

Larger Than Life: *Titanic* And Her Name Heritage

J. Joseph Edgette
Widener University

Ranked as one of the worst maritime disasters of all time, the well-known story of the tragic maiden voyage of R.M.S. *Titanic* has been thoroughly researched and retold periodically with renewed interest through means of popular culture and literature. This article identifies, discusses, and analyzes pertinent observations that, in turn, reveal specific patterns regarding the practice of names and naming that came to light during the process of examining the gravemarkers and cenotaphs of her passengers. Beginning with the origin of the ship's name, the evolution of her nicknames, and the patterns revealed by the names of her first-class passengers, a case can be made for the role of class distinction in the preservation and replication of names held by America's aristocracy. Sources of data were confined to primary documents, archival materials, and field notes and photographs taken during the last five years spanning the United States and Canada.

Onomastics is an area of study that attracts practitioners and scholars such as linguists, genealogists, historians, geographers, psychologists, anthropologists, and those having literary interests, to name a few. One can make a case for the fact that it is highly interdisciplinary and multifaceted, not forgetting its high interest appeal. As folklorists, we too discover pertinent and relative information that exudes characteristics associated with onomastics and related indicators in the course of our research. Quite often, we expose specific tendencies and patterns while engaged in fieldwork that pertain to the whole realm of names and naming, an evolutionary process spanning time, place, and culture that implies race, nationality, and ethnicity.¹

Names 54:2 (June 2006): 121-146

ISSN:0027-7738

Copyright 2006 by The American Name Society

Having spent the last several years actively engaged in researching and studying various aspects of the R. M. S. *Titanic* catastrophe of 1912, numerous patterns have come to light that are significant to the study of onomastics. The purpose here is to present these revelations thus bringing out interesting and pertinent findings with regard to the whole practice of names and naming as reflected by those associated, either directly or indirectly, with *Titanic*.

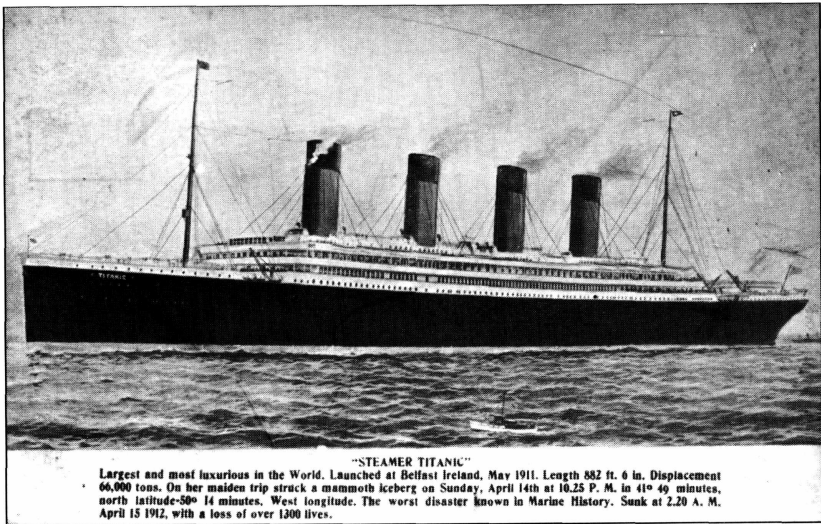


Figure 1 R.M.S. *Titanic*. 1912 Postcard from author's collection

The logical beginning would be her name and the various nicknames² that have likewise become familiar to the masses. Secondly, the names of her more famous passengers, by providing the naming practices of their families, will be presented and analyzed. Finally, the strange phenomenon occurring among first-class passengers of the ending of a family line resulting in the cessation of its usage by generations to follow will be posited and discussed. Interwoven throughout will be delicate threads tying in

evidentiary markers, both literal and figurative, to provide documentation for the points made.

Titanic

Knowledge of Greek and Latin often aids in deciphering and determining the definition of words. Linguists use affixes (prefixes and suffixes) as pertinent, meaningful clues in establishing meaning. One example is that of the suffix “*IC*” whose denotation is “*pertaining to.*” In the case of *Titanic* the interpretation is “*pertaining to Titan.*” Do not overlook the fact that *Titanic* had two sisters, *Olympic* and *Britannic*. Literally then, when applied to the sister ships, *Olympic*—*pertaining to Olympus* and *Britannic*—*pertaining to Britain*, a pattern emerges.³ However, what is not commonly known is that *Britannic* was not the original name selected for the third ship in the White Star Line’s new, modern Olympic class fleet. Rather, the name was supposed to be *Gigantic*—*pertaining to Giants*. Second thoughts convinced the Company to substitute *Britannic* in light of the ill-fated maiden voyage of *Titanic*. Why and how would this occur? In light of the tragic foundering of *Titanic*, the size of the vessel and its association with safety, which turned out to be a false sense of security after all, the White Star could not afford to create a negative mental image that would necessarily drive business to other lines. The general public had already experienced the shock and horror of the former event and did not need another reminder with a similar name that would conjure up negative impressions. However, it is through the recognition, analysis, and evaluation of an obvious, observable pattern that raises interesting and thought-provoking issues, concerns, and even detectable observations.

In order to place the *story* of *Titanic* into some perspective (in order to justify her name and those of her two other sister ships), it is both fitting and appropriate to provide a very brief description of the impetus behind the construction of the three largest ships ever to be built up to that time in maritime history.

In 1902, American millionaire and financier, J. Pierpont Morgan wanted to do for shipping what Peter A. B. Widener had done for rail transportation in Philadelphia (Wheeler 1973 and Burt 1963). With the creation of the International Mercantile Marine Company (1902-19270) Morgan would seize first place among the competing shipping companies vying for North Atlantic trade and thereby creating a price-fixing monopoly (McCaughan 1998, 53). Further, to compete with Cunard's express turbine liners, *Mauretania* and *Lusitania* (McCaughan, 43), Morgan contracted with Edward James Harland and Gustav Wolff, Ltd. (Heyer 1995, 9) in Belfast to construct three new ships that would be the largest ever built; thus, these additions to White Star's fleet would ensure the planned monopoly. The shipbuilding company's chief designer was Thomas Andrews who was called upon to design the three huge ships. It fell to J. Bruce Ismay, White Star's managing director, to name the ships: *Olympic*, *Titanic*, and *Gigantic*. Ismay⁴ was well educated and had received a thorough background in the classics (Wells 1977). Because the size of these ships was of Olympic proportions, Ismay turned to the genealogy of Greek mythology. These names would be officially given at the time of each ship's launching. Prior to that event, *Titanic* was known in the shipyard as simply "Boat 401" the successive number of the vessel under construction by the Harland and Wolff Shipbuilding Company.

The *Olympic*, first to be built (1911)(McCaughan), was named for the Olympian gods of ancient Greece.⁵ The second sister ship, *Titanic* (1912), was named for the Titans who parented the Olympian gods (Herzberg 1935). The third sister, *Gigantic* (1914), was named for the race of gigantic beings who essentially begat the Titans (Cotterell and Storm 1999, 88).

Having been given names based upon deities rooted in polytheism, the ships would clearly exhibit appropriate characteristics to live up to the names given to each. Although these names were "officially" recognized in maritime and corporate circles, there soon emerged six other names that

would specifically attach themselves to the *Titanic*. These names would become her nicknames, the sources of which will be named and explained here.

Her Nicknames

Broadsides⁶ were commonly used in England and the United States as well as other countries providing transatlantic transportation beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and continuing through present times. Today, these are the large poster size cardboard advertisements so frequently seen at travel agencies.

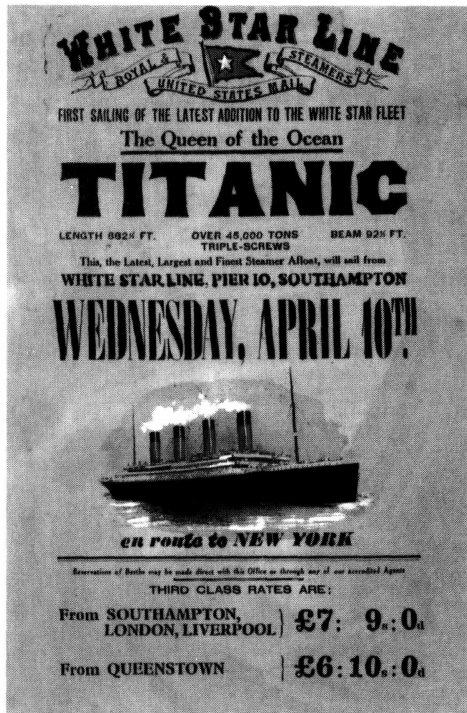


Figure 2 Broadside. Postcard from author's collection

As a result, the names associated with *Titanic* quickly became her nicknames used by the general public. The press would create and also use them when referring to her in

newspaper articles (Meredith 2003, 16). Most common among *Titanic's* nicknames were *Wonder Ship*, *Ship of Dreams*, *Millionaires' Special*, *Queen of the Ocean*, *World's Largest Ship*, and *Unsinkable*. Though not chosen at random, the nicknames for this steamship were reflective of her identity in terms of her construction, size, power, passenger manifest, and indestructibility. What follows is the derivation or origin of each of these names that would characterize her to the general public who were in awe of her very being.

The moniker *Wonder Ship* was appropriate to best describe the wonder with which most people reacted to *Titanic*. Almost fairytale-like, the four-funneled, triple-screw floating city captured the imagination and provided the same type of excitement that any *märchen*⁷ brings to the listener or reader. She was clearly unparalleled by any other ship of her time, save her sisters, in size, accommodations, and luxury. Thousands turned out for her departure at Southampton on 10 April 1912. The press at the time placed long, descriptive reports of the wondrous details of the greatest ship ever to sail on the water. Shouts of envy and shrieks of amazement filled the dockside. Though the ship was in front of their eyes, witnesses could not help but be amazed at its surrealistic presence in their harbor. A wonder ship she was, the eighth wonder of the world. Many marveled as to how a ship so large could actually float in the water.

The *Ship of Dreams*, a second common nickname for *Titanic* was also an appropriate one; for, like a dream she did not seem real. In fact, many questioned the veracity of her descriptive depiction with respect to its authenticity and accuracy. Why a ship a dreams? All great ventures begin with a dream or a vision. The *Ship of Dreams* was no exception. During the summer of 1907 a dinner party was hosted at the London mansion of Lord James Pirrie, Chairman of Harland & Wolf shipbuilders, and attended by J. Bruce Ismay, Director of the White Star Line, and other company officials. The two men conjectured the possibility of building a never-before colossal

ship that would rival any owned by Cunard (Brewster and Coulter 6). Because of the amicable and strong business relationship with J.P. Morgan, the idea was pursued and soon became a reality. The great French palace known as *Versailles* had already inspired architects and artists worldwide. So too, it would become a primary model on which to design the lavish, spectacular, and richly furnished interiors of the rooms aboard *Titanic* (Brewster and Coulter 1998, 28).

For any viewer who saw Cameron's recent film, *Titanic*, the richness and splendor of the first class lounge exemplified her magnificence. It was decorated to look like a room from the famous French estate. It had elaborately carved paneling and a white marble fireplace on which stood a classical statue called *Artemis of Versailles*. The grand staircase leading down to the restaurant for the last dinner aboard *Titanic* was in every sense of the word, grand. Having hand-polished oak paneling and gilded stair railings, its top landing contained a panel on which a large clock, supported by two classical figures, stood. These figures symbolized *Honor and Glory Crowning Time*. The private lounges set aside for first-class men and women, the library, the Turkish bath, the Gymnasium, together with the first class cabins and suites, would only rival the most splendid hotels in Europe. The restaurants were likewise the finest in their accoutrements and rivaled only the best that would be found on land (Brewster and Coulter 32).

The expectation was for the most luxurious accommodations to be made available to first-class passengers; however, second- and third-class passengers were treated to accommodations and surroundings that would rival that of the upper class on competing shipping lines. Aboard *Titanic*, those traveling third-class were referred to as third-class passengers not the misleading, *steerage*⁸ (Merideth 243). Even the quarters reserved for crew members were not as crowded and without comfort as were found on ships of other lines. When viewing the photographs of the interior taken by Father

Frank Browne, S.J.⁹ how quickly the thought of a ship disappears, for each room causes the viewer to mentally gravitate towards a building that would typically come to mind when seeing such accommodations. Was it a floating palace as it showed every sign of its being? Yet, this was a ship; but it was the *Ship of Dreams*.

Millionaires' Special, a third *Titanic* nickname, is one that is directly attributed to the most notable and wealthy of her passengers. The overall cost of the ship was set at \$7.5 million in 1910, an equivalent of \$400 million today. It has been reported that the total net worth of those traveling first class was set at \$600 million or \$9.8 billion today. The long litany of names: John Jacob Astor, George Dunton Widener, Benjamin Guggenheim, Isador Straus, Archibald Butt, Molly Brown, William C. Carter, Francis Millet, Archibald Gracie, Emma Bucknell, Charlotte Cardeza, John Ryerson, Charles Melville Hays, William Dulles, Harry Molson, Frederick Maxfield Hoyt, John Borland Thayer, Dorothy Gibson, Countess of Rothes, William T. Stead, Sir Cosmo Duff, Thomas Pears, Hugh Woolner, Emil Tausigg, Austin Van Billiard among a host of others was published and made available to all first and second class passengers.¹⁰ It is interesting to note that many of the families from the United States were very involved with transactions on Wall Street. In fact, had it not been for illnesses, both J. P. Morgan and Milton S. Hershey, the chocolate king, would have also been included on the list of the wealthiest passengers and most likely counted as being among the victims.

Because each of these families were worth more than \$5 million dollars, the attraction of *Titanic's* luxury at any price was quite enticing when coupled with a maiden voyage on the world's greatest ship. Many from the general public sector believed that it was money that saved the majority of them; however, the fact of the matter is that the vast majority of the wealthiest of the first-class male passengers did indeed perish in that great catastrophe. Most of the first-class passengers

embarked from Cherbourg, France, *Titanic's* second port-of-call. It seems only logical then that the wealthy would be attracted to a ship that would be in keeping with their life style, that of the rich and famous. Also, members of the upper classes during the period embraced and exhibited through their actions that unspoken rule of "women and children, first" would be followed and upheld.

The sheer size of the largest seagoing vessel would result in yet another nickname, *World's Largest Ship*. Begun on 31 March 1910, the world's largest ship would be built over two 220-foot gantries, the largest ever built to aid construction. Four city blocks long (882.5 feet), 92.5 feet wide, and as high as an eleven-story building, she weighed in at 53,800 tons. The 29 boilers enabled her to cruise at a top speed of 24 knots or the equivalent of 28 miles per hour. *Titanic* never reached that speed while on her maiden voyage.¹¹ Her hull consisted of hundreds of overlapping steel plates held in place by more than three million rivets, each being one inch thick and three inches in length.

It is interesting to mention a subset of nicknames associated with the riveting process used in *Titanic's* construction. Among the more than 15,000 workers employed at the shipyard, each performed a specific task or tended to a particular area of responsibility. The riveters were but one, albeit very critical, job.

Once the plates were hauled into position and the holes lined up, a worker, nicknamed the *heater boy*, heated a rivet until it was red-hot which he then threw to the *catch boy*, who would catch the rivet in a wooden bowl and place it into a hole using tongs. While the *holder up* held a mallet over the rivet head on the outside of the hull, the *basher* on the inside of the hull would bash the rivet end into place (Brewster and Coulter 9). This example also serves to indicate the common use of nicknames on the job site. Many other nicknames abound in the shipyard. (The use of children, as workers, was also very commonplace.)

Unlike any other ship to that time, the three sister ships each proudly displayed seventy-five-foot funnels or smokestacks each measuring 60 feet high and 22 feet wide; however, three were real, venting the boiler rooms. The fourth was a dummy for appearance being used to vent a small amount of steam and fumes from the galleys below (Merideth, 26). When including her furnishings, coal supply, victuals, and three anchors (one at 15.5 tons and two at 7.5 tons) each having a 1200-foot length of chain, she clearly held the record of being the world's largest ship.

Queen of the Ocean was apropos in that the title radiates an air of royalty. She was, after all, the largest, most expensive, and carrier of the world's *crème de la crème* in terms of her passengers. Each guest was treated royally and with great respect. Since the connection has already been made to the origins of the ship's name, her gender is revealed by this nickname. The tradition of referring to ships in the feminine gender has been in place from the earliest maritime annals; therefore, it is not illogical for the reason for this nickname.¹² Present in all mythologies is the presence of a reigning god as king and his counterpart, his queen.

The last and perhaps the most well-known nickname given to the majestic, gargantuan *Titanic* was *Unsinkable*. No doubt, a second application of "unsinkable" was associated with the Colorado silver mine queen and heiress, Margaret "Molly" Brown. Oddly enough, this attribute when applied to *Titanic* was coined by the prestigious trade journal, *Shipbuilder Magazine*, in an article written about her construction and safety. In this nautical magazine, while publishing articles about the engineering feats accomplished in building *Titanic*, one author wrote: "With *Titanic's* transverse bulkheads and watertight doors, these engineering marvels render this vessel practically unsinkable" (*Shipbuilder Magazine* 1911). It was not unusual both in the United States and Europe for rivaling newspapers, to sell copy, to use catchy phrases and words that would no doubt appeal to their reading public. By homing in

on the phrase, “practically unsinkable,” the first word was dropped and the second gained much attention.



Figure 3 Unsinkable. Advertising Postcard from author's collection

There were even postcards published following *Titanic's* foundering on that fateful night with the caption: “God Himself could not sink this ship.”

Ironically, the White Star Line was aware of such stated claims and did not condone what was being published; however, at the same time, they did nothing to prevent the journalistic misuse of the language, nor did they stop the practice. After all, it did spark the imagination of readers, and it could be very good for sales.

Thus, these are the six nicknames directly used to name the *R. M. S. Titanic*. Each had an origin, and each was sufficiently noteworthy in that they had a definite appeal to the reader in characterizing the greatest ship in the annals of maritime history.

Naming Practices And *Titanic's* Passengers

Having had the opportunity of examining all of the names listed on the ship's passenger manifest, an interesting but somewhat unique pattern in naming practices soon became quite evident. It was only in the first-class passenger list where names of the children were listed along with those

of their parents. There were no instances among the children in second- or third-class that shared the same given names as their fathers and/or mothers. Certainly to make the claim that the passing of the given names to the offspring was only found among the upper classes during the Victorian and Edwardian Periods would be ludicrous; for the retention of the first names is very much in evidence beyond the limited sample represented by *Titanic's* passengers. However, it was curious but not surprising to discover so many cases limited to the first class only.

Among those aristocratic, stately names represented by this class, naming practices were similar to those having been used by previous generations. To illustrate one discovery made while examining the family names in this research, I shall use the Widener family. Peter Arrell Brown Widener married Hannah Josephine Dunton and thus began what would become one of the wealthiest families in America, both having descended from the Colonial upper class and European royalty. In order to preserve the Dunton family name in the genealogy, Peter and Josephine named their second son George Dunton Widener (Bateman 1943). When George wed his wife, Eleanore Elkins, another member of Philadelphia's high society in the nineteenth century, they named their second son Harry Elkins Widener. Their only daughter was named Eleanor, without the final "e," Elkins Widener. She would marry Fitz Eugene Dixon in June 1912 following the tragic loss of her father George and brother Harry aboard *Titanic*.¹³

Eleanor Widener Dixon and Fitz Eugene Dixon begat Eleanor Widener Dixon and Fitz Eugene Dixon, Jr., who would eventually marry Edith Bruen Robb. Their two children were George Widener Dixon and Edith Eleanor Dixon, both living today.

The same naming pattern was established across the major families represented among the first-class passengers. The names Astor, Spedden, Thayer, Carter, Gracie, Rothchild,

Cardeza, Potter, and nearly forty others repeat this same pattern over and over.

As a cultural marker showing class distinction or identification with a higher social order, the preservation and/or replication of names from one generation to the next appears very common among the first-class, but in the case of the two other classes, is conspicuously absent.

Family Names Of The First Class

According to the ship's passenger manifest, there was a total of 2,228 passengers aboard *Titanic* with 337 of that number listed as first class. Survivors numbered 199 with 130 lost (Wormstedt 2002). From across those listed, there were 197 separate families represented; of these 90 were recognizable as well-known and wealthy. In addition to several listed earlier, others included were: Harper, the publisher; Spedden, the banker and his wife, heiress to the Corning fortune; Hays, President of the Canadian Central Railroad; VanBilliard, diamond mines; Rothchild, European dynasty; Stead, author; and many more.¹⁴

Having begun a detailed study of the burial sites of each of the passengers on *Titanic* six years ago and continuing to the present, a pattern emerged with respect to the names of these survivors and victims. Though subtle, the pattern became more prominent to the point where its repetition begged for a closer examination. In many cases the names of the parents, both father and mother, were also given to their offspring. This onomastics phenomenon was repeated over and over. It became most evident when examining the gravemarkers erected for these departed souls.

When exploring the ancient burial grounds, cemeteries, and churchyards dating to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is not uncommon to see the same names of children repeated as many as three or four times on the markers in the family plot. Because of the high child mortality rate, mothers would frequently name a second, third, or fourth child the same as their predeceased brother(s) or sister(s).¹⁵ It

was not unusual, as it still is today, for a father to name his first son after himself. The mother also has been known to name her first-born daughter after herself even though this practice was not as common as in the case of the male. It was also common practice for the mother's family name to be passed to the child in the form of a middle name. Evidence of these names is commonplace even in the twenty-first century.

As early as the turn of the twentieth century, evidence abounds when looking at the gravemarkers of these departed for similar examples. Especially true of the elite, upper class, or aristocracy, the passing of the names of the parents to their children was most likely done to preserve name recognition and therefore tying the tradition to the family. To further establish that connection, we find the use of Jr. or a numeral to indicate the position in the line of succession. To further confirm and substantiate this form of succeeding name assignments one needs only to consult family genealogies. Interestingly, these documents together with family biographies are commonplace when considering those families of aristocratic genealogical origins or roots.

Given the fact that at least one hundred of the 192 families named among the first-class passengers sailing on *Titanic* were indeed considered members of the world's aristocracy, at least forty percent of them passed names of parents directly to their children in the hopes that the name recognition would insure continued success within society's elite. In the interest of space restrictions in this article, to illustrate this phenomenon only several examples are offered.

William Carter, a wealthy coal and iron magnate from Philadelphia's Main Line¹⁶ together with his wife, Lucile; son, William; and daughter, Lucile, were returning from a trip to the Continent when they decided to book passage aboard the ill-fated *Titanic*. William's father was also named William and was responsible for starting the family fortune. When the third generation was born, William passed his given name to his son; his wife Lucile followed suit when their daughter was

born. The youngest William never married thus ending the Carter family line. All three of the Carter men are entombed in the family mausoleum at West Laurel Hill Cemetery in Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania. The two women, mother and daughter, are buried elsewhere, mother with her second husband, George Brooke, a prominent Philadelphia realtor, and daughter with her husband Samuel J. Reeves. The former was interred at St. Michael's Churchyard in Birdsboro, Pennsylvania, and the latter at Valley Forge Memorial Park in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

A similar pattern is easily detected when examining the Thayer Family Genealogy.¹⁷ John Borland Thayer, Second Vice-President of the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1912 together with his wife Marian and son, John B., Jr. had traveled to Berlin to visit their friend the U.S. Ambassador. Son, Jack, and his mother would survive the sinking, but father, John, would not. Upon his completing a degree from the University of Pennsylvania, Jack, the Olympic-class swimmer, went on to establish a very successful career. He later married and fathered a son named Edward. There would be no more John B. Thayers, for Jack never recovered from the tragedy in the North Atlantic in 1912 and especially the death of his father with whom he had a very strong bond. The grief and loss of his father would be exacerbated by the death of his own 22-year-old son who was killed in action during WWII in August 1945. Jack took his own life the following September (Archbald and McCauley 1997). Each of the Thayer men is buried in the Holy Redeemer Episcopal Church where they were parishioners in Wayne, Pennsylvania. In the two burial plots, John Borland and his grandson Edward are memorialized by cenotaphs¹⁸ there while "Jack" has a gravemarker. Thus, another family line was discontinued.

The year preceding his return voyage from a visit to his sister's villa in Italy, William Crothers Dulles had lost his father, William. A victim of the tragedy, the younger William's body was recovered, returned to Philadelphia, and entombed

in the family's mausoleum at Philadelphia's Laurel Hill Cemetery.

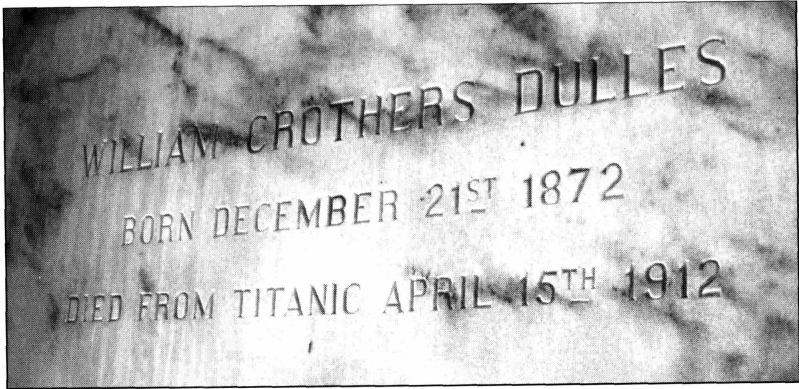


Figure 4 Dulles Crypt Cover. Photo by author

He had been a very prominent attorney and horse breeder who was an only son. Another prominent family line had been suddenly extinguished by the same maritime mishap.

The ocean that had swallowed *Titanic* gave up another of the bodies of her wealthiest passengers, John Jacob Astor IV. He had been returning from his honeymoon with his very young, pregnant, second wife (Eaton and Haas 1986). Unfortunately, he never saw his son, John Astor VI. His very young widow, Madeline, remarried and bore her second husband two sons; she divorce him, married a third time, and then died in 1940. She was buried in an unmarked grave in the Astor family plot in Trinity Cemetery (not to be confused with Trinity Churchyard) in New York City. Her first-born, John Jacob Astor, VI¹⁹ eventually dropped the VI and relinquished the family ties because they had never done anything for him. He died in 1992 without fanfare. The end of another family line had been witnessed.

Two other families whose lines were stopped dead in their ancestral tracks were the Speddens of Tuxedo Park, New

York, and the Van Billiards of South Africa. Both shared the common characteristics of great affluence, high social prominence, and aristocratic lineage. Both traveled on *Titanic* on their return home. Mr. Spedden and Mr. Van Billiard had young children. Both men would lose their male heirs, one to the sea and one to a fatal accident three years later.

Frederic and Daisy Corning Spedden, together with their six-year-old son, Douglas, and servants, were returning from Europe when they found themselves on the ill-fated *Titanic*. Among the fortunate, they all survived; however, three short years later while vacationing at their summer estate in Winter Harbor, Maine, young Douglas was struck by an automobile, the first in the state of Maine, while retrieving a tennis ball from hedges bordering the estate's tennis court. He was laid to rest in the Corning plot at Brooklyn's Greenwood Cemetery. There were no more children, and the Spedden line ended (Spedden 1994).

As tragic as that scenario may seem, much worse was that of the Van Billiard family enroute from South Africa to New Wales in the northwestern suburbs of Philadelphia. Austin and his wife, Maude, and their two sons and two daughters had decided to leave the African diamond mines that he owned and return to his native United States. Maude, a British citizen, would linger in London with the girls to visit her parents for a month while Austin would proceed to the United States with the two boys (Geller 1998).

The sinking of *Titanic* would seal forever the Van Billiard name with no generations to follow. Recovered body number 255 was identified as that of Austin Van Billiard, but more tragic was the unknown identity of the first body²⁰ recovered, only later to be identified as Walter John Van Billiard, second son of Austin and Maude.



Figure 5 Van Billiard Gravemarker. Photo by author

The body of their younger son, James was never recovered. In the churchyard at the Zion Lutheran Churchyard in Flourtown, Pennsylvania, stands the family gravemarker for Austin and Walter with James listed in cenotaph form.

These are just a few of the many examples of fathers and sons who were lost that April morning, but more importantly, not only were lives lost, but also many family fraternal lines were severed at the same time. No kind of assault could have been more devastating by being so far reaching.

In Memoriam

As of 15 April 2005, only three survivors of the original 705 were living. One lives in Massachusetts and the other two in England.²¹ Of these three, only one freely talks about the experience; the others refuse. Similarly, in examining the hundreds of gravemarkers of *Titanic* passengers located in the United States and Canada, one notices that many markers do bear a reference to the ship, either noting that the deceased was obviously a victim or a survivor; however, the majority of

the survivors moved on with their lives and leave no indication of having had any connection with the great ship. Throughout the many accounts,²² there are many reports of those who never mentioned or wanted to hear of the name *Titanic* or anything related to her for the rest of their lives; however, in some instances the tragedy became an ongoing obsession.



Figure 6 Gracie Gravemarker. Photo by author

New York's famous Archibald Gracie, the "hero of the *Titanic*" as etched into the stone that marks his Woodlawn Cemetery grave, spent his final months tracing passengers and collecting their thoughts. As he neared his own death later that same year, memories of the sinking seemed to thicken and take a strong hold on him. Those closest to him recall hearing him say, "We must get into the lifeboats. We must get them ALL into the lifeboats" (*New York Times* 1912,1). In a somewhat related incident, it was claimed by those who knew him best that J. P. Morgan died from the grief and loss he suffered when so many of his close colleagues and socially-akin friends perished. The tragedy was magnified and especially injurious to his psyche by the fact that he had been scheduled to sail on her as well, but for illness and the sound counsel of his physician he did not. Those closest to him claim he never recovered; he had given up the will to live.

The Peter A.B. Widener²³ family of Philadelphia, the wealthiest in the city and perhaps in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania at that time, lost his second-born son, George, and his first-born grandson, Harry, on the *Titanic*. Both bodies were never recovered. Because Harry was a Harvard graduate, his mother, Eleanore Elkins Widener presented the University with \$2 million to build a library in his memory (Bentick-Smith 1976).

The building, now at the heart of the world's largest library, serves as a lasting memorial to the young Widener and as an external sign of his love for books.²⁴ Dedicated at Harvard's commencement in 1915, the Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library stands in testimony of a short but powerful life of a young man dedicated to books. A prominently displayed large, marble plaque documents Harry's life and its tragic end. What makes this memorial additionally special is the fact that Harry's personal library—the room—was physically dismantled and moved to its new home at the library in Cambridge. His name and that of the family lives on in memory.

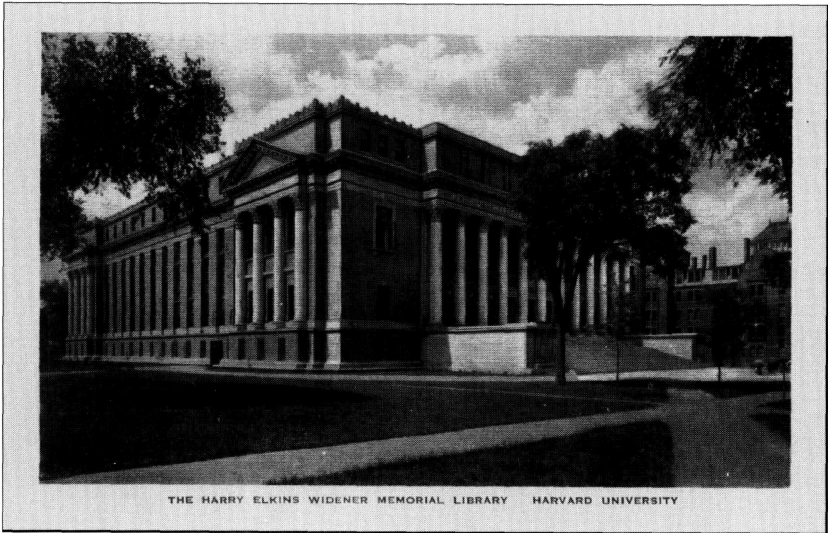


Figure 7 Widener Library. 1915 Postcard from author's collection

The R.M.S. *Titanic* was the *Wonder Ship*, *Ship of Dreams*, *Millionaires' Special*, *Queen of the Ocean*, *World's Largest Ship*, and *Unsinkable* according to the nicknames that have been passed down through the generations and reaffirmed by various and multiple exhibits and other popular culture venues.

Her passengers were real people, they were rich people, they were famous people, and they all had names. Names pass from generation to generation usually unobstructed; however, at times, the unexpected, the undetected, or the unimaginable happens to curtail that transmittal to the next generation. This was the case over and over again, having a devastating and lasting effect upon the succeeding generations and in some instances eliminating any possibility for any further procreation from the paternal side.

Despite the reason, the manner, or the outcome, a need to be reminded of the names and of those who they represented as well as of those who perished has become

evident. Those names have now been permanently carved or etched in stone and will remain so.²⁵

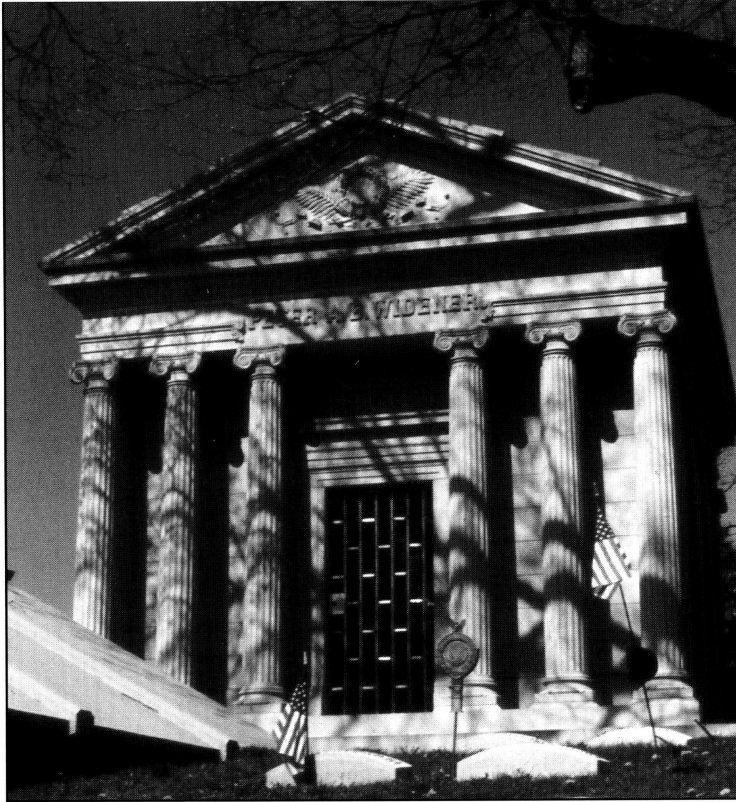


Figure 8 Widener Mausoleum. Photo by author

Unlike the ship that has been reduced to the smallest fraction of her former self and quickly approaching oblivion, the name *Titanic* and all she represented will likewise live on in the hearts and memories of all who have learned and will learn of her life. The names will survive even though their bearers have gone from our midst. Their names and naming practices continue into the twenty-first century. Class

distinction is still very much a fact of reality even here in the United States for America.

Notes

1. For the sake of clarification, following are the definitions for these three terms: Race—the physical characteristics of individuals that reflects their belonging to a specific group sharing those same characteristics; Nationality—the political or national origin of individuals according to their birth; Ethnicity—the bloodline or heritage of an individual.
2. Intended here are names that are based on physical or personality characteristics of the personage or thing named.
3. Claude Lévi-Strauss, popular and well-known French anthropologist, was father of structural anthropology. He described this theory as a search for “unsuspected harmonies.”
4. Ismay used the code word “*yasmi*” as his signature on all cablegrams sent from *Titanic* to others with whom he communicated. The name was *Ismay* spelled backwards.
5. The difference between the Greek gods and man were that the gods were greater in size and power and were immortal. In applying these qualities to the three sister ships, they were the largest ships ever built, they were also the most powerful requiring the energy of one pound of coal to drive them one foot through the water. The *Titanic* used 620-640 tons of coal per day on her maiden voyage. They were also said to be “unsinkable” or immortal.
6. As a form of advertisement, these large notices combined text with attractive, colorful images and were printed on heavy card stock to publicize scheduled departures of major ships between and among ports-of-call. Sometimes, prices for second and third class were also given. Rarely, were first-class fares listed. It was believed that it was not necessary to list such fares because first-class accommodations would be affordable by that class.
7. Coined by Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm in their seminal work, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812–15), the term *märchen* was simply defined as a folktale type consisting of a tale of wonder. Based on its internal and structural characteristics, it was an oral account in which there is always a time reference, good vs. evil, the demonstration of supernatural power, and a happy ending.
8. Steerage customarily applied to that section of a ship at the stern near the steering apparatus. Because of space restrictions, the accommodations generally consisted of berths in a dormitory-type room. Not so on the *Ship of Dreams*. Cabins with cots and hanging berths were available to house six to eight, a vast difference from other ships.
9. Fr. Frank Browne, an amateur photographer, sailed aboard *Titanic* from Southampton to Cherbourg, and disembarked at Queenstown. During his short time aboard, he managed to shoot hundreds of pictures, the only interior photographic images ever taken of the ship. These same photos would be used by James Cameron when designing the sets for his successful 1997 film at a cost of \$200 million.
10. These names were randomly selected to represent a cross section of the wealthiest passengers aboard *Titanic*.
11. For details of the ship’s specifications and other statistics refer to the Brewster and Coulter volume in the references.

12. A ship is referred to as "she" according to a seasoned mariner, George Moses, from Falmouth on the coast of Massachusetts because: "...there's always a great deal of bustle around her...because there's usually a gang of men around...because she has waist and stays...because she takes a lot of paint to keep her looking good...because it's not the initial expense that breaks you, it's the upkeep...because she is all decked out...because it takes a good man to handle her right...because she shows her topside, hides her bottom and, when coming into port, always heads for the buoys." A second explanation came from Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz in an address to the Society of Sponsors of the United States Navy: "A ship is always referred to as 'she' because it costs so much to keep one in paint and powder." ...Naval Ceremonies, Customs, and Traditions.

13. As Widener University's Resident Folklorist, University Historian, and Widener Family Historian, I have direct access to the family genealogy and other documents.

14. These names were extracted from the First Class list of passengers issued by the White Star Line from my own archives.

15. In the Newport, Rhode Island, city burial ground there is a long slate marker containing five babies named John, none of whom survived more than a year. At the same grave are two female children bearing the name Suzanne.

16. Philadelphia's Main Line consists of that area just outside but adjacent to the city accessible by the Pennsylvania Railroad. It was primarily residential and palatial, at that. The most elite of society lived on massive estates designed by the nation's leading architects. To this day the location exudes great wealth.

17. Through a personal interview with Judson A. Hughes, a Thayer family friend, I was able to examine the private papers of the Thayer family during the winter of 2003. Copies of the private papers are part of my own archives.

18. A cenotaph is a memorial erected in memory of the deceased whose body is buried or entombed elsewhere. In some cases, the location of the body or place of death is noted.

19. John Jacob Astor V was the name of John Jacob Astor IV's cousin, William Astor.

20. The system of numbering the bodies recovered by the cable ship *MacKay Bennet*, chartered out of Halifax by the White Star Line for the victim recovery effort, was chronological in the order they were recovered.

21. *Wikipedia*, an online encyclopedia that, at the time this research was conducted, maintained current information and statistics regarding pertinent *Titanic* information.

22. Hyslop, Forsyth, and Jemima have written a national bestseller in which they present a wide assortment of collected interviews of survivors over the last several decades. These first-person oral narratives, many from widows, children, and a few adult males capture the horrific, poignant, and remarkable memories etched in the minds of those who survived the life-altering ordeal.

23. Peter A. B. Widener and William Elkins were widely known, including on Wall Street, as "the traction twins" because they conceived the idea of creating a city-wide transit system that would provide a cheap, efficient mode of transporting people in and about the city. This served as the model

for New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, Chicago, London, Paris, Berlin and many other cities.

24. Horace Trumbauer of Philadelphia was Eleanore Widener's choice of architect for the project. Julian Francis Abele, the first formally trained African-American architect in the United States, actually did the design.

25. The purpose of the gravemarker is essentially four-fold: to mark the location of the remains of the deceased; to provide identification and other relative information about the individual; the artistic and aesthetic talents of its carvers or makers; but more importantly, the design and placement of the memorial attests to the societal attitude towards death and dying at the time it was created and by whom.

References

- Archbold, Rick and Dana McCauley. 1997. *The Last Dinner on the Titanic*. New York: Madison Press.
- Bateman, Thomas H. 1943. *Widener, Dunton, Pancoast, and Allied Families: A Genealogical Study with Biographical Notes*. New York: The American Historical Company, Inc.
- Bentick-Smith, William. 1976. *Building a Great Library*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- Brewster, Hugh and Laurin Coulter. 1998. *8821/2 Amazing Answers to Your Questions About the TITANIC*. New York: Scholastic, Inc.
- Burt, Nathaniel. 1963. *The Perennial Philadelphians: The Anatomy of an American Aristocracy*. New York: Little and Brown.
- Cotterell, Arthur and Rachel Storm. 1999. *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Mythology*. London: Lorenz Books.
- Eaton, John P. and Charles A. Hass. 1986. *Titanic: Triumph and Tragedy*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.
- Geller, Judith B. 1998. *Titanic: Women and Children First*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Herzberg, Max J. 1935. *Classical Myths*. New York: Allyn and Bacon.
- Heyer, Paul. 1998. *Titanic Legacy: Disaster As Media Event and Myth*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers.
- Hyslop, Donald, Alastair Forsyth, and Sheila Jemima. 1994. *Titanic Voices: Memories from the Fateful Voyage*. New York: St. Martins-Griffin Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1963. *Structural Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books.

- McCaughan, Michael. 1999. *The Birth of the Titanic*. Ithaca, New York: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Merideth, Lee W. 2003. *1912 Facts About Titanic*. Sunnyvale, California: Rocklin Press.
- "Obituary for Col. Archibald Gracie." *New York Times* 5 December 1912,1.
- O'Donnell, E. E., SJ. 1997. *The Last Days of the Titanic*. Niwot, Colorado: Roberts Rihelhart Publishers.
- Shipbuilder Magazine. 1911.
- Spedden, Daisy Corning Stone. 1994. *Polar the Titanic Bear*. New York: Madison Press, Little, Brown and Company.
- Wells, Susan. 1977. *Titanic: Legacy of the World's Greatest Ocean Liner*. New York: Time Life Books, Inc.
- Wheeler, George. 1973. *Pierpont Morgan and Friends: the Anatomy of a Myth*. Englewood cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Wormstedt,Bill.2002.wttp://home.att.net/~wormstedt/titanic