

Research paper on a about the titanic myths

[Religion](#), [God](#)



Introduction

Since the sinking of one of White Stars Line's most famous luxury ship, 100 years ago, there have been many films, books, speculations and myths about the Titanic's tragic maiden voyage which cost the lives of over 1, 500 people including women and children. The reasons of why the infamous ship sank is varies, some being factual accurate, others hypothesis that made sense and some that are just plain stories that have no place in history or science. These stories are what this paper will look at; claims that cannot be supported by scientific evidence, myths propagated by popular culture and reasons that are mired in tradition that it may not stand the test of time and logic.

Films and their Stories

The first few myths and claims that we will look at is those spread by popular culture as they are probably the most improbable to be true and more often than not, these are the claims that can be scrutinized as films tend to skew the truth for a better story that the audience will like.

The Titanic was unsinkable

While the Titanic is certainly one of the biggest ships to be launched by mankind during the time, the fact of the matter is that White Star Liner had never made the claim that their ship was unsinkable. In fact, the Titanic was not even famous before it sank. The reason behind this was the fact that the Titanic's sister ship, the Olympic, had gone through the same route, had the exact same captain, had the same amount of lifeboats and safety facilities as the Titanic and reached its destination on its maiden voyage without so

much as a scratch .

Historically, the Titanic and the Olympic were made and designed to be the main competition of the Lusitania and the Mauretania, both ships owned by their competitor, Cunard Liner. Both ships held the record for the fastest Atlantic Crossing, something that the White Star Liner wanted to replace. In a sense, the Titanic and the Olympic were the Boeing's 747 of the early 20th century as they were both people carriers of massive proportions, both had steam turbine engines powering them and they were both experimental in their design as they had enlarged versions of the hulls usually made by White Star Liner .

Furthermore, it is speculated that the myth of the Titanic being unsinkable began in an article published by ' The Shipbuilder Magazine' which showcased the double bottom and the water-light compartments that made the ship ' practically unsinkable' .

It is speculated that the main reason why this myth was allowed to grow is the fact that if one called the Titanic as ' unsinkable' then you would have a more tragic storytelling as not only did the man who built it was full of pride, but his pride also lead to the deaths of thousands of people .

The Last Song Played

Another myth that the numerous movies featuring the tragedy of the Titanic is the fact that the band onboard the Titanic kept on playing despite the fact that the ship was already sinking. While this is not disputed as many survivors had claimed that the band did keep on playing to keep the spirit of the passengers and crews who were fleeing for their lives alive, what song they really played is in question.

While eyewitnesses did claim that the band played on the deck, some have said that the band played popular and ragtime music as the ship sank while others say that they played ' Nearer, My God, To Thee'. While what the band truly played will probably never be known, what is known is the fact that James Cameron reused the same scene in his 1997 film from an earlier Titanic film in 1958 entitled " A Night To Remember" where the band played the song ' Nearer, My God, To Thee' as he claims that the scene was beautifully crafted to the point that he wanted to remake the same scene .

Captain Smith's Death

While the many films portraying the Titanic showed that the captain died a heroic death, some parts of history it seems, does not agree. The reason behind this is the fact that there are claims that the captain did not heed ice warnings, he did not decrease the speed of his ship despite the fact that there was an iceberg in his path, he did not fill up all of the lifeboats, letting them leave being only half full and not coming back for other survivors who were abandoning ship, and he apparently did not call an ' abandon ship' order .

In truth it can be said that every failure of the crew of the Titanic that night is the captain's fault. There are even speculations that the captain simply vanished and it was also possible that he was simply traumatized by the event that there were not enough lifeboats to save his passengers and crew .

J. Bruce Ismay

In the numerous portrayals of the story of the Titanic, one of the most famous is the character of the company president that built the ship. In

every portrayal of the man, he was shown to be a coward that escaped the Titanic despite knowing that he'd be leaving behind women and children to die in his stead when he took the first lifeboat available and fled the sinking ship. The myth can be traced back to the fact that Ismay was unwilling to cooperate with the press at the time to verify what really happened to the Titanic . As such, all of his portrayals in films show him to be a villain, some even saying that he was the first to jump into the lifeboats and ordered his crew to row him away.

Other sources claim that he helped many passengers into the lifeboats first before jumping in himself. Regardless of what he really did, J. Bruce Ismay never recovered from the shame of being called a coward and resigned as president of the company in 1913 . But perhaps one of the most serious allegations that were thrown towards Ismay is the fact that he apparently told Captain Edward Smith to make it the fastest crossing in histories which lead to the captain not slowing down and the collision with the iceberg that destroyed the ship in the first place .

The Third Class Passengers Fate

In another of James Cameron's 1997 film's most dramatic moments was the sealing off of the passengers from the third class that prevented them from reaching the lifeboats. While this scene was certainly one of the most moving, there are no historical evidences that prove that this truly happened.

While gates were present in the third class compartments of the Titanic, this was merely part of the regulations back in the early 20th century that segregated immigrants going to America. Each class had their own paths to

reaching their own lifeboats but there were, unfortunately, no lifeboats that were stored at the third class deck. The report of the British Inquiry recorded that the Titanic was simply following the immigration laws of the United States by installing the gates and as such, one of the most moving scenes in film history, is also one of the least historically accurate .

The Record Breaker

It is also speculated that the reason why the Titanic hit the iceberg was that it was on a tight schedule as (stated above) White Liner wanted to break the record of fastest Atlantic voyage during the ship's maiden voyage. While this speculation is one of the most famous myths of the ship, the speculation is just that, a speculation .

The truth of the matter is that the Titanic was following the same route that the Olympic had taken the year before. Furthermore, not all the boilers on the ship were lit and she was also taking much longer, southern passage to cross the Atlantic to avoid icebergs, which ironically led to the loss of the ship in the first place .

The most important evidence that debunks this myth is the fact that the Titanic did not run at full speed to begin with was to avoid possible engine damage, furthermore, even the maximum speed of the Titanic (21 knots) was also no competition to the maximum speed of Cunard Liners' two ships that held the record as their maximum speed was 26 knots .

The final evidence to debunk the myth is practicality in itself. Had the Titanic arrived one day earlier than planned, as the myth says was the plan of Captain Smith and Ismay, then their passengers would also be a day early for their bookings in hotels, trains, etc. .

The SOS

There are also claims that the Titanic was the first ship to use the SOS system of the Morse code, a myth that cannot stand to the fact that the Morse code of the SOS had already been in use is 1908. This however, was not regularly used by the British at the time as most wireless operators still preferred using the CQD code, an older code that was also more comfortable to use at the time .

It is claimed that the First Wireless Operator of the Titanic, Jack Phillips, first started to send a CQD coded message before the Second Wireless Operator of the Titanic, one Harold Bride suggested half-jokingly using the SOS code instead as this was probably the first and last time that Phillips would be able to use it .

The Distress Signal

Another myth that surrounds the reason why the Titanic was not saved was because no saw the distress rockets that they were firing to begin with. At the time, the Company Signals and Distress Signals had different rules on how to use. Company Signals were mostly used to allow two ships of the same company to communicate if their radios did not work. The Merchant Shipping Act stated that a gun had to be fired at a 1 minute interval each, there had to be flames on the ship (burning barrels to be precise) and rockets of any color had to be fired one at a time at short intervals.

The Titanic was only able to fire 8 of its 36 rockets and they were not fired at the correct intervals. To be precise, the rockets were fired at a rate of 4 to 6 minutes as such no passing ship would have been able to understand the

meaning of the lights even if they were seen. As a note, this part of the tragedy was never given a proper explanation until today .

The Supernatural

There are also many myths and rumors about the Titanic that are not shown in films nor in history. These are the myths that are mired in the tradition and speculation that were never given any evidence, even circumstantial ones that could prove that they were true to begin with. Most of these are called curses of the Titanic that truly have no historical facts whatsoever.

Hope Diamond

It was once rumored that the Hope Diamond, was onboard the Titanic when the ship sunk. The truth is that the Hope Diamond was nowhere even near the ship at the time of its sinking. It was once owned by a wealthy woman named Mrs. Evalyn McLean who had it in her possession the entire time that the Titanic was on its maiden voyage. Mrs. McLean did not board the Titanic at all. From her, the diamond fell into the possession of a jeweler named Harry Winston and after to the Smithsonian Institute where the diamond can still be seen till today .

The Mummy Curse

Another wild rumor that used to be spread about the reason why the Titanic sank was because of a mummy named Amen-Ra who even had her own backstory was onboard. The rumor began with a writer and journalist named William Stead who is considered to be one of the most famous people to die onboard the Titanic. It is known that before boarding, Stead told the ' legend of Amen-Ra' to his friends and that the body was held in the cargo hold of

the ship .

The legend then spread and before anyone knew it, Stead sank with the ship unable to verify his claims to be true or not. History however, says that there was no mummy onboard the ship at any given time during its fateful voyage and if there were, no coffin has been found to date . Moreover, since the myth began with a supernatural event that cannot be verified by scientific explanations, this reason for the sinking of the Titanic cannot be held in good faith .

The Hull Worker

There were also rumors that refused to die down before with the story that the Titanic sank because a worker was trapped in the hull of the ship during construction and was left to die. This is fortunately not true as while two workers died during the construction of the massive ship (a record for the time) the rest of the workers were accounted for before the vessel was launched .

The rumors apparently began when some of the older workers started scaring the younger workers with stories of death during construction the rumors officially began when the riveters had to tap the exterior of the hull at the end of the work day and apparently, they would hear workers who were trapped in the hull with no way out tapping back in a desperate cry for help .

Defying God

Another rumor to circulate is the fact that the Titanic was sank by God as a means to show ' who's boss' after a worker painted the words ' we defy God

to sink her' on the stern of the Titanic. Couple this with the fact that the ship was falsely claimed to be unsinkable and you will see how the rumors began. Furthermore, there were evidences that said that the Titanic was anti-Catholic as some of its numbers apparently meant the phrase 'no pope' . Because of such rumors, it was concluded that the Titanic was a challenge towards God and he sank it to prove his point. As we cannot get God's statement on the matter, whether or not the sinking of the Titanic was of divine wrath, we will never know .

The Bottle Christening

Another rumor why the Titanic sank was because of the fact that the bottle of champagne used to christen it apparently did not break. In maritime practices, every ship must be christened with a bottle of champagne to bring the ship good luck. The problem with this rumor is the fact that there was bottle christening held by White Star Liner to begin with. This may also be the reason for another rumor that because the ship was not hit with a bottle for luck to begin with, it sank on its maiden voyage .

Whether or not breaking a bottle of champagne on a ship brings it luck, this cannot be proven as many ships that were christen inadvertently sank throughout history.

One Piece

The rumor that the Titanic sank in one piece is by far the easiest rumor to quash as it has been proven by the wreckage and eyewitnesses accounts that the ship was split in to as it was sinking in the Atlantic. Scientifically, the

weight of the stern was simply too great while the ship was sinking from its rear to the point that the ship broke into two .

Conclusion

While the reason behind the sinking of the Titanic can be pointed to numerous reasons, the ones that are more logical have always been accepted to be the truth. Regardless of what one believes to be the real reason why the Titanic sank in the first place, what cannot be denied is that it was also one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century with a total loss of 1, 512 accounted dead and with only about 713 survivors when many more could have been saved.

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