

## Chapter I

### A CALIFORNIAN VOYAGE

The Leyland Liner SS *Californian* was a tramp steamer with an overall length of 464 ft, maximum breadth of 54 ft, depth from the shelter deck of 42 ft 6 in, and maximum draft when fully loaded of 27 ft. She was built by the Caledon Shipbuilding & Engineering Co., Dundee, Scotland, in 1902. She had a gross tonnage of 6,223 tons, and her propulsion plant consisted of two double-ended Scotch boilers with a working pressure of 200 psi supplying steam to a triple expansion engine linked to one propeller. Her rated full ahead speed was 13.5 knots. She carried a single pink-colored funnel and four masts, and was equipped with a complete electrical plant that generated 60 volts of DC current that powered about 260 lamps,<sup>1</sup> including her two electric masthead lights, red and green sidelights, and a stern light. She also was equipped with a standard 1½ kW Marconi wireless set that was designed to work off a 100-volt dynamo system, but because of the 60-volt system that was installed on *Californian*, the transmitted power was only a little more than half of that.<sup>2</sup>

The SS *Californian* began her sixth voyage under the command of 35-year-old Captain Stanley Lord on April 5, 1912. She was bound from London to Boston. The chief officer was 34-year-old George Frederick Stewart, the second officer was 24-year-old Herbert Stone, and the third officer was 24-year-old Charles Victor Groves. As watch officers they would stand 4 hours on followed by 8 hours off. Stewart stood the 4 to 8 (am and pm) watches, Groves the 8 to 12 (am and pm) watches, and Stone the 12 to 4 (am and pm) watches. Also on board was 20-year-old James Gibson, an apprentice with three and a half years of experience at sea, and 20-year-old Cyril Evans, *Californian*'s only wireless operator with just 6 months of experience on the job. This was to be Evans' third trip as wireless operator on *Californian*, having had one trip on White Star Line's *Cedric* before being assigned to *Californian*. The total complement on board *Californian* for this Boston-bound trip was 55 crewmembers. Although *Californian* had accommodation for 47 passengers, she only carried general cargo on this particular voyage.<sup>3</sup>

*Californian*'s planned route of travel would first take her from her berth at No. 24 Shed in the Royal Albert Dock in London to a point located just off Bishop Rock (49° 52'N, 6° 27'W) at the westernmost tip of the Isles of Scilly, a distance of about 400 nautical miles. After taking departure from Bishop Rock, the official starting point of her transatlantic crossing, she would travel 1,734 nautical miles along the great circle route to "the Corner" point (42° 00'N, 47° 00'W) for westbound steamers going to America for that time of the year.<sup>4</sup> From there she would travel another 1,067 nautical miles on a fixed course heading of 271° true to the Boston Light Vessel (42° 20'N, 70° 54'W) that was located at a distance of about 15 miles from Boston's famed Customs House. Arrival at the light vessel would mark the official end point of her transatlantic crossing. From the light vessel she would then go on to the Clyde Street pier of the Boston and Albany docks located in East Boston.

#### Navigational Inconsistencies of the SS *Californian*

The planned route of travel across the Atlantic for the SS *Californian*, as well as the planned route of travel for the RMS *Titanic*, is shown in Figure 1-01.

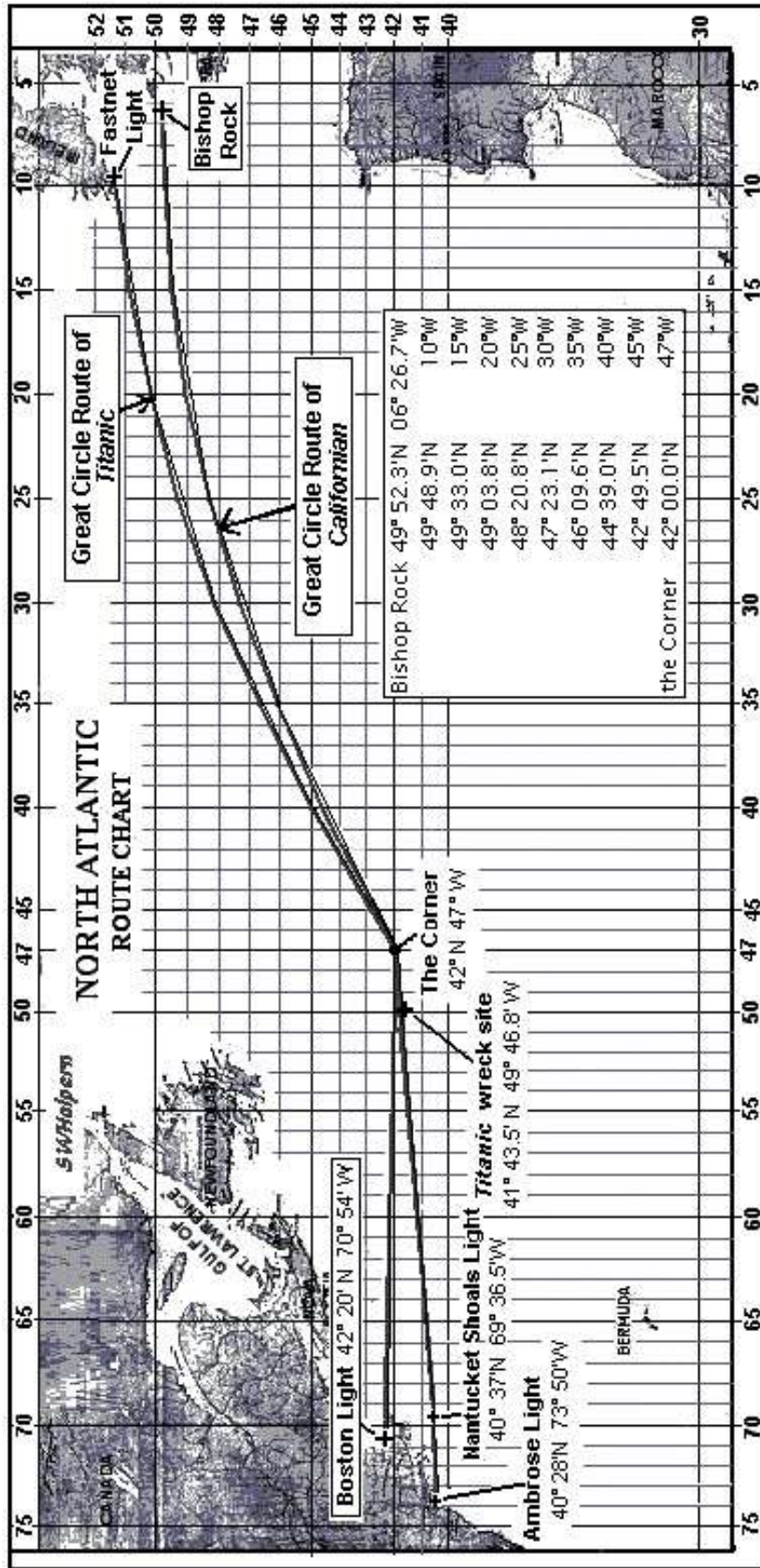


Fig. 1-01. *Californian's* route of travel across the Atlantic.