

'Aboard the

WHITE STAR LINE.

Passager Kontrakt Nr. 350083.

mellem

JOACHIM PRAHL, White Star Liniens Generalagent for Danmark
og nedenanførte Passager angaaende Befordring
fra Kjøbenhavn til *Burlington Jowa.*

Passagerernes fulde Navn	Fødested	Alder	Livsstilling	Sidste Opholdssted
<i>Gunnar Torgling.</i>	<i>Sverige</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Landm.</i>	<i>Sverige</i>



Jeg undertegnede

JOACHIM PRAHL

paatager mig herved at befordre med Dampskib og Jernbane ovennævnte Passager fra Afgangs- til Bestemmelsesstedet for den Sum *To Hundrede femti Kr.* Kroner *85* Ore, dansk Rigsmønt, som ere erlagte, og hvorfor herved gives Kvittering.

Rejsen skal ske saaledes:

Fra Afgangsstedet den *6 April* med Jernbane til *Esbjerg*, og derfra med Dampskib til *Harwich* eller anden engelsk Østkysthavn.

Fra Landingsstedet med det første senest tolv Timer efter sluttet Toldexpedition afgaaende Jernbanetog til Southampton

Fra Southampton med White Star Liniens Dampskib *Itania* i Mellendækket til *New York* og derfra med *Grand Trunk* til Bestemmelsesstedet.

do hereby engage to forward by steamship and railroad the above named passenger from the place of departure to the place of destination for the sum of *Two Hundred and Fifty* Kroner *85* Ore Danish Rigsmoney, which are paid and for which receipt is hereby given.

The passage is to be effected as follows:

From the place of departure on the *6 April* by rail to Esbjerg and from there by steamer to Harwich or other British Eastcoast port.

From the place of landing by the first leaving train, at the latest twelve hours after the custom house examination to Southampton

From Southampton by White Star Line's S: S: *Itania* in Third Class to *New York* and from there *via Grand Trunk* the place of destination.

In the above payment is included: Storage place in the vessels and third class waggons on the railroad. Forwardage passengers 10 cubic feet on board the vessel. 65 shillings per year. Good and sufficient for the year.

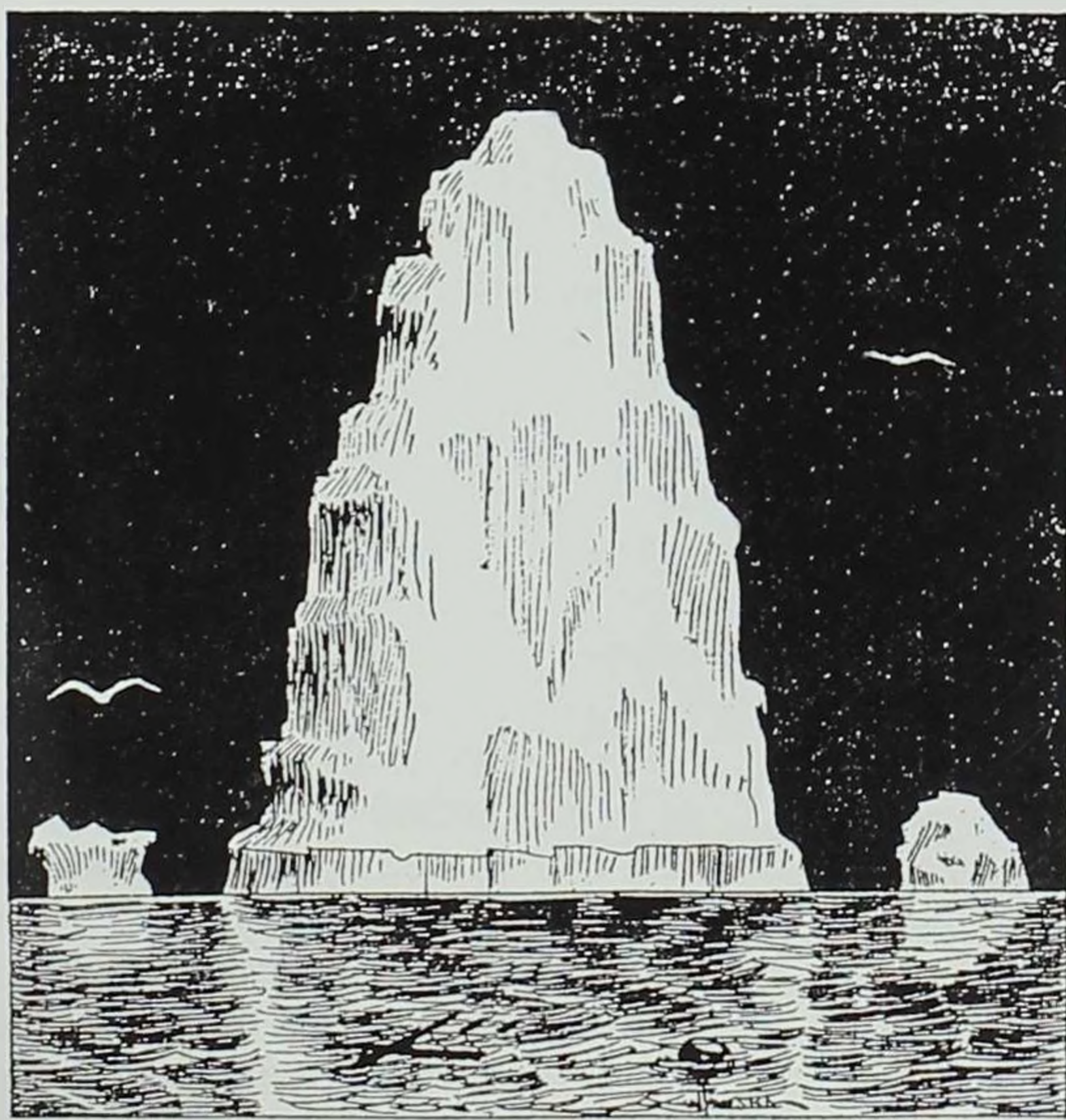
Attest eller skjult Noget, der kunde virke skadeligt med Hensyn til deres Antagelse til

der have afgivet falske bage. beløb betales ikke ti

ill-fated ship'

Iowa's connections to the *Titanic*

by Edward R. Tryon



THE TITANIC MONUMENT.

Grim echoes of a tragedy: the contract for *Titanic* passenger Gunnar Tenglin, headed to Burlington, and an editorial cartoon in the *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 17, 1912.

WHEN THE TERRIBLE news of the disaster to the great steamship, the *Titanic*, was read last week," the *Red Oak Express* observed soberly for its readers in Montgomery County, Iowa, "there was little idea that there would be anything of real local interest in the matter. . . . little idea that anyone bound for this county was aboard the ill-fated ship."

Yet in the days following the sinking of the *Titanic* on April 15, 1912, the state's newspapers would report that some three dozen people with Iowa connections had been aboard "the ill-fated ship," the largest and most luxurious ocean liner ever built. Across the nation, the disaster pushed its way into small-town weeklies and big-city dailies.

From the beginning, discrepancies plagued the reporting of

the disaster. As the press picked up the story, eyewitness accounts began to blur, myth-making hijacked facts, and journalism succumbed to story-telling. Now in its 86th year, the story is still riddled with unanswered questions: Who was a hero and who a coward? Who was to blame? Who saved whom? Why did so few steerage passengers survive? And, for whatever it's worth, what was the orchestra's final piece?

The story is also rich in irony. The *Titanic* provided a luxury voyage home for America's nouveau riche, but it also served as basic transportation to the New World for Europe's emigrants. Its wireless telegraphy allowed communication from ship-to-ship or ship-to-shore, but language barriers on board impeded communication between steerage passengers and crew. And the ship that was considered "unsinkable" did, indeed, sink.

Over the decades, social critics have framed the disaster as a cautionary tale, finding in it various morals for 20th-century society—the error of pride; the fallibility of technology; the redemption of the leisure class through heroic self-sacrifice.

Certainly the disaster touched the lives of America's leisure class. Billed as the social event of the season, the *Titanic's* first voyage had attracted many of the brightest and wealthiest stars of the Gilded Age. Among the 337 First Class passengers was a millionaire who had made much of his fortune in Iowa—Walter D. Douglas.

Born in Waterloo, Douglas had amassed substantial wealth in Cedar Rapids—including a one-third interest in Quaker Oats and partnership in Douglas & Co. starchworks—before moving to Minneapolis in 1905 and expanding his fortune there. Now 51 and retired, Douglas and his wife, Mahala (a Cedar Rapids native), had decided to return from a three-month tour of Europe on the *Titanic*, the White Star Line's newest floating palace. "It was the last word in luxury," Mahala Douglas said later, describing the ship's elegant dinner parties. "The women in their beautiful shimmering gowns . . . the men immaculate and well-groomed. The food was superb: caviar, lobster, quail from Egypt, plover's eggs, and hot-house grapes and fresh peaches."

But the *Titanic* disaster also touched the lives of ordinary Iowans: a coal miner in Appanoose County who could finally afford to send for his family in France; three Greek immigrants who had been promised jobs in Mason City. In Burlington, friends and family awaited Gunnar Tenglin's return on the *Titanic*; in Central City, Bertha Lehmann; in Stanton,

Ernest and Sigrid Danbom. Culled from Iowa newspapers of April 1912 and pieced together here, their stories are compelling reminders that the past comprises an immeasurable number of individual experiences and interpretations. And, like all historic events, the *Titanic* disaster had endless levels of impact on ordinary people—even in Iowa, some 2,000 miles from an iceberg off the coast of Newfoundland.

AMID GREAT FANFARE, the *Titanic* had begun its first voyage well prepared. Coal filled the bunkers—some 650 tons a day for the ship's 162 furnaces. Provisions lined the galleys—40 tons of potatoes; 7,000 heads of lettuce; 40,000 eggs. Twenty lifeboats stood ready—enough for 1,176 people

Granted, the lifeboats would hold only half of *Titanic's* 2,223 passengers and crew members, but the number of boats complied with, and actually exceeded, British regulations. And even though the regulation dated from an era of ships only a quarter the size of White Star Line's trio of enormous liners (the *Olympic*, *Titanic*, and the proposed *Gigantic*), it hardly mattered. Hadn't the respected British journal *Shipbuilder* described White Star's trio as "practically unsinkable"?

Now on the *Titanic's* third day out, all was proceeding as planned—the Sunday morning ritual of the captain's inspection, followed by a prayer service, and then an afternoon luncheon. Fair weather continued to grace the voyage. But towards evening, as the *Titanic* entered the iceberg region, the weather turned unseasonably cold. Although several ice warnings had been received throughout the day and into the evening, Captain Edward J. Smith continued to push the ship through the darkness at speeds above 21 knots.

Then, shortly before midnight, one of the lookouts spotted a massive object directly in *Titanic's* path. Instinctively, he sounded the ship's warning bell, then picked up the telephone and informed the bridge: "Iceberg right ahead!"

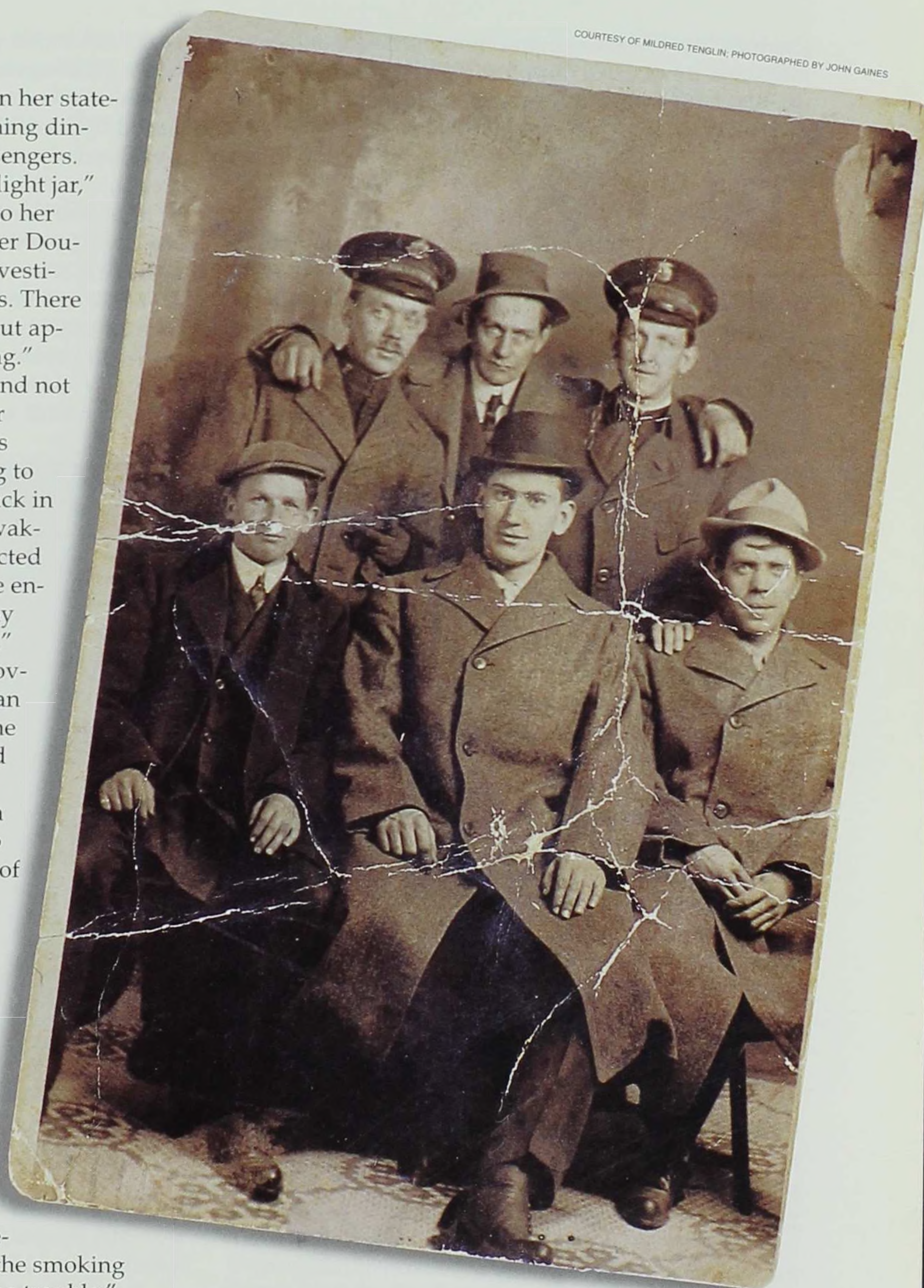
Immediately the quartermaster threw the wheel "hard-a-starboard" as the first officer slammed the lever of the engine-room telegraph into "full-speed astern." But a ship the length of four city blocks and weighing some 90 million pounds could neither turn on a dime nor stop in less than half a mile. Moments later the *Titanic* sideswiped a huge iceberg. The time was 11:46 p.m.

MAHALA DOUGLAS was in her state-room after a particularly lavish evening dinner party with other First Class passengers. Now preparing for bed, she felt a "slight jar," as she later described it, and called to her husband in an adjoining room. Walter Douglas dressed, went out on deck to investigate, and returned in a few moments. There had been a collision, he explained, but apparently it had "amounted to nothing."

On a lower deck, near the bow and not far from the point of impact, Gunnar Tenglin was asleep in his Third Class cabin. The 25-year-old was returning to Burlington, Iowa, after four years back in his homeland of Sweden. He was awakened by the collision, but what attracted his attention was the stoppage of the engines. "I put on all my clothes but my shoes and went to the forward deck," Tenglin recounted. "The deck was covered with particles of ice. We asked an officer if there was any danger and he said, 'No, go back to your berths and go to sleep.'"

Near the stern, Albert and Sylvia Caldwell and their baby were asleep in their Second Class cabin. Months of overseas travel had meant that neither their friends in Cedar Rapids and Burlington, nor their family across the Mississippi in Biggsville, Illinois, had met the couple's ten-month-old son, Alden—but they would soon. The Caldwells slept through the collision but were awakened by the sudden absence of noise. "The silence was ominous," Albert Caldwell remembered. "I slipped my coat over my pajamas and stepped out of the state-room. A steward was sweeping out the smoking room and I asked him the cause of the trouble." "Hit an iceberg," he had replied. Reassured by the steward's apparent lack of concern, Caldwell returned to his family and dozed off.

Seventeen-year-old Bertha Lehmann did not awaken until she heard excited voices and footsteps in the hall outside her Second Class cabin. Traveling from Berne, Switzerland, to relatives living near



COURTESY OF MILDRED TENGLIN; PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOHN GAINES

Gunnar Tenglin (extreme right) and five other *Titanic* passengers, photographed in New York City.

Central City, Iowa, Lehmann thought the *Titanic* must have already reached New York. She got out of bed, dressed, and waited for the ship to dock.

THE COLLISION had been only a glancing blow. There was no great gash in the starboard side—only some bent plates, split seams, and popped rivets in an area about 12 square feet, according to later estimates. Nevertheless, water began pouring into the forward holds, rising seven feet in seven minutes.

Captain Smith ordered the wireless operator to send out a distress call and the crew to prepare the lifeboats, but to avoid panic he decided not to sound a general alarm. Instead, stewards began knocking on doors, advising passengers to put on life jackets and to assemble on the upper decks. The time was just after midnight—12:05 on Monday, April 15.

In her stateroom, Mahala Douglas slipped a heavy coat over her kimono and accompanied her husband to the upper deck. "There was not the least commotion," she recalled, "and even when the lifeboats began to be lowered most of the passengers took it lightly." She heard a shipboard acquaintance turn to his wife and say: "You go out there in the water and play around a little while, you will be back here in a few minutes."

Publicity about the "unsinkable" *Titanic* had bred great confidence in its ability to remain afloat. Now despite the collision, there seemed to be little urgency or need to board the 16 wooden lifeboats or 4 canvas-sided collapsible boats. Many passengers were reluctant to leave the warmth and safety of an "unsinkable" ship for a lifeboat that wasn't.

To compound this reluctance, some passengers were still in their cabins, gathering a few belongings (a partly read novel perhaps, or a muff or a compass);

others refused to part with spouses, or were uncertain of procedures and exits. Certain crew members were slow to mobilize; others feared that a fully loaded lifeboat would buckle and break, or planned to add more passengers as the boat passed by lower decks or reached the water. Later, when distress rockets lit up the sky and the pitch of the deck increased, passengers would mob the lifeboats. But now, some of the first boats were lowered only half full.

Lifeboat 8 had room for 65 people but only 28 boarded it. One was Mimi [Stauffer] Kenyon, a Connecticut woman whose roots lay in Fremont County, Iowa. (Her father had been a newspaper editor in Sidney, and her widowed mother lived in Hamburg.)

Now it was Mimi's turn to board. Her husband, Fred, helped her into the boat, kissed her, and stepped back.

COURTESY OF BRUCEMORE (CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA)



Walter Douglas, about 1912.

RESPONDING to a rap on their door, Albert and Sylvia Caldwell woke again. "I was not a particle uneasy," Albert remembered. "In fact, [I] was somewhat annoyed as I fully believed the boat would float for days or weeks before it sank." Nevertheless, they dressed warmly, wrapped baby Alden in a steamer rug, and proceeded to the top deck. Rerouted first to one deck and then another, they arrived at Boat 13 just as someone shouted, "Lower away." The baby

was handed to a woman in the stern, Sylvia took a seat near the center, and Albert and several crew members scrambled in.

Tilting first to one end, and then to the other, Boat 13 jerked its way down the 70 feet to the sea. It landed just short of a torrent of water spewing from boiler room pumps. As the lifeboat crew struggled to release the lines, the force of the discharge was pushing the boat directly under Boat 15, now being lowered. Boat 15's five and a half tons were about to drop squarely onto Boat 13. "We shouted to the men above

to stop lowering the boat," Albert Caldwell reported later. "They comprehended our warning, but not until the boat was so low that we could reach up and touch the bottom with our hands." With seconds to spare, the lines were cut and Boat 13 moved out of the way.

Amidst the 70 passengers on Boat 15 was a trio of professional gamblers who had jumped in at the last moment. Identified as Harry Homer, Harry Romaine, and "Boy" Bradley, the men specialized in separating wealthy passengers from their cash on fast transatlantic liners. Bradley, in fact, was wanted for questioning about a swindling operation in Council Bluffs. Now crowded into Boat 15, the three gamblers were taking, as the newspapers put it, their "last turn of the cards of fate."

The shouts of passengers and crew would have meant little to Bertha Lehmann, who spoke French but not English and was traveling alone. But earlier on the voyage, she had struck up an acquaintance with a musician from the ship's orchestra. They had shared an occasional dance and once he had escorted her back to her cabin. Now the French musician arrived to escort her to one of the remaining lifeboats.

As Lehmann's boat was being lowered, up on the top deck, port side, Mahala Douglas climbed into Boat 2. She pleaded with her husband to join her, but Walter replied: "You had better get into the boat. It would be safer. We can't tell what may happen." She begged again. He answered: "I can't do it. I would not be a man or a gentleman if I left the Titanic while there was a woman or child on board. It's all right. I'll probably be with you again in a few minutes."

Chivalry and self-sacrifice aside, Walter Douglas probably would not have been allowed in Boat 2 anyway. To Charles Lightoller, the officer in charge of lifeboats on the *Titanic's* port side, "women and children first" meant "women and children *only*." More

rigid than his counterpart on the starboard side, Lightoller not only refused John Jacob Astor's request to join his pregnant 19-year-old wife in Boat 4 but also tried to prevent a 13-year-old boy from joining his mother.

STILL BELIEVING there was no immediate danger, Gunnar Tenglin walked the length of the ship to the Third Class smoking room at the rear. "We tried to get something to drink but the bar was closed," recounted Tenglin's cabinmate, August Wennerstrom.

"Nothing else to do, we got someone to play the piano and started to dance."

"The English, Swedish, Irish and German passengers were the most composed, but the Italians were greatly excited," Tenglin later told reporters. "They were swarming up on the deck in all stages of undress, carrying baggage of every description, crying, praying and wringing their hands. As we were perfectly sure the boat would not sink, their antics seemed amusing to us. In fact we stood around about an hour or more watching them, enjoying what we considered their unnecessary fright." Wennerstrom remarked: "They acted like they were crazy—jumping and calling on their Madonna. We made a circle

around them and started a ring dance."

More than one American news story of the disaster would reflect a rising xenophobia toward immigrants from southern and central Europe. In fact, Italians on the *Titanic* were accused (wrongly) of so many cowardly acts that the ambassador of Italy later lodged a protest. Actually, the majority of Italians on the *Titanic* were waiters, not passengers, and very few survived.

There were, however, a number of Bulgarians (an ethnic group perhaps mistaken as Italian by some)



Mahala Douglas, some years before 1912.

who were traveling in Third Class. Most were young, single men, and at least four—Ivan Mineff, Lazar Minkoff, Christo Nenkoff, and Stanko Lyntakoff—were bound for Coon Rapids, Iowa. Three unidentified Greeks were headed for jobs in Mason City, and one Norwegian, Johannes Kalvig, was ticketed to Roland. All went down with the ship.

Third Class passengers would have found access to lifeboats very difficult, as Seaman Joseph Scarrott later testified. Because of the ship's design, the route to the upper decks and the lifeboats was indirect and complicated. And in full compliance with American immigration laws, the steerage exits were guarded or barricaded, a regulation intended to isolate Third Class passengers until they were examined at Ellis Island. Originally designed to stop the spread of disease, the barriers were now stopping steerage passengers from escaping a sinking ship.

FOR MORE THAN AN HOUR after the collision, the *Titanic's* bow settled in the water at an almost imperceptible rate. But now the ship was taking on water at an increasing rate and the slant of the decks was growing steeper. Gunnar Tenglin and cabinmate Wennerstrom could feel the ship sinking beneath their feet.

By 2 a.m., only a few lifeboats remained. Officer Lightoller was attempting to fill Collapsible D with women and children. To prevent men from rushing the lifeboat, he enlisted crew members and a few passengers to link arms around it. Shortly before Collapsible D was lowered at 2:05, a man passed two children through the circle of arms and into the boat.

About ten minutes later, the bow of the *Titanic* lurched downward, lifting the stern out of the water. Those still onboard stampeded up the steep incline. From her lifeboat Bertha Lehmann watched people jump from the stern. "It was a nightmare," she said, "the screaming, the calling. . . . the ones that were left behind." Crew members were making a last-ditch effort to launch Collapsible A when it was swept off the deck with Tenglin clinging to the side.

As the ship split apart between the third and fourth funnels, the bow slipped beneath the surface and the stern settled briefly to a near-even keel. Then, as water filled the front of the stern, the aft section raised out of the water.

From Boat 13 a half-mile away, Albert Caldwell watched the drama unfolding before his eyes: "One

by one the rows of lights from the portholes disappeared as the boat sank lower and lower in the water. About five minutes after all the lights went out, there was a muffled explosion. . . . The stern of the boat reared high in the air into an almost perpendicular position and then dove from sight forever."

The time was 2:20 a.m. Ten-month-old Alden Caldwell had slept through the whole thing.

NOW, AS THE *TITANIC* PLUNGED two miles to the ocean's bottom, some 1,500 people struggled for their lives in the bone-chilling waters. Gunnar Tenglin and two dozen others hauled themselves aboard Collapsible A. "When the ship went down there was a tremendous shrieking and groaning," he said. "It was awful and continued for some time, but we were having our own troubles and did not pay much attention.

"There must have been fully 150 people swimming around or clinging to the boat," he continued. "It meant the death of us all should they have swamped our raft by overloading it. There was no way to sit down in the boat and we stood knee deep in ice-cold water while those on the edges pushed the frantic people in the water back to their fates, it being feared they would doom us all."

The water temperature that night was 28 degrees, and the victims' cries were soon stilled. Bodies floated on the waves as if, said Tenglin, "the ocean were carpeted with the dead."

Adrift in 20 small boats, the 705 *Titanic* survivors were a thousand miles from land with no food, no water, and no knowledge if help was on the way. In Boat 2, Mahala Douglas lay on her back holding a long pole topped by a signal lantern. When the oil was gone, she stood at the tiller as Officer Joseph Boxhall fired off green flares, one by one.

Meanwhile, the Cunard liner *Carpathia* had picked up the *Titanic's* distress call and was steaming to the rescue. Fifty-eight miles separated the rescuers from the survivors, and the *Carpathia* was a 13-knot ship. But by cutting off cabin heat and forcing every ounce of steam through the engines, Captain Arthur H. Rostron pushed the ship to 17 knots and covered the distance in three and a half hours. A flare was sighted and Captain Rostron steered directly for it. At 4:10 a.m., the *Carpathia* pulled alongside Boat 2. Mahala Douglas and the others struggled aboard.

As dawn broke on that Monday morning and the

lifeboats were emptied one by one, survivors held out hope for missing family members. Carrie Toogood Chaffee (a native of Manchester, Iowa) had not yet found her husband, Herbert, but prayed that "he is somewhere, alive," certain that "there are some prayers that will be answered."

Meanwhile, Mahala Douglas was searching desperately for Walter. Some survivors reported that they had seen him helping load lifeboats; her maid was certain she had seen him in one of the collapsibles. But by 9 a.m., all lifeboats had been picked up and all survivors accounted for.

Mahala Douglas stood at the rail and stared at the ocean, realizing for the first time that she was a widow. Indeed, the *Carpathia* was a ship of widows. "Such an outburst of grief," Albert Caldwell later remarked, "I hope it may never again be our lot to witness."

AS THE *CARPATHIA* STEAMED towards New York that Monday, incomplete survivor lists and conflicting reports spread across the nation and into Iowa communities. "The news of Titanic's disaster came at noon while we were at luncheon," Irene Douglas (wife of Walter's brother George) wrote in her journal in their elegant Brucemore mansion in Cedar Rapids. "Did not seem serious until evening about

7:30—spent the evening at the Republican office."

A morning paper, the *Cedar Rapids Republican* would not appear on the streets for hours, but conflicting press dispatches had already filled the front page of Monday's *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*. A dispatch from Montreal reported: "All passengers are safe and Titanic taken in tow." From Halifax: "Titanic reported sinking." From the White Star Line: "The boat is absolutely unsinkable. . . . We are extremely sorry for the annoyance and inconvenience of our passengers."

But any remaining hopes were blasted by the *Republican's* Tuesday morning headline: "1234 PROBABLY DROWNED AS TITANIC SANK." Irene Douglas spent the morning "frantically answering telephones and telegrams."

Also awaiting news of her "Uncle Walter and Aunt Mahala" was 15-year-old Margaret Douglas. "At noon Mother & Daddy decided to go to N.Y.," she wrote in her diary that day, and on Thursday: "Got up early and read the news about Titanic. Everybody telephoned if we had gotten any news yet."

When the *Carpathia* docked that night in New York, among the 40,000 waiting in the cold rain were Mahala's sister and George and Irene Douglas. Mahala told them simply: "Walter did not come with me."

In the privacy of a New York hotel room, Mahala would recount the disaster to her family; later, before a U.S. Senate investigating committee, she would pillory White Star Line and its managing director J.

[Twenty years after witnessing the sinking from Lifeboat 2, Mahala Douglas published a collection of her stories and poems. This poem appears on the final page of her book.]

Titanic

The sea velvet-smooth, blue-black,
The sky set thick with stars unbelievably brilliant.
The horizon a clean-cut circle.
The air motionless, cold—cold as death.
Boundless space.
A small boat waiting, waiting in this vast stillness,
Waiting heart-breakingly.
In the offing a vast ship, light streaming from her portholes.
Her prow on an incline.
Darkness comes to her suddenly.
The huge black bulk stands out in silhouette against the star-lit sky.

Silently the prow sinks deeper,
As if some Titan's hand,
Inexorable as Fate,
Were drawing the great ship down to her death.

Slowly, slowly, with hardly a ripple
Of that velvet sea,
She sinks out of sight.

Then that vast emptiness
Was suddenly rent
With a terrifying sound.

It rose like a column of heavy smoke.

It was so strong, so imploring, so insistent
One thought it would even reach
The throne of grace on high.

Slowly it lost its force,
Thinned to a tiny wisp of sound,
Then to a pitiful whisper. . . .
Silence.

Bruce Ismay. But there on the dock, George and Irene Douglas had already heard what they had most dreaded.

COAL MINER Francois ("Frank") Lefebre was in disbelief. Working in Mystic, Iowa, Lefebre had slowly hoarded his miner's wages until at last he had saved enough to bring his wife and four young children from France. He learned of the disaster from friends. "It is not so, what you tell me," he insisted. "In the letter my wife says they come to me on the *Titanic*."

Then Lefebre learned of two unidentified French children who had arrived on the *Carpathia*. These were the two boys who had been thrust into Collapsible D at the last moment. Dubbed the "Titanic Waifs," they had become an international news story. Certain they were his, Lefebre set out for New York.

Meanwhile, a woman in France saw the waifs' picture in the newspaper. She alerted authorities that her husband, Michel Navratil, had kidnapped their two boys pending a divorce. (Aboard the *Titanic*, Navratil had used the alias "Hoffman," and had told Bertha Lehmann, who had babysat on the ship for his sons, that he was a widower.)

Frank Lefebre had gotten as far as Chicago when he found out that the boys' real parent was on her way to New York. Steamship officials convinced the

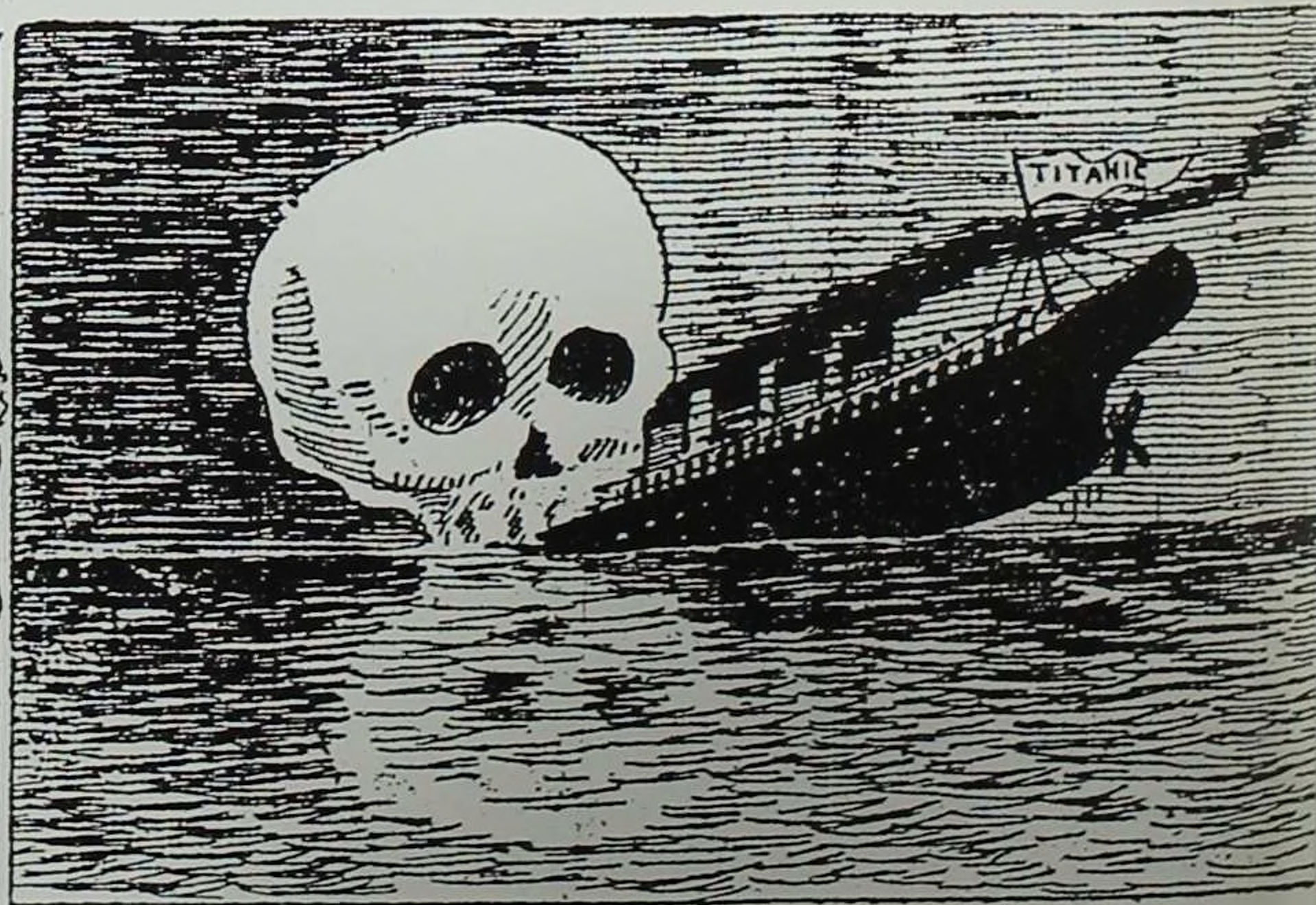
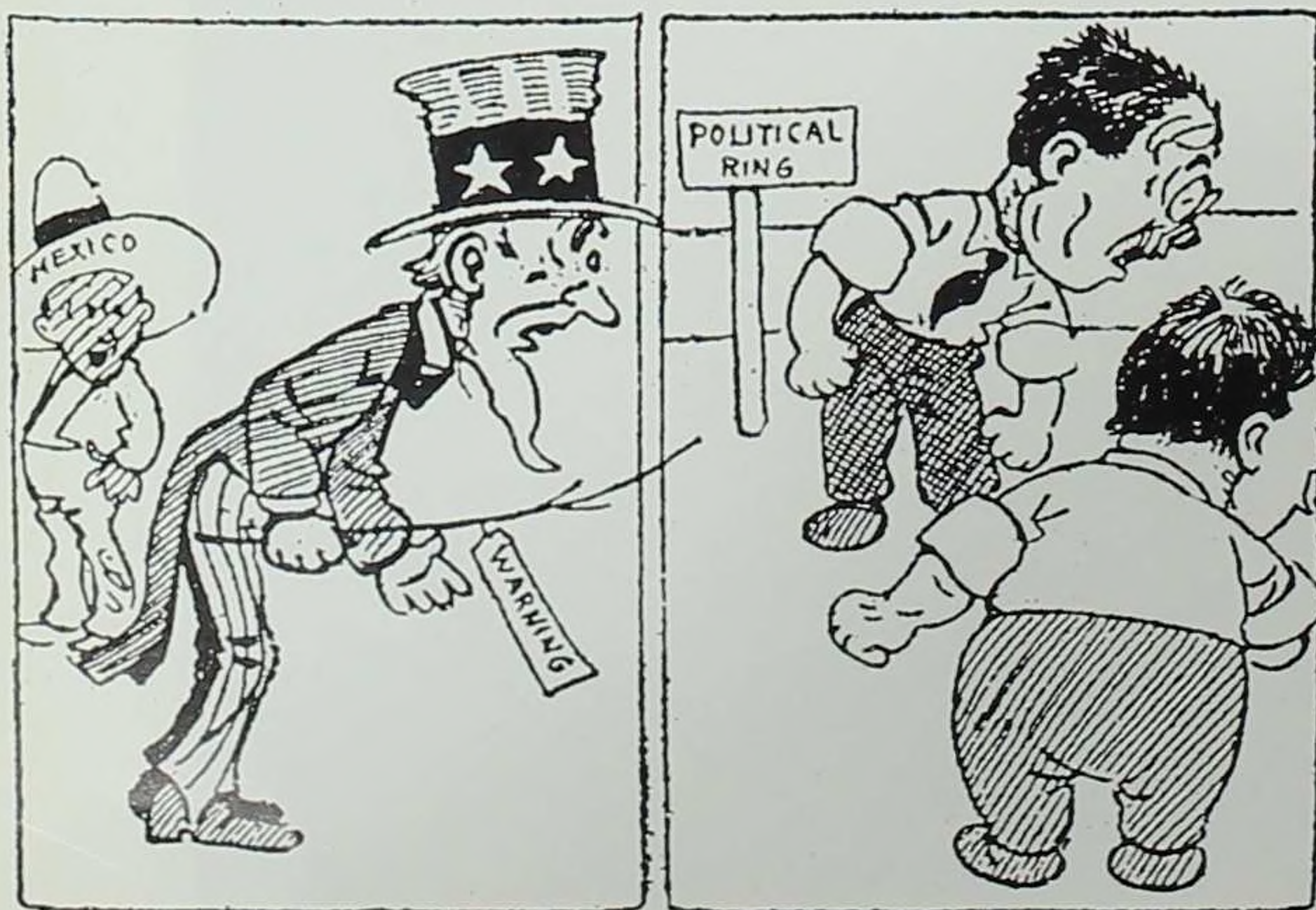
Mystic coal miner that his entire family had been lost. In grief, he returned to Iowa.

Other Iowans also were desperate for confirmation of survivors. In Des Moines, friends of Ernest Tomlin had just received a letter from the 22-year-old British student, who had been caring for his ailing father. He was returning on the *Titanic*, Tomlin wrote, and would resume his theology studies at Drake University. The letter arrived the day after the disaster. In shock, his friends wired White Star's New York office for information but received no answer. Five days later a telegram finally arrived in Des Moines: Tomlin, too, had gone down with the ship.

In Red Oak, Emily Peters awaited news of her niece and nephew, Dagmar and Kurt Bryhl. Against her parents' wishes, Dagmar and her fiancé, Ingvar Hagstrom, had left Sweden to start a new life in the United States. Her brother Kurt had also decided to emigrate, as had Konrad Hagstrom. All had tickets on the *Titanic*. Now the details filtered into Red Oak: only Dagmar had survived.

A DAY OR SO AFTER THE SINKING, August Schmalenberg stood on the deck of the German liner *Bremen* and saw before him a sea strewn with bodies. The shoe manufacturer had not anticipated such a gruesome sight on his trip to visit his brother in Hawkeye, Iowa. *Bremen* passengers

THE GAZETTE CARTOONIST REVIEWS THE LEADING EVENTS



counted more than a hundred bodies, some in chilling tableaux: a man in evening dress lying on a door, several clinging to steamer chairs, two locked in a death embrace, a woman floating on the surface, her nightgown billowing in the breeze. Later in Cedar Rapids, Schmalenberg would tell a German translator how there hadn't been "a dry eye on the ship," how some passengers had become hysterical as the *Bremen* passed through the *Titanic's* debris field.

Perhaps those aboard the *Mackay-Bennett* were more prepared for the sight. With a volunteer crew and 40 funeral directors aboard, the cable-ship was on its way from Halifax, Nova Scotia, towards what newspapers were calling "the graveyard of the Atlantic." Picking up the *Bremen's* message that bodies and wreckage had been sighted some 30 miles northeast of the *Titanic's* last known position, the ship charted its course accordingly and arrived Saturday night, April 20.

Recovery work began the next morning. As each body was pulled from the sea, it was examined, assigned a number, and identified if possible. Personal effects were inventoried and numbered. Over the next five days, 306 bodies were recovered—a fifth of the total number of victims.

On the third day, the body of First Class passenger Walter Douglas was recovered and a telegram dispatched: "DOUGLAS HAS BEEN EMBALMED." The *Mackay-Bennett* had left Halifax with only enough embalming fluid for 70 bodies and 100 coffins. These were allotted not by "first come, first served," but

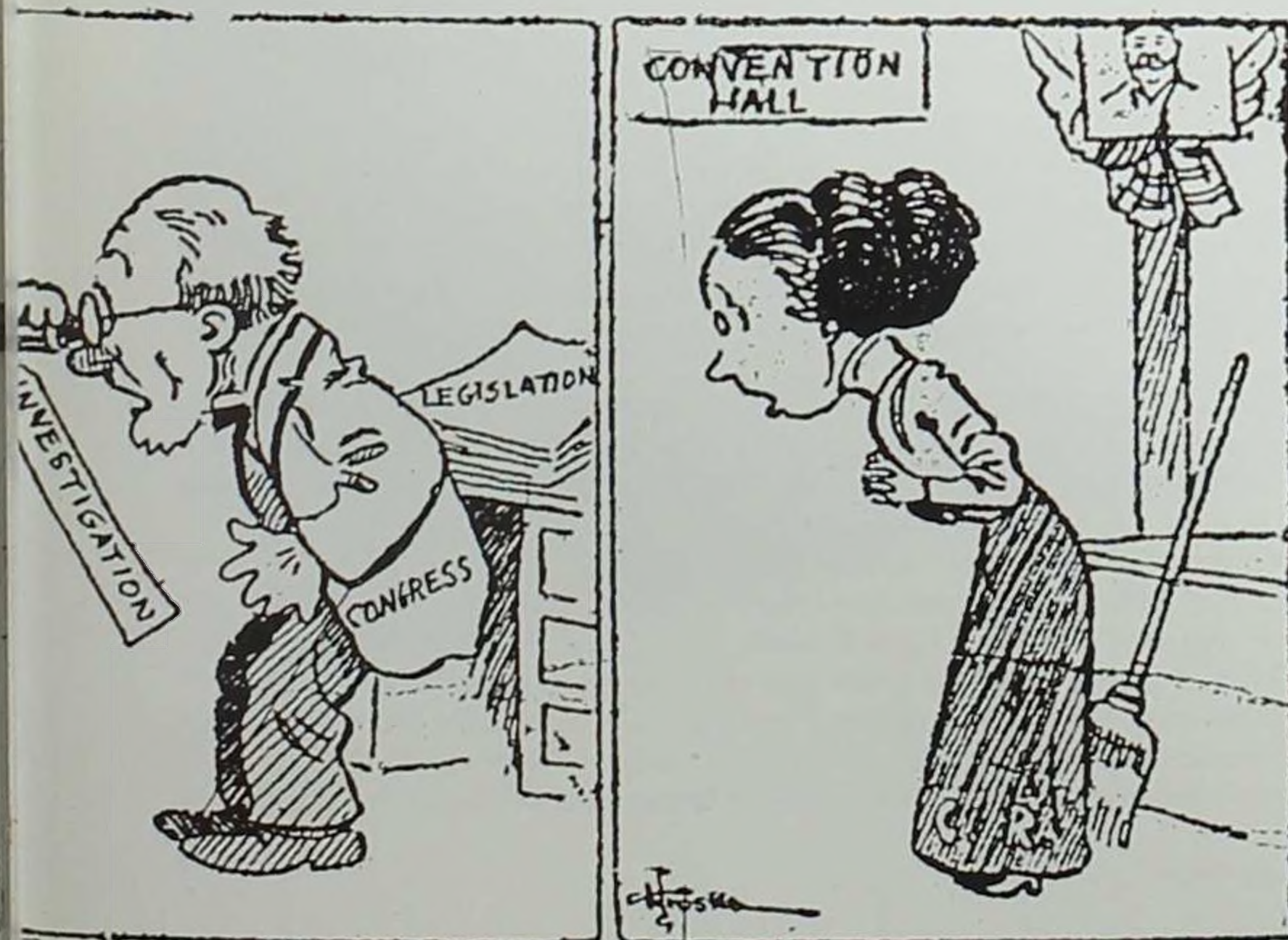


Ernest and Sigrid Danbom, and their son, Gilbert.

rather "First Class, first served." Although many bodies were packed in ice, and a hundred or more weighted and buried at sea, "no prominent man was recommitted to the deep," Captain F. H. Lardner would explain, because "it seemed best to bring back the dead where the death might give rise to questions of large inheritance." Thus the class distinctions that had existed in life were maintained in death.

Among the Third Class passengers identified was Ernest Danbom of Stanton, Iowa. After an 18-month wedding trip to Sweden, Ernest and Sigrid Danbom had been returning to Iowa with five-month-old

News of the *Titanic* dominated Iowa's newspapers in mid-April 1912. An editorial cartoon from the *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette* on April 20 conveys how a nation in shock turned its attention away from these major events:



- The previous week, the Taft administration had vowed to protect American lives and property amidst the Mexican Revolution and had sent stern warnings to the Mexican government and rebel leaders.

- Theodore Roosevelt's challenge of Taft for the Republican nomination was gaining momentum, but that news also took a back seat to the *Titanic* story.

- The U.S. Congress now shifted its focus from legislation to investigation of the tragedy.

- Cedar Rapids was caught up in the glory of hosting the upcoming state Republican Party convention. Now a full-page story about local preparations for the event was bumped to page 11, as *Titanic* news washed over the pages.

Gilbert and six Swedish relatives—Alfrida and Anders Andersson and their children. All nine perished.

Of the nine, only the body of Ernest Danbom was hauled from the sea and identified. The inventory of his personal effects included a gold watch, an opal and ruby ring, a bracelet, a woman's watch, a diamond ring, a substantial amount of cash, gold coin, and a check for \$1,315.79 drawn on the Security National Bank of Sioux City, Iowa. Seventy-five years later that inventory prompted speculation: "Was E. Gilbert Danbom a real name?" asked author Michael Davie in *Titanic: The Death and Life of a Legend* (1987). Davie thought Danbom was carrying too much money for someone in Third Class, and conjectured that he might have been either a jewel thief or a professional gambler. He was neither.

A better question might have been why only 25 percent of Third Class passengers survived—compared to 43 percent of Second Class, and 60 percent of First Class. (Of the crew, 23 percent survived.) Two investigations found no discrimination in loading the boats and attributed the disproportionate loss of life to the fact that most Third Class passengers could not speak English and presumably could not understand directions. The theory does not hold for the Danboms. Ernest Danbom had been born and raised in Iowa, and both he and his wife understood English.

BY THE CLOSE of the American and British investigations in mid-summer, *Titanic's* victims had been laid to rest and the survivors had left New York.

The body of Walter Douglas was interred in the family mausoleum in a Cedar Rapids cemetery; Mahala waited three years before returning to their palatial Minnesota house on Lake Minnetonka.

Gunnar Tenglin posed with other survivors for a picture postcard that he later sent to his mother in Sweden, assuring her of his safety. The Salvation Army and other New York relief agencies provided assistance—\$40, a suit of clothes, and a railroad ticket to Burlington, Iowa, where he said he intended to remain.

Albert and Sylvia Caldwell boarded a train for Biggsville, Illinois, where they were welcomed home by friends and family, and interviewed extensively by the *Burlington Gazette*. Baby Alden met his grandparents for the first time.

Bertha Lehmann continued on to her sister's home near Central City, Iowa. Months later she became a bride, and, in 1918, a war widow.

Coal miner Frank Lefebre was left near penniless. Having spent his savings on *Titanic* tickets for his family, he applied for Red Cross aid. Immigration officials subsequently discovered that he had entered the country illegally, and he was deported.

En route to North Dakota, and dressed in the same clothes she had worn when she climbed into a lifeboat, Carrie Toogood Chaffee stopped in Minnesota to see her new grandchild. Unwilling to accept her husband's death, she told reporters: "I simply cannot lose hope." Chaffee still had ties to Manchester, Iowa, her childhood home, and there the local newspaper soon announced: "She alone survives."

Grief-stricken over the loss of her fiancé and brother, Dagmar Bryhl decided against proceeding to

NOTE ON SOURCES

Iowa newspaper accounts from April and May 1912 form the basis of this article; the author searched newspapers from these towns: Boone, Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Centerville, Charles City, Coon Rapids, Davenport, Des Moines, Manchester, Mason City, Ottumwa, Red Oak, Roland, Sioux City, and Stanton. Follow-up stories on Gunnar Tenglin appeared in the *Keokuk Daily Gate City* (April 13, 1962) and the *Burlington Hawk Eye* (January 2, 1998); and on Bertha Lehmann in the *Brainerd (Minn.) Daily Dispatch* (Dec. 2, 1937) and the *Fort Wayne (Ind.) News Sentinel* (Feb. 14/15, 1998). Internet sources: "An Unforgettable Voyage" by Lehmann's son, Elmer Zimmerman (newsletter home page, 1996); and Tom Fruehling, "Lost, not forgotten," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, *GazetteOnline.com* (posted April 14, 1996). Accounts published in 1912 and thereafter vary considerably on some points; the author weighted the earlier accounts more heavily. The names of those traveling to Red Oak differed slightly in various sources: Bryhl/Bryll; Ingvald/Ingvar; Kirt/Kurt; and Hagland/Hagström.

The author thanks Donald Peterson (Stanton Historical Society) for information on the Danboms; and Tracy Schoenle (SHSI intern) for research on the Douglas story. Douglas diary excerpts and Mahala Douglas's poem appeared in the March 1998 newsletter from Bruce More, a National Trust historic site in Cedar Rapids. For the U.S. investigation, see U.S. 62nd Cong., 2d sess., Senate Report No. 806, May 28, 1912 (also in National Archives Microfilm M580, Roll 200). Britain's investigation was reported in the *London Times*, May 4, 1912.

Numerous books have been published on the *Titanic*; one of the first was Jay Henry Mowbray's *The Sinking of the Titanic, Memorial Edition* (Harrisburg, PA, 1912), and one of the most famous, Walter Lord's *A Night to Remember* (New York, 1955). For general background and occasional mention of Iowans, both were consulted, as well as: Rick Archbold and Dana McCauley, *Last Dinner on the Titanic* (NY, 1997); Steve Biel, *Down with the Old Canoe: A Cultural History of the Titanic Disaster* (New York, 1996); Daniel Allen Butler, "Unsinkable": *The Full Story of RMS Titanic* (Mechanicsburg, PA, 1998); Michael Davie, *Titanic: The Death and Life of a Legend* (New York, 1987); John P. Eaton and Charles A. Hass, *Titanic, Triumph and Tragedy: A Chronicle in Words and Pictures* (New York, 1986); Robin Gardiner and Dan Van Der Vat, *The Titanic Conspiracy: Cover-ups and Mysteries of the World's Most Famous Sea Disaster* (New York, 1996); Col. Archibald Gracie, *Titanic: A Survivor's Story* (Chicago, 1996; first pub. 1913); Donald Lynch and Ken Marschall, *Titanic: An Illustrated History* (Toronto, 1995); Wyn Craig Wade, *The Titanic: End of a Dream* (New York, 1979); and Jack Winocour, ed., *The Story of the Titanic, as Told by its Survivors* (New York, 1960).

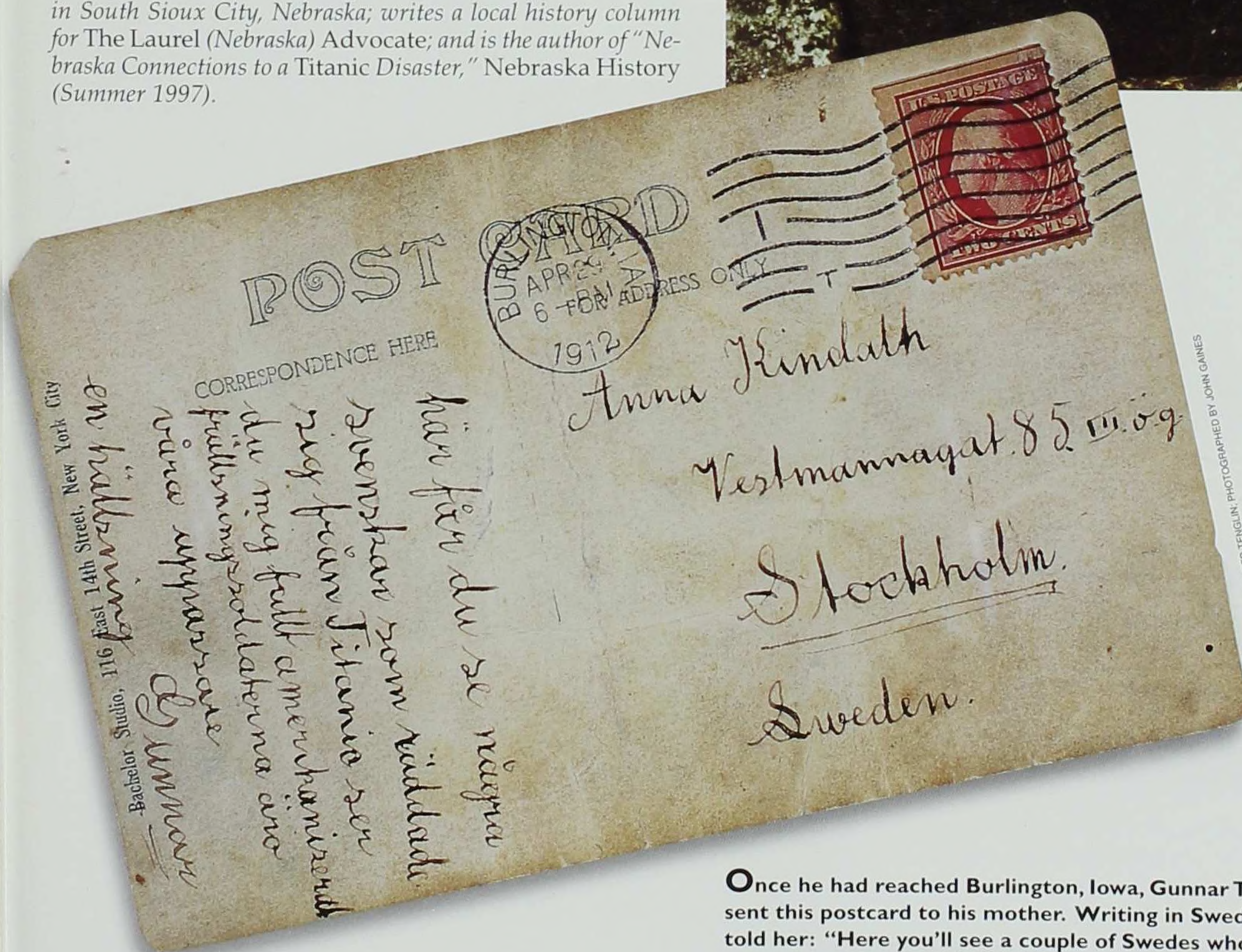
Manuscript annotations are held in Iowa Heritage Illustrated production files (SHSI-Iowa City).

Red Oak for the wedding of her cousin Ebba Peters. Instead, she boarded the White Star liner *Baltic* and returned to Sweden on May 9—the same day the body of Ernest G. Danbom was laid to rest in a Stanton, Iowa, cemetery.

What about Sigrid Danbom, her baby Gilbert, and the other Iowa-bound *Titanic* passengers? Perhaps they are among the thousand or so victims whose bodies were never recovered. Or perhaps, like their stories that lie buried in Iowa newspapers of 1912, they lie unidentified in one of the scores of numbered graves in Halifax, Nova Scotia—far from North Atlantic icebergs, but even farther from Iowa prairies. ❖

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COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



COURTESY OF MILDRED TENGLEN; PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOHN GAINES

Once he had reached Burlington, Iowa, Gunnar Tenglin sent this postcard to his mother. Writing in Swedish, he told her: "Here you'll see a couple of Swedes who were saved from the *Titanic*. Can you see me totally Americanized. The Salvation Army our servants. A greeting from Gunnar." (His photo was on the reverse side; see page 53.)

Above: In a cemetery in Halifax, Nova Scotia, scores of simple stones dated "April 15, 1912" mark the graves of unidentified victims of the *Titanic*.