
Canada and the Titanic

Passengers Heading to Canada

On board the *Titanic*, there were 129 people who were either Canadians heading home or others planning a brief visit to the United States. There were also a large number of non-Canadians who were planning to travel from New York City to Canada to settle in the country permanently. These included a number of people from England and Lebanon; many of the latter were heading to Ottawa to live.

The passengers on the *Titanic* were divided into three classes: First, Second, and Third. The First-class passengers paid a huge amount of money (in the tens of thousands in today's dollars) for a suite, meals, and entertainment. Second-class passengers paid less, and their accommodations were not quite as fancy. Third-class travellers, mostly working-class men looking to settle in North America, paid a modest amount and their modest sleeping arrangements and food reflected this!

In the case of Canadians heading home, most were First- or Second-class passengers. There were thirty-nine people going to Canada in First-class and of those, seventeen died, and fifteen of those were men. Thirty-five people travelling to Canada went Second-class and 25 of them died, again mostly men. The largest number of passengers, fifty-five, were in Third-class and the vast majority of them, fifty, passed away.

There were a number of reasons for the disparity in numbers who survived from each class, and this was quite consistent no matter where the passengers were coming from or where they were going. One of the policies of those crew members helping passengers into lifeboats was to give priority to women and children. Third-class had a higher proportion of men overall and many of them bravely sacrificed their lives so women and youngsters had a chance at survival, although many of the male passengers did not really believe the ship would sink. In some cases, Third-class ticket-holders did not get to the deck quickly enough, as they were farthest away from the lifeboats.

Some of the travellers and crew did not want to board the lifeboats, thinking their chances were better if they stayed on the ship. They did not, and sadly, and almost all of them died as the *Titanic* sank into the cold waters of the North Atlantic.



Benjamin, Eva, and Esther Hart from Ilford, England, were travelling to Canada to make a new life in Winnipeg. Eva and her mother survived the disaster; Benjamin did not.



Harry Markland Molson, a member of one of Canada's prominent families, the founders and owners of Molson's Brewery of Montreal, died in the sinking of the Titanic. Many of the wealthy First-class Canadians knew each other.



Trevor Allison, 11 months old, being held by his nanny, Alice Cleaver, after their rescue from the ship. Trevor lost both of his parents and his sister in the Titanic disaster.

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The Aftermath of the Disaster

The *Titanic* slowly sank into the Atlantic, only hours after it struck an iceberg, and broke into two sections. For those still on board, their tragic end must have been frightening, but the extremely cold ocean water would have meant they survived a very short time before slipping into unconsciousness and dying quickly. Some of the bodies were never found and some of those found were never identified.

For the mostly women and children who made it into lifeboats, help was on its way. It would take many hours but the *Carpathia*, an immigrant ship owned by the Cunard line, appeared just after dawn, and survivors were helped aboard. Warm clothing, blankets, and food were quickly offered and in some cases, medical help was provided. The ship returned to New York as soon as it could.

Meanwhile, on land, officials of the White Star Line, presuming the *Titanic* would not sink, told the port of Halifax in Nova Scotia to expect the damaged ship to arrive shortly. When reports came in that the *Titanic* had sunk, vessels from Halifax were sent out to sea to recover bodies, burying many at sea, and the boats brought back 209. About three-quarters of the dead were buried in Halifax, the rest claimed and buried elsewhere. An unknown child, a toddler about two years old, with a gravestone, was identified recently by a Canadian scientist using DNA analysis. The boy was Sidney Goodwin, from England, who lost his parents and five siblings in the disaster.

Remembering the Titanic

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There are many memorials to the *Titanic*, including a number in Canada. In Halifax alone, there are three cemeteries where passengers were buried, some never identified. George Wright, a millionaire from Halifax, rewrote his will just before boarding the *Titanic*, and left his mansion to the Halifax Local Council of Women. The town of Melville, Saskatchewan was named for Charles Melville Hays, the president of the Grand Trunk Railway. Hays went down with the *Titanic*. His ghost is said to haunt the Château Laurier hotel in Ottawa, built by his railway company. The loss of the ship's passengers were remembered in other ways in Canada: flags flew at half-mast, businesses closed, and churches and schools remembered the dead.

On April 15th, 1995, a *Titanic* Memorial Garden was opened at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England. Two women, the only living survivors of the sinking of the doomed liner, attended. One of them was Eva Hart, age 90, who eighty-three years earlier had been a little girl immigrating to Winnipeg with her parents.

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Titanic, the Movie

Thanks to the diligent efforts of scientists and engineers, in 1985 the wreck of the *Titanic* was located on the Atlantic floor. This reawakened public interest in the sinking of the ship and in 1997 the movie *Titanic* was released. Not expected to be a big hit, it became one of the most popular movies of all time. The movie was directed by Canadian James Cameron (left, above) and the hit song from the movie was recorded by Canadian Céline Dion (right).

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Comprehension Questions, p. 3 & 4



I. Understanding the Text: Canada and the Titanic

1. What were the differences between the three different Classes travelling on the *Titanic*?

2. How many people were travelling to Canada? How many survived the voyage?

3. What were some of the reasons the Third-class passengers died in higher numbers compared to the First- and Second-class passengers?

1. What was the *Carpathia*? What part did it play in the story of the *Titanic*?

2. What central role did Halifax, NS play in the aftermath of the sinking of the *Titanic*? What remains there today in memory of those who died?

3. What are the Canadian connections to the movie "Titanic"?
