

Walter C. Porter, 46 years, 11 mo. and 2 days old of S. Porter & Co., drowned at sea.

Worcester Magazine

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Worcester's Toll in Titanic Disaster

Walter C. Porter, of the Samuel Porter Company, a Member of this Board on Ill-fated Ship, Returning from European Business Trip. His Body Found by Crew of Mackay-Bennett after the Mighty Ocean Liner Sank to a Watery Grave.

SLOWLY steaming into Halifax harbor on April 30 the cable ship Mackay-Bennett brought to land the body of Walter C. Porter, of Samuel Porter & Co., Worcester's toll in that greatest marine disaster of all ages- the sinking of the Titanic. His name is inscribed in the list of honored dead of that great mistress of the seas, among those who voluntarily stepped aside to obey, and see that it was obeyed, the rule of the high seas in times of trouble - "Women and children first in the life boats."

His body was among the 250 heroes found floating about the scene of the wreck. Like the others a life belt was about his waist, he having evidently jumped as the great liner took its last plunge, and had then perished in the intensely cold water.

While his friends and business associates, even at this late date, can barely realize that he is gone they know he died, like hundreds of others, who saw that women and children had preference in the meager supply of life boats which were included in the equipment of the Titanic.

Hope that Mr. Porter had been saved was not abandoned for more than a week after the disaster. His family, his business partner, Walter E. Bigelow, and his friends enlisted every possible means to get some tidings of his fate. These efforts were futile until the cable ship reported that the body had been found.

Mr. Porter was returning on the Titanic from a business tour of Europe. It was his first foreign business trip, made to acquaint a growing number of European customers with a member of the firm and get ideas to further increase its foreign business. He sailed from Boston February 20, and had visited trade centres of England, Germany, France, Austria and other European countries. His last letter home was an optimistic one but carried with it a tinge of homesickness which every true American feels while abroad.

"The coal strike is serious," said Mr. Porter, under date of March 31, "but the officers of the White Star line assure us that the Titanic will sail April 10 on schedule time. How I wish it were to-day that I were to sail instead of April 10."

Mr. Porter was widely known in Worcester. As a member of this Board he served during 1911 on the Committee on Peace and Arbitration.

Walter C. Porter was born in Worcester, May 13, 1865, the son of Mr. & Mrs. Samuel Porter. He was educated in the public schools of Worcester, after which he entered the employ of his father and began to learn the last -making business.

When a young man Mr. Porter secured a leave of absence from his work and cruised through South American waters aboard a large sloop-rigged pleasure yacht. At that time he had a narrow escape from being shipwrecked during a hurricane. Upon his return he went back to work for his father and remained in the business until 1891, when he retired to the country and opened a grocery store in Holden, Mass.

His early training however, asserted itself strongly and he returned again to work for his father, this time as a sales manager of the firm. Mr. Porter entered the firm as a partner in 1897.

In 1903 Mr. Porter and Walter E. Bigelow, a lifelong friend, bought out the business. Mr. Porter took charge of the sales department and Mr. Bigelow assumed charge of the manufacturing end of the business. Each year saw the business of the company increase and the sales territory steadily spreading throughout North America and Europe.

European orders came unsolicited for more than three years, and it was the direct result of such business that led Mr. Porter to find time to make a business tour of that country to further strengthen the business relations which had been established.

Mr. Porter was twice married. His first wife was Louise Philips, daughter of Oscar E. Philips of the Heywood Boot & Shoe Co. She died in 1905. Eighteen months later Mr. Porter was married to Mrs. Mabel L. Sanford, widow of Charles L. Sanford, who survives him. He also leaves two children, Miss. Helen I. Porter, a teacher at West Haverstraw, N.Y., and O. Stanley Porter, a student at Worcester Polytechnic Institute; two stepchildren, F. Lyndon Sanford, Lynn, and Miss Nellie R. Sanford, Worcester; and a sister, Mrs. Albert J. Gifford, Worcester.

In addition to being a member of this Board Mr. Porter was a member of the Commonwealth Club, the Lakeside Boat Club, the Worcester Automobile Club and the Worcester Commercial Travelers Association.

Mr. Porter's strength as a salesman lay in the confidence which his trade had in his honesty and integrity, and he labored always to justify that reputation for his firm as well as himself. No man connected with the shoe trade had their respect and confidence to any greater extent.

The last business of S. Porter & Co. will continue, and the aim will be to keep the reputation of the firm up to the high position it has maintained for quality, service and fair dealing.

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