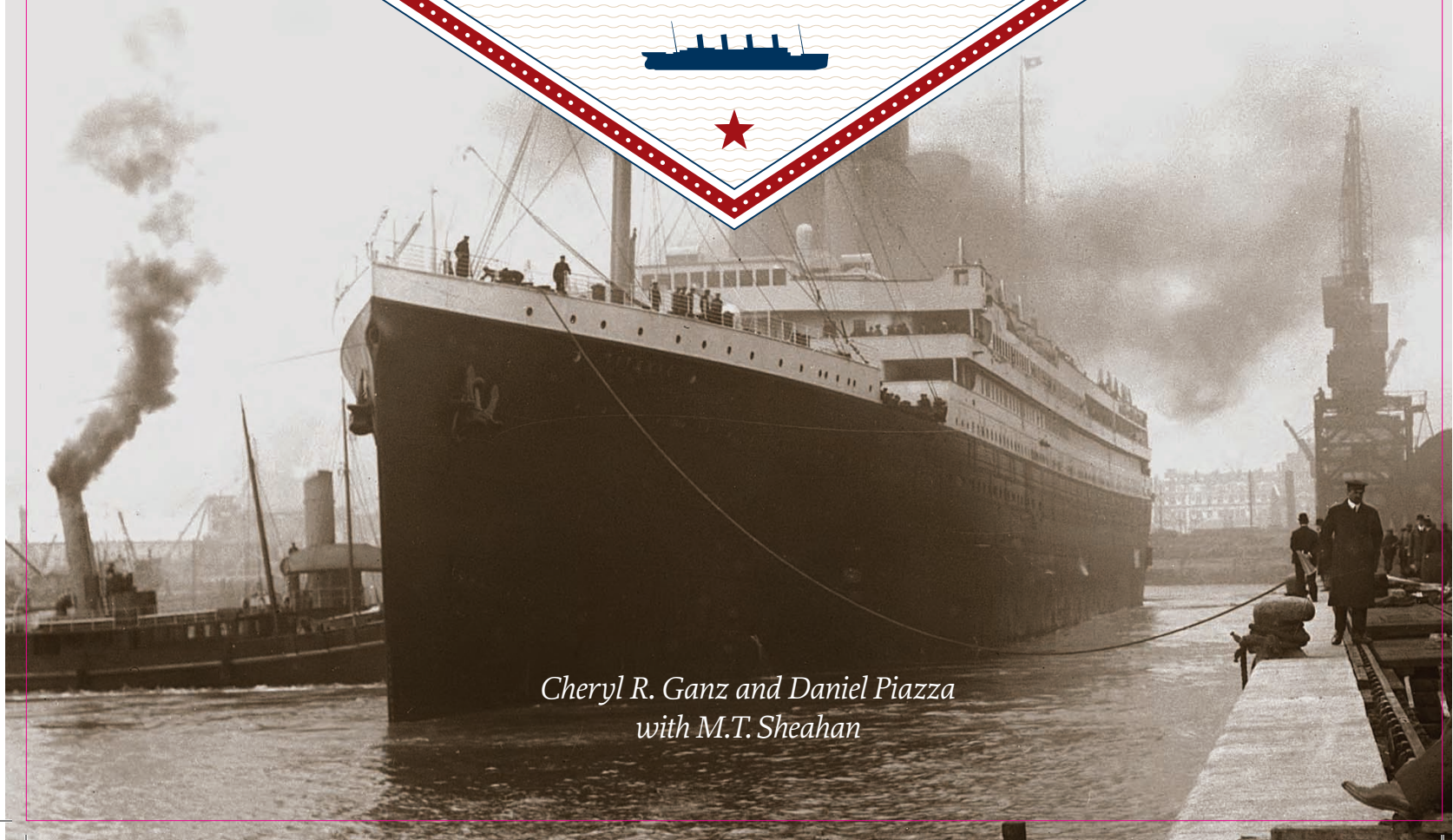




HINDENBURG
FIRE & ICE
AND TITANIC



*Cheryl R. Ganz and Daniel Piazza
with M.T. Sheahan*

After cruising over the Smithsonian and dipping a salute to the White House, *Hindenburg* departed for Lakehurst, New Jersey. In 1936 and 1937, *Hindenburg* regularly carried passengers and mail between Europe and the Americas. The airship, using highly flammable hydrogen for lift instead of helium, burst into flames as it attempted mooring at Lakehurst. Thirty-five perished in the scorching disaster. A small percent of the mail survived. *Courtesy Archives of the Luftschiffbau Zeppelin Company, Germany*

Cover: *Hindenburg* courtesy National Archives, *Titanic* courtesy National Museums Northern Ireland



FIRE & ICE: HINDENBURG AND TITANIC

**Cheryl R. Ganz and Daniel Piazza
with M.T. Sheahan**

Exhibition Dates

March 22, 2012, to January 6, 2014

*Smithsonian National Postal Museum
Washington, D.C.
2012*

The first two lines of Robert Frost's poem *Fire and Ice* inspired the exhibition's title. They are appropriate in view of the natural elements that caused the catastrophes and that so many lives ended because of them.

*Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.*

*But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.*

In the National Postal Museum's tradition of outstanding exhibits, *Fire & Ice: Hindenburg and Titanic* offers new ways to understand history. In 2012 we commemorate two great ships and their tragic ends. The exhibit reminds us that both *Hindenburg* and *Titanic* exemplified state-of-the-art technology and speed and that both ultimately revealed technology's shortcomings, culminating in tremendous loss of life and disillusionment. It also reminds us that both carried mail and that their postal clerks sacrificed dearly trying to protect it. Thanks to popular media, images of *Hindenburg*, *Titanic*, and their passengers remain vivid, which makes this exhibit and its many original artifacts especially spell-binding.

As NPM's director, I am proud of NPM's record of making the finest of philately and postal history accessible to the public. Your support makes this possible. I am also pleased to announce that your support has guaranteed the opening of the William H. Gross Stamp Gallery in 2013.

The William H. Gross Stamp Gallery, which will be the largest and finest postage stamp museum gallery in the world, has been a dream project made possible by the dedication and generosity of so many, especially William H. Gross. The Smithsonian staff, NPM staff, Council of Philatelists, USPS officials, donors, and so many others have worked steadily with me to fulfill the dream. The gallery's spacious halls will house the museum's finest examples of stamps and mail and allow NPM to continue presenting rich, knowledgeable, and visually exciting exhibits.

Thank you for your ongoing support for the galleries and for exhibits that instruct and delight all of us.

Sincerely,

Allen R. Kane
Director

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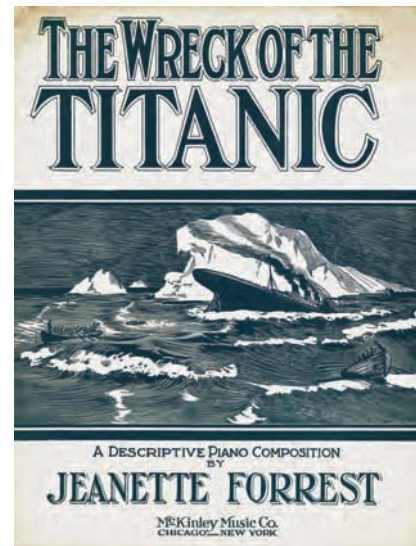
As the largest, fastest, and most glamorous ships of their eras, *Hindenburg* and *Titanic* shared many similarities. The human tragedy associated with each stunned the world . . . a shock that affects people to this day. Both offered travelers elegant accommodations, and both provided postal services. In each era, the public trusted modern technology to provide safety and speed. And as anniversaries of the disasters are marked in 2012—seventy-five years since *Hindenburg* burned and a century since *Titanic* sank—many questions remain unanswered.

The Zeppelin Company of Friedrichshafen, Germany, completed the 804-foot-long LZ-129 *Hindenburg* in 1936. Financed in part by the Nazi regime, the rigid airship, designed to use non-flammable helium for lift, confirmed Germany's technological prowess as Adolf Hitler prepared for war. The U.S. refused to sell helium to the Zeppelin Company, which instead used highly flammable hydrogen for *Hindenburg's* lift. On May 6, 1937, carrying ninety-seven passengers and crew, *Hindenburg* burst into flames at Lakehurst, New Jersey. The disaster destroyed the ship in thirty-four seconds, ending the magnificent era of lighter-than-air commercial travel.

Between 1909 and 1911, Harland & Wolff, Belfast, Ireland, built the massive, 882-foot-long *Titanic* for Britain's White Star Line, owned by American J. P. Morgan. On April 10, 1912, the lavish *Titanic* left Southampton, England, on its maiden voyage. Bound for New York, the ship hit an iceberg in the North Atlantic late night April 14. It sank in less than three hours. Of its 2,229 passengers and crew, only 712 survived, predominantly women and children.

After nearly a century, images of *Hindenburg* and *Titanic* still haunt viewers worldwide. Published accounts, photographs, radio broadcasts, and movies have transformed the catastrophes into two of the 20th century's most horrific disasters. Both tragedies capture the universality of terror in the face of death, prompting the question, "What would I have done?" They also underscore technology's shortcomings during eras that beatified science and progress.

Popular media has recreated the *Hindenburg* and *Titanic* disasters in books, movies, and television programs, searing them indelibly into a collective memory. Toys, games, models, and other memorabilia repeatedly revitalize the compelling stories for each new generation.



Left: Board game "With *Hindenburg* and *Zeppelin* to America," 1936. The board game box lid shows a zeppelin over Brazil. | Courtesy anonymous
 Right: "Wreck of the *Titanic*" sheet music, c. 1920. Before radio, middle-class households entertained themselves with a piano. *Titanic* sheet music appeared within days of the sinking and remained in print for years. Much of it consisted, like this example, of already popular tunes strung together with a few ruffles and flourishes. | Courtesy Malcolm Niedner

<p>Hindenburg Explodes With 97 Aboard; D. C. Man Escapes, 33 Die at Lakehurst</p>		<p><small>SURVIVORS TELL OF TERROR WHEN AIRSHIP BURST</small></p>
<p>ZEP BLOWS UP; KILLS 35</p>		
<p><small>REICH DISPATCHES GROUP OF PROBERS HEADED BY ECKENER</small></p>	<p><i>Cameramen 'Shooting' as Blast Occurs.</i></p>	<p><i>Lightning Spark Hinted as Cause By Hugo Eckener</i></p>
<p>Flames Destroy Hindenburg on Her First Voyage to America in 1937</p>		
<p>U. S. INVESTIGATES 'PLOT' IN ZEP EXPLOSION AS GERMANY DISPATCHES PROBERS TO SCENE</p>		
<p>F.L. Belin, Jr., Leaps From Blazing Ship</p> <p><small>Relatives Here Term His Jump to Safety a 'Miracle.'</small></p>	<p><small>GROUND CREW AIDS RESCUE</small> Sparks From Engines or Static Believed to Have Ignited Hydrogen Gas</p>	<p><small>SHIP FALLS ABLAZE</small> Great Dirigible Bursts Into Flames as It Is About to Land</p> <p><small>VICTIMS BURN TO DEATH</small> Some Passengers Are Thrown From the Blazing Wreckage, Others Crawl to Safety</p>
<p>TITANIC SINKS, 1500 DIE</p> <p>Carthia Picks Up 675 Out of 2200--Races for New York--Survivors Mostly Women and Children.</p>		
<p><small>WORST OCEAN DISASTER IN WORLD'S HISTORY; TITANIC GOES DOWN: 1,341 LIVES ARE LOST</small></p>		<p><small>IT WAS THOUGHT TITANIC WAS UNSINKABLE VESSEL</small></p>
<p><small>NEW LINER TITANIC HITS AN ICEBERG; SINKING BY THE BOW AT MIDNIGHT; WOMEN PUT OFF IN LIFE BOATS; LAST WIRELESS AT 12:27 A. M. BROADCAST</small></p>	<p>TITANIC WRECK STUNS LONDON</p>	<p><small>Hysterical Men and Women Crowd Office of Steamship in New York and Hundreds Give Way in Sobs and Tears</small></p>
<p>GIANT LINER TITANIC SINKS AFTER STRIKING AN ICEBERG 1,800 LIVES LOST</p>		
<p>TITANIC SINKING AT SEA AFTER CRASH WITH BERG</p> <p>Steamers Racing for the Scene in Answer to "C.Q.D." by Wireless.</p>		<p><small>TOO FEW BOATS ON BIG SHIP TO SAVE PEOPLE ON BOARD WHEN SHE STRUCK ICEBERG</small></p> <p><small>Good Show! One: Does Not Save Ship Aches</small></p> <p><small>Grated! Sea Tragedy is History Of New England</small></p> <p><small>"We Can Replace the Money Loss," They Say, "But Not the Lives."</small></p>
<p><small>"HORRIBLE LOSS OF LIFE," SAY WHITE STAR OFFICIALS</small></p>		<p>868 SAVED <i>Titanic Horror Shocks the World</i> 1,312 LOST</p>



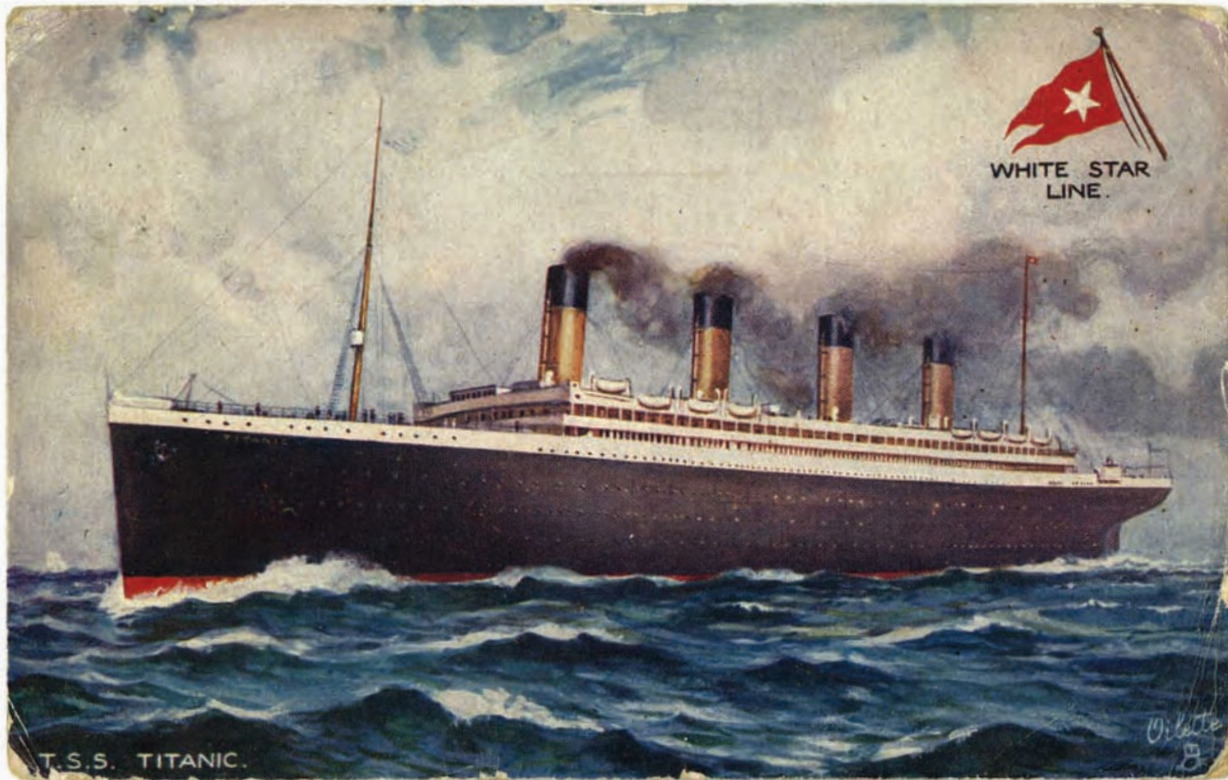
Newsboy Ned Parfett sells his papers in front of the White Star Line's London offices, April 16, 1912.

Huge by any comparison, *Hindenburg* and *Titanic* inspired a sense of safety with their superior technology. White Star Line did little to discourage the public's perception of the ship as unsinkable. *Titanic's* double bottom, sixteen supposedly watertight compartments, and luxurious amenities such as a heated swimming pool and electricity made it the most scientifically advanced vessel of its time.

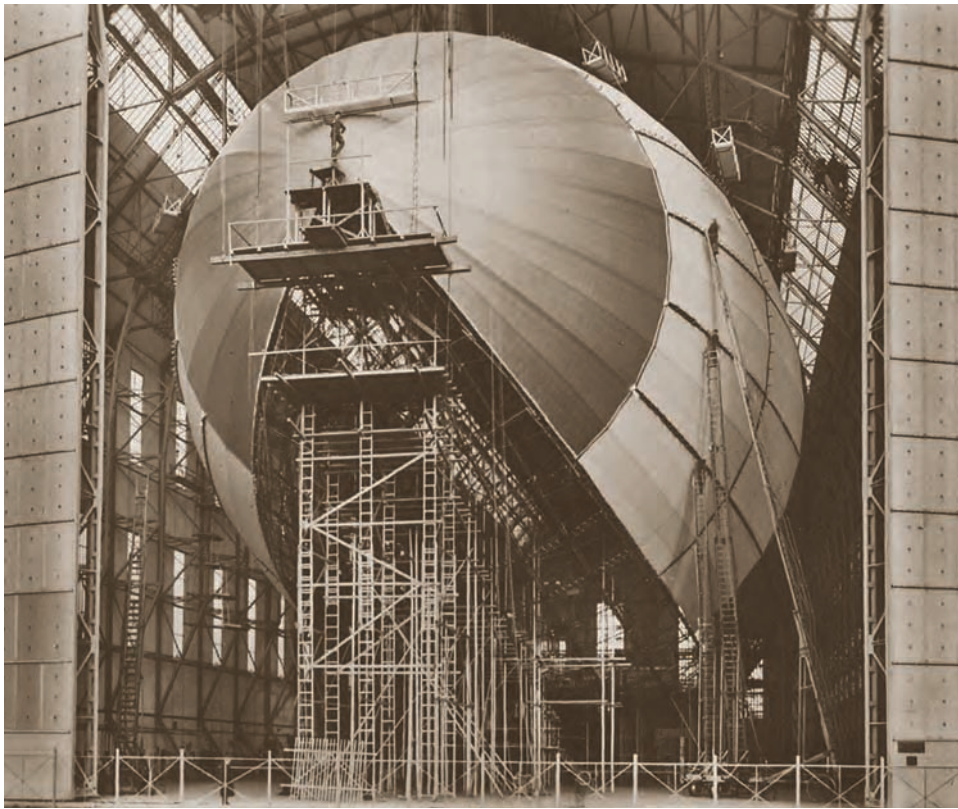
During the 1930s, some inter-continental travelers preferred the relatively speedy giant zeppelins to travel by ship. *Hindenburg's* lighter-than-air technology raised predictions that airships would replace ocean liners altogether. As nations worldwide struggled through the Great Depression, *Hindenburg's* ultra-modern design and amenities inspired faith in science and a prosperous future.



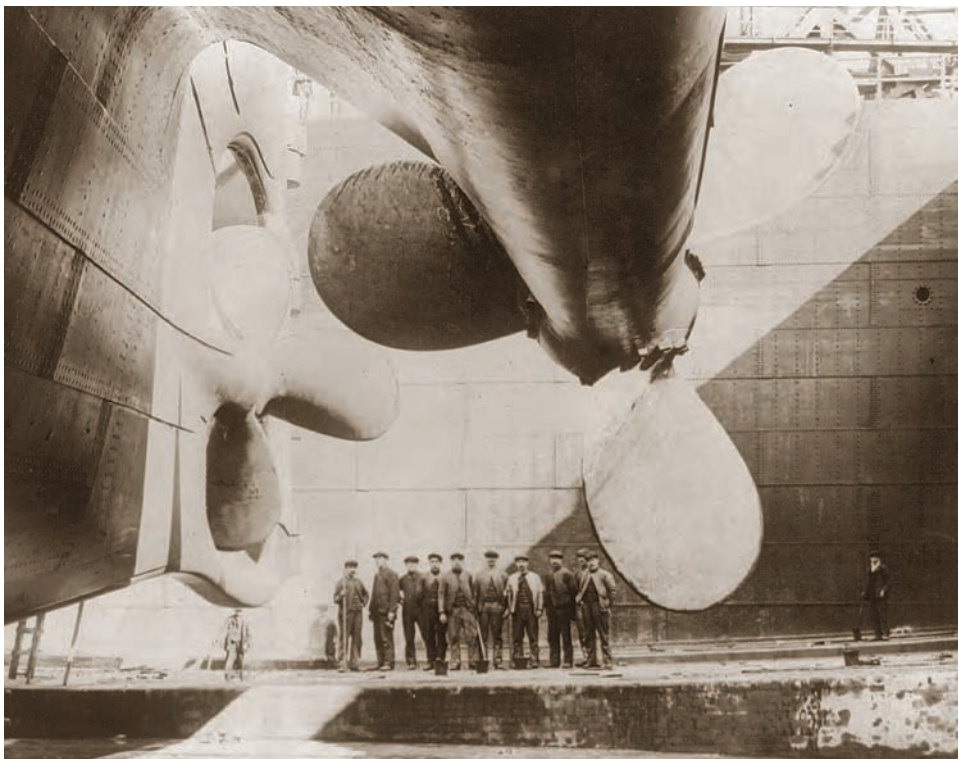
Hindenburg salvaged girder relic, 1937. Duralumin rings and girders formed a framework to hold the gas cells. The holes in the girders reduced the ship's weight. *Hindenburg* used hydrogen for lift because the U.S. government banned exportation of its helium reserves. Courtesy Navy Lakehurst Historical Society



Titanic picture postcard, 1912. Relatively few photographs exist of *Titanic*. Most images purporting to be the ship actually picture her slightly older, nearly identical sister, *Olympic*. The message side of this postcard is shown on page 23. | Courtesy Dr. Edward and Joanne Dauer



Hindenburg's construction spanned five years, 1931–1936. At Friedrichshafen, Germany, workers stretched fabric, later doped, over its duralumin framework. *Courtesy anonymous*



Two three-story-high engines turned *Titanic's* side propellers at up to seventy-five revolutions per minute. | *Courtesy Library of Congress*



COMPARISON CHART



	<i>LZ-129 HINDENBURG</i>	<i>RMS TITANIC</i>
Length	804 ft.	882 ft.
Width/Diameter	135 ft.	92 ft.
Weight	242 tons (lift gross)	53,310 tons displaced, when fully laden (46,329 gross registered tonnage)
Speed	Cruising speed: 76 mph Maximum speed: 84 mph	Maximum speed: 24 mph (21 knots)
Cost to build ship	\$2,600,000	\$10,000,000
Length of a transatlantic trip	2 to 2 ½ days	6 days
Number of trips taken before disaster	63	0
Cause of disaster	Prevailing theory is that a spark ignited loose hydrogen	Hit an iceberg
Amount of time disaster took	34 seconds	2 ½ hours
Cost of tickets	\$400 in 1936 \$450 in 1937	Max. first class, parlor suite: approx. \$4350 Min. first class, cabin: approx. \$150 Second class: approx. \$65–70 Third class: approx. \$35–45
Number of people aboard	97	2,229**
Number of crew members	61	912
Number of first-class passengers	36	324
Number of second-class passengers	N/A	284
Number of third-class/ steerage passengers	N/A	709
Number of passenger casualties	13	817
Number of crew casualties	22, plus 1 ground crew member	700
Number of total survivors	62	712
Number of postal clerks	1 (plus backup and radio officers)	5—all 5 were killed in the disaster
Pieces of mail carried	17,000+, in 8 sacks (1 dropped over Cologne)	7 million+ pieces of mail, in 3,364 sacks
Pieces of mail salvaged	360 (176 were unburned)	0

Numbers have been rounded.

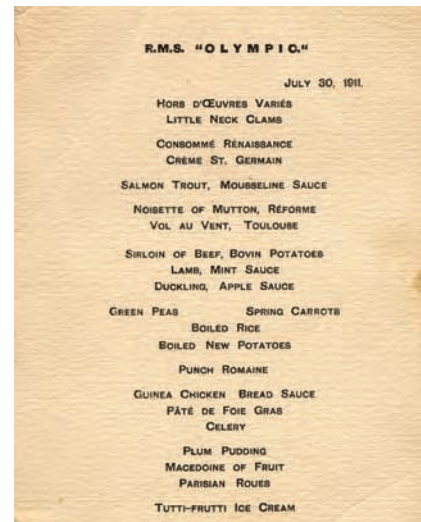
*** Exact figures for Titanic are not known. These are estimates.*

Hindenburg's passengers, primarily business professionals and occasionally their families, enjoyed lavish onboard service and comforts. A large lounge, sumptuous meals and superb German wines, promenade decks, a pressurized smoking room, and a writing room . . . all contributed to an exceptional experience. The ship's streamlined décor underscored Germany's resurrection after World War I.

For some, a voyage on *Titanic* offered opulence comparable to that of the finest hotels. Upper-class passengers enjoyed gourmet meals and aged liquors, a swimming pool and gym, and many other comforts. Those traveling in steerage, however—primarily immigrants hoping for better lives in America—enjoyed no such luxuries. Nonetheless, passage included food, mattresses made sleeping more comfortable, and the tiny cabins boasted electric lights and running water.



Hindenburg menu, 1936. Each lavish lunch and dinner had a specially printed menu. The XIth Olympic Games Berlin, 1936, flight luncheon featured clam soup, beef in Madeira sauce, cauliflower, peas, potatoes, and salad. Diners then enjoyed an ice cream bombe, hot chocolate, coffee or tea, and cake. | *Courtesy anonymous*



Olympic dinner menu, 1911. Dinners in the first-class dining saloon of a White Star liner usually consisted of eleven courses. One first-class menu survives from *Titanic's* last night, and about half of the dishes were the same as shown here.

Hindenburg's passenger quarters featured observation windows on both the port and starboard sides that opened for fresh air and taking photographs. *Courtesy anonymous*

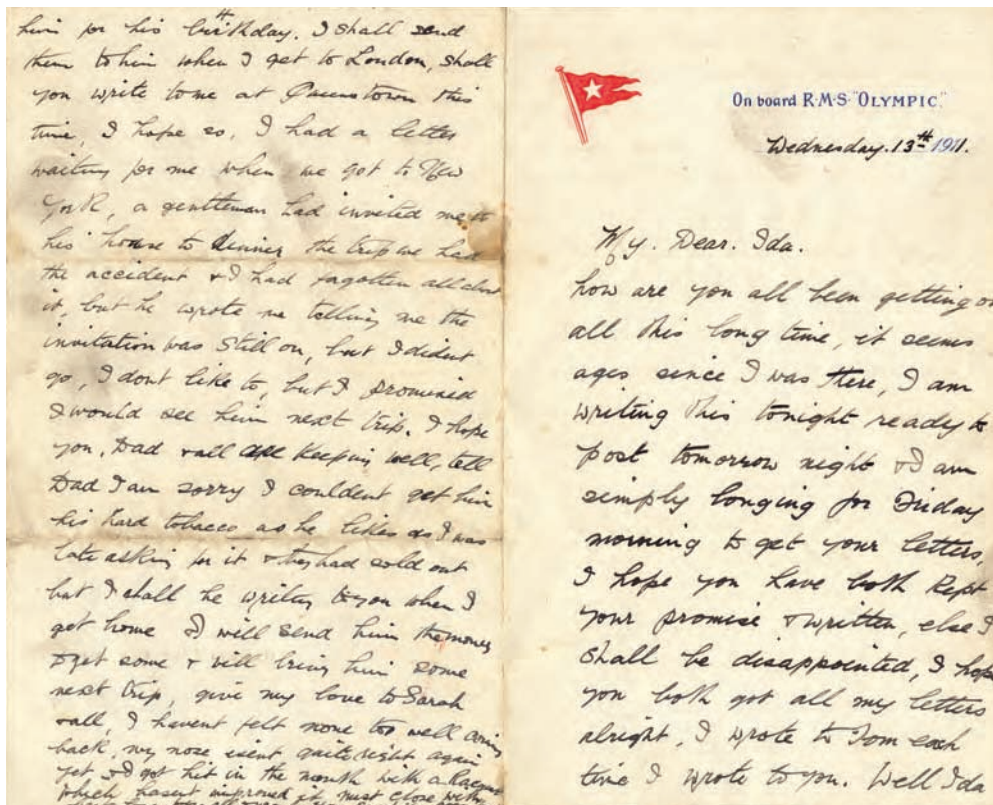


The casual Café Parisien offered *Titanic's* first-class diners an ocean view, something unique for a British liner. | *Courtesy National Museums Northern Ireland*





Hindenburg sixth North America flight card, 1936. German boxer Max Schmeling and movie actor Douglas Fairbanks, both passengers, signed this card for Captain Albert Sammt. In 1937, Sammt survived the *Hindenburg* disaster by jumping from the gondola and climbing through the burning wreckage crashing down around him.



Fred Wright letter, December 1911. Written onboard *Olympic*, Fred Wright's letter to his sister mentions Captain Edward J. Smith, the hymns sung in the Sunday church service, and Wright's interactions with passengers.

Both *Hindenburg* and *Titanic* underwrote expenses by carrying mail. *Hindenburg* was the largest flying post office ever. It provided the first regularly scheduled, entirely by air post service between Europe and North America.

Titanic was the largest floating post office of its day and bore its official status in its name, RMS *Titanic*—Royal Mail Ship *Titanic*. Travelers on both ships enjoyed onboard postal service.



Hindenburg Olympic Games flight card, 1936. A passenger aboard *Hindenburg* wrote this card, postmarked August 1, 1936, while en route to Berlin for the Olympic Games opening ceremony. Bearing the Olympic Games rings on its hull, the gigantic ship flew over Olympic Stadium before dropping twenty bags of mail by parachute at the Berlin airport. | Courtesy anonymous



Hindenburg's Reading and Writing Room offered books, newspapers, a typewriter, and a mail slot on the side of the bookshelf. | Courtesy anonymous

Right: White Star Line's parent company, International Mercantile Marine, published a book of *Ship's Rules and Uniform Regulations* for officers and crew aboard its vessels, including *Titanic*. The book included a section related to "Custody of the Mails." | Courtesy National Archives

6
 and place, he is to give his personal attention to this matter, and to be present with at least one of the whenever Specie is received or discharged, and is not to leave the ship until the Specie is delivered.

23. Custody of Mails.—The Commander shall be responsible for the safe custody and due delivery of the Mails, as well as for the punctual rendering of the various returns required by the English and United States Post Offices. When no Postal Sorting Clerks are carried he shall appoint the Purser to tally, receive, and deliver the Mails, giving and taking a receipt for the same; the same Officer shall see the Mails safely stowed in the Mail room, and when this has been done, and the room secured to the satisfaction of the Commander, shall hand the key or keys of the room to the Commander, in whose custody the keys are to remain until the Mails are delivered to the Post Office Authorities. In the event of more Mails being shipped than the regular Mail rooms will accommodate, the overplus shall be carefully placed in the square of the hatch adjacent, which shall be locked, and the key or keys dealt with as above. The Commander, accompanied by the Purser, shall visit the Mail room once a day whenever circumstances permit of this being done. The Commander shall see that the Mail room is kept clean, dry, and in good order, and shall observe the printed rules issued by the English Postal Authorities as to the disposal of the Homeward Mails. In all cases of doubt, he shall be guided by the Company's Agent. The usual documents are to be made out and sent to the Managers by the Purser upon the ship's arrival at New York and Liverpool or Southampton.

24. Doctor's Duties.—The Doctor is required to visit the various lodging-houses, where intending emigrants are staying, in order to ascertain that their health is such as to warrant their embarking; these visits to be paid at noon the day



Frankfurt postal staff postmarked the mail, sorting and bundling it by type of service and destination. | *Courtesy Archives of the Luftschiffbau Zeppelin Company, Germany*



Mail to be flown by *Hindenburg* often arrived at the Frankfurt post office inside another envelope with instructions for mailing. *Courtesy Archives of the Luftschiffbau Zeppelin Company, Germany*



On its final flight, *Hindenburg* carried over 17,000 pieces of mail, which raised revenue that helped cover operating costs. *Courtesy Archives of the Luftschiffbau Zeppelin Company, Germany*

At least 360 of the 17,609 pieces of mail carried by *Hindenburg* on its fatal flight survived the disaster, much of it charred. Some of *Titanic's* mail may survive at the bottom of the North Atlantic; other paper artifacts have been successfully recovered from the wreck. While *Hindenburg's* crew had

no time to save mail, *Titanic's* mail crew, comprised of both American and British clerks, struggled heroically to save what they could of the 3,364 mailbags while water surged into the mailroom. The North Atlantic claimed the bags and the lives of all the clerks.



Hindenburg was a sub-post office of the Frankfurt post office. Located across from the radio room, it operated only during flight. Postmaster Max Zabel changed the date stamp daily to postmark mail from passengers and crew with the special onboard marking. *Bruce MacPherson, Illustrator*



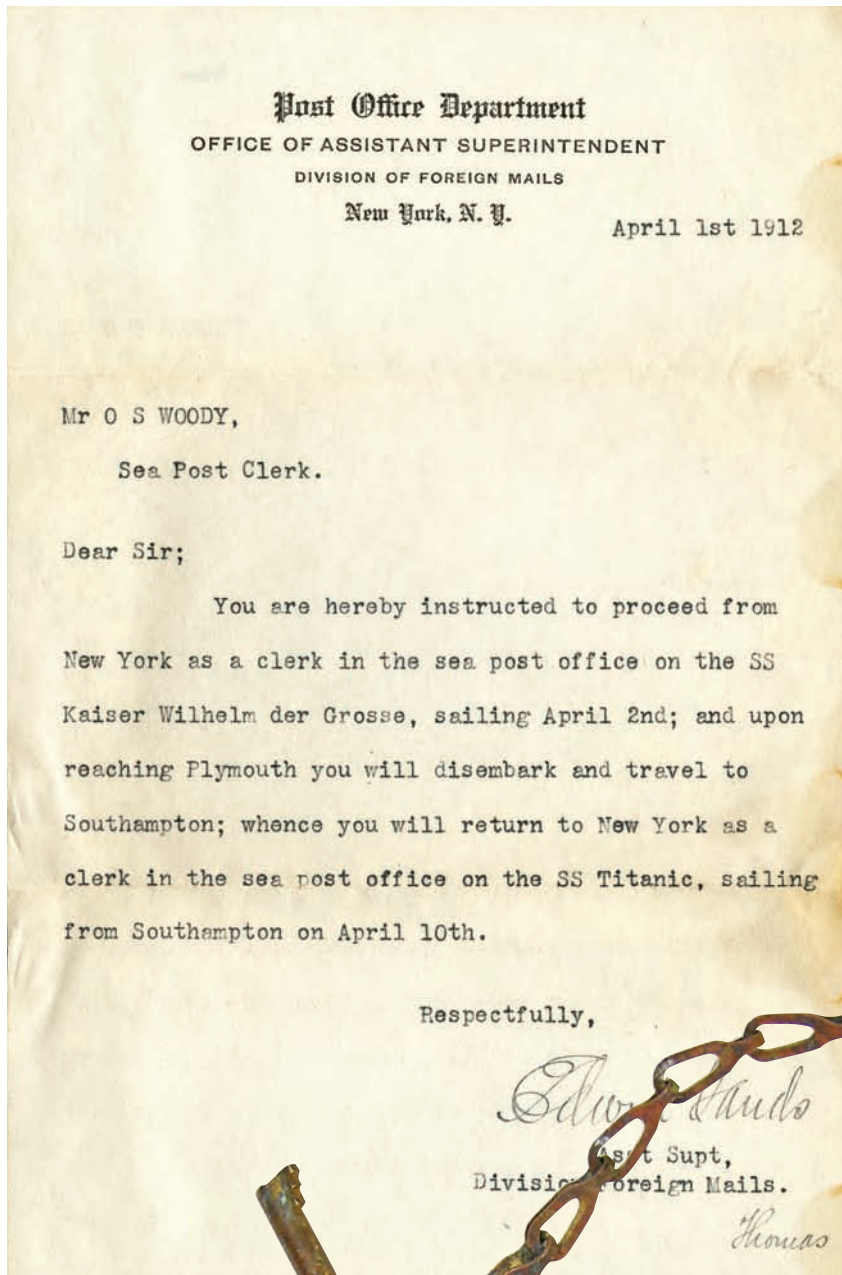
Hindenburg first North America flight cover, 1936. Captain Ernst Lehmann, who died from the 1937 disaster, and Commander Hugo Eckener autographed this envelope to James A. Farley, postmaster general of the United States. Lehmann sent the greeting using *Graf Zeppelin* stationery rather than the *Hindenburg* stationery available for purchase.



Hindenburg first North America flight cover, 1936. Stamp collectors could post mail at the TIPEX postage stamp show in New York City for the first return trip of *Hindenburg*. Commander Hugo Eckener attended the exhibition.



Hindenburg third North America flight card, 1936. Passenger Lord Donegall, a journalist, traveled on the maiden voyage of *Queen Mary* to the United States and returned via *Hindenburg*. *Courtesy anonymous*



Oscar Scott Woody's letter of assignment, 1912. These orders directed American sea post clerk Oscar Scott Woody to travel to Europe and return "in the sea post office on the SS *Titanic*, sailing from Southampton on April 10th." Sea post clerks earned about \$1,000 a year, considered a small fortune by the standards of the time.

Below: Oscar Scott Woody's set of post room keys, 1912. The largest key was probably for the registered mail bags aboard *Titanic*; the smaller keys were likely for desks or cabinets in the post office room. These postal keys and chain were recovered from Woody's body.

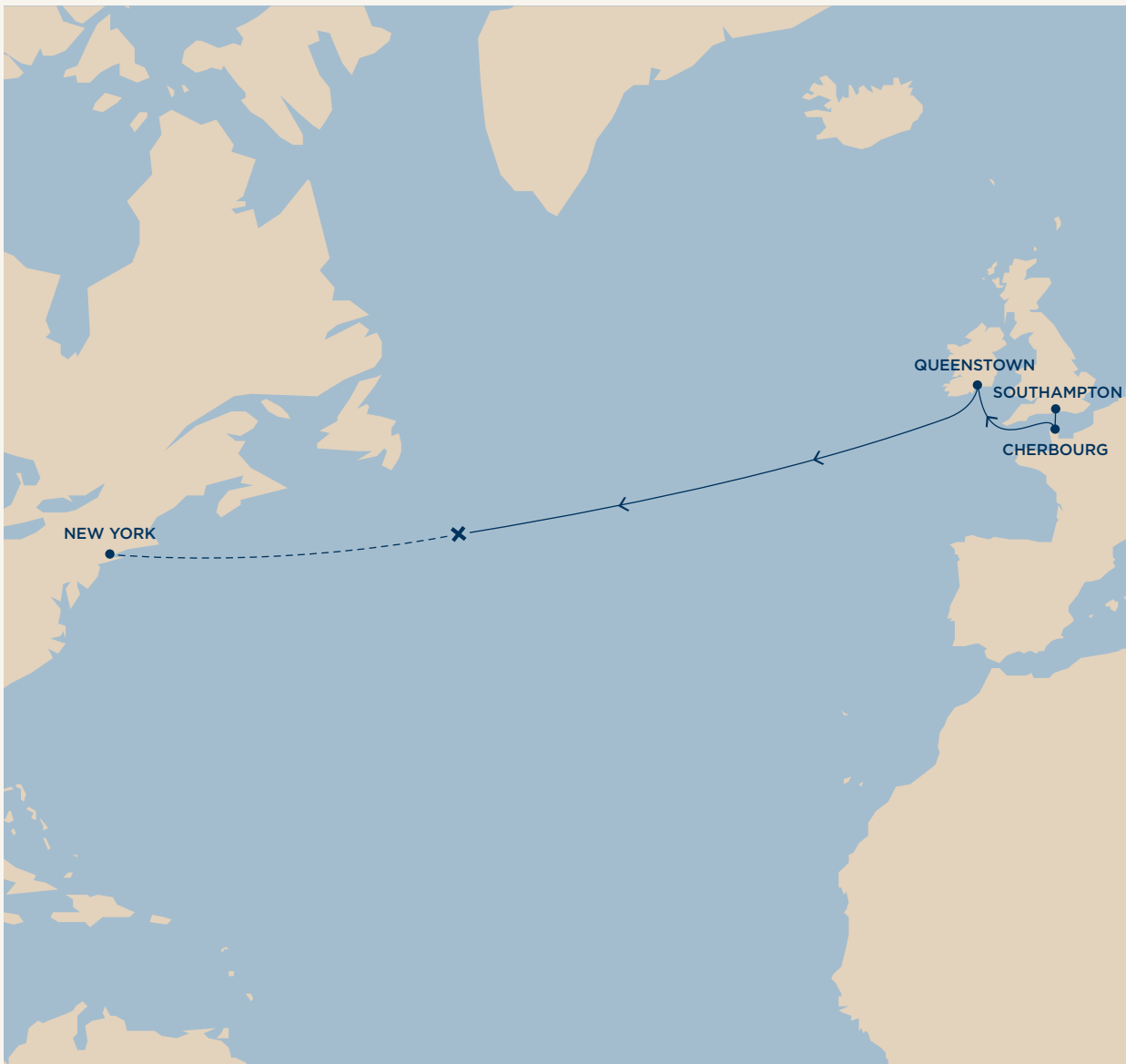


HINDENBURG TRAVEL ROUTE



Following the route posted in the lounge, passenger Peter Belin (see pages 26–27) recorded *Hindenburg's* final flight on his map each day. All log books burned, but Belin's map, folded in his valise, miraculously survived. | Courtesy Harry Lamot Belin and Susan Lenhard Belin

TITANIC TRAVEL ROUTE



On her only voyage, *Titanic* traveled the “Great Circle Route” used by most North Atlantic steamships. Since the disaster, ships follow a more southern route from January to July, when icebergs are common, and the International Ice Patrol monitors ice in the shipping lanes.

At 6:25 p.m. EST on May 6, 1937, while approaching Lakehurst Naval Station's mooring mast between storms, *Hindenburg* burst into flames. Within thirty-four seconds, fire consumed the entire airship. Passengers and crew members jumped from the burning airship, some falling

to their deaths. Thirty-five of the ninety-seven men and women onboard, plus one member of the ground crew, died. The disaster ended transatlantic commercial travel in lighter-than-air vessels. Debates continue regarding the cause of the spark that ignited the hydrogen and outer covering.



Hindenburg final flight Cologne drop card, 1937. Departing Germany for the last time, *Hindenburg* dropped mail bags at Cologne. The mail had been held from the cancelled May Day flight to Berlin, as indicated by the red-boxed marking on the mail.



Customs inspectors examined two kinds of *Hindenburg* salvaged mail: burnt mail and unburnt, uncanceled mail. *Courtesy anonymous*



Hindenburg salvaged serving bowl, 1937. *Hindenburg*'s logo, luxuriously etched into the silver, contrasts with the burnt edges, unexpectedly illustrating the triumph and tragedy of the zeppelin's brief time as North America's first regularly scheduled air service. | *Courtesy Henry Applegate*



Hindenburg salvaged postmark device, 1937. Crew member Rudolf Sauter salvaged this postmark device from the wreckage. The red wooden handle, rubber stamp lettering, and movable date type burned. | *Courtesy anonymous*



Moments after *Hindenburg's* bow lines dropped, eyewitnesses saw a red glow ahead of the upper tail fin, and then the ship burst into flames. | Courtesy National Air and Space Museum



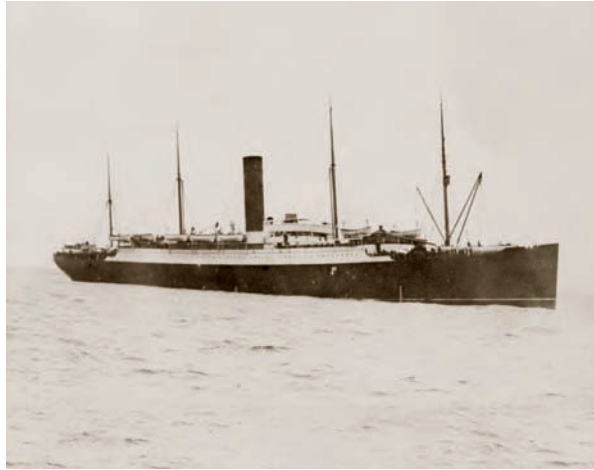
A blaze of hydrogen raged within *Hindenburg*, destroying the ship in thirty-four seconds. The rapidly disintegrating airship crashed to earth tail first. | Courtesy National Air and Space Museum

At 11:40 p.m. ship's time—9:50 p.m. in New York—on the night of April 14, 1912, *Titanic* struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic. The ice buckled hull plates and popped rivets along 300 feet of the vessel's starboard side, breaching six of her watertight compartments. Emotions onboard

staggered from disbelief, to resistance, and finally to panic as passengers and crew comprehended their ship's unimaginable fate. In the radio room, frantic operators sent distress signals. With too few lifeboats, only 712 of the 2,229 people aboard *Titanic* lived to see sunrise on April 15.



A passenger aboard RMS *Carpathia* photographed this iceberg near *Titanic*'s wreck site. | *Courtesy Library of Congress*



Carpathia laden with *Titanic*'s survivors and lifeboats. | *Courtesy Library of Congress*



Harold Bride, *Titanic*'s surviving wireless operator, being carried off *Carpathia* with sprained and frostbitten feet. | *Courtesy Library of Congress*



Sea Post Clerk John Starr March's Pocket Watch, 1912. This watch was found on the body of John Starr March, an American sea post clerk on *Titanic*. It probably stopped when the ship sank in the Atlantic.



Twenty-two *Titanic* passengers huddled in Lifeboat D, the last to leave the sinking ship.
Courtesy National Archives

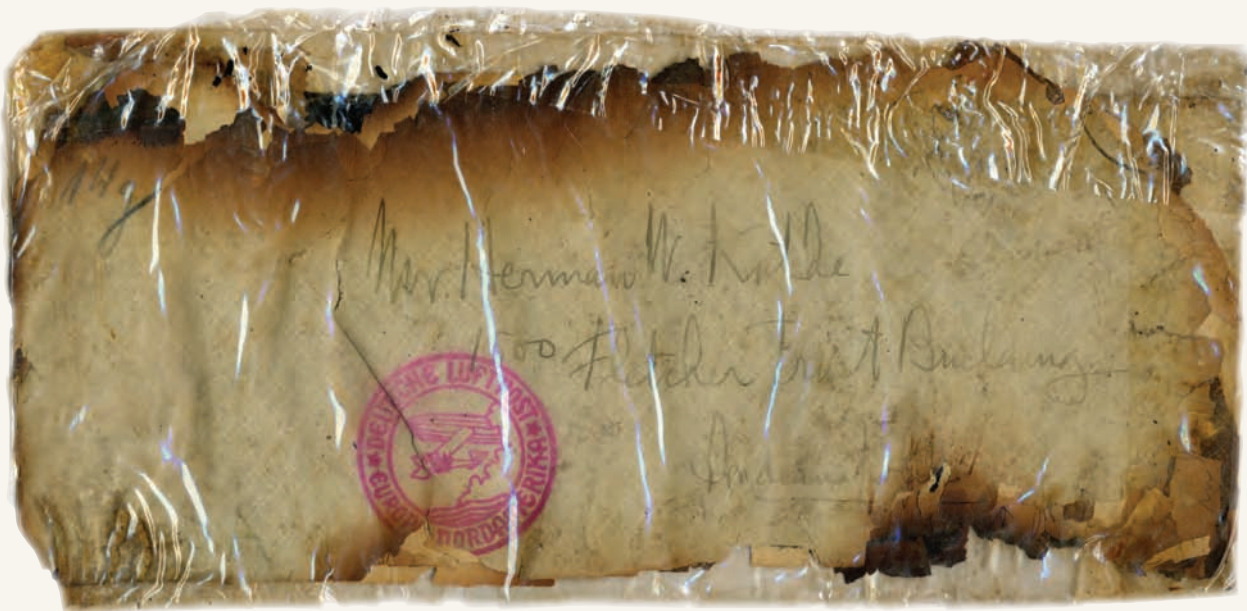


Funeral procession for billionaire *Titanic* victim John Jacob Astor IV, May 5, 1912.
Courtesy Library of Congress



Hindenburg disaster card, 1937. Postal officials salvaged only about 160 burned pieces of mail out of more than 17,000 pieces that had been onboard.

Below: *Hindenburg* disaster cover, 1937. Salvaged from the wreckage, the U.S. Post Office Department enclosed the fragile, charred remains of this cover in a glassine envelope, officially sealing it before delivery to the addressee. Courtesy John Hotchner





Titanic postcard, 1912. Signed "Love, Ugly" by an unknown passenger, this card addressed to "Miss Gwen" was postmarked aboard *Titanic* and sent ashore with the mail, probably at Queenstown, Ireland, the ship's last port of call before heading westbound across the Atlantic. The picture side of this postcard is shown on page 6. Courtesy Dr. Edward and Joanne Dauer

Form No. 1-100-2.2.09. Sent date 17 APR 1912

The Marconi International Marine Communication Company, Ltd.
WATERGATE HOUSE, YORK BUILDINGS, ADELPHI, LONDON, W.C.

No. 10/14 **CARPATHIA** OFFICE 17 APR 1912 19

Prefix Code **CARPATHIA** Words 3

Office of Origin

Service Instructions: sea news

CHARGES TO PAY.	
Marconi Charge ...	50
Other Line Charge...	18/9
Delivery Charge ...	
Total	68/9

Office sent to Time sent By whom sent
sea news 6/3 m.e.a. 7:10 p.m. J.C.

READ THE CONDITIONS PRINTED ON THE BACK OF THE FORM.

To: Stengskild Newark N.J.
Both on Carpathia
L E Henry Stengel

PLEASE ASK FOR OFFICIAL RECEIPT.

CONINGHAM BROS., Printers, etc., Limehouse, E.

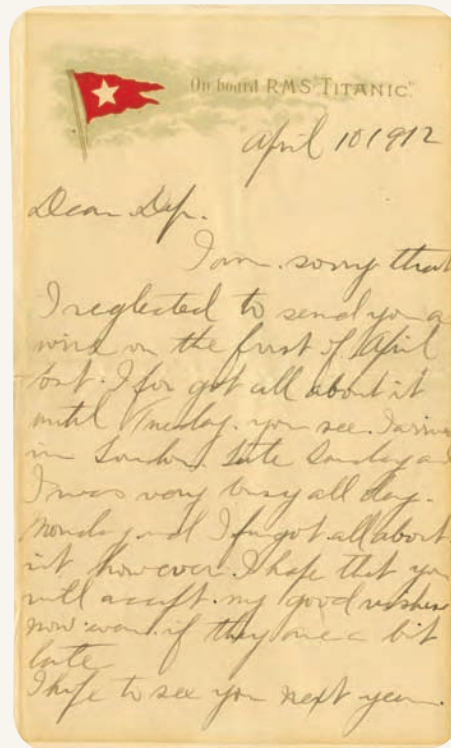
Telegram receipt from *Carpathia*, 1912. First-class passenger Charles Stengel of Newark, New Jersey, sent his children a telegram from *Carpathia* to say that he and his wife were safe. The ship's wireless operators transmitted only brief passenger messages, angering reporters seeking information. | Courtesy Brian, Maria, and Alexander Green

Hindenburg disaster cover, 1937. Passenger Hermann Doehner posted this envelope onboard, addressed to himself. In Germany on business, he was returning home to Mexico City with his wife and three children. He and his daughter died in the disaster. Courtesy Dr. Edward and Joanne Dauer

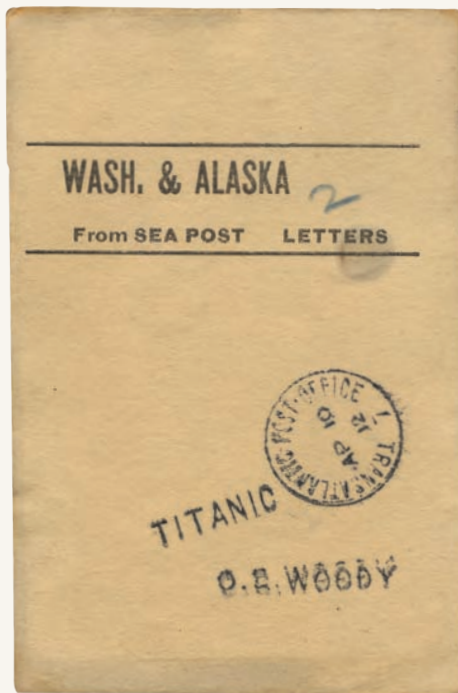


Hindenburg disaster card, 1937. A New York paquebot mark cancelled 176 salvaged unburned pieces of mail four days after the disaster. Having been stored in a protective, sealed container while awaiting postal service on the return flight, this uncanceled mail survived intact. Courtesy anonymous





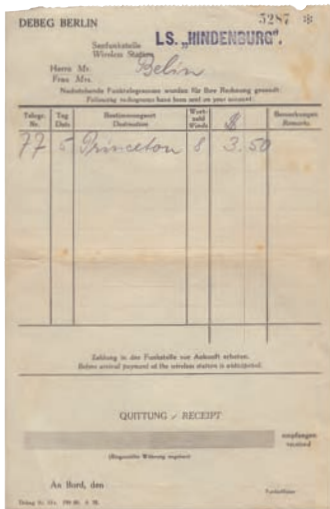
Titanic cover, 1912. First-class passenger George E. Graham, a Canadian returning from a European buying trip for Eaton's department store, addressed this folded letter on *Titanic* stationery. Destined for Berlin, the envelope was postmarked on the ship and sent ashore with the mail, probably at Cherbourg, France. The morgue ship *Mackay-Bennett* recovered Graham's body.



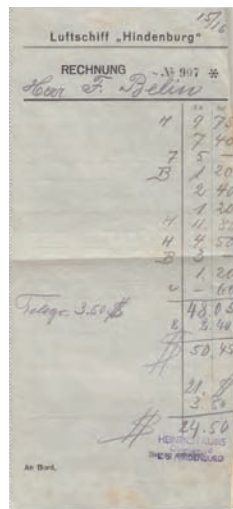
Titanic facing slip, 1912. Found on Oscar Scott Woody's body nine days after *Titanic*'s sinking, this facing slip bears one of the clearest surviving strikes of the ship's onboard postmark ("Transatlantic Post Office 7"). Clerks placed facing slips on bundles of mail to indicate their destination.

Returning from his studies in Paris, Peter Belin (1913–1982) was the only resident of Washington, D.C., aboard *Hindenburg's* final flight. Standing at the windows during the approach, he grabbed a post as the floor tilted and other passengers fell. With crew members, Belin rushed to the windows, but the window shut and jammed. Frantic, he broke the celluloid pane and jumped. His horrified parents watched the disaster, believing their son could not survive. His distinctive whistle brought them together in the midst of chaos. Belin later served in the navy, retiring as a captain.

What was in Belin's pockets when he jumped? An envelope and a roll of film. Having settled his tab with the chief steward, he had pocketed an envelope with receipts for onboard purchases, including postage stamps, beverages, and a telegram. Although his Leica camera was destroyed in the crash, Belin had removed the last roll of film and dropped it in his pocket. As a result, some of the last photographs taken from *Hindenburg* are seen here for the first time.



Receipt for telegram with *Hindenburg's* one-line hand stamp.



Receipt for telegram with onboard receipt for drinks in the bar.



Hindenburg's shadow passes over the landscape.



Lakehurst naval base and hangar in New Jersey.



Invoice for onboard purchases.



Passengers at *Hindenburg's* promenade deck.



Landing crews and the landing flag at the mooring circle.



Peter Belin's French identity card.



S.S. *Hansa* baggage claim check.

Below: *Hindenburg's* telegram envelope.



One of the previously mailed envelopes to Belin salvaged from the wreckage.

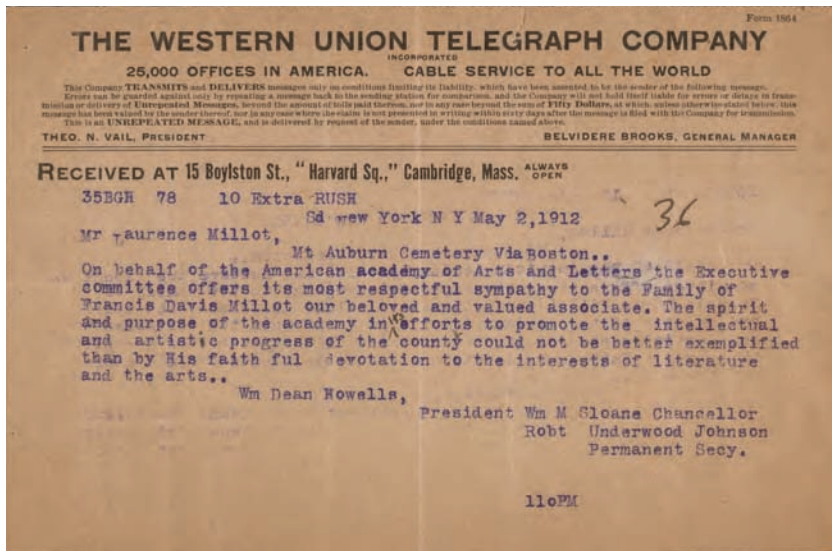
All images courtesy Harry Lammot Belin and Susan Lenhard Belin

What items packed in Belin's valise survived the inferno? H. Rauber, the landing agent for American Zeppelin Transport, Inc., and Hamburg-American Line, contacted Belin to return his salvaged possessions and ask him to identify his property from among unclaimed possessions. Fortunately, the inscribed pocket watch that Belin lost from his waistcoat pocket during his escape was found still operational the next day in the wreckage. Although no

intact baggage survived, charred remnants from his valise included his French identification card, leather wallet with documents, receipts and mail from his stay in Paris, checkbook, nine S.S. *Hansa* baggage claim checks for shipped luggage, one telegram envelope, and the map he used to mark the flight's route (see page 16). To survive the catastrophe, these paper items must have been packed tightly together and perhaps even doused with ballast water.

Noted American artist Francis (“Frank”) D. Millet died on *Titanic*. The Millet Family Papers at the Smithsonian Archives of American Art contain three folders of letters addressed to Lily Millet (his widow) and Laurence Millet (his son) in the days after the sinking. As the largest intact archive of *Titanic* condolence letters, they offer insights

into how the disaster was perceived and communicated by high society in England and America. They also show the changing etiquette of bereavement in the Edwardian era. Although intimate personal letters such as notes of sympathy were expected to be handwritten, the rising popularity of typewriters and telegrams is evident.



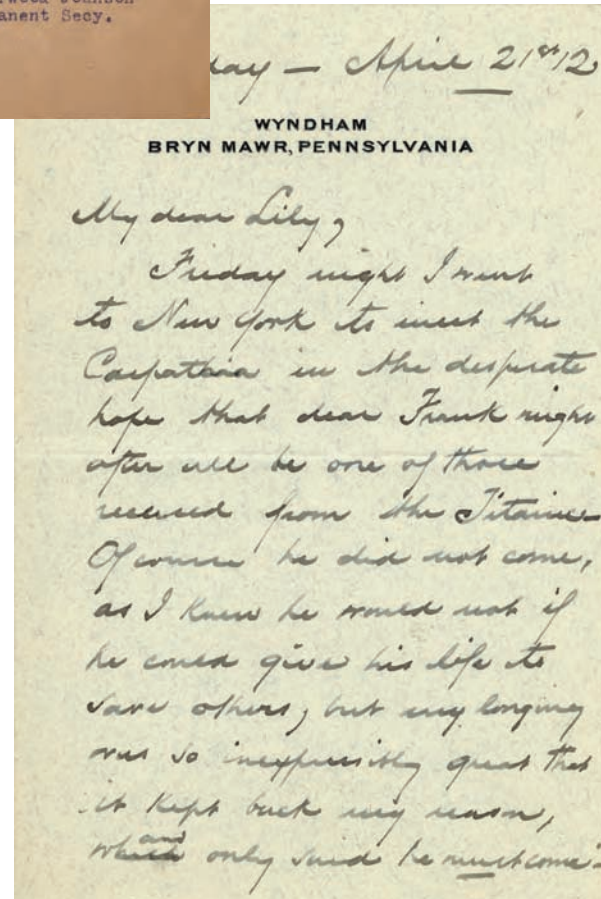
Condolence telegram, 1912

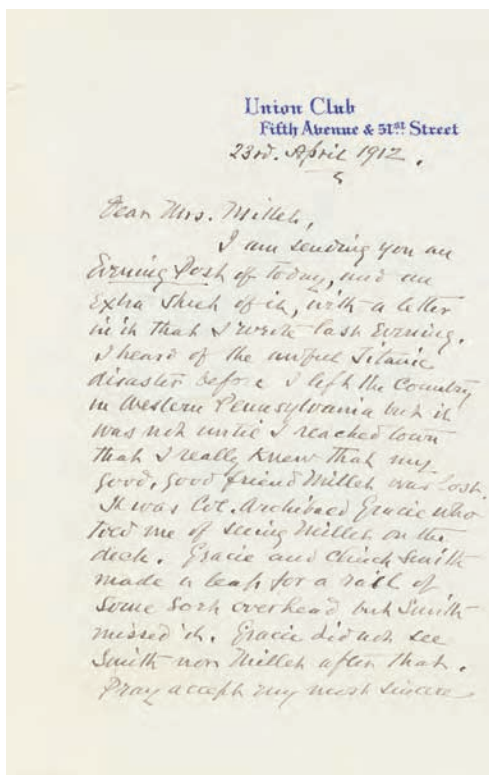
Below: Theodore Ely condolence letter, 1912. Confusion reigned after *Titanic*'s sinking as wireless operators and the press broadcast rumors. Thirty thousand people—including reporters, relatives of *Titanic* passengers, and the curious—greeted the rescue ship *Carpathia* when she docked in New York on April 18, 1912.



Courtesy Library of Congress

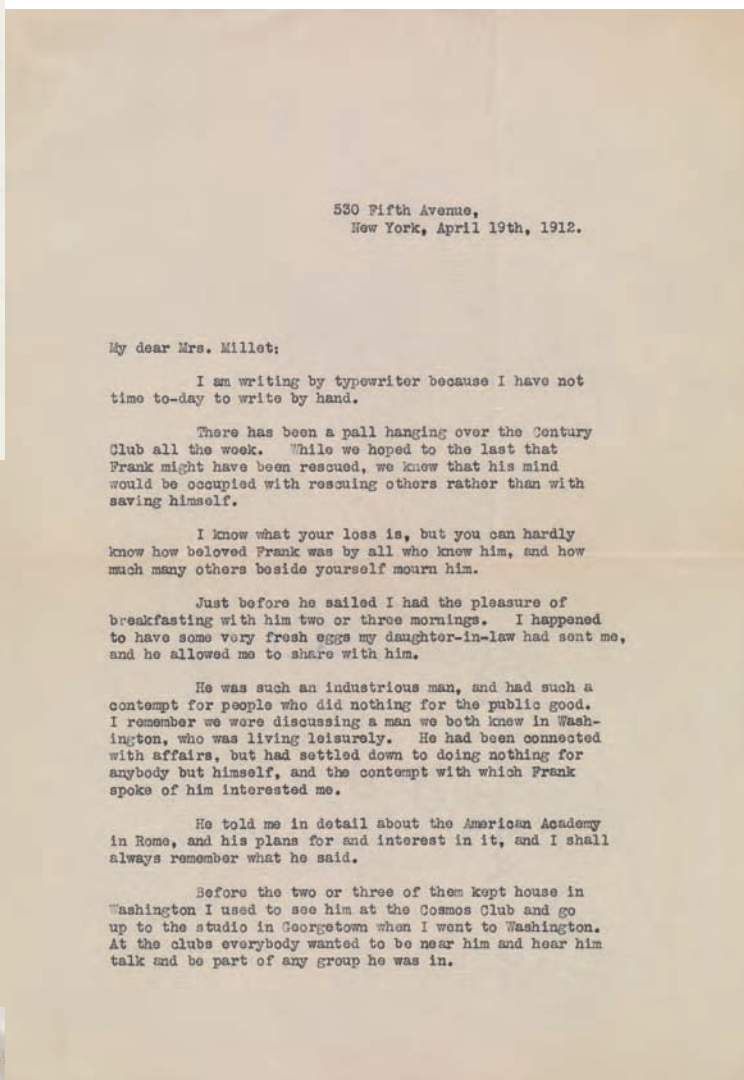
“I went to New York to meet the *Carpathia* in the desperate hope that dear Frank might after all be one of those rescued from the *Titanic*.”





Left: William A. Coffin condolence letter, 1912. Details of the disaster spread quickly in upper-class circles. *Titanic* survivors J. Bruce Ismay and Colonel Archibald Gracie as well as victims John Jacob Astor IV and James Clinch Smith were all members of New York's elite, all-male Union Club.

“Col. Archibald Gracie told me of seeing Millet on the deck. Gracie and Clinch Smith made a leap . . . Gracie did not see Smith nor Millet after that.”



Right: Algernon S. Frissell condolence letter, 1912. By highlighting (or inventing) instances in which men willingly gave their lives so that women and children might live, the popular press extolled the bravery and chivalry of *Titanic*'s male passengers, especially those in first class.

“We knew that his mind would be occupied with rescuing others rather than with saving himself.”



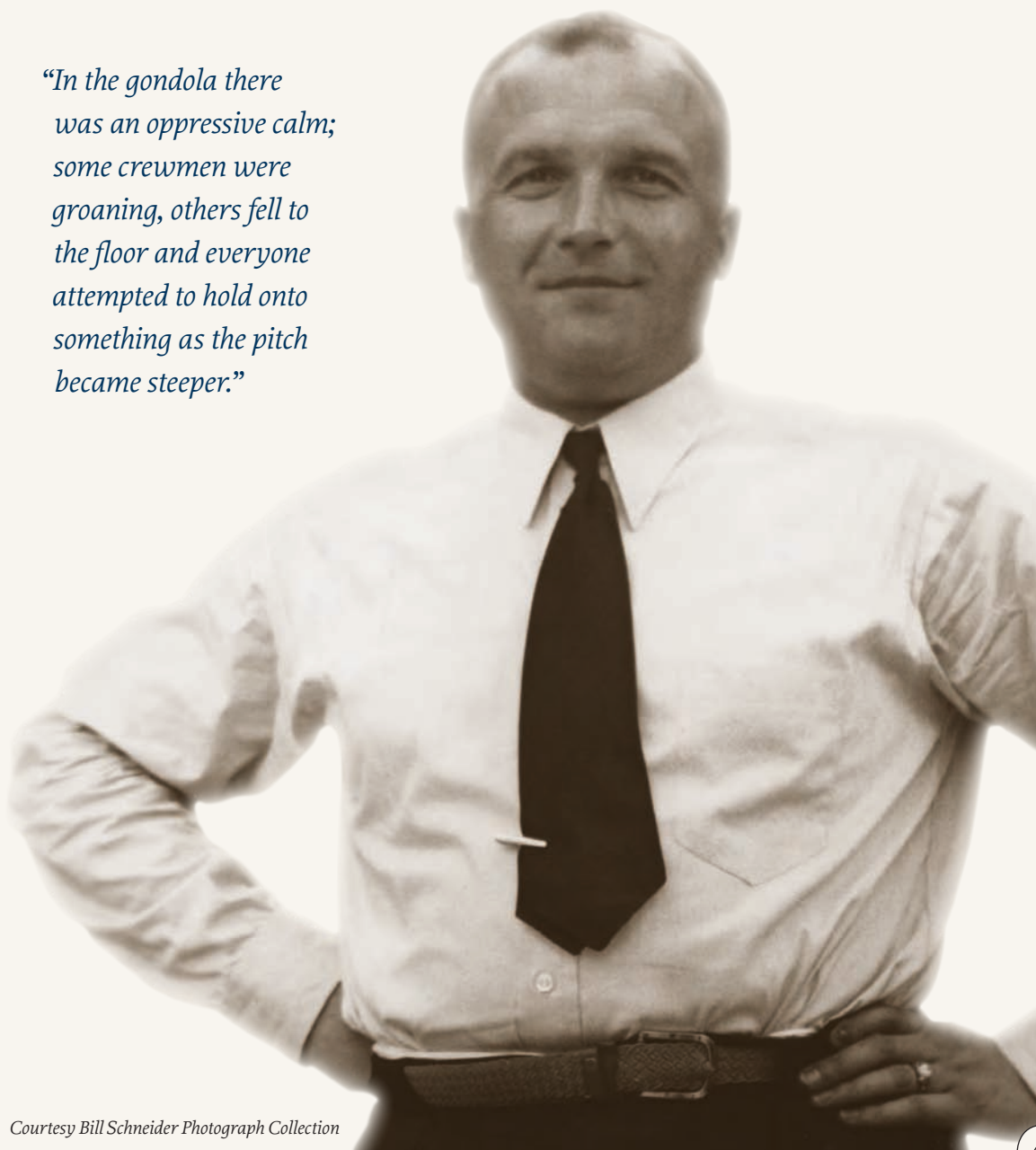
Left: *Mackay-Bennett*, a transatlantic telegraph cable-laying ship, retrieved 190 bodies, including that of Frank Millet, from the *Titanic* wreck site and transported them to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where families waited to identify and bury their relatives. *Courtesy Library of Congress*

All condolence letters courtesy Millet Family Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

CAPTAIN HEINRICH BAUER (1902–1979) Bauer, a young *Hindenburg* captain, controlled the water ballast during the final approach. He tried to level the flaming ship to soften its landing. At the instant the landing wheel

bounced, he jumped from the gondola’s port side window and ran to a place of safety. He suffered minor burns but returned to rescue passengers. After the disaster, Bauer worked in aviation and automobile industries.

“In the gondola there was an oppressive calm; some crewmen were groaning, others fell to the floor and everyone attempted to hold onto something as the pitch became steeper.”



Courtesy Bill Schneider Photograph Collection

SECOND OFFICER CHARLES HERBERT LIGHTOLLER (1874-1952) Lightoller supervised the launch of *Titanic's* port side lifeboats. After the vessel sank, he clung to an overturned lifeboat until rescued. As *Titanic's* senior surviving officer, he gave crucial testimony at the British

and American inquiries. Lightoller commanded three Royal Navy ships during World War I, but the White Star Line never promoted him to captain because of his association with the *Titanic* disaster.

★
"I never allowed my thoughts to dwell on . . . those ghastly moments."



PASSENGER NELSON MORRIS (1891-1955) Armour meat packing executive Nelson Morris and business associate Burtis J. Dolan, both from the Chicago area, had watched lightning from the starboard passenger lounge

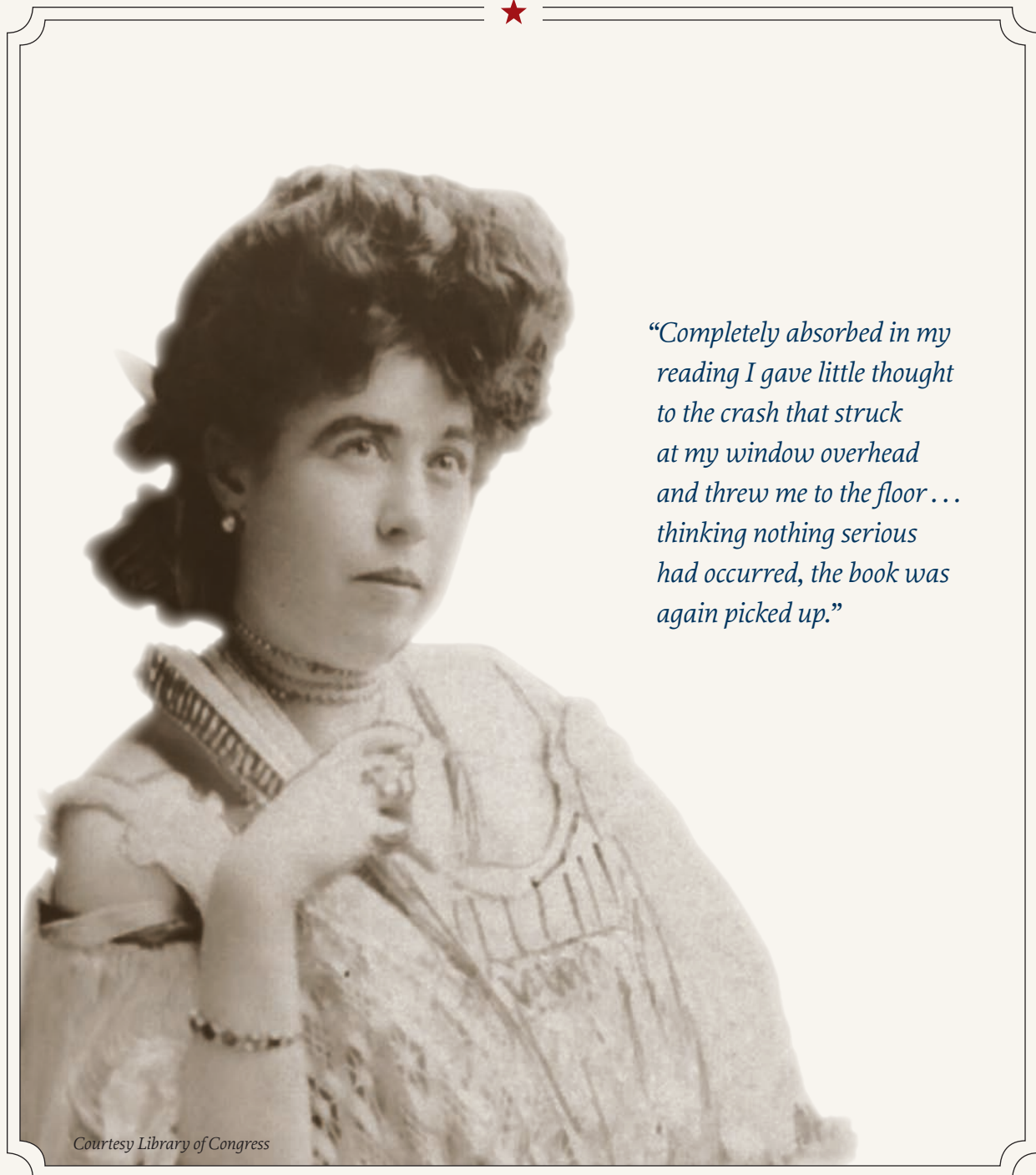
before *Hindenburg's* stern dropped sharply. The friends jumped from the flaming ship into a fiery tangle of girders. Morris survived, but Dolan became fatally trapped in the wreck. He secured financial support for Dolan's family.

“The most remarkable thing that I know in my life, I took metal rods an inch thick in my hands and I broke them. They broke like paper.”



FIRST CLASS PASSENGER MARGARET TOBIN BROWN (1867–1932) A Colorado mining fortune transformed Margaret Brown from the child of impoverished Irish immigrants into a Denver socialite. Saved in Lifeboat 6, she raised \$10,000 for *Titanic*'s destitute third-class passengers

even before *Carpathia* docked in New York. She ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate in 1914 as a suffragist, and was awarded the French *Légion d'honneur* for her relief work after World War I.



CABIN BOY WERNER FRANZ (1922–) When the flaming *Hindenburg* sharply tilted, water from a ruptured ballast miraculously drenched fourteen-year-old cabin boy Werner Franz. Soaked and briefly protected from the flames, he kicked open a supply hatch and jumped. The gondola’s bounce provided the seconds he needed to escape the conflagration virtually unharmed. Franz spent his life after World War II working with precision instruments.

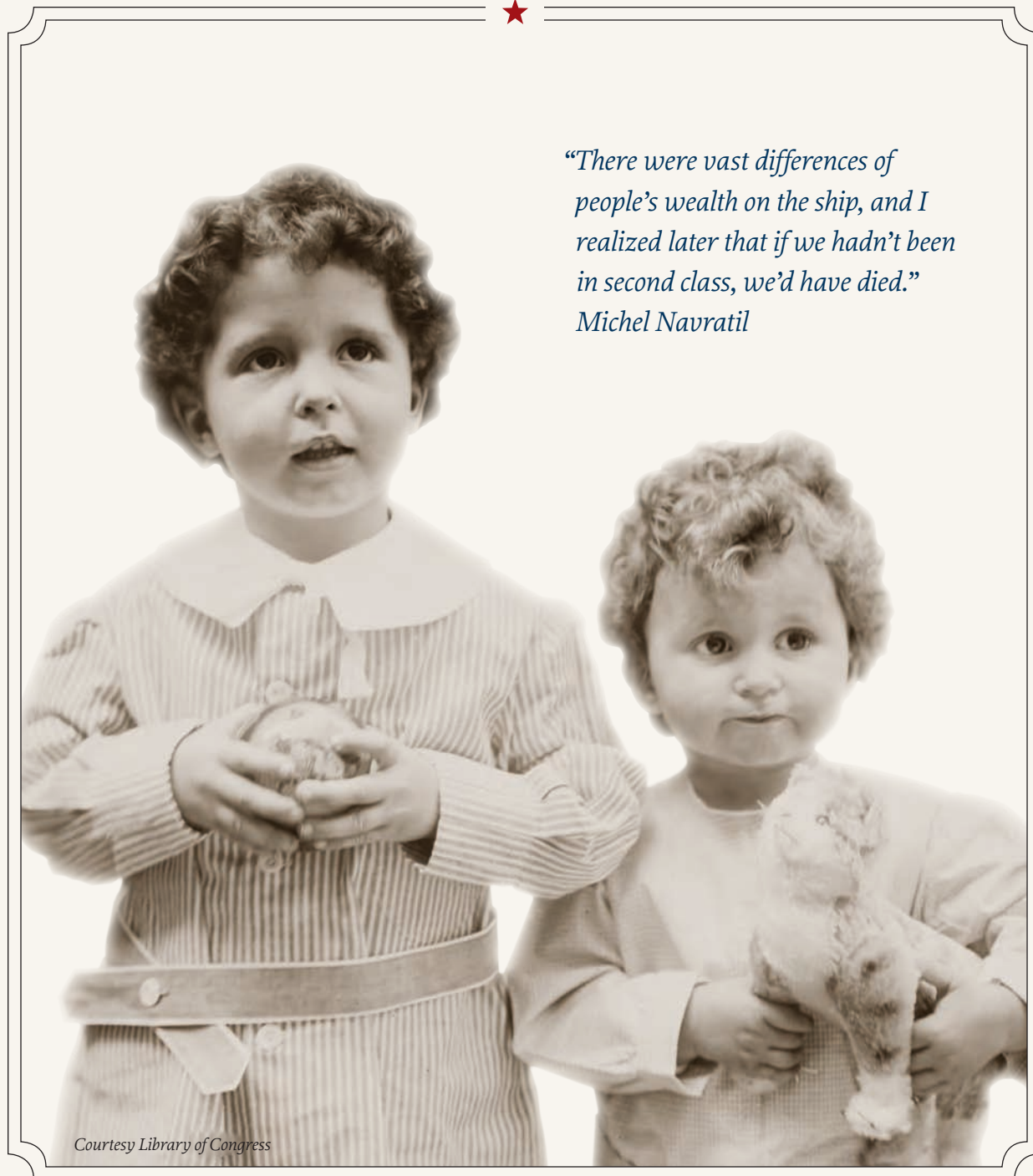
Hindenburg Crew Survivors, Lakehurst Naval Air Station, May 11th, 1937. Left to Right: Max Henneberg (steward); Fritz Deeg (steward); Max Zabel (navigator and postmaster); Jonny Dörflein (mechanic); Severin Klein (steward); Eduard Boetius (navigator); Egon Schweikardt (radio operator); Xaver Maier (chief cook); Werner Franz (cabin boy); Rudolf Sauter (chief engineer); Wilhelm Balla (steward); Eugen Nunnenmacher (steward); Albert Stöffler (pastry chef); Wilhelm Steeb (apprentice mechanic); Heinrich Kubis (chief steward); Captain Heinrich Bauer (watch officer); Kurt Bauer (elevatorman); Eugen Schäuble (engineering officer); Helmut Lau (helmsman); Alfred Grözinger (cook); German Zettel (lead mechanic).

“When the next Zeppelin is ready, may I fly again with her?”



PASSENGERS MICHEL (1908–2001) AND EDMOND (1910–1953) NAVRATIL The toddler Navratil brothers were placed in *Titanic*'s last lifeboat and arrived in New York as "Louis and Lolo, the *Titanic* orphans." When their

mother spotted their photograph in a French newspaper, it was learned that they had been kidnapped by their father and were traveling under assumed names. From 1992 until his death, Michel (left) was *Titanic*'s last male survivor.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



FURTHER READING

Airships: *Hindenburg* and other Zeppelins
www.airships.net

Navy Lakehurst
Historical Society, Inc.
www.nlhs.com

Titanic Inquiry Project
www.titanicinquiry.org

Zeppelin Study Group
www.ezep.de

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Find additional resources at
www.postalmuseum.si.edu



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Cheryl R. Ganz and Daniel Piazza, Curators

Titanic leaves Belfast, Ireland, for her sea trials, April 2, 1912. | Courtesy National Museums Northern Ireland





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