

would have been in a direction perpendicular to the eastern edge of that vast icefield which Captain Rostron described as “extending as far as we could see, N.W. to S.E.”¹³ The report to bear away from the wreckage southwesterly, if accurate, appears to be an initial attempt to put some distance between *Carpathia* and the observed wreckage that was seen floating on the surface of the sea at that time. According to Bisset, “most of the passengers and crew of the *Carpathia*, and some of the survivors of the *Titanic*, were crowding the deck-rails, to stare overside.” As we have seen, Captain Rostron was quite adamant about not wanting to cause any “unnecessary excitement or any more hysteria” among the survivors. So Captain Rostron had ordered Bisset to turn *Carpathia*’s head away from the wreckage as she departed the area. However, within 2 to 3 miles of the wreckage there was this huge field of pack ice which Captain Rostron was not about to cross despite having seen the SS *Californian* come through it about an hour earlier.¹⁴

In 1913, Captain Rostron wrote an article about the rescue of *Titanic*’s survivors by *Carpathia* for *Scribner’s Magazine*. In that article he wrote:¹⁵

“At eight o’clock we also saw a steamer coming toward us out of the ice-field. This ice-field stretched as far as the eye could see from northwest to southeast, and we soon found her to be the *Californian*. We signaled her and told news of trouble, and asked her to search around, as we were returning to New York. It was now blowing a moderate breeze and the sea was getting up.

About eight-twenty or so all the people were aboard, and by eight-forty-five all the boats we could take, and then we proceeded to New York. I had decided to return to New York, as I considered New York the only port possible under the circumstances.

We soon found our passage blocked by a tremendous ice-field. Of course we had seen this ice-field before, but did not know how compact it was, nor the extent of it. In the field were many bergs from one hundred to one hundred and fifty feet high, and the general mass of ice perhaps six to twelve feet high. We sailed round this ice-pack for nearly four hours – quite fifty-six miles – before we could set our course for New York. We also passed several large bergs clear of the pack.”

In an article published in *The Titanic Commutator*, the journal of the Titanic Historical Society, *Carpathia* passenger Howard Chapin wrote:¹⁶

“As we had picked up all the lifeboats and taken on board all the survivors and whatever lifeboats were in good condition, we got underway and steamed southward, leaving the *Californian* to cruise about the spot the rest of the day in the hope of finding other boats... As we steamed away we passed within a few hundred yards of an immense icefield...a smooth sheet of snowy whiteness from whose midst here and there rose lofty cones of ice, whose clear-cut outlines showed up against a cold, blue sky.”

From a letter written in mid ocean by *Carpathia* passenger Luke Hoyt we have the following:¹⁷

“By about nine o’clock all boats in sight having been cared for and the Lyland [sic] Liner *Californian* steaming up we left her cruising in the vicinity and started for New York with our load of sorrow and woe and

misery... You have no doubt seen pictures in the magazines of rescue parties in the polar seas. Well that is the best description of the scene I can give you. In the background was in immense ice floe with berg after berg, which had not broken loose, and other bergs floating around, our ship standing off the floe and the boats approaching from the direction of the floe. I think this a perfect picture of the scene. The ice floe was immense. We steamed 52 miles to get away and around it, and it extended in the other direction beyond the horizon..."

From his testimony at the US Senate investigation, *Titanic* survivor Hugh Woolner had this to say about that vast icefield that blocked their path:¹⁸

"I saw [from collapsible boat D] a faint line, what looked like a faint line along the horizon; but when we got on the *Carpathia*, we saw it was a huge floe which stretched out, I do not know how far but we were several hours steaming along it... [There were icebergs that] looked more like scouts out in front... By out in front I mean to the south... That is the way it looked to me."

And from *Titanic* survivor Lawrence Beesley, we have the following description that he wrote in his book, *The Loss of the SS Titanic*:¹⁹

"The problem of where to land us had next to be decided... Halifax was the nearest in point of distance, but this meant steaming north through the ice, and he thought his passengers did not want to see more ice. He [Rostron] headed back therefore to New York, which he had left the previous Thursday, working all afternoon along the edge of the ice-field which stretched away north as far as the unaided eye could reach... It was certainly an extraordinary sight to stand on deck and see the sea covered with solid ice, white and dazzling in the sun and dotted here and there with icebergs. We ran close up, only two or three hundred yards away, and steamed parallel to the floe, until it ended towards night and we saw to our infinite satisfaction the last of the icebergs and the field fading away astern."²⁰

Four separate first hand accounts that said that *Carpathia* steamed a course that was parallel to the eastern edge of the icefield in an obvious attempt to get around it to the southward. That icefield trended to the southeast. Pictures taken of this icefield from *Carpathia* are shown in Figures 10-01 and 10-02.

The departure of *Carpathia* was also observed from the bridge of the SS *Californian*. Charles Groves, *Californian*'s third officer, described her departure very simply:²¹

"The *Carpathia* then got under way by which time it was nine o'clock, and less than 20 minutes later disappeared from view, hidden by the icebergs."

It should be noted that icebergs covered the entire seascape that morning, "there were dozens and dozens all over the place." According to *Californian*'s Captain Stanley Lord, "The ones way to the southeast were much larger than the ones to the westward... The ones to the westward were not very high, and they were mixed up with field ice."

If we attempt to reconstruct the course taken by *Carpathia*, what we find is that she

