

Iceberg Ahead

After sailing to Cherbourg, France and Queenstown, Ireland, the *Titanic* began making its way across the North Atlantic sea towards New York. The morning of April 14, 1912 began as a normal day aboard the grand ship for many passengers. As it was Sunday, many passengers attended church services. Children played games on the deck, and adults socialized in the lounges or recreational areas.

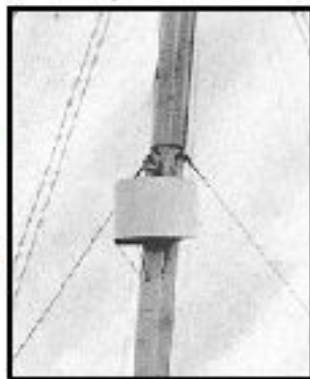
Despite the normalcy of the day, warnings began to come from other ships in the area that icebergs, growlers and field ice had been spotted in the direction the *Titanic* was sailing toward. A growler is a dark slab of ice that has broken away from an iceberg.

The warnings of icebergs were not alarming to Captain Smith, and it was said that he was even urged to go faster by J. Bruce Ismay to make good time. The day continued, and passengers soon settled down for the evening. The iceberg warnings had been arriving all day and night. At 9:30PM, second Officer Lightoller told two lookouts in the crow's nest to keep an eye out for any icebergs or growlers.

Aboard the *Titanic* there was a wireless room that housed a telegraph controlled by Jack Phillips and Harold Bride. The telegraph was meant to be used to communicate to the crow's nest (a lookout area) and bridge, where much of the ship's movement and navigation was controlled. On the day of the ice warnings, many wealthy passengers were using the telegraph in lieu of writing letters to communicate with people at home. The final ice warning came from the ship the *Californian* around 10:55PM, but was cut off by Jack Phillips to continue transmitting the messages from the wealthy passengers.

The last lookouts of the night, Fredrick Fleet and Reginald Lee, were also told to look out for growlers and icebergs. However, the night was clear and there was no moon, making any ice hard to see. The sea was also very calm that night, which meant any waves normally seen around icebergs weren't there. Icebergs can be very massive, but they don't always seem so. Since the vast majority of an iceberg is underwater, only a small part is visible above water.

Soon after the last intercepted ice warning, the two lookouts spotted an iceberg straight ahead at 11:39PM.



The crow's nest where lookouts were stationed.

Disaster

After Fredrick Fleet spotted the iceberg, he rang the warning bell three times and phoned the bridge to alert them about the iceberg ahead. The crew quickly sprang into action to try to avert disaster. First Officer William Murdoch told Robert Hitchens who was steering the wheel: "Hard to starboard!", which means to turn the ship sharply left. The helmsman steered left with all his strength. At the same time, Murdoch notified the engineers below and told them to stop the engines and put the ship into reverse.

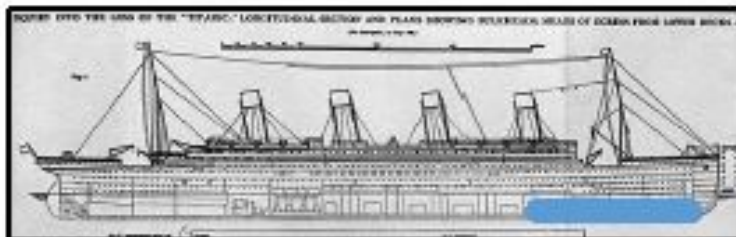
Slowly the ship began to turn, but it was too late. While The iceberg avoided a head-on collision (which would have actually been better), it struck the *Titanic* on the right side. After the sinking, some passengers said they saw the iceberg hit, while many others felt it. Up on the deck, the damage seemed minimal at first. However, down below in the boiler room, the crew saw the actual damage. Icy water poured in, and the stokers had to run for their lives.

When the wreckage of the *Titanic* was found many years later, it was discovered that the iceberg had not actually made a long gash in the *Titanic*, but rather a series of scrapes and bumps had caused the rivets to pop open, allowing water to rush in. Because the iceberg was so large, it had opened up six of the sixteen watertight compartments in the front of the ship. The *Titanic* was only able to stay afloat if no more than four of the compartments were flooded, thus dooming the ship.

The ship's builder Thomas Andrews and Captain Smith inspected the damage below and saw water pouring into the mail room on G Deck. In ten minutes the bow began to slowly sink as the compartments began to fill with water.



William Murdoch



A diagram of the Titanic where the damage occurred and water started to rush in.

Mr. Andrews told Smith that the ship would sink in two hours. Captain Smith gave Jack Phillips the *Titanic*'s current position and told him to use the Morse Code distress call CQD and SOS. Three ships received the distress call, the *Olympic*, the *Frankfurt* and the *Carpathia*. The *Carpathia* was the closest, yet still 58 miles away. She would not be able to reach the *Titanic* for hours.