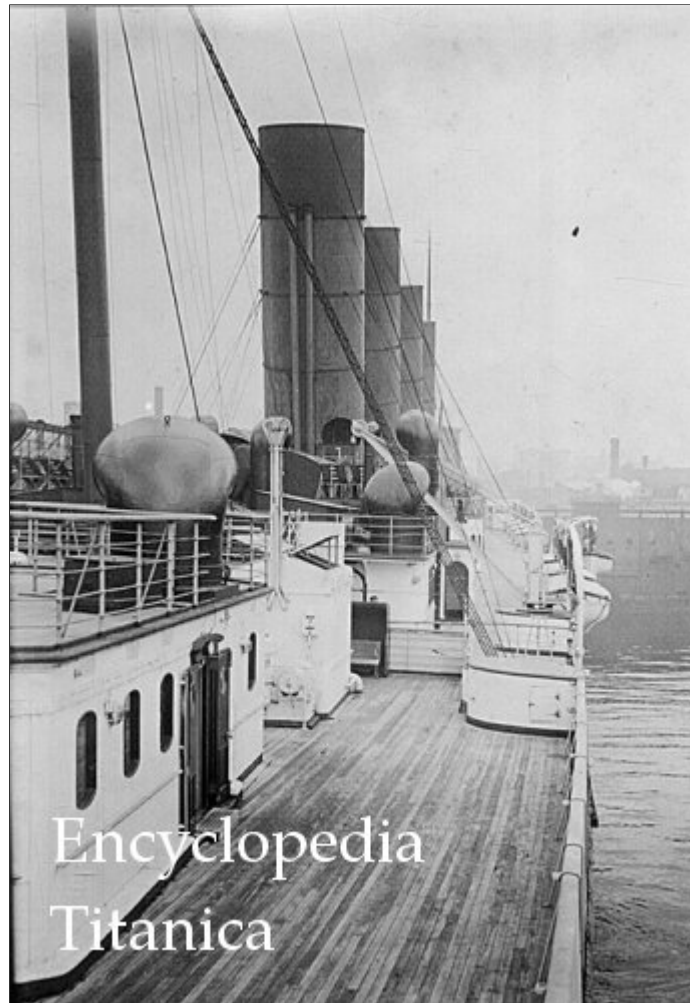
The brothers stayed in a hotel near Euston Station London, before resuming their journey to New Zealand. Eric enlisted in the army during the summer of 1916, joining the New Zealand Expeditionary Force 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, and was shot through the head and killed in the Paeschendale Offensive on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1917. He is buried in the Nine Elms Cemetery in Flanders. William suffered from epilepsy after



**Willie and Eric Gardner**  
*Daily Sketch*  
Jim Kalafus collection

the disaster and was institutionalized for 40 years. When he was properly diagnosed and advances in treatment were made, he returned to live with his older brother in the Nelson area. Willie went on to live a productive, normal life and passed away on December 20, 1984.

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**A deck view in Second Class**  
Jim Kalafus Collection

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**Cyril and Mary Anita Pells**, traveling with their infant son John from Canada to England where Mr. Pells was to join his regiment, despaired of ever leaving the ship safely. They sat together on chairs, presumably on the port side, to wait for the end. When it came, they were pulled down deep with the ship, and in the torrent John was wrenched out of his father's arms and lost. Cyril and Mary surfaced and were able to pull themselves atop a swamped lifeboat or collapsible. Cyril Pells joined his regiment as originally planned, following a period of recovery in London, but after receiving a brief note telling of his safe arrival in France, Mary Anita never heard from him again and he is documented as having been killed in action on May 27<sup>th</sup>

1918.

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Another passenger who survived the *Lusitania* only to be killed in action was **Cyril J.G. Wallace**, 20.

Cyril, from "The Barracks, Alnwick, Scotland," had immigrated to the United States at the age of 16 aboard the *Furnessia* settling with an uncle in Boston. He, like many other male passengers in second class, was returning to the United Kingdom for military service

Cyril was in his cabin, C-28, when the ship was torpedoed. He was indulging in a "*sing song*." with Robert Duncan Gray and just finished "*Eileen Aiannah*" when they heard a slight explosion. Gray said, "*That is*

*a torpedo*." He had time to grab his lifebelt and run up to the boat deck. He assisted in the lowering of the boats, and surrendered his lifebelt to 66 year old Jeanie Fyfe of Glasgow. Mrs. Fyfe fell to her knees and said she was a grandmother and implored him to give her his lifebelt He swam clear of the *Lusitania* before she sank, and was able to witness her end from a distance of thirty yards. He managed to climb atop an upturned lifeboat, allegedly the same boat as Belle Naish, and from there was rescued.

In August 1915 he contacted Jeanie Fyfe, who had been aboard the *Lusitania* returning from a visit with her son, The Reverend James Fyfe of Bath, New Hampshire. She had gone down with the ship but survived thanks to his lifebelt. He sent a friendly letter in which he inquired about her well being and stated that his only regret was the loss of his money and wardrobe. Despite his evident concern for her, as of March 20 1916 Mrs. Fyfe had left his letter unanswered -on that date she forwarded it to the mother of victim Richard Prichard. In her letter, she said that she knew that she was being ungrateful, and that Cyril was a very nice young man but she was still too disturbed by the disaster to contact him. She lived for at least another year, dying in Johnstone, Elderslie, Scotland in 1917.

Lieutenant Cyril J.G. Wallace was lost in while military service on September 9, 1918.

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When **Gerda Welsh** was pronounced dead on June 2, 1961, it was a sad end to a sad life. Gerda was born in Norway, circa 1885, as the youngest child of Thomas Neilsen, a seaman. His wife died soon after Gerda's birth, leaving him to raise her, and her older sister Thomasine, by himself. The Neilsen family relocated to South Shields, England, from where Gerda, a skilled dressmaker, emigrated to the United States in 1910. She had visited the United States once in 1908, and upon the death of her father it might have occurred to her that she could earn a good living there. She contacted a friend, Mrs. Gabrielson, who lived in Brooklyn at 95 Bedford Avenue, who agreed to house her when she arrived. She set sail on the *Mauretania*, which arrived in New York on October 7, 1910. The following four and a half years of her life are difficult to document, other than that she continued working in New York City, and that she booked passage aboard the May 1<sup>st</sup> crossing of the *Lusitania*, to visit her sister Thomasine who still resided in South Shields.

John Welsh had traversed the country in order to take the *Lusitania*. He had been working in Honolulu, Hawaii as a mechanic with the Marconi Wireless Telegraphic Company. He was returning to Groton, near Manchester with several thousand dollars that he had earned over the years. He had not been on the ship long when he noticed Gerda. She stood about 5'6, had fair hair and blue eyes. She noticed him as well and they soon struck up a conversation. *"We took a strong fancy to one another,"* he declared. According to the book, 'Seven Days to Disaster', during the course of the voyage, John and Gerda became acquainted with the Hook family and shared their table at meal times. One of the main topics of conversation was the threat of being torpedoed. *"If the worst should come,"* John said, *"we made up our minds to sink or swim together."* Towards the end of the voyage, *"we became engaged, arranging to be married on arrival."*

*"When the ship was struck, I was with my young lady, and we stuck to one another till the vessel sank."* said John Welsh. Placing a lifebelt on Gerda, he escorted her to one of the last lifeboats. Unfortunately, the boat upended and he jumped into the sea to rescue her. *"In the water, she was braver than any man I've ever met. She encouraged me whilst I swam... I supported her in the water for half an hour till we reached a lifeboat. The people in the boat did not want take her in, but relented."* To Gerda's horror, the men who lifted her into the boat wanted to leave John behind, for they claimed the craft was crowded. *"She pleaded with them, and finally they pulled me up."* He claimed that he, *"sustained some slight injury to my leg and arms."* The lifeboat was rescued by a tugboat and landed that night in Queenstown. Talking to a reporter from the *Irish Times*, he said, *"Here we*



**Gerda Neilsen**  
Jim Kalafus collection



**Gerda Nielsen John Welsh  
Wedding Photo**  
Jim Kalafus Collection

*are together safe and sound, and the wedding bells will soon be ringing.”*

They took the ferry to England and in less than a week, made their way to the All Saints' Registry Office to be married. The ceremony took place on Thursday, May 13, 1915. The couple settled in at his home, 31 Carlton Terrace, Gorton. Their happiness slowly unraveled, as they were unable to conceive any children. The memory of the *Lusitania* constantly played over in her mind and she slowly went insane. Finally, John saw no other choice but to commit her to a mental hospital. Although there was hope that she might come out of it, she never seemed to improve. The years went on and John moved away to find work. He eventually died in 1941 in Bromsgrove. If Gerda was notified of his death, it may not have registered. Her mind was trapped aboard the *Lusitania*, but on June 2, 1961, she was finally at peace.

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**Allan Beattie**, 18, of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada was aboard the *Lusitania* with his mother, Grace. They were bound for Scotland where they planned to visit Beattie's father, who was a Captain and the Chaplain of the 79<sup>th</sup> Cameron Highlanders of Winnipeg. Neither found their way to a lifeboat, and when the ship sank they were pulled down with it, tangled in a mass of rope. Beattie freed himself and managed to surface, his mother 'though wearing a lifebelt did not. Like Gerda Welsh, he had a hard time escaping from the shadow of the *Lusitania*. He was rejected by the Armed Forces due to poor eyesight, and passed through a succession of jobs before having a breakdown in 1920. A second breakdown followed in 1921, and reference was made to a third and fourth having been suffered prior to 1926. For a time he worked as a reporter for the *Winnipeg Tribune*. His father remarried, to a woman with whom Allan could not get along, so a distance grew between father and son. He drifted between several cities in Western Canada, never managing to settle down or hold a job for any appreciable period of time. Commissioner Pugsley, offering his decision regarding Beattie's claim against Germany stated:

There is no doubt this young man suffered severely as a result of his experiences, and while it is difficult to assess the monetary extend to the damage sustained the statements on file from employers to the effect that had he not been suffering from extreme nervous conditions he would have been earning a larger salary tend to substantiate the claim. I allow for this item...\$15,000.00.

Allan Beattie was still living in Canada at the time of his father's death in the 1930s. There is some evidence that he may have decided to live in Scotland with relatives, and that

he may have died in Provan in 1943, age 47.

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**Beatrice “Trixie” Witherbee**, of New York City and London was another survivor who found coping with the memories of May 7<sup>th</sup> 1915 too much to bear. However, unlike Gerda Welsh and Allan Beattie, she was able to pull herself out of the downward spiral and lived to experience a happy ending.

Beatrice arrived in NYC aboard the last completed voyage of the *Lusitania* in April 1915. She had travelled to London, in advance of her family, to join her husband A.S. Witherbee and establish her new household in The Savoy to her liking, and on the May 1<sup>st</sup> voyage was escorting her mother, Mary Cummins Brown and her son Alfred Scott Witherbee Junior to their new home. Her brother in-law Sidney Witherbee attempted to persuade Beatrice to switch her booking to the *New York* while visiting with her at the Biltmore the evening before departure, but to no avail — a second attempt on the morning of May 1<sup>st</sup> proved equally futile.

Several passengers and crew were charmed by Mrs Witherbee’s attachment to her son and left written accounts of their day-to-day life during the voyage, but no record survives to tell of what became of the small family group after the ship was torpedoed. Beatrice alone survived, and joined her husband at the Savoy, but soon seems to have slipped into a deep depression. The means by which it was initially treated were quite lavish:

“The accounts were kept by my husband so I have no actual knowledge of the outlay entailed. I should, however, assume that for two years or additional expenses due to travel approximated to at least Fifteen Thousand Dollars a year, in excess of our normal expenditure while living in England, or a total of \$30,000.00. In addition I had a masseur in attendance from May to October of 1915, at \$4 a day for services and \$3 a day living expenses, or a total of \$1250.00. Also an attendant for one year at \$600.00 and living expenses of \$300.00 or more. Our expenses at Monte Carlo at the Windsor Hotel were, according to my best information, \$50 a day or approximately \$6250.00. All of these expenses are fairly attributable to the accident and my collapsed nervous condition.”

However, Witherbee began to run short of funds. The following letter reveals a great deal about Beatrice’s collapse, the demise of her marriage and the unfortunate character of her husband:

Hon. Robert Lansing, June 20, 1916

Secretary of State,



**Beatrice and Alfred Witherbee Jr.**

Courtesy Lawrence Jolivet



**Rita Jolivet**

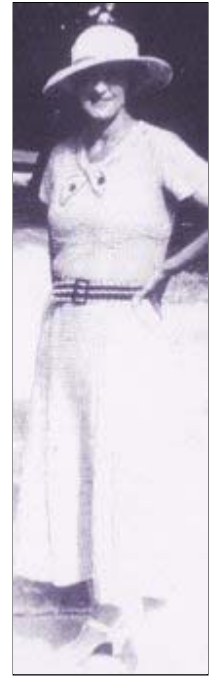
Jim Kalafus Collection

Washington D.C.

Dear Sir:

In June 1912, after taking stock of my holdings in Mexico, which represented the labor of years, I considered myself to be a comfortably rich man and my future assured. In 1916 I find myself ruined, and regret to say that it has been brought about by "Watchful Waiting." I am only one of thousands of Americans similarly afflicted by this same germ. In 1915, my little family of three went down, as you are aware, on the 'Lusitania' when that ship was torpedoed and sunk by the Germans. My boy, a child not quite four years of age, and his grandmother, lost their lives, and his Mother, a young woman only then 23 years of age, has been hovering between death and a mad house ever since, a physical and mental wreck. She is even now in a nursing home in London, while I am over here in an effort to get our government to force a settlement of my claim for indemnity for such financial loss as it is known I suffered when the "Lusitania" was sunk. What money I have left as the result of "Watchful Waiting" has been spent trying to save her. I have braved the dangers of crossing the Atlantic twice, to try and get a settlement, the first time in December last, and the second now. I have been received politely at the State Department, and even had three minutes conversation with you, but I have each time been passed along to someone else, and so successfully that when I was finished with the last gentleman I interviewed, I found myself on the grounds adjacent to the State Department with nothing accomplished.

I have spent thousands of dollars in my efforts to save Mrs. Witherbee, particularly in consultations with leading specialists and in travel through the south of France and in Italy, but I can go no further for lack of the funds necessary, which in itself is another tragedy as she was just beginning to improve a little, and I was encouraged. It has been since I left her last month that she has been taken to the nursing home, which fact alone has increased tenfold my anxiety regarding her. I found that Italy, and especially Rome, helped her amazingly, and I am anxious to take her there permanently. As my finances are now such as to make this impossible without help, I want to ask of the President and yourself an appointment as Consular Agent in Rome. I know that for the moment there is a vacancy through the death of the former Consul, his death having occurred while we were in Rome. I have no desire to embarrass our government by any undue interference in any policy or plans it may have in disposing of the "Lusitania" matter, but if I must wait, it is only fair that I should find a willing hand, somewhere, that will help me bide my time until a settlement has been effected. I am as competent as any I have seen filling such positions abroad, and by birth and education am a



**Beatrice Witherbee (right: in San Remo).**

Courtesy Lawrence Jolivet

gentleman.

I have been a life long Democrat, if that makes any difference, and am fully entitled to the utmost consideration from the President and yourself.

Summed up in as few words as possible, I wish to call your attention to the desperate state of affairs, which have been brought through no fault of my own.

I must do something very quickly, as I cannot remain long away from Mrs. Witherbee, especially as she is now absolutely in the hands of strangers.

Awaiting your pleasure, I am,

Very Respectfully, your obedient servant,

A.S. Witherbee

This missive was written on letterhead from the New Willard which, in 1916, was Washington's most elegant - and costly - hotel. Despite his claims of abject poverty, Mr. Witherbee evidently was not one to cut back.

It is not clear how long Beatrice remained in the London nursing facility, but from there she moved in to the Jolivet family mansion in Kew where she remained for over a year. She divorced Alfred Witherbee in Philadelphia in 1919 on the grounds of desertion, and then married Alfred Jolivet, Rita's brother, late in the year and gave birth to her second child, Lawrence, in 1920.

Lawrence would tell us, over 80 years later, of how his mother flat out refused to speak of her *Lusitania* experiences. She was a cheerful woman, and kept whatever memories tormented her in 1915-1919 well in the past. "Awww, you don't want to hear about that" was the extent to which she was willing to discuss the disaster, and she never once deviated from that course. We uncovered a cache of correspondence between Beatrice's lawyers discussing her claim against Germany and, amusing from the perspective of 2004, they spoke of how frustrating a client she was. As early as 1923 they suspected by her (sometimes hysterical) refusal to answer even the simplest questions that she was not physically capable of recalling the events of May 7<sup>th</sup>. Over the years, she developed inner contentment and that was all that mattered to her. Her son recalled that she had a "beautiful voice" and was always humming. She even traveled aboard the ship, *Annie Johnson*, on the anniversary of the *Lusitania*, but according to Lawrence, it most likely didn't register with her as she had put the disaster so far out of her mind. She died on December 16, 1977 without ever having told her family what happened aboard the *Lusitania*. Only one small clue

remains: Pauline Jolivet, her mother in law, once revealed that Beatrice had confided to her that she had tried to hold onto Alfred Scott Witherbee Jr. in the water.

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It was clear from the day **Maude Robinson** was born, October 25, 1882, that she would be afforded many opportunities in life. Her parents, Franklin and Ella (nee West) Robinson, were affluent residents of Long Branch, New Jersey. She was also descended from Martin Kalbfleish, who was twice elected Mayor of Brooklyn. Maude believed in being assertive, even penning an article on the problems of sensitive girls and how they may overcome their handicaps. *"Pity the sensitive girl... give me the jolly girl who is perfectly natural and who takes on the world as she finds it and the people as she finds them, too, without worrying over the impression she is making."*

It is not clear how and when Maude Robinson met Elbridge Blish Thompson, but they decided to marry in 1904, the same year he graduated from Yale University. The ceremony took place on March 31<sup>st</sup>. 'Blish' was born on October 2, 1882 in Seymour, Indiana. His family owned the prosperous Blish Milling. He was a student at Andover and Lake Forest, and when he arrived at Yale, he took up course studies in Metallurgy. Shortly after their marriage, the couple moved to Colorado where Blish was

interested in developing a mining property. A year later, they moved back to Indiana where he was elected secretary of Blish Milling. They were also active in politics and Blish was described as a 'leader' in the Republican county organization. He and 'Maudie,' as he affectionately called her, took part in community affairs such as 'The Festival.' He drove his roadster, uniquely decorated as a battleship, while his wife good-naturedly rode by his side.

The Thompsons began planning a trip, combining business and pleasure, on which they would tour England, Scotland and Ireland for three months. They booked passage on the *Lusitania* and were assigned cabin, A-21. A few days later they upgraded to a suite with a private bath, B-68, for which they paid \$500. It originally had a separate parlor next door, but it was booked by Elbert and Alice Hubbard

Maude and Blish enjoyed their vacation, spending time with other couples like Harry and Mary Keser. They also befriended families with children; the Hodges and the Lucks. It turned out to be a wonderful voyage for them, comparable to a second honeymoon. Feeling in a romantic turn of mind, they made plans to awaken early to watch the sun come up. *"About 4:30 or 5:00 A.M., the day of the disaster, (my) husband and myself had dressed and were standing on 'A' deck to watch the sun rise. At that time, we*



**"Blish" Thompson.**  
Courtesy Charlotte Sellers.



**Maude Thompson**  
Mike Poirier Collection

*saw a battleship off on (the) port side and traveling in the same direction as the Lusitania. The latter was moving very fast at this time. The battleship was close enough so that we could see the whole vessel and its lines distinctly.*” A short time after their stroll along the boat deck, the *Lusitania* was enshrouded in fog.

“The impact of the torpedo against the ship could be plainly felt,” Maude observed. “The noise of the impact, however was not like that of an explosion, but made a ‘jamming noise’ like a heavy boat rubbing against piling. Water from the impact was thrown into the dining saloon. My husband and I immediately jumped up from the table, the former exclaiming, ‘We are torpedoed.’

The entire dining room began rushing for the staircase. Maude noticed an officer standing in the companionway telling people, “*to take our time and keep calm.*” She later commented, “*that was the only time we saw any of the ship’s stewards or officers.*” Her friends, the Hodges, were having trouble getting up the stairs so Blish and Maude, “*helped Mr. and Mrs. Hodges and their two small boys.*” Parting from the family when they reached ‘B’ deck,” *Mr. Thompson went to his cabin, B-68, to get lifebelts. He returned with two life belts, also coats and sweaters, which we put on. After a moment he went back again to his cabin for his passports and money. After rejoining me, we went up on the ‘A’ deck... The ship had listed to starboard to such an extent that it had been difficult to walk up the stairs... We saw the Keser family of Philadelphia, and also Mrs. Luck and her two small sons.*”

Blish Thompson saw that Charlotte Luck did not have a lifebelt and gave her his. A crewman went past them saying, “*the ship is perfectly safe. You are all right*” Maude also heard someone calling from the bridge, “*lower no more boats.*” They waited for ten minutes, but were surprised that, “*there were no officers or member of the crew on the ‘A’ deck.*” Suddenly, the *Lusitania* began to sink rapidly, “*without preliminary warning.*” Blish clasped his wife and tried to reassure her. “*Let us take what offers, and take it without a fuss.*” Describing the final moments aboard the liner, she said that, “*when the ship plunged it stood up almost perpendicular and thereby swept everyone overboard in a mass, and we were swept half the length of the ship...I was holding tightly to his hand, but was torn away. I had on a polo coat and part of the belt was ripped off. I believe that was when Mr. Thompson was forced from me by the force of the suction.*”

Reaching the surface, she soon found a small raft, “*on which there were 50 others. Was pulled about the raft by Guy Cockburn. (I) was identified as a first class passenger*

*by some member of the ship's crew by reason of the kind of the lifebelt (I) was wearing. The ship's engineer was on board the raft and directed the handing of the same, and it was due to him that many were picked up out of the water and the raft kept stable... We were three hours on the raft and were being carried out to sea when the party was picked up by the tramp steamer Katrina."*

The survivors were eventually brought to Queenstown and Kinsale. Maude was brought to the Admiralty House with Amy Pearl and Rita Jolivet. Rita claimed to have taken the two women down to the Queens Hotel to care for them and Lady Allan. There was no sign of Blish, so she sent a telegram that read, 'Maudie safe.' Unfortunately, it was transcribed incorrectly saying, 'Maude safe I also.' The following day, she sent another saying, 'I am safe waiting news from Blish.' The family questioned the telegraph operator from Mays, Indiana and learned that a mistake had been made. Maude searched the town, but could not find any sign of her husband. She sent another telegram asking for advice as to what to do. Finally, she decided to proceed to London to the house of her friend Mr. Raikes to await any further developments and to convalesce. She was ready to come home as of June. There had been no word on her husband for about a month so there was no sense in remaining overseas any longer. She booked passage on the *St. Paul*, which was to arrive in New York on June 13, 1915. Her sister and some Thompson relatives met her. The *St. Paul* carried home many *Lusitania* survivors; James Leary, Charles Sturdy, Herbert Colebrook, Doris and Joseph Charles, Percy Rogers, Ogden Hammond and Virginia Loney (accidentally listed as Virginia Sedgwick). Also aboard were two *Titanic* survivors, Robert and Eloise Daniel. The memorial service was held on June 18<sup>th</sup> at the First Presbyterian Church in Seymour. It was conducted by Reverend Lewis Brown who delivered a short address on "Immortality." People from all walks of life attended the service including workers from Blish Milling to Blish's roommates from Yale. Soon after, she endowed Yale with a scholarship of \$600 annually in the Sheffield Scientific School and was to be awarded to graduates of Shields High School, Seymour, Indiana.

Blish's two cars sat in the garage of the Thompson home. Maude decided that she would have the National roadster rebuilt to be used as a scout car. She took the other National, a touring car, to France herself and turned it over to the Red Cross. She decided to stay and work with the humanitarian organization throughout the war. While there, she met Count Jean de Gennes, a French fighter pilot. He was twelve years her junior, but despite their age difference, they fell in love. The two married on November 17, 1917 at Paris. She gave birth to a son, Jean, on December 20, 1919 at the age of 37. When the child was a year old, she and

the Count took him to visit with Thompson relatives. Maude still had an active interest in the company as well, occasionally returning for board meetings, but considered France to be her new home.

Maude's marriage was a happy one, but once again, tragedy struck. Her husband Jean, a pilot for Compagnie Aeropostale, was killed in a plane crash in 1929. She was left with a nine-year-old son to raise. Although she may have considered moving back to the United States to be near her family, she opted to stay in France. A few years later, she may have regretted her decision, when the war broke out. It is unclear whether she stayed in France or if she traveled to a neutral country for the duration of the war, but by 1946 the Countess de Gennes moved back to the United States permanently, residing in New York. She spent the remainder of her days in Sunnyside Queens, passing away on May 17, 1951. Her final wish was to be buried in France.

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**Charlotte Luck**, to whom Blish Thompson surrendered his lifebelt did not survive, nor did her sons Elbridge, 12, and Kenneth, 8. Although their home was in Worcester, Massachusetts, Charlotte and her children had stayed in San Francisco with her mother, Mrs. Field, during Arthur Courtland Luck's extended business trips abroad. None of the bodies were recovered, and Mr. Luck was eventually awarded \$20,000.00 for the loss of his family. Frances Lapham Field, Charlotte's mother, was awarded \$5000.00 for the loss of her daughter's financial support.

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**William Sterling Hodges**, who along with his wife and children, was another acquaintance of the Thompson's had made the final westbound crossing of the *Lusitania* in April 1915. A 16 year employee of the Baldwin Locomotive Works, he had been appointed manager of their Paris offices and had journeyed there in advance of his family to get established in his new position and to begin the process of setting up a home. Sarah Hodges and her two boys, William Junior, 8, and Dean, 5, traveled from their former residence in Philadelphia to New York City where they joined Mr. Hodges and prepared for their crossing. On the morning of April 30th. William Hodges had his will amended to take into account the possibility that he and Sarah might die simultaneously-perhaps it was a loose end he simply intended on tying up before departing for Europe, or perhaps (and, given the timing, more likely) he was taking the German threats very seriously. The final recorded sighting of the Hodges family together was of them struggling on the staircase. Wallace Banta Phillips was the last known survivor to have seen Mr. Hodges, on A Deck: "*I then re-entered the saloon, and going down one of the*

*passageways met William S. Hodges, of the Baldwin Locomotive Works. Mr. Hodges was just going out of his cabin (the Hodges occupied A-16 and A-18 ) with several life preservers, and I asked him if he had enough for his wife and two children and himself. He said yes, and that they were all together.”* They were lost, and only the bodies of Sarah and William Junior were recovered, Sarah being buried in Queenstown and William Junior being returned to Philadelphia.

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**Josephine Mary Brandell** was a Rumanian immigrant. She was born November 26, 1891 in Bucharest. Her family came to America in 1900 and settled in New York. Like Maude, she had ambitions- she wanted to be an actress. This aspiration was temporarily put on hold when she married Dr. Bernard Black Brandeis, also a native Rumanian, on February 15, 1907 when she was only fifteen. The marriage was short lived and the couple divorced in September 1910.

Following her divorce, Josephine again became involved in the theatre. She was soon cast in *Night Birds*, a comic opera by Johann Strauss, which toured Europe and America. A newspaper compared Brandell to the star, Fritzi Scheff, saying that she was ‘commensurate with Miss Scheff’s prestige.’ By 1914, Josephine was starring in the London Opera House’s production of *Come Over Here*, which showcased her operatic abilities. The same year, she took a voyage to New York on the *Lusitania* on which William Crichton, the husband of her friend Mabel, escorted her. She frequently crossed the Atlantic to fulfill engagements. She took the *Lusitania* again, in February of 1915. She arranged to travel back to England on the *Lusitania’s* May 1<sup>st</sup> crossing and was assigned cabin, D-30 for which she paid \$142.50. Her friend, Mabel Crichton was also crossing on the *Lusitania* and throughout the voyage was a source of comfort for the young actress. Josephine Brandell, however, did not feel confident that the ship could outrace a submarine and as she put it, was “*in a state,*” for a good part of the journey.

She and Mabel became acquainted with their tablemates; Max Schwarcz and Francis Bertram Jenkins. Despite pleasant company, she could not get over her feeling of dread. “*I was nervous during the whole trip; so much so that I kept worrying my friends about fearing the submarines.*” Jenkins did not alleviate her anxiety by pointing out the lack of lifebelts. “*I had previously observed that no lifebelts were on the deck at all. I had spoken about it to several friends on board.*” The actress disagreed with him saying,

“*There were plenty of lifebelts on board.*” Her feelings of anxiety became unbearable on the night of the 6<sup>th</sup>.



**Josephine Brandell**  
*Daily Sketch*  
Jim Kalafus Collection.

*“Thursday night I was in such a state I could not sleep in my own cabin.”* She spent so much time tossing and turning that she decided to seek comfort from a friend. Josephine left her cabin and climbed the stairs to ‘A’ deck. She walked along the corridor to #19 and knocked on the door. *“I asked Mrs. Crichton if I could sleep in her cabin. Poor soul, she was only too happy to be of any assistance to me and did all she could during the whole night to quiet my nerves.”*

*“The next morning,”* stated Josephine, *“I heard the hooting of the horn as it was foggy.”* Feeling better, the actress went to her cabin to change for lunch. She thought that the orchestra had done a fine job this voyage and decided to take up a collection for them. Maude Thompson looked up at the ship’s clock. *“in order to set my watch, and I remember it was just 2:05 P.M.”* Josephine, *“ finished making a collection for the musicians and sat down where Mrs. Crichton, Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Schwarcz were sitting.”*

According to William Pierpoint, Charles Cameron and his band, *“ responded to an encore of ‘Tipperary,’ when a valet (George Slingsby) of an American (actually Frederick Orr Lewis, a Canadian), millionaire passenger shouted, “Look!” I looked through the window, saw the torpedo coming straight at the ship, and knew at once that it could not escape. One seemed to stand spellbound and hopeless.”*

Josephine Brandell’s worst fears were realized. *“We all jumped up. Poor Mrs. Crichton exclaiming, ‘They have done it!’ I heard someone shouting to be calm”* Josephine recalled. *“ I looked up and saw that it was one of the Captains (sic officers). I cannot say whether it was the first or the second.”* The listing of ship made it difficult to ascend the stairs so Francis Jenkins assisted Mrs. Crichton and Josephine up the stairs. *“When we finally reached the top deck, I saw very few of the first class passengers. I was simply horrified with fright. Mr. Schwarcz (was) trying to calm me,”* she said. Edgar Gorer noted the look of anguish on the actress’s face as he handed her a life jacket. *“Be brave,”* he told her. He then ran off to search for more lifebelts. Max Schwarcz and Francis Jenkins guided her to the lifeboat into which Jenkins had just helped Mabel Crichton. Everything happened quickly, and even though Josephine and Francis Jenkins were together, they both viewed the lowering of the lifeboat differently. She recalled that, *“our boat was lowered, but immediately it hit the water it upset throwing all the occupants out.”* He, on the other hand had this to say. *“ I was standing with one foot on the deck of the Lusitania and one foot on the lifeboat, when one of the ropes broke, or the sailors loosed their hold, and the thing collapsed and went into the water.”*

The wrecked lifeboat floated bottom up next to the ship. The



**Mabel Crichton**  
Courtesy of Paul Latimer.

actress grabbed at an oar to which a few people were clinging, some of whom dropped off. *“A rope was thrown to us which a few people caught hold of... The cries for mercy, the people drowning and coming up again within three minutes time barely touching me was too terrible,”* she lamented. Drifting about, *“somehow I caught hold of a deck chair which was floating near me and held on until I became numb, when I was picked up by Mr. Harkness, the assistant purser, who afterwards told me he thought I was gone when he first looked at me.”* Her companion, Francis Jenkins, *“saw an open porthole about two feet above me and I clutched it but not hold on. Then I saw a rope hanging down, which I got a hold of and some twenty others took hold of it... I let go and then I saw a champagne case which I swam to, but let go, and then swam for an oar. Then I saw a long piece of wood some distance ahead of me, which I swam for and in an exhausted condition reached it.”*

Josephine came ashore in near hysterical condition and, one survivor in the same hotel room remembered having to ask her to calm down. After that, she seemed more collected and tried to sleep the rest of the night. The next day, she found Francis Bertram Jenkins, but there was no sign of Mabel Crichton, Max Schwarcz or Edgar Gorer. Gathering the strength to complete her journey, she traveled to 34 Parliament Hill, London, N.W., Hampstead, where she informed William Crichton of his wife's last moments. He could not be consoled and passed away a year later.

Josephine did not fulfill the promise of her early stage career after the disaster. She chose not to pursue starring roles, acting only occasionally. Like many women, she helped with the war effort, and following the conclusion of the war, she accepted the proposal of John Ormiston Lawson-Johnston and they were wed on May 19, 1920. Unfortunately, for Josephine, her marriage was not a happy one and ended in divorce. She was married yet again to George John Seymour Repton on June 1, 1929. George Repton attained the rank of Captain during his service in the Irish Guards. She was best known, during World War II, as the founder and chairwoman of *The American Friends of Britain*. Her third husband's untimely death occurred on May 10, 1943. Two years later, she married once again to Beresford Cecil Bingham Annesley, 8<sup>th</sup> Earl Annesley and 9<sup>th</sup> Viscount Glerawly, which made her the Countess Annesley. The ceremony took place on December 7, 1945. He was a Pilot Officer in the service of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve during World War II. Previously, he had been a Lieutenant in the service of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Fusiliers. Their marriage lasted till his death on June 29, 1957. Countess Annesley returned to the United States and spent her final years living in New York City, dying there in

August 1977.

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**Francis Bertram Jenkins**, Josephine Brandell's onboard friend, never recovered from his *Lusitania* ordeal. He suffered from nightmares and insomnia, and had violent "seizures" which, from the perspective of 2005 sound like severe panic attacks from their limited description in the press. He continued travelling abroad on business, but as his mental state worsened he and his family bought a large Victorian style country home in rural Brewster, New York, where it was hoped that the quiet would "*restore his balance.*" Instead, while doing some early spring gardening with his teenage daughter, Josephine, he contracted pneumonia and died at home, on March 18, 1922, after an illness of a week's duration.

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The life of a wireless operator was not a glamorous one. The hours were long and the pay was minimal, but it was a chance to be part of progress and to go to sea. **Robert 'Bob' Leith** was born in Liverpool, circa 1886. He began his career the Marconi Company in 1906 and served on various Cunard and White Star ships such as the *Caronia*, *Franconia*, *Baltic* and *Arabic*. Describing what his job entailed he said "*we receive it by sound reading and we translate it on the Morse system. We must make a record before we take the message.*" He also served at the transatlantic radio station in Galway, Ireland. His younger brother, Samuel Alex, followed in Bob's footsteps and joined the Marconi Company. They served together on the *Caronia* and Alex noted how much pride his brother took in his work and how much he enjoyed his job.

Bob was assigned to the *Lusitania*, with David McCormick as his co-operator. They worked six hours on, six hours work off. Prior to their departure from Liverpool, Captain Turner told him that "*no passengers' messages must be sent from the ship whatever.*" Any messages from the Admiralty were to be brought straight to the Captain. Leith and McCormick took their meals in the second class dining room and spent their leisure time with the second class passengers. His time off was from 2:00p.m. to 6:00p.m. He recalled talking with Richard Preston Prichard about submarine attacks and the war in general. It was a standard voyage for him. Although there were government messages sent to the ship on Thursday and Friday, the majority of the traffic consisted of "*ordinary*" messages for passengers. One of them was to Alfred Vanderbilt from his wife, Margaret, informing him that one of his close friends had passed away.

On May 7<sup>th</sup>, he had just gone to lunch and was settling in



**Robert Leith**  
Mike Poirier Collection



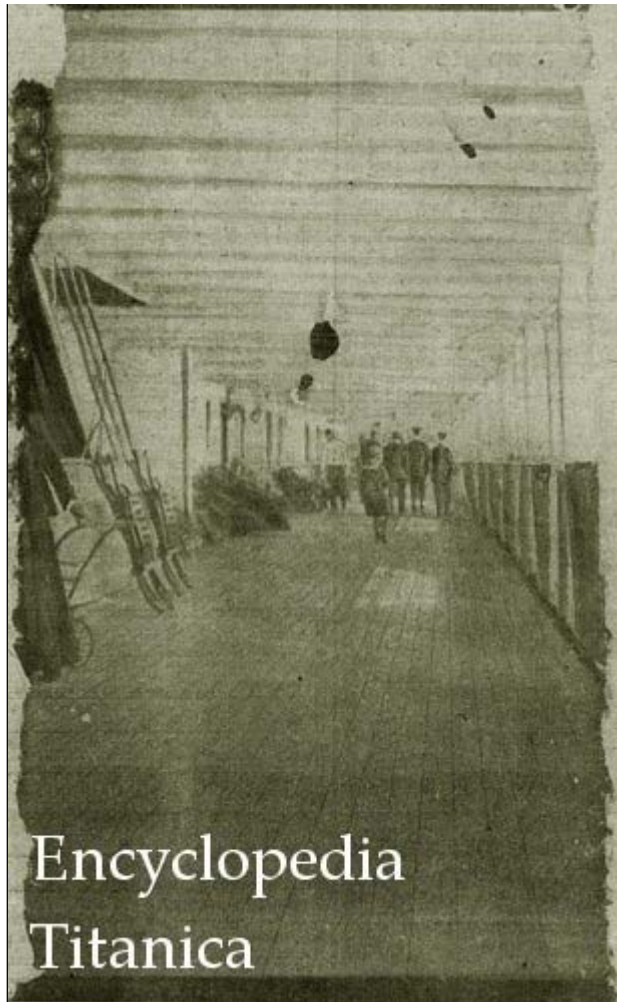
**David McCormick**  
*Daily Sketch*  
Jim Kalafus collection

when the ship was struck. He was in *"the after dining saloon; that is situated on D deck aft. I felt some shock or other and I thought it was a boiler explosion. I could not conclude at the time what had taken place."* He immediately ran for the stairs. *"I came along the boat deck from the after saloon to get to the wireless cabin. Approximately, I think it took about a minute and a half... I saw nobody on the boat deck."* He found McCormick at the wireless desk and took over sending out an S.O.S. and *"Come at once- big list... They were sent both by the ship's power, that is power supplied from the ship's dynamo, and in addition to that after three or four minutes after the torpedo struck the ship, the power section gave out and we had to fall back upon the emergency station which is situated in the wireless cabin."* An officer came to the cabin and informed them that they were about 10 miles off the Old Head of Kinsale. The wireless coast station responded as did other stations, *"but I was unable to read them owing to local noises."*

A passenger, Oliver Bernard, wandered over to the wireless shack between the second and third funnels and recorded his impressions in an article shortly after the disaster. *"I crossed over to the starboard side again, and on my way encountered the two Marconi operators in the emergency wireless room. They, too, were coolness personified... They were sending out their 'S.O.S' messages. The explosion had disorganized the main wireless room and they were working the emergency wireless apparatus. At this stage, all the electric lights had been extinguished... I asked the wireless operators how they were getting on, and at the present moment they received an answer to their call. A moment later their apparatus was smashed. One of the operators offered me a swivel chair to go down into the water... Finding he could do no more, a young operator, superbly humored and careless of what looked like sure disaster for us all, took up a kneeling position on the funnel deck in order to make snapshots of the Lusitania settling to its doom. A further lurch of the boat upset him and his plans for the last glimpse I had of him was astride a chair in which he said that he was going to sit down and swim."*

David McCormick gave a brief account to the papers. *"I didn't know we had been torpedoed, but I knew that a hole had been knocked in the ship.. I remember one act, especially of mine. A lifeboat had just been swamped in the water and men and women were struggling amidst the wreckage. I had a pocket camera with me and I made a picture of the scene thinking at the time it would be a valuable memento for me in the after life."* McCormick put the camera back into his pants pocket when the ship lurched and he went into the water. Following McCormick's rescue, he brought his camera to the Daily Sketch who tried to reproduce the pictures, but they did not come out. Oddly,

The Daily Sketch published two photos that they claimed was from McCormick's camera. Bob Leith noted, "*the boat deck was under water at the time. I jumped into a boat that was full of water. The ship's funnel was coming down on top of me at the time, or so it appeared to be so, so I sprung from that boat to another one*" He eventually ended up in boat 15. Emily Anderson recalled him reassuring the people in the boat that he had sent out an 'S.O.S.'



**Photo allegedly taken by McCormick on the morning of May 7th.**

We leave it up to the reader to decide if it is legitimate or not.

*Daily Sketch*

Jim Kalafus Collection

Shortly after the disaster, Bob was called before Lord Mersey. He testified about the types of messages sent and received, and that the log books were lost. Following the disaster, he was given a shore job as an inspector. He married Ann Beddome in late 1916 in Birkenhead. The couple had two daughters. He seldom talked about the disaster and his brother only knew the outline of the story of his survival. He continued with the Marconi company as an inspector. In 1928, he was chosen to represent the wireless officers and was presented to the Queen when the

Merchants Service War Memorial on Tower Hill was unveiled. His health began to fail in 1933 and he passed away in October 1933 in Wallasey, Cheshire at age 48. He was laid to rest in Wallasey. His family believes, to this day, that he developed cancer from injuring his side when escaping from the *Lusitania*.

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Stewardess **Marian May Bird** had been with the *Lusitania* since her maiden voyage. Originally from Cheshire, England, she found herself at work aboard the liner at the suggestion of a friend she later described as a Chief Steward at Cunard who recommended that she apply at the company. To her surprise, she was appointed to the brand new *Lusitania*, which was about to embark on its maiden voyage. She would spend over six years on the ship.

May claimed that the *Lusitania* was so large that it took twenty minutes to get from one end of the ship to the other. She was impressed by the interiors: *"The accommodation, of course, was wonderful. I'd never seen anything like it before... beautifully furnished,"* and by how well the children on board were treated. One of her closest friends on the ship was a fellow stewardess by the name of Fannie Morecroft. May transferred over to the latest Cunard liner, *Aquitania* in 1914, but soon found herself back on the *Lusitania*. Years later, recalling service during the early days of the war, she described a voyage on the *Lusitania* that was diverted to Queenstown after a pilot boat was torpedoed.

Looking back on the final voyage, she said it was no different from any other trip. She was aware of rumors of a possible torpedoing, but later said she had laughed them off. She was assigned to lifeboat 19 in case of an emergency, but did not participate in any drills. Her cabin assignments were in second class. *"The starboard side on C. deck, from 1-28. The odd numbers and 28."* Some of her passengers included Cyril Wallace, Robert Gray, Guy Cockburn, Canon Ernest Phair, Gertrude Poole, Muriel Thompson, Reverend Henry Wood Simpson, and Duncan Hanes. Her own accommodation was a third class cabin.

May was standing on 'C' deck when there was a *"terrible thud and a bang... I asked the ladies to keep calm, get their lifebelts as quickly as they could, and get on deck."* Some of the children were bewildered and began to cry and scream. She asked them to be quiet. Looking around, *"there was not one person left on the deck when I left. I threw what remaining lifebelts were there out before I went on deck."* The lights went out, adding to the difficulty of her job. She made her way up the stairs and onto the starboard deck, where she found Fannie Morecroft. Accounts differ on how the two ladies made their escape. Archibald Donald

described May being in a boat that dumped its passengers in lowering. *"They cut the hanging rope and the boat went into the water, but of course was water logged. The passengers seemed to be crawling up a rope netting on the lower deck, climbing higher as the water reached them... The only woman I knew in the boat was a stewardess, May Baird (sic), and she does not clearly remember what happened."* Fannie recalled a man and a woman leaning against the rail begging, *"in God's name,"* for their children to be rescued. She placed the children in one of the boats. According to May, she and Fannie Morecroft jumped into the water together and were rescued by boat 13. May said that she saw Margaret Gwyer get sucked down the funnel and shot out again.

Testifying for the Limit of Liability hearings, she had a different story. *"There weren't very many on the boat deck when I got up. I got in the last lifeboat that was leaving. No difficulty, but she came down with the ship... She got clear. I think the Marconi wires did just foul her; they fouled one of the oars or something."* Fannie Morecroft told a similar story at the hearings. *"There was only one side where you could stand, the starboard side."* The list *"made us slide right across on to the rail."* She said Arthur Rowland Jones was in charge of their boat. At age 96, May said she got into *"THE last boat"* after the first officer spotted in her in the crowd trying to get into boat 15. He asked her if she could jump. She said she would try and jumped fifteen feet down into the middle of the boat. She took an oar, for she was "fond" of rowing. She said the ship was leaning over at a precarious angle, and they had to row quickly to get away. She said that they were *"showered with soot"* from the funnels. One of the saddest sights she witnessed was *"hundreds and hundreds"* of people in the water, many of them pleading to get into her boat. Her last view of the ship was of the top of funnels going under. She said that when the ship went down, the funnels were standing straight up, which to her proved the *Lusitania* went down on an even keel. She claimed to have seen the submarine that sank the *Lusitania* while waiting for rescue. She was not the only one in her boat to have done so; Emily Hill, Dora Wolfenden, and William Inch also swore that they saw the submarine and that men came out on deck to view the destruction. The passengers and crew in boat 15 were rescued by a herring boat and were transferred to the *Flying Fish*, the Captain of which was an old friend of May's. She went to the temporary morgues in Queenstown, but said that she was unable to identify any friends.

She continued working for Cunard following the disaster and, happily, she married Charles Walker in early 1919. Fannie Morecroft remained her closest friend through out the years: she passed away on July 9, 1958. May, widowed,

lived a quiet life, but did not mind discussing the *Lusitania* and continued to grant interviews well into her 90s. She died in early 1975 at age 99, in the Birkenhead area, just a few months short of her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

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Did the young leaves wonder  
If the year were all spring,  
With flowers thereunder  
And birds to sing;  
with no sigh of trouble  
Or hint in the tune  
That life is a bubble  
And death comes soon.  
~Algol

(Cyril Herbert Emanuel Bretherton)

**Norah Annie Bretherton**, 32, embarked aboard the *Lusitania*, with her two children, in May 1915 out of necessity. Her husband, Cyril, a journalist and a lawyer in Los Angeles, had recently found a newspaper job “*At a hopeless wage*” but with potential for advancement, (Norah, in a post sinking letter, described their financial situation as “*having gone from bad to worse*”) and Mrs. Bretherton, four-to-five months pregnant, was travelling to her sister’s home in Bexhill-on-Sea to spend her “*confinement.*”

Convent educated Norah had emigrated to the United States in 1910, via Antwerp, aboard the *Kroonland* and had traveled to Los Angeles to marry her fiance, Cyril. Their son Paul was born in January 1912, and their daughter Elizabeth circa December 1913. The family resided in Santa Monica, as Cyril worked at establishing himself as a journalist. Norah, despite her apparent misgivings over the family’s finances, supported her husband’s ambition and in a cache of Bretherton family papers on file at Harvard there exists, in addition to a number of letters, a draft copy of one of Cyril’s short stories with editorial input offered by his wife.

Little remains to document the Bretherton family’s seven days aboard the *Lusitania*. Norah made the acquaintance of Mrs. Helen Secchi, of New York City and, by her own account, won the ship’s Second Class Whist contest. Chances are good that like the other mothers in Second Class she passed most of her time tending to her children: Betty, at 15 months, was attempting to walk and talk, while three year old Paul would have been energetic and at the “exploring” stage which requires constant parental attention.

Mrs. Bretherton had a singularly unpleasant time on the afternoon of May 7<sup>th</sup>:



**Norah Bretherton and family**  
Courtesy of Paul Latimer

I had lunched at the first sitting and taken my little girl up to Deck B to play, and put the little boy to sleep in cabin on C Deck (the Brethertons were in C-14)

She was on the staircase when the explosions came.

.... I begged and implored dozens of men on the way to go down and get Paul- they took no notice. One man looked right at me and I knew he had played with Paul and I said, "You know Paul. Get (word omitted) in the cabin" but he went on. Then I forced baby into some man's arms who had got to the stairs (I saw a man pull a woman by the arm and get up in front of her) then I ran down to Deck C...I reached my cabin, smoke was coming up through the floor in the hallway and in the cabin, seized Paul and carried him to Deck B. I dragged the boy along- not one of the men who rushed by offered to help me and I saw a woman with a little baby fall and slide along the deck but saw no one help her up...

In a May 1915 interview, Norah's sister offered a detail Norah never made public: Once she reached the boat deck, Mrs. Bretherton had encountered the man into whose arms she had thrust Elizabeth, but the man no longer had her infant. Elizabeth was lost in the sinking, although whether she was placed into one of the upset lifeboats or simply abandoned by her 'benefactor' and lost when the ship foundered cannot be determined.

...and I heard mens' voices saying, "Lower, for she's full" get into the next boat. I had a friend in that boat, a woman who called out for them to let me in- and she tells me the men did not want me in. This friend, a Mrs. Secchi was the second person to get into the bye boat- she found a man already in it.....we had a splendid seaman in charge and another of the regular lifeboat crew- there were otherwise 22 men, and 20 women and five children. We pulled away just as a terrific explosion occurred and the Lusitania went down.

Norah and Paul survived, with Mrs. Bretherton giving birth to a son, Cyril Junior, the following October. Mrs. Bretherton's days as a Californian were over: Cyril soon joined her in England, enlisted, and although they brought suit against Germany as United States citizens (eventually being awarded \$7500.00 for the loss of their daughter and \$1500.00 for the loss of their effects) they lived out their lives in the United Kingdom. Cyril's career took off soon after the disaster: his stint in Ireland lead to yet another wartime adventure (*"The reports he sent out of Dublin when he was a correspondent during 'the troubles' lashed the natives so mercilessly that his life was only saved by the intervention of the American Consul"* said one of his obituaries) which in turn later produced a book *The Real*

*Ireland*, which can, politely, be described as far from politically correct. His work *Midas*, which remained in print as late as 1974 predicted, in the mid 1920s, that the United States was destined to become the only world power within his lifetime. Norah appears in a handful of mentions in his autobiographical work *Rhyme and Reason: Being the Thoughts and Theories of a Journalist Philosopher*; a book as likeable as *The Real Ireland* is hard to swallow. In it he touched on virtually all of his likes (California, fishing, dogs) and dislikes (pretension) and omitted only one detail: his connection to the *Lusitania*. He produced several other books, and dozens of poems before his unexpected death in 1939. Paul Bretherton, himself a journalist, wrote the forward to *Poems By Algol*, a 1945 anthology of some of his father's better works. The family lived, at various times, in London and Oxford but following Cyril's death settled in Wiltshire. Paul Bretherton married Margaret Clingan in 1944, with their first child, a daughter named Teresa, being born in 1945.

Norah, then residing with her son John Christopher in Ramsbury, died of degenerative heart disease on April 29<sup>th</sup> 1977 at the Cheriton Nursing Home in Swindon at the age of 94 (born January 6<sup>th</sup> 1883, Brighton). Paul outlived her by only three years, dying of bronchiopneumonia, as a complication of cancer of the vocal cord on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1980, at 68

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**Charlotte Pye** was a young mother from Edmonton, travelling in second class with her infant daughter Marjorie. Her husband, William remained behind to tend to the family tailoring business, the Pan-Co-Vesta Pantorium, while his wife paid an extended visit to her parents in the United Kingdom. It was to him that Charlotte sent a graphic account of the disaster a few days after her arrival safely in London:

I scarcely know how to begin this letter, so much have I gone through since I parted from you...we were sitting at luncheon when the torpedo struck us. A few minutes earlier I had been talking with a woman who sat opposite me, and I told her I intended upon staying on deck all night as we were in the danger zone and I feared something might happen. 'They daren't do any such thing' (meaning the Huns) and then the crash came. Everybody stood up, and my friend shouted 'she's going down!' I picked up Marjorie and ran on deck. The ship had listed to starboard and the decks were slanting so much that it was almost impossible to walk on them. My head was banged several times, but I still managed to hold on to Marjorie...

I saw the poor women running up and down...I did not have



**Charlotte Pye**  
Courtesy of Kevin Spaans

a lifebelt, but a gentleman took off his and strapped it around myself and the baby. When my turn came to get into a boat, Marjorie was taken away and handed in first, and I followed. Barely had I got into the boat and taken the baby into my arms when I looked up and saw the big ship coming right over on us, with people jumping for their lives. Then our boat suddenly keeled over and we found ourselves in the water. Marjorie gave one piercing scream and we both went down together. The suction underneath the water dragged her out of my arms and she was gone forever. I shall never forget the agony of it: while I was under the water I felt my end had come.

Charlotte rose to the surface only to be dragged under a second time, losing consciousness. She awoke in a field of debris, and clung to wreckage until three men pulled her atop an upturned lifeboat.

"On one side of the boat a lady was lying dead, and all around us in the water were the dead bodies of people who only a few hours before had been bright and happy."

Mrs. Pye was rescued by the fishing vessel *Flying Fish* and brought with the others into Queenstown. She traveled on to England. Searchers in Queenstown eventually found Marjorie's body, which was buried in Private Grave #5, row 17, with the body of an unidentified 12 to 18 month old female sharing her coffin. Charlotte coped with her loss by throwing herself into the War Effort, appearing as a speaker and a symbol at several recruitment rallies: a film of one of these appearances has survived. In 1926, as Charlotte Bergen, she was awarded the sum of \$3265.00 in the Canadian courts for her injuries and losses aboard the *Lusitania*. Late in her life, as Charlotte Kelly, she granted an extended audio interview during the course of which she related her *Lusitania* experiences. She died in Vancouver on January 18, 1971, at the age of 84.

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**Marjorie Pye**  
Courtesy of Kevin Spaans

**Gertrude Adams'** experience paralleled that of Charlotte Pye. Mrs. Adams, a Second Class Passenger returning to Bristol, England, after a stay in Canada, was in the dining saloon with her two and a half year old daughter Joan when the explosion came. She described it as a "dull boom" and a "slight tremble" and told of how, as the passengers started for the doors, a crewman tried to calm them by speculating that perhaps they had run aground. Mrs. Adams made her way to the boat deck, and from there followed a group of passengers obeying a "women and children this way" order to the Promenade deck. Mr. Basil Wickings-Smith gave her his lifebelt when he saw that she had none. As the ship listed, Gertrude witnessed another young mother and child hurled down the sloping deck, landing against a flight of steps. Shortly thereafter the *Lusitania* sank and both Mrs Adams and Joan were pulled down with her.

Mother and daughter came to the surface together, and Gertrude swam to a piece of wreckage upon which she placed her daughter. *"But I could not help her more than hold her there."* The water although not as quickly fatal to those immersed in it as was the water into which the Titanic victims were plunged, was dangerously cold and Joan soon began to fade. *"Then, I had to watch her die. A young fellow near offered to take her while I tried to reach a tank that was floating a little way off, but my baby had passed away then and I felt I must kiss her goodbye."* Mrs. Adams, the young man and several other people clung to the tank in the numbing water for hours. *"One of the men later capsized the tank and I and the others were again in the water. It was twenty-five minutes of two when I first entered the water and I was picked up at ten minutes of six. A boat took us to a trawler, and by that time I was delirious, awakening to find myself in a bunk of the trawler with the recollection of what seemed like a horrible dream in my mind."*

Before Lord Mersey, Robert Henry Duncan confirmed part of Mrs. Adams' story:

Q: You rescued a lady, I think?

A: A Mrs. Adams of Bristol, I found out...There was another lady and gentleman on the tank, but the gentleman died from exposure and the lady got hysterical and we lost her too.

Mrs. Adams was taken to Queenstown and from there journeyed on to her mother's home in Bristol where she was joined by her husband, a stretcher bearer with the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Central Ontario Regiment. She would later write to the mother of victim Richard Preston Prichard that at least she, Gertrude, had the small comfort of knowing her child's fate, unlike so many other *Lusitania* parents who were forever left to wonder.



**Gertrude Adams**  
*Daily Sketch*  
Jim Kalafus Collection



**Dorothy Ditman Allen** remains a high profile victim, best known as a footnote in the tragic tale of the Crompton family, all eight of whom were lost along with their governess- Miss Allen – when the *Lusitania* was destroyed.

Dorothy was the middle daughter of Dr. Richard Allen of Frankford, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Allen sisters were afforded “*rare educational advantages*” with two becoming teachers upon graduation from college and the third, Dorothy, becoming a governess to the Crompton children in 1913 after her graduation from Mount Holyoke. Dorothy may have been bitten by the ‘acting bug’ at one point, for she appeared in at least one college production.

Miss Allen was lost, and very little detail survives regarding her final seven days. She was seen to be crying on sailing day, which is often attributed to the behavior of her charges, but since she had worked for the Cromptons for two years at that point and was, presumably, used to the childrens’ high spirits, it is more likely that her tears were induced by some other factor. Fear of the German warning, and of a wartime crossing perhaps? It is known that the childrens’ boisterous behavior caused Theodate Pope to evacuate her cabin for quieter quarters, but nothing of Dorothy’s role in this incident, if any, is known. Samuel Knox of Philadelphia, glimpsed the Cromptons during the disaster:

I saw Paul Crompton, of Chestnut Hill, with four of his little children. He was trying to fasten a belt around the smallest, a mere baby.

One of his two older daughters, a girl of about 12, was having trouble with the belt she was trying to put on by herself. ‘Please will you show me how to fix this?’ she asked unconcernedly. I adjusted it, and she thanked me.

But no one who survived recalled seeing Miss Allen. Three of the Crompton children were recovered and buried in Queenstown, but Dorothy Allen was never found. Her family sent the consulate a description in hopes of identifying her body. They said she was “five feet, blue eyes, stub nose, twenty six years old.”

Dorothy had helped to support her widowed mother, Hettie, with an annual contribution of approximately \$300.00 She had spent her free hours helping, along with her sisters, to maintain Hettie Allen’s house. In 1924 the U.S. Mixed Claims Commission awarded Mrs. Allen \$7500.00 for Dorothy’s loss, plus a second sum of \$1267.00 to be awarded to her as Administratrix of Dorothy’s estate.



**Dorothy Allen**  
Courtesy of Mount Holyoke  
College Archives and Special  
Collections

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**Henry Sonneborn** of Baltimore, Maryland, and **Leo Schwabacher** of Peoria, Illinois, shared a mutual love of classical music. It was the practice of each man to summer in Paris and study music, and it was there that they met in 1908. There has been speculation over the nature of their friendship ever since: what is known is that they returned from Europe with one another aboard the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse* at the end of the summer, and by 1913 Mr. Schwabacher was living in the Sonneborn residence, at 2209 Brookfield Avenue in Baltimore. Sonneborn may have been married: his Ellis Island record lists him as “married” in 1911, but single and sharing his home with Mr. Schwabacher by 1913. They journeyed to Europe each summer and, with the exception of 1913 when they traveled aboard the *France*, returned each year aboard the *Lusitania*.

The pattern continued in 1915. Sonneborn and Schwabacher treated the German warning lightly, with Sonneborn being quoted in the press as saying that he would cable as soon as he reached Europe safely. His mother, Wilhelmina, accompanied the two of them to New York but despite her misgivings both men embarked on the final voyage.

The two men occupied Cabin B-60, a centrally located inside cabin. It is possible, given their German surnames, that it was Sonneborn and Schwabacher to whom George Kessler was referring when he said

“ Two men who kept to themselves were generally alluded to as Germans. How much truth there is in this I cannot say.”

Neither survived and neither was recovered. Their families learned that prior to their departure each had changed his will naming the other as principle heir. Schwabacher was described by the court as a wealthy coal and lumber man, while Sonneborn might, politely, have been described as a struggling artist:

The resources of the decedent were slender and his income small. He was travelling with his friend Leo Schwabacher, also a bachelor...these two men seem to have been fast friends..... provision is made in Schwabacher’s will for the burial of the two friends in the same mausoleum. The substantial provision made by his will for his friend, Sonneborn, suggests a possible source of income to the latter, supplementing that from his own slender estate and enabling him, at middle age, to embark on the cultivation of his voice in Paris.



**Schwabacher and Sonneborn**  
Courtesy of Paul Latimer

When one hears the phrase, “poor little rich girl”, it normally conjures images of Shirley Temple or Gloria Vanderbilt, but no one is more deserving of the title than **Virginia Loney**. She was born, on May 19, 1899, to a life of privilege. Her parents were Allen Donnellan Loney, a one time member of the New York Stock Exchange, and Catharine Wolfe Brown. Mr. Loney had sold his seat on the stock exchange shortly after the birth of his only child. He continued to work as a bond salesman and stockbroker, generally earning \$10,000 a year. Though well off, he mostly managed money from his wife’s large estate. They traveled quite frequently, alternating between their homes in New York, Maryland and Northamptonshire, England. They used several famous liners such as the *Cedric*, *Amerika*, *George Washington*, *Campania*, and *Mauretania*. They sailed on the *Olympic*, which docked in New York on April 10, 1912. Several days into *Olympic*’s next voyage, she would received an S.O.S. from the *Titanic*.

Their home in England, Guilsborough House, had a stable with twenty hunters and Allen Loney was considered one of the best riders in the area and described as an “*excellent whip*.” Catharine and Virginia were proficient at riding as well. While summering at their lake house in Skaneateles, New York, Virginia learned how to swim. In a era when most women did not possess this skill, Virginia was very lucky, for she would need it a few years later.

Virginia and her parents returned to New York aboard the *Celtic* in September 1914, after summering in The Untied Kingdom. They took up residence at the Gotham Hotel on Fifth Avenue, from where Allen Loney returned to England shortly afterwards. He joined the British Ambulance Corps, and supplied his own automobile, which was equipped as an ambulance. He and his chauffeur spent much time in France and Belgium, helping out however they could. Catharine Loney decided to sail back to England to work in a convalescent home. She was to spend the summer caring for wounded soldiers. She also gave permission for two of her cars to be donated and used as ambulances.

Her husband did not want his family traveling alone, and sailed back on the *Adriatic* to escort them. They booked passage on the *Lusitania* on April 21, 1915. Shortly before they sailed, Catharine revised her will leaving her daughter an estate worth over \$1,000,000. The family paid \$1020.00 for cabins B-85, B-87, which included a private bath.

Virginia spent most of her time during the voyage with her maid Elise Bouteiller. Her parents were friendly with Joseph Charles, of the Musson Book Company, and his daughter Doris. The two families frequently sat in the lounge together, although Virginia had little in common with the



**Virginia Loney and Doris Charles**

Jim Kalafus Collection



**Virginia Loney, ca 1917**

Mike Poirier Collection

older Doris, who was being taken overseas as a precaution: she was involved in a romance with a man named Elliott Lawler, and her parents felt, that at twenty-one, she was still too young to get married.

On the day of the disaster, Virginia was resting in her cabin after lunch with her maid. *"It all happened so quickly. When the Lusitania was torpedoed, I was in my stateroom. I had no idea what had happened, but joined in the rush for the deck. There, everything was in confusion. My father went down to get some lifebelts and returned with a number, which he distributed around, but did not keep one himself."*

The family stood on the portside of the boat deck at the back of a crowd. *"There was a lifeboat being lowered and he (Allen) saw there was just one place left. He ordered me to get in. I protested, but finally obeyed. It was the last lifeboat launched from the ship."* Virginia looked up from her place in Boat 14, and saw her parents standing at the rail. Years later, she told Adolph and Mary Hoehling that Alfred Vanderbilt was near them. It was a difficult descent as the boat was listing to starboard. The boat cast off, but the plug was not in. Water entered the lifeboat, making it unstable. As the *Lusitania* sank, boat 14 capsized. *"The lifeboat was overcrowded and was only a few yards from the Lusitania when the big liner went down. Suction from the sinking vessel caused the lifeboat I was in to capsize. With other passengers in the boat, I was drawn ever so far down in the water. When I reached the surface again, there was nothing to be seen of the Lusitania. People were struggling in the water all around me. I swam to another lifeboat, which was not far away, and was pulled aboard."*

She was rescued by a fishing trawler that brought her into Queenstown. There were no sign of her parents or her maid. Joseph and Doris Charles took responsibility for her. *"Mr. Charles and daughter, of Canada, who were rescued from the Lusitania were very kind to me, taking me to London with them. I stayed in London overnight, then a maid arrived from my cousins, with whom I was to visit."* She was taken to Guilsborough House. Her sixteenth birthday came and went, but there was little to celebrate. She then booked passage to the United States on the *St. Paul*. She was escorted while on board the ship by Mrs. Harry Sedgwick. Many *Lusitania* survivors were aboard including Joseph and Doris Charles, Ernest Cowper, Maude Thompson, James Leary, Charles Sturdy, Ogden Hammond, Daniel Moore, Herbert Colebrook and Percy Rogers (who was also in boat 14 with Virginia) among others. During the voyage, a submarine began following the destroyer assigned to protect the *St. Paul*. People stampeded on deck when they heard that a submarine was sighted. Lifebelts were handed out and lifeboats were readied for lowering. Miss Sedgwick

said, “*There’s a submarine!*” Virginia grasped her arm and cried, “*No, no, I can’t stand it again.*” The ship arrived on June 13<sup>th</sup> and the girl proceeded to Huntington, Long Island to be with her maternal uncle, George McKesson Brown. He assumed responsibility for the girl, as did Mary Chamberlaine who oversaw the overall care of Virginia. She received, outright, property worth \$45,000; her mother’s jewelry that did not go down with the ship; \$12,000 trust from a great-aunt, and an automobile among other things. An itemized list of essentials for the upbringing of Virginia was brought to the court’s attention. The list included-

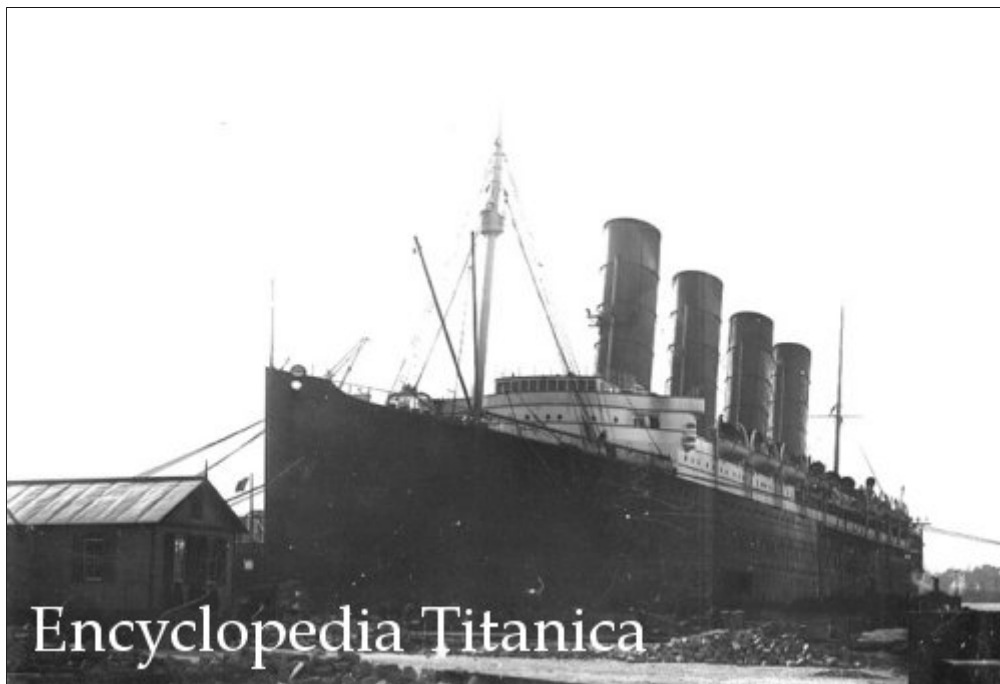
Rent...	\$5,000
Food and supplies...	\$4,000
Clothing...	\$3,500
Three servants...	\$1,200
School, music and languages...	\$2,500
Summer vacation and travel...	\$2,500
Automobile and chauffeur...	\$2,000
Recreation...	\$1,500
Maid...	\$600
Doctors and dentists...	\$500
Insurance...	\$200
Incidentals...	\$1,000
Total...	\$25,500

The Mixed Claims Commission awarded Virginia \$26,700 for the loss of her parents. Her uncle George was given \$15,450 as executor of his sister’s estate. Mary Chamberlaine received \$1,235 as the executrix of Allen Loney’s estate.

A few years later, while overseas, she met Robert Howard Gamble, of Jacksonville, Florida who was ten years her senior. He was an aviator who served in the Naval Reserve. His family was originally from Tallahassee, Florida and Richmond, Virginia. The two were married on April 27, 1918. At age 21, she inherited \$1,452,000 from her late mother’s estate. She gave birth to two children, Robert and Catharine Gamble, but all was not well with the marriage and Virginia and Howard separated. Finally, they divorced in the Paris courts in the spring of 1923. She and the children returned from France on the *Aquitania*. A few months later, Robert Gamble went to Huntington, New York and took his children to Jacksonville. Virginia reported them kidnapped. The scandal made its way into the newspaper headlines. The father vowed to fight a custody battle in the Florida courts. A custody agreement was eventually reached, and when Virginia was remarried to Paul Abbott on January 29, 1926, her ex-husband sent their children to attend the wedding. The couple honeymooned in Akin, South Carolina before returning home to Long Island. Virginia then gave birth to a second son, Paul Abbott. She continued to live the life of a gracious Long Island matron, though sadness returned

when her married daughter predeceased her. Paul Abbott, Sr. died in 1971 and Virginia passed away on April 4, 1975 in Southampton, New York.

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From a negative in the Jim Kalafus Collection

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*Dedicated to Mr. Paul Latimer, whose willingness to answer questions is always appreciated, and to the memories of Lawrence Jolivet and Harvey C. Tedford.*

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*We are particularly grateful to these survivor relatives, and archivists, who have taken the time to provide us with information: Barbara Cotton; Frank and Lois Deluski; Alison Glenie; Cathy Higgs; Joy Hill; Carol Keeler; Charlotte Sellers; Rick Timmis, and James Wang.*

*And, as always, thanks to Barbara McDermott, the nicest of all possible shipwreck survivors.*

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