

Chapter II

A MAIDEN VOYAGE

At precisely 12:00 noon, Wednesday the 10th of April 1912, two 675-pound triple-domed steam whistles sounded three times to indicate an immediate departure from Southampton's Ocean Dock berth 44. It was the signal indicating the start of RMS *Titanic*'s maiden voyage.

In command of *Titanic* was 62-year-old Captain Edward J. Smith. On the navigation bridge along with Captain Smith was Trinity House harbor pilot George W. Bowyer who was assigned to take *Titanic* out from Southampton to the Nab Light Vessel, the departure point for the cross-channel voyage to Cherbourg, France.

Titanic carried three senior officers, each of who worked four hours on followed by eight hours off. Her chief officer was 39-year-old Henry Tingle Wilde, who was brought over from *Olympic* specifically to take that position. Just two days before, 39-year-old William McMaster Murdoch had been *Titanic*'s chief officer, and 38-year-old Charles Herbert Lightoller had been *Titanic*'s first officer. As a result of Wilde being brought on board, Murdoch was forced to step down from his position as chief officer to that of first officer, and Lightoller was forced to step down from his position as first officer to that of second officer. As a result of all this reshuffling of senior officers, 37-year-old David Blair, who had been *Titanic*'s second officer before Wilde came over, was forced to leave the ship.

Titanic also carried four junior officers. Her third officer was 34-year-old Herbert John Pitman, and her fourth officer was 28-year-old Joseph Groves Boxhall. Pitman worked what was called the "port watch" with 29-year-old Harold Godfrey Lowe, *Titanic*'s fifth officer. Boxhall worked the "starboard watch" with 28-year-old James Paul Moody, *Titanic*'s sixth officer. These junior officers stood the same watch hours as the rest of the deck crew, typically four hours on followed by four hours off.¹

Leaving Southampton was not without incident. After casting off her mooring lines, the 46,300 GRT triple-screw passenger liner was moved away from the Ocean Dock wharf and into the river Test with the help of tugboats *Albert Edward*, *Ajax*, *Hector*, *Hercules*, *Neptune*, and *Vulcan*. As *Titanic* gathered speed in those restricted waters, an adverse hydrodynamic interaction was set up between her and two steamers that were moored at berth 38 down by the lower Test quays near the juncture of the Test and Itchen rivers. The larger of the two, the 17,300-ton *Oceanic*, was moored against the quay while the smaller of the two, the 10,500-ton *New York*, was moored abreast and outboard of the *Oceanic*. The interaction that took place was even more magnified because of the shallowness of the restricted waters that separated *Titanic* from the two moored vessels.

As *Titanic*'s bow approached the sterns of the two vessels, a small repulsive force was set up between the larger and more massive *Titanic* and the two smaller vessels pushing them both up against the quay. Soon the hydrodynamic force turned from one of repulsion to one of heavy attraction as a low-pressure area was set up between the advancing ocean liner and the two smaller steamers that were moored alongside the quay. With that attractive force came an induced turning moment that now acted to swing the stern of the two ships outward toward the passing *Titanic*. As *Titanic* approached abreast of them, the attractive force became too much for the mooring lines of *New York* to bear, and to the horror of those nearby, her mooring lines suddenly snapped. (See Figure 2-01.)

Tugs *Neptune* and *Vulcan* caught *New York* and pulled her back toward the quay while *Titanic*, stopped dead in her tracks by having her engines reversed for a short time, was slowly drifting backward. Eventually *New York* was brought under control and moored around the head of the Test docks. It was only then that *Titanic* was allowed to resume her

maiden voyage, her departure from Southampton delayed by more than an hour. Little did those on board know at the time, but the near-collision between *Titanic* and *New York* would have been far better than what lay ahead in the ice infested waters of the North Atlantic.

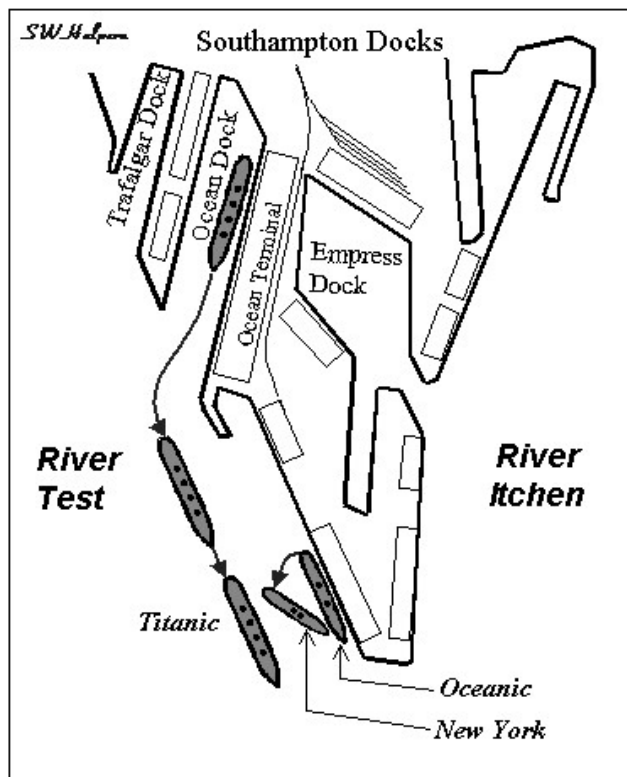


Fig. 2-01. Incident at Southampton.

After finally departing Southampton, *Titanic* proceeded across the English Channel to Cherbourg carrying 68 revolutions per minute (rpm) on her reciprocating engines. She arrived at Cherbourg that same evening to take on additional passengers and mails, and then departed Cherbourg for Queenstown, arriving there before noon the following morning, April 11, 1912, to take on additional passengers and mails.

Track Across the Atlantic

It was early Thursday afternoon when *Titanic* raised anchor and departed Queenstown harbor to begin her maiden voyage crossing of the Atlantic. After taking departure off the Daunt's Rock light vessel at 2:20pm GMT, *Titanic* proceeded at 70 revolutions per minute on her reciprocating engines along a path that hugged the southern coast of Ireland toward Fastnet Light. From there, she followed the great circle track westbound to the Corner point at $42^{\circ} 00'N$, $47^{\circ} 00'W$,² the turning point for westbound steamers heading for the east coast of North America for that time of year. From the Corner point *Titanic* was to follow a direct rhumb-line course to a point just south of the Nantucket Shoals light vessel,³ and then directly to the Ambrose Channel light vessel marking the arrival point and entrance to New York harbor.

The coordinates of the key points along *Titanic*'s planned route of travel are listed below: