

LIFEBOATS, LAUNCH TIMES, LIST AND TRIM – Part-I

by Samuel Halpern

Over the years there have been many attempts to determine the various times that lifeboats were launched from the sinking *Titanic*. The first such attempt appears to be by the British Wreck Commission when they wrote their report on the loss of the SS *Titanic* back in 1912. They based their work on the testimony provided to them by the survivors that were called as eyewitnesses by taking what they said about the loading and launching of the boats, those who they believed were involved, and the time estimates that they gave. The Commission had a very short time to develop their conclusions with the limited evidence that was available to them. The table of launch times they derived, put down to the nearest 5 minute time interval, is shown below.¹ As openly stated in the Commission's report, "it is necessary to say that these, and, indeed, all the times subsequent to the collision which are mentioned by the witnesses, are unreliable."

Launch times from British Wreck Commission report				
Boat	Port side		Boat	Starboard side
6	12:55am		7	12:45am
8	1:10		5	12:55
10	1:20		3	1:00
12	1:25		1	1:10
14	1:30		9	1:20
16	1:35		11	1:25
2	1:45		13	1:35
4	1:55		15	1:35
D	2:05		C	1:40
B	Floated off when the ship sank and was utilized as a raft.		A	Floated off when the ship sank and was utilized as a raft.

It should be noted that the accepted time of the iceberg encounter was 11:40pm, and the accepted time of the foundering was 2:20am, all times being Apparent Time Ship (ATS). The Commission also learned during their investigation that *Titanic* had started to slowly trim down by the head soon after the collision with the iceberg took place, and had taken on an initial list to starboard, the side on which she struck the iceberg, within minutes of impact. They also learned that *Titanic*'s list to starboard began to shift over to port sometime during the evacuation process that followed, and was listing well over to port before she finally foundered 2 hours and 40 minutes following the impact.

Sixteen Pairs Of Davits And Twenty Lifeboats

With reference to Figure 01, there were 16 pairs of davits located on *Titanic*'s boat deck. They were arranged in four groups of four pairs each, with a forward group of four and an aft group of four on the starboard side, and a forward group of four and an aft group of four on the port side. Other than the collapsible boats, the eight starboard-side boats were given odd-numbers, beginning with No. 1 forward and ending with No. 15 aft, while the eight port-side boats were given even-numbers, beginning with No. 2 forward and ending with No. 16 aft.

¹ The references provided in the British report were to various witness responses to British inquiry (BI) question numbers: 15809, 147, 156, 15593, 15000, 17911, 4937, 4987, 11071, 2134, 10120, 13303, 13200, 2266, 5647, 10456, 5950, 1018, 1054, 1065, 1094, 13931, 5841, 17920, 14014, 15426, 15832, and 14068.

There were four collapsible boats stored on *Titanic*. The starboard-side collapsible boat stored on the roof of the officer's quarters by the side of the first funnel was labeled boat A, while the port-side collapsible boat stored on the roof of the officer's quarters by the side of the first funnel was labeled boat B. Stored on deck by the davits for No. 1 boat on the starboard side was collapsible boat C, and the one stored on deck by the davits used by No. 2 boat on the port side was collapsible boat D.

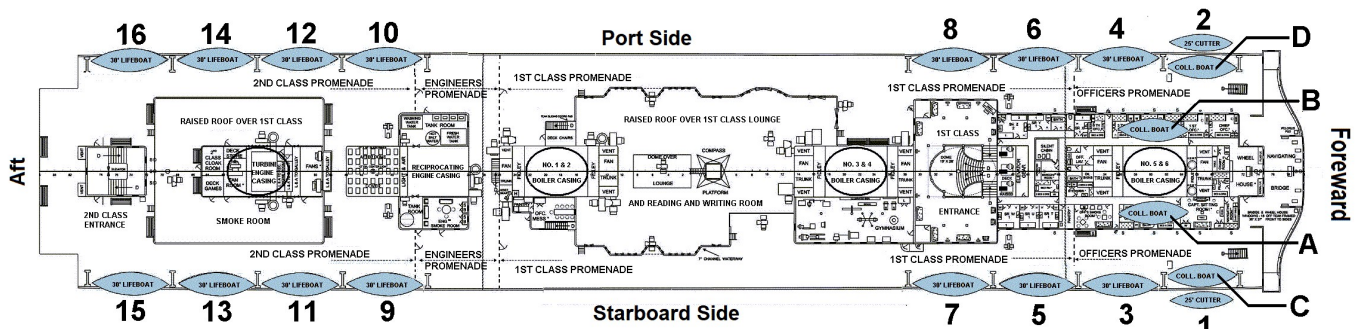


Fig. 01 – *Titanic*'s boat deck showing location of the 20 lifeboats as carried.

Since the publication of the Wreck Commission's findings, a number of well respected and objective researchers have attempted to delve further into the question of lifeboat launch times, and to identify the people involved and their whereabouts during the evacuation process. Most notably was the detailed work of Bill Wormstedt, Tad Fitch and George Behe (W-F-B) that led to the publication of their landmark article, "*Titanic: The Lifeboat Launching Sequence Re-Examined*" in 2001,² with revised and expanded on-line versions in 2009, 2010, 2012, and recently in December of 2022 and February of 2023;³ and the lesser known work of Ioannis Georgiou that led to the publication of a comprehensive nine-part series of articles entitled, "The Lifeboat Story," which ran from December 2012 through March 2016.⁴

Both these newer studies went far beyond what was available to the Wreck Commission back in 1912, making use not only of the transcripts of testimony from the British and American inquiries, but also the Limitation of Liability Hearings of 1913, and the many articles, letters, books, newspaper and magazine accounts provided by a number of survivors in the aftermath of the disaster over the years.

Below are the launch times derived in these two relatively recent studies:

Launch times from the work of Wormstedt, Fitch and Behe (W-F-B)			
Boat	Port side	Boat	Starboard side
8	1:00am	7	12:40am
6	1:10	5	12:43
16	1:20	3	12:55
14	1:25	1	1:05
12	1:30	9	1:30
2	1:45	11	1:35
10	1:50	13	1:40
4	1:50	15	1:41
D	2:05	C	2:00
B*	2:15	A*	2:15

* Floated off as the ship sank.

² Published in edited form in *The Titanic Commutator* No. 155.

³ <http://wormstedt.com/Titanic/lifeboats/lifeboatarticle.htm>.

⁴ This was first published in the British Titanic Society's journal, *Atlantic Daily Bulletin*, and also in the journal of the Swiss Titanic Association, *Titanic-Verein Schweiz*, in posts 82-93.

Launch times from the work of Ioannis Georgiou						
Boat	Port side	List		Boat	Starboard side	List
6	12:55am	starboard		7	12:40am	starboard
8	1:20	port		5	12:50	starboard
16	1:30	port		3	12:55	starboard
12	1:35	port		1	1:00	starboard
14	1:40	port		9	1:05	none
10	1:45	port		11	1:10	none
2	1:50	port		13	1:15	none
4	1:55	port		15	1:25	port
D	2:10	port		C	2:00	port
B*	2:18	port		A*	2:17	port

* Floated off as the ship sank.

What is noteworthy about these derived sequences and launch times is that there appears to be universal agreement (including in the British report) as to the launch sequence of the lifeboats on the starboard side, although different launch times are given; and the close agreement among modern day researchers as to the launch times for the collapsible boats, A, B, C, and D. However, for the boats on the port side, there are a number of differences in the sequences listed as well as the launch times that were derived. What is apparent in all three tables, however, is that the first boat to be launched was boat No. 7 on the starboard side sometime around 12:40-12:45am, about an hour after the collision with the iceberg took place. Also apparent is agreement that the first boat launched on the port side, sometime around 12:55-1:00am, occurred about 15 to 20 minutes after the first boat was launched on the starboard side. However, there is a disagreement as to which of the port-side boats was the first one launched, No. 6 or No. 8.

What is also noticeable in some of these tables are some very wide gaps in time between consecutive launchings that took place on a given side of the boat deck. Excluding collapsible boats A and B, which were not actually launched but floated off the ship after the bridge became inundated, the British report shows consecutive launchings taking place mostly every 5 to 10 minutes on both sides of the deck. In stark contrast, we see some very large gaps between some consecutive boat launchings on a given side of the deck in both the W-F-B sequence (e.g., 25 minutes between boats 1 and 9), and in the Georgiou sequence (e.g., 25 minutes between boats 6 and 8).

Why are there differences in sequence and launch times between modern day researchers? The problem can be traced to numerous inconsistencies and contradictions that show up in the available evidence. Questions concerning eyewitness reliability and credibility also come into play, as well as differences caused by subjective estimates of such things as length measurements, clock times and time intervals that were mentioned. As a result, differences in interpretation, opinions and resulting conclusions appear in these comprehensive works. Even so, some differences in survivor accounts were documented in the articles that were written, and a few explanations were given, more or less, for some of the time estimates and conclusions that were developed by the authors.

In Part-I of this work I will attempt to review some of these differences, and point out a few things that may have been overlooked, possibly misinterpreted, or perhaps not fully considered. It is not my intent to repeat all the comprehensive good work done by others, but to work off of their work, and offer some additional considerations and possible insights.

Another objective of this work is to try and quantify the angle of list as well as the angle of trim that *Titanic* took on as a function of time, and see how the launch times of the boats and other related events fit in with that work. This will be covered in Part-II. The reader should bear in mind that the results of any such study are only as good as the reliability of the data that goes into it, and the assumptions that are made. The reader is therefore cautioned not to assume that this, or any other such work regarding this topic, as the unquestionable last word on this subject.

What Do We Mean By Launch Time?

The launch time of a boat is taken as the time that a boat first started to be lowered away with passengers in it after an order was given to lower the boat, not the time it first reached the water. Lowering a full-sized lifeboat from a height of about 60 feet above the water might take as long as five or six minutes, assuming all goes smoothly, by paying out the falls at a rate of about 12 to 15 inches per second on each end. For every 12 inches (one foot) that the falls were payed out, a full-sized lifeboat would drop only two inches (1/6 foot) on account of the six-to-one pulley arrangement that was used in the system.⁵ To lower a boat 60 feet to the water, about 360 feet of rope on each side of a boat would have to be payed out. Should one fall be payed out a little faster than the other, or if one side should somehow get entangled, a boat would start to tip downward at one end and would have to be leveled off before lowering at both ends could resume. Also, if the ship developed a list to cause a boat to swing in toward the hull of the ship, the boat might have to be pushed off the side of the ship somewhat as it was being lowered down. After reaching the water, in order for the boat to get clear of the ship, the falls had to be released usually by using a patented Murray's disengagement arrangement that at times had a tendency to jam. All of this could extend the time that it would take to lower a boat to the sea and get clear of the ship. In some cases, it might take a good 10 minutes, if not more, before a boat might actually reach the water and have its falls released so it can get clear of the ship after being launched.

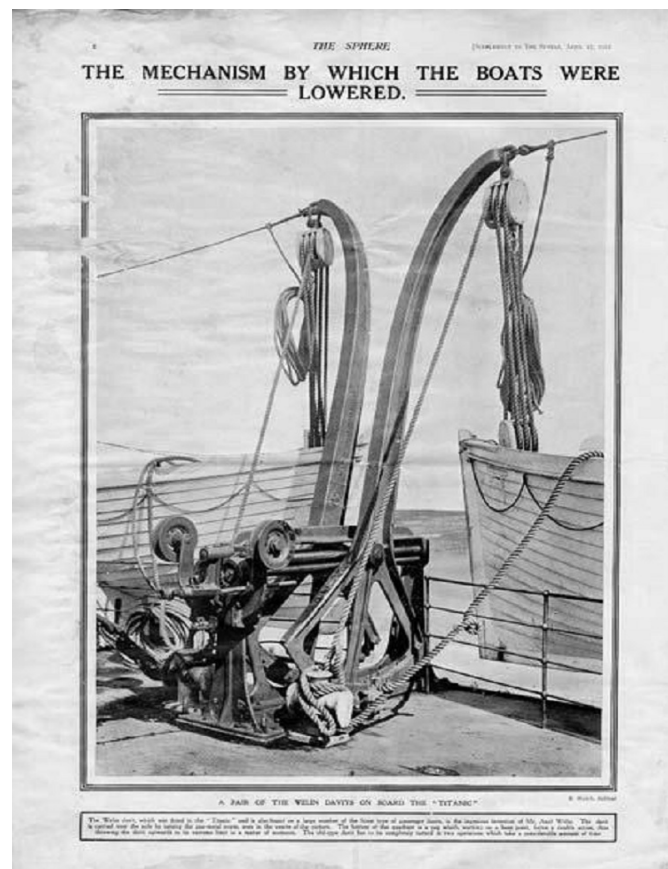


Fig. 02 – Lifeboat davits and falls used on *Olympic* and *Titanic*.

⁵ The davits for emergency cutter lifeboats, No. 1 and No. 2, used only a four-to-one pulley arrangement. For every 12 inches (1 foot) of falls payed out, those boats would drop 3 inches (1/4 foot). Thus, to lower a boat from those davits by paying out the falls at a rate of 1-foot per second, it would take about four minutes to reach the water from a height of 60 feet after paying out 240 feet of rope at each end.

Clearing Of The Boats And Getting Passengers On Deck With Belts On

It is generally agreed that the uncovering of the lifeboats first started around 15-20 minutes after the accident happened, sometime close to midnight, with the calling out of all deck hands in the forecabin. It is also generally agreed that that order to swing out the boats and get passengers up on deck with lifebelts on came around ten to fifteen minutes after all deck hands were called out, or around 12:10 to 12:15am. It is also generally agreed that the order to start placing women and children into the boats came around 45 minutes after the iceberg encounter, or around 12:25am, in close juxtaposition with the sending out of the first distress call by wireless. Furthermore, it is also agreed that the loading of the first lifeboats took a lot more time because of the reluctance of many passengers to get into the boats, or married women to leave their husbands behind, or for many to leave the comfort of the ship as compared to being put into an open, small boat, and lowered some 60 feet to the dark, cold sea below.

Early on, it was only known by a very few that *Titanic* could not be saved. Captain Smith and Thomas Andrews (from the design office of Harland & Wolff) knew the harsh reality a little before the order to fill the boats with women and children was given.⁶ It is also possible that Chief Officer Wilde, First Officer Murdoch, and Chief Engineer Bell also knew early on, and it is also likely, based on his reported actions during the loading and launching of the first group of lifeboats, that first-class passenger and managing director of the White Star Line, Bruce Ismay, was also aware that *Titanic* could not be saved.⁷ Later on, however, as the vessel trimmed down by the head more and more, it became more obvious that the ship may indeed founder, and getting into a lifeboat for many became much more urgent.

Launching The Starboard-Side Lifeboats

As mentioned before, the first boats to be launched were those on the forward starboard side. Both modern-day research articles referred to above show the same sequence of launchings, but have slightly different assigned launch times for the four forward starboard boats. Both agree, however, that the first boat launched from *Titanic* was boat No. 7 at the aft end of the forward group of four at around 12:40am.

The second boat launched on the starboard side, No. 5, was put down in the W-F-B article as occurring at 12:43am. The reasoning was that Third Officer Pitman, who was put in charge of the boat, was asked directly by Senator Smith at the American inquiry, "Was it [boat No. 7] lowered at the same time yours [boat No. 5] was lowered?" Pitman's answer was, "Two or three minutes previously."⁸ Adding 3 minutes to 12:40am gave them 12:43am for the launch time of boat No. 5.⁹

In the Georgiou article, a launch time of 12:50 was assigned for boat No. 5. This can be partially traced back to Pitman being asked by Senator Fletcher, "How long was it after your boat was lowered into the water before the 2.20 hour arrived and the *Titanic* went down?" Pitman's answer was, "I should say an hour and a half."¹⁰ Subtracting 1½ hours from 2:20 gives 12:50am, which was the time put down in the Georgiou timeline for the launching of No. 5.

It should be noted that Pitman himself believed that he first got to No. 5 around 12:20am, about 20 minutes after first being called out of his quarters by Fourth Officer Boxhall. He also thought that his

⁶ Fourth Officer Boxhall was told of the true gravity of the situation only because he had asked Captain Smith sometime during the clearing of the boats if the situation was very serious. It was at that time that Smith told Boxhall what Thomas Andrews had told him, that the ship had from an hour, to an hour and a half, left. From what Second Officer Lightoller, Third Officer Pitman or Fifth Officer Lowe had testified to, it appears that they were not informed that the ship was actually going to sink while the boats were being launched.

⁷ Fifth Officer Lowe, who was helping with the loading and launching of the forward starboard-side boats, said that Ismay was "overanxious and he was getting a trifle excited" at that time, and had to be ordered away. (American inquiry, p. 389.)

⁸ American inquiry, p. 289.

⁹ In their printed table of launch times, all times were rounded to the nearest 5 minute interval thus showing No. 5 being launched at 12:45am.

¹⁰ American inquiry, p. 307.

lifeboat reached the water about 12:30am. The first estimate, given all that he said he did after being called upon by Boxhall some 20 minutes after the accident, appears somewhat reasonable, including coming over to boat No. 5 while it was still being uncovered. However, getting the boat fully cleared, swung out and lowered to the level of the deck, then loaded with people, and then lowered down to the sea in just 10 minutes time, cannot possibly be accurate. Both articles reject that particular estimate, and explain the rationale why.

In the W-F-B article, a time of 12:47am was put down for the firing of the first distress rocket (technically a socket distress signal) from *Titanic*. This was based primarily on the timing given by Quartermaster George Rowe (who appears to have been using partially adjusted time on his watch) as to when he called the navigating bridge from the docking bridge out on the poop after sighting a lifeboat in the water. This was coupled with the supporting testimony from Fourth Officer Boxhall that he received a call from the docking bridge inquiring about a lifeboat seen in the water just after he put the firing lanyard back in the wheelhouse after firing off a socket distress signal. It was well documented that the first distress signal was fired as boat No. 5 was being lowered, and the boat that Rowe probably saw in the water, which would have been lit up by the flash of the exploding shell high above, was No. 7, the first lifeboat launched, as it rowed away from the ship's side.¹¹ (See Figure 03.)

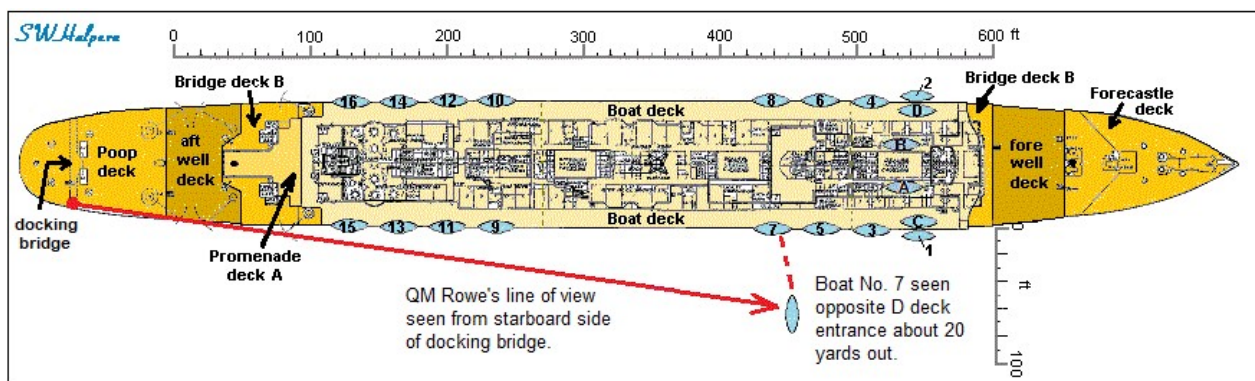


Fig. 03 – QM Rowe's sighting of a boat in the water.

As to the launch times of the other starboard-side boats, the Georgiou sequence has a boat being launched every five minutes following the launching of No. 5 at 12:50am, with No. 3 being launched at 12:55am, No. 1 at 1:00am, No. 9 at 1:05am, No. 11 at 1:10am, and No. 13 at 1:15am. The last starboard-side boat to be launched, other than the collapsible boats, was No. 15, which was assigned a launch time of 1:25am in the Georgiou sequence, some ten minutes after the assigned launch time for boat No. 13. What was documented in the Georgiou sequence was that *Titanic* had sustained a list to starboard throughout the launchings of boats No. 7 through No. 1, then had no significant known list during the launchings of boats No. 9 through No. 13, and then sustained a list to port by the time No. 15 was launched. The change from having no list to a noticeable list to port at 1:20am in the Georgiou sequence appears to be one of the reasons for assigning that 10 minute gap between the launching of boat No. 13 at 1:15am and boat No. 15 at 1:25am, as well as some actions described by a few eyewitnesses.

Despite the fact that it was pointed out in the Georgiou article that boat No. 15 almost came on top of boat No. 13 as it drifted under No. 15 before its falls could be cut loose, in my opinion, a gap as long as

¹¹ The first distress signal that seen from afar on the SS *Californian* was by Second Officer Herbert Stone. Stone at first thought it may have been a shooting star, and estimated the time at around 12:45am, *Californian* time. This would have corresponded to about 12:57am, *Titanic* time, about 10 minutes after the first signal was actually sent up. Since distress socket signals were being fired at 5 to 6 minute intervals, this would imply that the first signal seen by Stone was actually the third signal fired from *Titanic*. The reader should be aware that nobody on *Titanic* actually counted the number of distress signals that were fired. Very wide estimates were given as to the total, ranging from a half dozen to more than a dozen. *Titanic* carried a total of 36 socket distress signals, of which 17 unused signals were found in a decayed box at the wreck site. All in all, a total of only eight distress signals were seen from the bridge of the SS *Californian*.

10 minutes between the launchings of these two boats does not seem to be fully consistent with the available evidence.

In contrast to the Georgiou sequence, the W-F-B sequence has the second starboard boat, No. 5, being launched at 12:43am as before mentioned, followed by No. 3 at 12:55am, and then by No. 1 at 1:05am. Then they show this huge gap in time, some 25 minutes, until boat No. 9 was launched at an assigned time of 1:30am. After that, they show boat No. 11 being let down at 1:35am, No. 13 at 1:40am, and No. 15 just one minute later at 1:41am.¹² The one minute difference between the launch times of No. 13 and No. 15 in the W-F-B sequence can easily be traced to the testimony of Leading Fireman Frederick Barrett who said that No. 15 was getting lowered “30 seconds” after No. 13, and that it was coming down right on top of them.¹³ It was Barrett who cut the falls of No. 13, and took charge of the boat.

Still, why is there such a large gap in time, 25 minutes, between the launching of boat No. 1 and boat No. 9 on the starboard side in the W-F-B sequence? The explanation for the delay in loading and launching the aft starboard boats given by the authors was:

“[Fifth Officer] Lowe was not alone in heading to the aft port boats at this time [after No. 1 was launched]. Other crewmen also moved from the forward starboard boats back to the aft port boats - Seamen Evans and Buley, for example. Passengers had begun to act alarmed and unruly there. *This convergence of crewmembers to calm the disturbance and crowds at the aft port boats was one factor that led to the later start in the loading and lowering of the aft starboard boats, even though at least some of those boats had been prepared for loading earlier in the evening* [my emphasis].

Second Class passenger Lawrence Beesley’s account may provide further explanation of why passengers, particularly male passengers, began to crowd the aft port boats. He reported that sometime after the first distress rocket was fired, and after the crew had swung out the aft starboard boats, a rumor began to circulate that men were to be taken off on the port side. He was unsure of where the rumor started, but said that it was ‘acted on at once by almost all the men,’ who went to watch the preparation for lowering the aft port boats. Beesley said that this left the aft starboard side ‘almost deserted,’ *which further explains the delay in loading and lowering the boats there* [my emphasis].”

It should be pointed out to the reader that the aftermost port-side boats were actually swung out quite early in the evacuation process, probably during the same time that some of the forward starboard-side boats were being swung out. Fourth Officer Joseph Boxhall reported that just before he went onto the bridge to get a better look at a light that was reported ahead, “They started to screw some [boats] out on the afterpart of the port side.” This was after he spent some time unlacing a few boats on the port side himself, and was going along the after part of the deck on that side when a light was reported ahead.¹⁴

So let us take a hard look at what several eyewitnesses had to say about the loading and launching of the aft starboard-side boats which began with boat No. 9.

According to boson’s mate Albert Haines:¹⁵

“We were turning out the after boats [on the starboard side] while they were filling the forward ones. As soon as we finished turning the boats out I went to my own station. I got to my own boat just in time, as they filled my boat. The boatswain [Alfred Nichols] missed his boat, No. 7. No. 7 was gone before he got there. My own boat was No. 9. ... I did not

¹² In their printed table of launch times, they rounded the numbers to the nearest 5 minute interval thus showing both No. 13 and No. 15 being lowered at 1:40am.

¹³ British inquiry, 2170.

¹⁴ British inquiry, 15385. This was about the time the first wireless distress signal was given to the operators by Captain Smith, before Boxhall went inside to rework the position.

¹⁵ American inquiry, p. 659-660.

see any of them [the other boats] loaded. I came back just in time to take charge of my own boat.”

Much of what Haines reported can be supported by several others. For example, Saloon Steward William Ward:¹⁶

“When I got on deck, I adjusted preservers on people that hadn’t got one. I did not take it seriously at all. I put one on myself. Everybody was supplied around there at the time...I went to my boat - I was stationed at No. 7 - and she was already lowered to the same level as the deck...They called for the ladies to get in. Some got in, and there were a few men got into it; quite a few of the crew up there, and they did not want them for that boat. They did not want me for that boat, although I was told off for that boat. They just had sufficient men to man the boat. Then I went aft to No. 9 boat...I went to No. 9 boat and assisted to take the canvas cover off of her. Then we lowered her down to level with the boat deck, and a sailor came along with a bag and threw it in the boat.”

The sailor Ward was referring to was Quartermaster Walter Wynn, who came up from below after getting a knife and a kit bag with some clothes in it, and threw the bag into boat No. 9. According to Wynn, he was ordered to boat No. 9 by Sixth Officer James Moody:¹⁷

“Mr. Moody told me to go to number nine boat and take charge of number nine...It was all ready swinging out on the davits and he told me to take charge of No. 9, as I did not know my own boat [number]...I got in [No. 9] and assisted the ladies in; and when we started to lower away the boatswain’s mate [Albert Haines] got into the boat, and I handed charge over to him, and took an oar.”

Wynn’s narrative seems fairly consistent with what Haines said. When Wynn got to No. 9 it was already swung out and ready for loading. From Ward we know that they first started to clear No. 9 as they were finishing up with the loading of boat No. 7, the first boat that was launched. This therefore had to be at a time that was close to 12:40am, the accepted launch time for No. 7 boat. It was after No. 9 was uncovered and lowered to the level of the deck that Quartermaster Wynn came by with his kit bag and was ordered to take charge of the boat by Sixth Officer Moody. It is also significant that when Moody told him to take charge of the boat, the boat was only swung out and ready for loading. Wynn then got in and started to help “the ladies in.” All of this happened while the forward starboard boats were being loaded and launched. Also, while this was happening, bosun’s mate Albert Haines, along with a few others, was busy turning out the aftermost starboard-side boats (No. 11, 13 and 15). When Haines got back to No. 9, it was still being loaded up, and he soon took over the charge of the boat from QM Walter Wynn.

The overall loading of No. 9 appears to have been supervised by First Officer William Murdoch with the assistance of Chief Purser Hugh McElroy. According to Ward, even Bruce Ismay had been around. During the loading of lifeboat No. 9, Murdoch had a number of stewards gather women from the port side of the boat deck and escort them over to the starboard side to fill the boat. As pointed out before, some of the aftermost port-side boats had been swung out quite early, and crowds coming up to the boat deck seem to have naturally gathered around them waiting to get in.

Meanwhile, at some point during the loading of boat No. 9, Murdoch apparently ordered the remaining aft starboard-side boats (No. 11, 13 and 15) lowered from the boat deck down to A deck, and had tasked Assistant Second Steward Joseph Wheat to take the remaining members of the victualing

¹⁶ American inquiry, p. 596-597.

¹⁷ British inquiry, 13396 and 13323-13328.

department (stewards), who had gathered around boat No. 9, down to A deck and to start loading the remaining starboard-side boats with women and children from that deck.¹⁸ At the time, the ship's list to starboard had apparently straightened out, otherwise, they would never have attempted to load the aftermost boats from the deck below the boat deck. This may also have been the time that the rumor described by Beesley may have started because they started to bring women and children down to A deck to put them into the remaining starboard-side boats from there.

Looking at what Second Steward Joseph Wheat had to say, it seems that the loading of boat No. 9 must have started sometime shortly around 1:00am, and not as late as the W-F-B sequence would suggest.¹⁹ Joseph Wheat reported that the order to get the stewards out and to bring passengers up with belts on came around 12:15am, consistent with what several others had to say. The order that was heard by Wheat was given by Chief Purser McElroy. It was heard as Wheat was coming up the stairs approaching C deck just after he helped close two hand-driven watertight doors located down on F deck by the Turkish baths. After receiving the order to get passengers up on deck from McElroy, Wheat went back down to E deck and saw most of the stewards there already out and about, and gave the order to those who he saw there to get all passengers up on deck with warm clothing and lifebelts on. Wheat estimated that it took about a half an hour to do all that when further word came down to "to pass all women and children on to A deck on the port side." (This may very well have been the time that Lightoller initially decided to load boat No. 4 on the port side from A deck, an order that he soon countermanded after realizing that the windows on A deck forward were all closed.)

Wheat went on to say that it was about a quarter or ten minutes to one o'clock when McElroy gave another order, this time for all the stewards to go up to their boat stations. Wheat then passed the word along "for as many men as I could see there; and then I went down below again and went down to my own quarters. I think you will find there were about six or eight rooms down our quarters, the Turkish bath attendants." As he then revealed:

"I went and saw if all the people were out of those rooms first, and as I was coming up there was water running down off E deck on to F deck, down our section...it had come from E deck and was running down on to F... It was running down the stairway."

What had happened by then was that water had overtopped watertight bulkhead F located at the forward end of the Turkish bath space. It was seen by Wheat coming down the stairway from E deck onto F deck. (See Figure 04.)

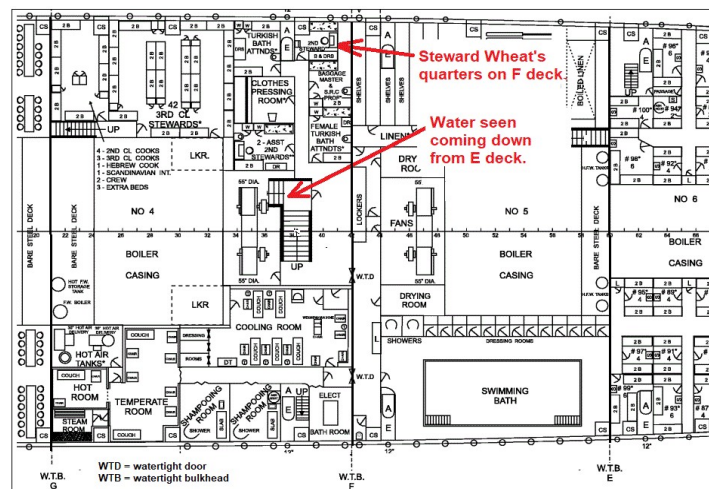


Fig. 04 – Steward Joseph Wheat sees water flowing down staircase onto F deck.

¹⁸ British inquiry, 13187-13207.

¹⁹ British inquiry, 10942-11012, 11064-11071.

Wheat was asked about the time that this took place, and again responded by saying that it was about 12:45-12:50am when he was down in his quarters to make sure nobody was left there. It was when he was going back up the stairs to E deck that he saw that water trickling down the stairway. When further pressed about the time, Wheat confirmed that it was a little more than an hour after the impact when he saw that water there. He also said that when he got back up to E deck he noticed that the water was not coming from the working alleyway (also known as “Scotland Road”) over on the port side of the ship, but was coming from the forward end of the other alleyway that was located on the starboard side of the ship. (See Figure 05.) From that starboard-side alley, the water had reached the stairs that were located in the center of the passageway that connected the two alleyways there, and was flowing down those stairs onto F deck below. Although Wheat said that he did not notice any list carried by the vessel at that time, it is clear from what he described that *Titanic* was still carrying some list to starboard, otherwise water would have been seen coming from the forward end of the working alley on the port side as well, as was later described by Steward Frederick Ray,²⁰ who we shall have more to say about later on.

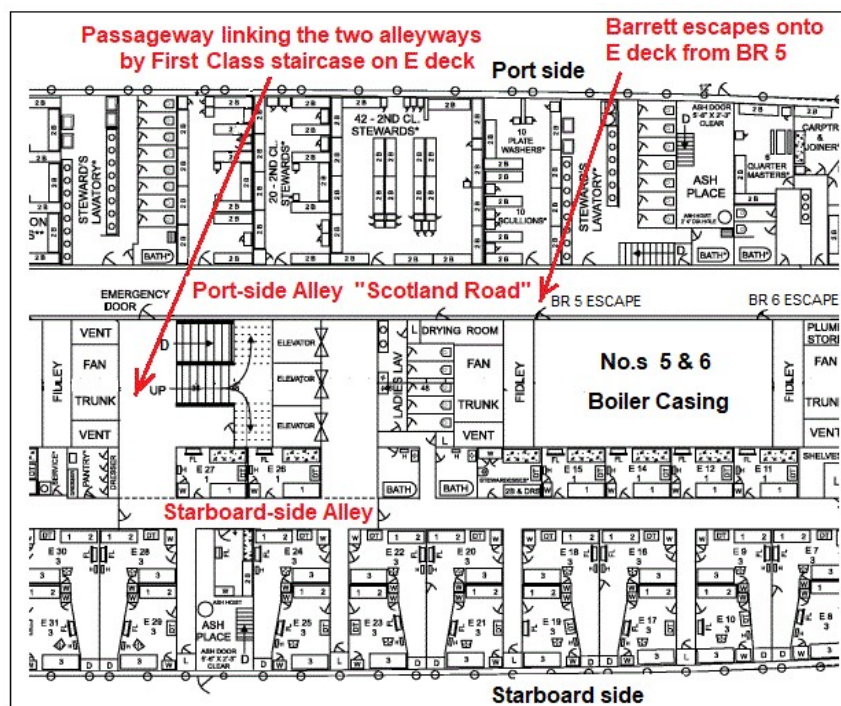


Fig. 05 – Location of First Class staircase on E deck.

It was shortly before 1 o'clock, according to his account, when Wheat saw this water falling down the stairs onto F deck. What did he do next? According to his testimony before the British inquiry, the next thing he did was to go out into the working alley on E deck through the open emergency door that was located there (Figure 05 above), then aft to the service stairs used by the crew that was located just aft of the third funnel casing, and from there up to B deck where he briefly met Chief Steward Latimer who was wearing his lifebelt over his coat.

“I told him to take his big coat off and put the lifebelt under it or his big coat would be no use to him. Then I went along forward and up the forward stairway up on to the boat deck and there I saw they were just filling No. 9 boat, starboard.”

²⁰ American inquiry, p. 803.

If we take 12:55am as the approximate time that Wheat saw this water flowing down from E deck onto F deck, and then generously allow another 10 minutes, or thereabouts, for him to get to the boat deck after first going aft and up to B deck (where he briefly met Latimer) and then forward and up to the boat deck, we find Wheat coming out by the first-class entrance just forward of the second funnel onto the boat deck somewhere around 1:05am, where he said, “they were just filling No. 9 boat” on the starboard side.

So why was an allotted launch time as late as 1:30am given for No. 9 in the W-F-B sequence? To answer this we have to jump across to the port side of the boat deck and look at the launch times that were assigned in the W-F-B timeline to the three aftermost boats located there (No. 12, 14 and 16), which we know from the evidence of several eyewitnesses, including Fifth Officer Lowe, were loaded and launched very close together in time. (Boat No. 10, the forward most boat of the aft group of four on the port side, was the last boat in that group to be loaded and launched. However, this took place somewhat later on.)

Linking The Launching Of The Aft Starboard-Side Boats To The Aft Port-Side Boats

In the W-F-B sequence, a launch time of 1:20am was assigned for the launching of boat No. 16, the first boat launched on the aft port side, which gave enough time for Fifth Officer Lowe to arrive there from the forward starboard side after he finished lowering boat No. 1 down to the water. The authors then assigned a launch time of 1:25am, five minutes after boat No. 16, for the launching of boat No. 14 in their timeline. The reasoning behind this had to do with Leading Fireman Thomas Threlfall who managed to get into boat No. 14. Threlfall and a few others were released from the stokehold by Second Engineer John Hesketh at a reported time of 1:20am.²¹ The authors assumed it would have taken Threlfall only five minutes to come up from the stockhold and reach the boat deck just in time for him to get to boat No. 14 before it started down. This then puts a launch time for boat No. 14 at 1:25am. They then showed boat No. 12, the third of the aftermost port-side boats to be launched in their sequence, as being launched at 1:30am, five minutes after No. 14. (Boat No. 10, the fourth of the aft port-side boats that was launched, was put down for 1:50am, some 20 minutes after boat No. 12, as explained later.)

So how was the launching of No. 9, a boat on the aft starboard side, related to the launch times for these aft port-side boats? The answer has to do with the testimony of a single eyewitness, AB Joseph Scarrott, who was sent away in boat No. 14, the boat that Fifth Officer Lowe went away in.

Scarrott testified that the crewman who lowered the after-fall of boat No. 14 was AB George McGough.²² It was also well established from multiple sources that McGough went away in boat No. 9. In order for McGough to cross the deck to get over to boat No. 9 before it left, the boat he allegedly was lowering, No. 14, had to have been lowered to the water first. It was assumed that it took only 5 minutes of time to both lower boat No. 14 to the water, and for McGough to cross over to the starboard side in the nick of time to get into boat No. 9 before it was lowered. Of course that would only work if the falls at No. 14 were paid out at a rate of about 15 inches per second, and that all went without a hitch during the lowering process, which it didn't, as it was reported that the after-fall, the one that McGough was allegedly lowering, got hung up before the entire boat had reached the water. Furthermore, it was assumed that McGough still had enough time to run from the port side over to No. 9 on the starboard side and arrived there just as it began to lower away. Most of all, however, it assumes that AB Joseph Scarrott was not mistaken about McGough being the one lowering the after-fall of boat No. 14 in the first place.

²¹ A time of 1:20am can be confirmed from Threlfall and several others as the time when men in the stokeholds and engine rooms were ordered up on deck. Threlfall mentioned 2nd Engineer John Hesketh as giving the order at 1:20am in an article in *The Bridgwater Mercury* in May, 1912. When Greaser Frederick Scott was released from the Engine room, also at 1:20am, he said that he believed the order came from one of the senior engineers [most likely Senior 2nd Engineer William Farquharson], but he did not directly mention the engineer's name. (See British inquiry, 5640-5642, 5707.)

²² British inquiry, 395.

Unfortunately, there is no direct supporting evidence that it was McGough who actually handled the after fall at No. 14 as it was being lowered. The timing that was then assigned to all the aft starboard-side boats (No. 9, 11, 13 and 15) in the W-F-B sequence thus becomes fully dependent on this one linchpin of evidence in their launch timeline.

If we dig deeper into this scenario, several questions arise. According to Boson's Mate Albert Haines:

"We had the boat crew there [my emphasis], and Mr. Murdoch came along with a crowd of passengers, and we filled the boat with ladies, and lowered the boat, and he told me to lay off and keep clear of the ship...I was in charge of that boat. That was my own boat, there being two sailors with me...One was named McGough, and there was one by the name of Peters. That was my boat's crew."

So according to Haines' story, after he finished turning out the aft starboard boats while the forward group of boats were being loaded and lowered, he returned to boat No. 9 and had his boat crew (which consisted of AB William Peters and AB George McGough) already with him, when Murdoch came by with a group of women passengers. Haines then completed the loading of No. 9 and took over charge of the boat from QM Wynn. If Haines' account was accurate, then McGough had already been on the starboard side of boat deck along with Haines and Peters when Murdoch came along with that final group of women to finish the loading of boat No. 9. McGough could not have just lowered boat No. 14 to the sea by 1:30am on the port side of the ship, and also get into boat No. 9 on the starboard side of the ship at the same time.

Could Scarrott have been mistaken about seeing McGough on the port side of the ship when No.14 was being lowered? It should be noted that Scarrott had been involved with clearing boats on the aft starboard side along with several others before he went to boat No. 14 on the port side. He was initially ordered aft to the starboard side by Boatswain Alfred Nichols before being sent over to the aft port side by Chief Officer Wilde. As Scarrott put it:

"At the time we were working at the starboard boat - I think I was at boat 13 - the chief officer [Wilde] came along and asked me whether it was my right boat. I said, 'No, we are all assisting here.' He said, 'All right, go to your own boat,' and then I went to No. 14 boat."

It seems that Wilde needed more men over on the port side to deal with the growing crowds of people there, and was questioning some of the sailors who were clearing boats on the aft starboard side about their boat assignments. It seems very possible that Scarrott may have seen McGough by the falls of No. 13 boat while working to swing out boats on the starboard side along with Haines, Peters and several others, and somehow got confused later on about McGough being at the falls of No. 14 when that boat was lowered with him, AB Scarrott, in it. Once a boat starts lowering down, it becomes impossible to actually see who is working at the falls from inside the boat.

We will come back to the question of boat No. 9 being launched after boat No. 14 in the W-F-B timeline somewhat later on. But first, let's consider the first port-side boats to be let down.

Launching The First Port-Side Lifeboats

There are a number of notable differences between the W-F-B and Georgiou studies regarding both sequence and launch times when it comes to the port-side boats. The first major difference has to do with which of the port-side boats was the first to be launched, No. 6 or No. 8, and the time differences between the launchings of those two boats.

(The reader should be aware that the first boat that was swung out on the port side after all hands were called out was boat No. 4, which was lowered to A deck for loading. However, after being reminded that the windows down on A deck forward were all closed, the attempt to board that boat from A deck was temporarily aborted. It was not loaded until much later on in the evacuation process, as was also true of the emergency cutter lifeboat No. 2, which was always kept swung out while at sea.)

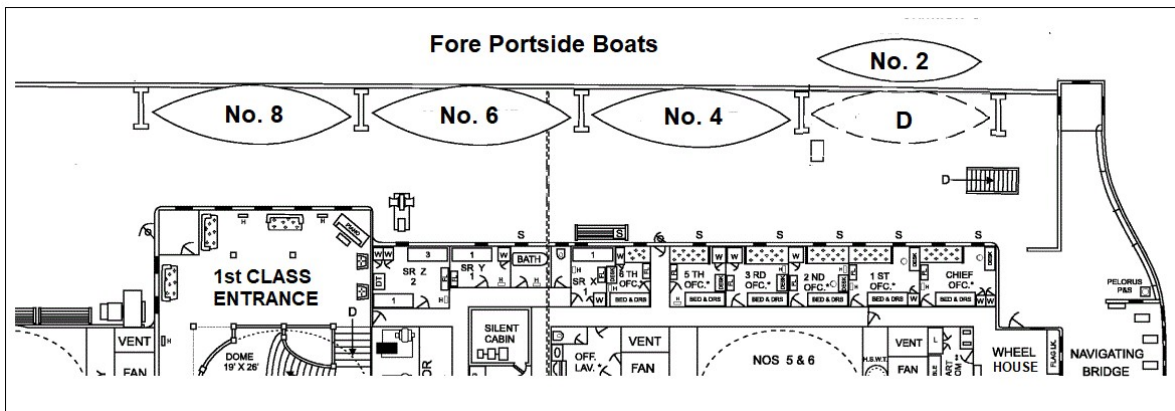


Fig. 06 – Location of the forward portside lifeboats.

In their report on the loss of the SS *Titanic*, the Wreck Commission concluded that boat No. 6 was the first boat to leave from the port side of the ship around 12:55am, and that boat No. 8 was the second boat to leave at 1:10am. Their conclusion was mainly based on the evidence of Lookout Frederick Fleet as well as Second Officer Charles Lightoller, both of whom gave evidence that boat No. 6 was the first boat launched on the port side followed by No. 8. The commission did not explain why they chose those particular launch times that they did.

In the Georgiou sequence, boat No. 6 was put down as the first port-side boat launched at an assigned time of 12:55am, the same time that was put down in the Wreck Commission report; while in the W-F-B sequence, boat No. 8 was put down as the first port-side boat launched with an assigned time of 1:00am. As for the second boat launched on the port side, the Georgiou sequence shows No. 8 as the second boat launched at an assigned time of 1:20am, some 25 minutes after No. 6; while the W-F-B sequence shows No. 6 as the second port-side boat launched at an assigned time of 1:10am, just ten minutes after No. 8.

Why was there a 25 minute gap between the launching of No. 6 and No. 8 in the Georgiou sequence? The explanation again has to do with the reported list that the ship took on over time.

It was reported by QM Robert Hichens that during the launching of boat No. 6, *Titanic* still carried a list to starboard, and that boat No. 6 had to be pushed off the ship's side somewhat as it was being lowered. Moreover, it was reported by Steward Alfred Crawford, that during the launching of boat No. 8, the second boat launched on the port side in the Georgiou sequence, there was no need to keep the boat off the ship's side as it was being lowered, and Crawford agreed with a leading comment made by the Wreck Commissioner, Lord Mersey, who suggested that the boat would not have to be kept off the side of the ship at that time because a list to port had developed on *Titanic*.

As noted previously regarding the starboard side boats in the Georgiou sequence, a list to starboard was put down during the launchings of boats No. 7 through No. 1, no list during the launchings of No. 9 through No. 13, and a list to port reported during the launching of No. 15 and after that. It was therefore assumed that No. 8 (on the port side) had to be launched a little time after No. 13 (on the starboard side) which was put down as having no appreciable list when it was lowered. However, during the launching of No. 15 (also on the starboard side), a slight list to port was reported. Since No. 13 was assigned a launch time of 1:15, and No. 15 a launch time of 1:25, a launch time of 1:20am was chosen for No. 8 in the Georgiou sequence, and a list to port put down for all boats launched after that time.

Justification for No. 6 being lowered at 12:55am could be made in the Georgiou sequence by citing the testimony of Frederick Fleet, who not only said that No. 8 was lowered *after* No. 6, but also said, “I think I got into the water in the boat about 1 o’clock.” As far as No. 8 is concerned, Steward Crawford said his boat was launched, “after 1 o’clock,” and first-class passenger Margaret Swift, who went away in No. 8, reported in a newspaper article that the boat she was put into went away sometime between one and half past one.

Although a launch time for No. 8 of 1:20am in the Georgiou sequence would seem to fit with what both Alfred Crawford and Margaret Swift had to say, it does not fit very well with No. 8 being loaded with women passengers during the same period of time that No. 6 was. According to Lookout Frederick Fleet, “As soon as I loaded No. 6 and No. 8, Mr. Lightoller made me get in No. 6 and ship the rudder and put the women in.”²³ It seems to me to be highly improbable that 25 minutes would pass before No. 8 would finally be ready to be lowered after No. 6 was launched. So something in the timeline assumptions in the Georgiou sequence must not be right in my opinion; something that we will come back to later on in this article.

So why was boat No. 8 shown as the first boat lowered on the port side in the W-F-B sequence, and not No. 6 as in the Wreck Commission report or in the Georgiou study? The answer has mainly to do with a number of newspaper reports from eyewitnesses that suggested that boat No. 8 may have been lowered ahead of boat No. 6, and some very questionable evidence pertaining to the blowing off of steam, and a fallacious observation by an eyewitness that was reported in a newspaper.

The evidence that was offered for No. 8 being launched ahead of No. 6 in the W-F-B article included that of first-class passenger Mary Eloise Smith who, according to newspaper articles of April 20th 1912 claimed that she refused to get into the first boat lowered on the port side, but was forced by her husband (Lucian P. Smith) into the second boat which was boat No. 6.²⁴

Another newspaper account that was cited in the W-F-B article was that of first-class passenger Martha Evelyn Stone,²⁵ who claimed to have looked down toward the water before she entered boat No. 6 and saw empty seats in another lifeboat that had already been launched.

Also cited was from a unknown newspaper account given by first-class passenger Julia Cavendish who also was rescued in boat No. 6. In that account, Cavendish mentioned about being in the second boat, and described seeing first class passenger Major Arthur Peuchen offer to climb down into her boat from the boat deck.²⁶

Also referred to in the W-F-B article was a description given by Ellen Bird, Ida Straus’ maid, about how Mrs. Straus helped her get into boat No. 8 before climbing in herself, only to step back and famously refuse to go away without her husband, Isidor. In her description, Ellen Bird said that, “Mr. Straus stepped aside when the first boat was being filled” before describing the Straus’ refusal to part company from each other, thereby suggesting that No. 8 was the first port-side boat to leave the ship.²⁷

The W-F-B article also brought up a statement by first-class passenger Caroline Bonnell that her boat, No. 8, was the second boat to be let down over the side, but was the first boat to reach the water.²⁸ She also was reported to have said that she left *Titanic* “considerably more than an hour” after she came up to the top deck.

Recently added to their list was an account by Albina Bassani, the maid to first-class passenger Emma Bucknell, who was also rescued in boat No. 8, where she is claimed to have told *The Evening Herald* in May 1912 that, “Mrs. Bucknell and I were among the first survivors to leave *Titanic*...When

²³ American inquiry, p. 363.

²⁴ *The New York Tribune*, and *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, April 20th 1912. Also in an affidavit dated May 20th 1912 that was submitted to the US Senate investigation (American inquiry, p. 1149-1151.)

²⁵ *The New York Tribune*, April 20th 1912.

²⁶ Marshall Everett (editor), *Story of the Wreck of the Titanic*.

²⁷ *The Sinking of the Titanic*, Jay Henry Mowbray, Ch. 17, 1912.

²⁸ *The Washington Times*, April 19, 1912.

our lifeboat, which was first to leave the ship, was rowed away...”²⁹ As we shall show, this is at variance to what Emma Bucknell told *The Philadelphia Inquirer* back in April of 1912.

Also referred in the W-F-B article was an impression attributed to first-class passenger Mrs. Helen Candee by Colonel Archibald Gracie in chapter 6 of his book, *The Truth About the ‘Titanic.’* Gracie wrote that Candee had “an impression” that there were other boats in the water which had been lowered before her boat. As we shall soon see, there is first-hand, primary-source evidence from Hugh Woolner, that Mrs. Candee was safely placed into the *first boat* to leave from the port side. Helen Candee departed the ship in lifeboat No. 6.

There is also a first-hand account given by Major Arthur Peuchen before the American inquiry that some people use as possible evidence that boat No. 8 was launched before No. 6. Peuchen went away in lifeboat No. 6 by climbing down a lifeline into the boat after telling Second Officer Lightoller that he was a yachtsman. According to Peuchen’s narrative:³⁰

“As the boat was going down, I should think about the third deck. So he [Quartermaster Robert Hichens] made this call for assistance, and the second officer [Lightoller] leaned over and saw he was quite right in his statement, that he had only one man in the boat, so they said, ‘We will have to have some more seamen here,’ and I did not think they were just at hand, or they may have been getting the next boat ready. However, I was standing by the officer; and I said, ‘Can I be of any assistance? I am a yachtsman, and can handle a boat with an average man.’ He said, ‘Why, yes. I will order you to the boat in preference to a sailor.’”

To me, Peuchen’s “I will order you to the boat in preference to a sailor” seems to be somewhat self serving. Nothing of the kind was corroborated by Lightoller when he testified before the two inquiries in 1912. According to Lightoller, Peuchen was simply told, “If you are sailor enough to get out there [onto the falls] you can go down.”³¹

Peuchen painted himself as being almost indispensable in preparing and launching the lifeboats. According to his story, he saw the boats with their covers off and their falls coiled on deck ready for lowering when he came up to the boat deck on the port side. He then said that either Captain Smith or Second Officer Lightoller told him, “you might give us a hand” in getting the masts and sails out of the boats as they would not be required. He immediately got into the boat, got hold of a knife somehow, and cut the lashings of the “very heavy mast” and took it and the sail out of the boat. Peuchen then went on to say that as soon as that was done they called for women to get into the boat. When he was asked what boat that was, he said: “I got into - I think it was - the first large boat forward on the port side, and I imagine, from the way they number those boats, the emergency boat is 2, and the first large one is 4, and the next one is 6. I am not sure about that.” (He was actually correct about the first large boat being boat No. 4 and next one being No. 6.) He then was asked if this was on the port side of the vessel, to which he replied: “On the port side. This was the largest lifeboat - the *first large lifeboat toward the bow* [my emphases] on the port side. They would only allow women in that boat, and the men had to stand back.”

It seems from his description before the inquiry that he was clearly talking about loading lifeboat No. 4 with women, something which actually did not take place until much later on that night.

Peuchen went on to say that “the second officer [Lightoller] stood there and he carried out that [call for women] to the limit,” allowing “no men except the sailors who were manning the boat” to get in. Peuchen thought altogether there were 4 sailors manning the boat, and that he himself was “busy helping and assisting to get the ladies in.” Then, after “a reasonable compliment of ladies had got aboard,” he said that the boat was lowered safely.

²⁹ *The Evening Herald*, May 17, 1912.

³⁰ American inquiry, p. 336.

³¹ American inquiry, p. 80, p. 433-434.

After apparently lowering the first large boat on the port side, Peuchen said that he “proceeded to boat No. 2 or No. 4 or No. 6; I do not know which it is called,” and assisted in taking the mast and sail out of that boat, loaded it with women, and then witnessed that boat being lowered. This was the boat that he said he got into after it was lowered down to around C deck and QM Robert Hichens called up saying, “I can not manage this boat with only one [other] seaman.”

Now there are some who say that the first boat that Peuchen lowered had to be No. 8, not No. 4, because we know that the loading and lowering of No. 4, the first large boat aft of the emergency cutter lifeboat No. 2, was done quite late in the evacuation process, well after most of the port-side boats had already left the ship.³² However, besides Peuchen saying that the first boat he assisted with was the first large boat on the port side, he also identified the officer that supervised the loading and launching of that first boat as the second officer. However, we know from Second Officer Lightoller, as well as those who actually went away in boat No. 8, that the officer who supervised the final loading and launching of No. 8 was Chief Officer Henry Wilde, not Lightoller. Furthermore, we also know that Captain Smith himself was directly involved with the lowering of boat No. 8. Wilde’s name was never mentioned by Peuchen in his sworn narrative about this first boat that he helped launch.

One must wonder just how much of Peuchen’s full account should be taken as reliable. Was he concerned about how it would look if indeed he left the ship in the first boat that was launched on the port side while so many other passengers still remained on board? We know that on board *Carpathia* Peuchen had asked for and received from Lightoller, the officer who allowed him to go away in lifeboat No. 6, a signed note explaining that he, Lightoller, ordered him to go away in the boat in lieu of a seaman.³³

Also, for what its worth, Peuchen gave an account to a reporter on April 19th that was published in the April 20th European edition of *The NY Herold* where he was quoted as saying that he helped with the loading of two boats on the port side, and got into the *first* boat that was lowered after crying out, “Oh, they cannot manage alone!” Also in that same newspaper account he allegedly admitted, “I realized that it was my only chance,” and he then “swung off the deck, hanging to a thin halyard, and went down the ship’s side” to get into the boat.

Another person identified in the W-F-B article to suggest that boat No. 6 may not have been the first boat launched on the port side of the ship was Quartermaster Robert Hichens. In response to a question asked of him before the British inquiry, Hichens said: “I *think* [my emphasis] there were two [boats that got away before] on the port side, but how many on the starboard side I could not tell you.” He obviously was not very sure about that. The context around his answer had to do with the time they were rowing toward this light that was sighted ahead of them with three or four other lifeboats that were closeby to his. Previously, at the American inquiry, Hichens said that one of the boats he hooked up with was “the boat the master-at-arms was in, sir. I think it was No. 8 boat. He left about the same time as we did.” That was in response to a question about making fast to another lifeboat well after they were already in the water. Hichens didn’t get the boat number right regarding Master-at-Arms Joseph Bailey’s boat, which was actually No. 16 boat, and which was launched somewhat later than No. 6. However, Hichens did imply that boats No. 8 and No. 6 were launched close in time to each other, but he did not come out and say that No. 8 was launched before or after his boat (No. 6) was launched.

Hichens was the sailor who was placed in command of No. 6 by Second Officer Lightoller, and was manning the tiller of the boat in the stern. He would have been very close to boat No. 8, which was swung out just aft of No. 6, and would have been in a very good position to see No. 8 being lowered before his boat, if it was. However, once No. 6 was being lowered, his attention would likely have been taken up with the lowering process, keeping his boat off the side of the ship’s hull, as he said they had to do, making sure the boat was kept level as it was being let down, and dealing with all the drama associated with Major Peuchen climbing down into the boat and immediately, according to Hichens,

³² It was an abortive attempt by Lightoller to initially load No. 4 from A deck, but soon realized that the windows there were closed, and countermanded his order.

³³ A copy of Lightoller’s note was published in George Behe’s: *On Board RMS Titanic*, Lulu.com, 2011, p. 169.

wanting to take command over it. From his answers to the questions asked, it is clear that Hichens was not very sure about a few things.

But Hichens was not the only seaman in boat No. 6. Lookout Frederick Fleet was also in the boat seated on the starboard side facing aft toward the stern of his boat. (See Figure 07.) Fleet was there to handle an oar along with Major Peuchen, who came into the boat later on by climbing down that lifeline, and sat on the port side of the boat across from Fleet to help row.

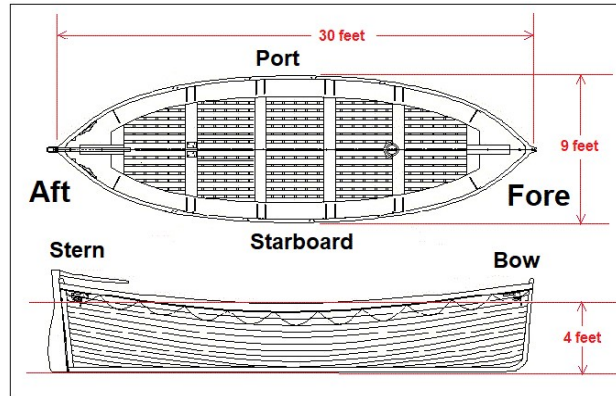


Fig. 07 – Plan of a full-size 30’x9’x4’ lifeboat carried on *Olympic* and *Titanic*.

Frederick Fleet was questioned at the American inquiry specifically regarding the loading and launching of the two boats, No. 6 and No. 8:

Senator FLETCHER. Do you think there were about the same number [of people] in lifeboat No. 8?

Mr. FLEET. I could not say. I do not know what number [of people] went in No. 8. As soon as I loaded No. 6 and No. 8, Mr. Lightoller made me get in No. 6 and ship the rudder and put the women in.

Senator FLETCHER. Was No. 8 loaded after No. 6?

Mr. FLEET. It was.

Senator FLETCHER. It was lowered after No. 6, was it?

Mr. FLEET. Yes.

Senator FLETCHER. How many other boats did you see lowered?

Mr. FLEET. I not see any more, because as soon as we got in the water he [Lightoller] made us pull for the light.

Senator FLETCHER. Did you see any [boats] lowered before No. 6?

Mr. FLEET. No, sir.

It should be noted that Senator Fletcher’s question about No. 8 being “loaded” after No. 6 may have been a transcription error, where the word “loaded” may have been recorded by the stenographer instead of “lowered.” Notice that in his follow-up question that he put to Fleet, Senator Fletcher seemed a bit surprised by Fleet’s first answer. In his follow-up question, Fletcher asked, “It was lowered after No. 6, was it?” to which Fleet decisively replied, “Yes.” This then was followed by the question whereby Fleet was asked directly about how many *other* boats did he see lowered, and specifically did he see any boats lowered *before* No. 6 was lowered, to which Fleet decisively replied, “No, sir.”

The evidence provided by Frederick Fleet was first-hand, and it was very specific regarding these two boats. There was absolutely no ambiguity. Being in a position on the starboard side of the boat facing aft, he easily would have seen boat No. 8 swung out and hanging from the davits as boat No. 6 first started down, before it was halted around C deck to take on Major Peuchen. However, the authors of the W-F-B article chose to dismiss this first-hand, primary-source evidence by suggesting that Fleet may have

been distracted or not seated in a good position to see aft because of all the people in the boat. (When Boat No. 6 was picked up by *Carpathia*, she had only 24 souls on board, just 37% of her full capacity, which included a fireman that was transferred from boat No. 16 to help them row.) Instead, they favored, for the most part, a number of newspaper accounts ascribed to a number of passengers that we have previously cited. Even so, upon searching further, additional passenger accounts have been brought to their attention supporting evidence that indeed No. 6, not No. 8, was lowered first, just as Lookout Frederick Fleet had said, and as Second Officer Lightoller had believed when he testified about it.³⁴

So what are these other accounts that were brought to their attention but not mentioned in their revised article?

First there is a primary-source account by first-class passenger Ella White in her testimony taken before the American inquiry.³⁵

Senator SMITH. Do you recollect what boat you entered?

Mrs. WHITE. Boat 8, the *second boat off*. [my emphasis]

Senator SMITH. On which side of the ship?

Mrs. WHITE. I could not tell you. It was the side going this way - the left side, as we were going.

Senator SMITH. That would be the port side?

Mrs. WHITE. Yes. I got in the *second boat that was lowered*. [my emphasis]

Then there is primary-source evidence that comes from the testimony of Hugh Woolner, also taken at the American inquiry. Woolner explained to the Senate committee how he took it upon himself to look after Mrs. Helen Candee while on board *Titanic*. After getting their lifebelts on:

“I then took Mrs. Candee up onto the boat deck, and there we saw preparations for lowering the boats going on. My great desire was *to get her into the first boat, which I did* [my emphasis], and we brought up a rug, which we threw in with her, and we waited to see that boat filled. It was not filled but a great many people got into it, and finally it was quietly and orderly lowered away.”

Helen Candee was put into lifeboat No. 6.³⁶

Then there is the April 19th 1912 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* account of Margaret Swift, who left in lifeboat No. 8, where she was quoted as saying:

“But, you know, I was in the second boat that left the vessel. I might have gone in the first, but I did not believe that there was any real danger, and I hesitated to get down in an open boat at 1 o'clock in the morning when our own ship seemed to be perfectly safe. One of the passengers – he went down with the *Titanic*, poor fellow – called my attention to a list to starboard but I did not notice it. Somebody said that a ship always listed a bit when she struck anything.”

This was while she was watching the first boat leave from the port side, and indirectly confirms that that first boat left around 1 o'clock. It directly implies that the boat she got into, boat No. 8, was the second

³⁴ British inquiry, 13841-13842, 13931. Lightoller said that after leaving the abortive attempt to load boat No. 4 from A deck, the next boat he went to was No. 6, and then after that, to No. 8. At No. 8, however, he left the loading and launching to Chief Officer Wilde who had come by.

³⁵ American inquiry, p. 1006.

³⁶ American inquiry, p. 884.

boat on the port side to leave *Titanic*. It also supports what Quartermaster Robert Hichens had said about there being a list to starboard during the loading and launching of boat No. 6.

In an account published in *The NY Herald*, also on April 19th 1912, Margaret Swift was quoted as saying:

“My companion [Dr. Alice Leader] and myself held back until *the first lifeboat had been let down into the water* [my emphasis]. At that time absolute quiet prevailed. Indeed, at no time did I observe any traces of panic among the passengers. The men kindly helped the women into the lifeboats, many of them laughing and chatting, and few of them dreaming that there was any immediate danger. When *the second boat* [my emphasis] was being filled Captain Smith insisted that we get into it, and as the sailors pulled away from the ship I heard him say, ‘Row for that light,’ and I saw him point to a dim glimmer that must have been three miles distant...”

This account clearly states that first boat she was talking about was let down to the water, not just let over the side, and that she was placed into the second boat, No. 8, to be let down.

Dr. Alice Leader, Margaret Swift’s cabin mate, also implied that boat No. 8 was not the first boat with passengers in it to be lowered. Also from the *New York Herald* of April 19th 1912, Alice Leader was quoted as saying:

“We watched one go down with passengers and noticed that there were no men in it – that is, none except seamen.”

This is certainly an accurate description of the situation in Boat No. 6 when it was first being lowered, before it was halted to allow Major Peuchen to climb down to it.

Margaret Swift and Alice Leader left the ship in lifeboat No. 8, and they were not the only ones from boat No. 8 to say it was the second boat lowered on the port side.

In an interview published on April 20th 1912 in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, first-class passenger Emma Bucknell, who also left the ship in boat No. 8, had mentioned twice being in the second boat. When speaking about the time they began to row towards this light seen on the horizon, Emma said:

“The *Titanic* was settling rapidly by that time, although we were the second lifeboat to cast off.”³⁷

There is also a first-hand written account by first-class passenger Marie Young which she wrote while on board the rescue ship *Carpathia*. In that account, dated April 18th 1912, Marie wrote:³⁸

“One boat had already been lowered from the port side when we were lifted into Boat No. 8.”

This is yet another first-hand account that happens to agree with what Ella White, Margaret Swift, Alice Leader, and Emma Bucknell had to say.

As was referenced earlier, there is an account by Caroline Bonnell, who also was rescued in boat No. 8, where she was reported to have said: “The boat we were in was the second to let down over the side, but the first to strike the water.”³⁹ If Bonnell’s account was accurate, then it seems that the first boat

³⁷ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 20, 1912. The actual words printed were: “the second lifeboat to crest off.” The word “crest” was obviously a minor misprint of the word “cast.”

³⁸ George Behe, *On Board RMS Titanic*, Lulu.com, p. 183.

³⁹ Bonnell also said in the same article: “As we took to the oars the officer shouted to us to row over to a distant light and to land there, sending the boat back for others.” We know from AB Thomas Jones, Steward Alfred Crawford, and several others, that boat No. 8 was ordered to do exactly that by Captain Smith. (American inquiry, p. 113 and p. 570.)

to be let down on the port side was No. 6, which we know had stopped around C deck when Hichens called up for another seaman to be put into his boat to help row. Eventually, it was Major Peuchen who got into the boat with Lightoller's permission. So boat No. 8, the second boat to be let down, may very well have struck the water before No. 6, as boat No. 8 would have overtaken No. 6 in reaching the water first if No. 6 was delayed around C deck long enough until Peuchen was able to get in and get settled.

There is an interesting story written by Second Officer Lightoller in his book *Titanic and Other Ships* about Chief Officer Henry Wilde coming over from the starboard side to the port side of the ship to ask where the firearms were stored.⁴⁰ Lightoller wrote, "It was about this time [after Major Peuchen had climbed down into boat No. 6] that the Chief Officer came over from the starboard side and asked, did I know where the firearms were?" Lightoller then went on to explain why Wilde approached him, and about how the four of them (Lightoller, Wilde, Murdoch and Captain Smith) went and got the firearms from a little-used locker in the first officer's cabin, and that the entire affair took less than 3 minutes. Lightoller then told a little story that on the way back he saw the Straus couple leaning against the deck house and how he asked Mrs. Straus if he could take her to the boats, to which she allegedly replied, "I think I'll stay here for the present." According to Lightoller, Mr. Straus then called her name and said to her "Why don't you go along with him, dear?" to which she replied, "No, not yet." Lightoller then said that he left them there to attend to the boats.

An interesting little tidbit, if it was really true, that would tend to fit in with the well known account of what happened at boat No. 8 a little later on where Ida Straus almost got into that boat, only to step back to remain with her husband, Isidor.⁴¹ Having Wilde come over from the starboard side after Lightoller launched No. 6 does seem to fit in with No. 6 being launched before No. 8, and with Wilde taking over the loading and launching of No. 8 from Lightoller at that point. My guess, again if the story is true, is that Wilde first went to ask Murdoch, who was then loading and launching boats on the forward starboard side at the time, if he knew where the firearms were kept since Murdoch was then the ship's first officer, and would have been the one responsible for their safekeeping. Murdoch didn't know where they were, and so Wilde would have gone over to the port side to ask Lightoller if he knew where they were kept since Lightoller had been the first officer until an officer shakeup occurred in Southampton prior to the start of *Titanic's* maiden voyage.

Is there more evidence that boat No. 6 was launched before No. 8? According to Steward Alfred Crawford, after Chief Officer Wilde ordered boat No. 8 to be lowered, he ordered a group of women that showed up there to go aft to No. 10 boat.⁴² Now if No. 6 was lowered 10 minutes after No. 8, as in the W-F-B timeline, then No. 6 would still have been in the process of trying to find and load women and children into that boat. Why would Wilde tell those women, who showed up as No. 8 just started down, to go all the way aft to boat No. 10 if you had a boat still looking for women passengers right in front next to you? (See Figure 06.) The group of women that appeared by No. 8 as it was just being lowered was most probably the group of women that was led up to the boat deck by Third-Class Steward John Hart.⁴³ Crawford had also testified, "When we left [the ship] they were trying to lower the other boats; *the farther aft boats* [my emphases]."⁴⁴

In addition to the above, AB Thomas Jones, who was put in command of boat No. 8, was asked directly at the American inquiry, "about how many boats were left on the port side when you got on your boat?" Jones' response was, "Two more after my boat, on my side." We know that emergency lifeboat No. 2, and lifeboat No. 4 next to it, were both launched from the port side much later on in the evacuation process. So if No. 8 was the first boat to be lowered with passengers from the port side, as suggested by

⁴⁰ Commander Charles Lightoller, *Titanic and Other Ships*, Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1935.

⁴¹ American inquiry, p. 112. According to Steward Joseph Wheat, Ida's famous words to her husband Isidor after stepping back onto the deck of *Titanic* was: "We have been living together for many years, and where you go I go."

⁴² British inquiry, 17920-17923, 18083-18084. This does not mean that No. 10 was being loaded up at that time. Wilde probably knew that the aft port boats were being readied, and No. 10 happened to be the nearest of those aft boats to No. 8.

⁴³ British inquiry, 9954-9957 and 9977-9982.

⁴⁴ American inquiry, p. 116.

some, then there should have been *three* boats left waiting to be lowered on the port side (No.s 2, 4, and 6), not just *two* boats as AB Jones had claimed.

The authors of the W-F-B timeline decided, based on the evidence that they considered, “that boat No. 8 was the first of the forward portside lifeboats to reach the water, and that it was launched prior to boat No. 6.” They also admitted, “considering all the conflicting accounts regarding these two boats, it is clear that not all of the accounts can be correct.” Unfortunately, for whatever reason, they did not include some of the additional evidence presented here that No. 6 was indeed the first boat to be launched on the port side, followed soon by No. 8, which may have reached the water before No. 6 if it was held up near C deck long enough for Major Peuchen to climb down, get in, and get settled.

Some Fallacious Arguments

In their most recent revision (2023), the authors of the W-F-B timeline have included what they call “additional evidence” to support their conclusion that boat No. 8 left before boat No. 6. One has to do with the noise of steam venting from *Titanic*’s funnels, and the other has to do with the level of floodwater seen inside the ship.

The argument about steam blowing off was that AB Seaman Thomas Jones had testified that while loading boat No. 8, steam was blowing off making it difficult for him to hear,⁴⁵ and that Second Officer Lightoller had indicated that he had “just lowered boat No. 6” level with the boat deck in preparation for loading when the venting of steam had suddenly stopped.⁴⁶ They therefore concluded that boat No. 8 had been in the process of being loaded before anyone was placed into boat No. 6. Then they pointed out that steam was still blowing off as late as 12:55am (*Titanic* time) by citing the time when *Titanic* told *Carpathia* that they [on *Titanic*] “could not read him [*Olympic*] because of the rush of air and the escape of steam” that was told to *Carpathia*’s wireless operator Harold Cottom.⁴⁷ The claim by the W-F-B authors was that this evidence supports not only boat No. 8 departing before No. 6, but also suggests that both boats were likely to have left sometime after 1:00am.

The problem with this claim is two-fold. The first has to do with the credibility of evidence from Charles Lightoller taken from a book he wrote in 1935 which has been noted to contain quite a bit of incorrect information. The second has to do with evidence from Robert Hichens taken in 1912 which was used in the W-F-B article to support the timing of the first distress rocket, but overlooked when considering the launch time of lifeboat No. 6. That evidence shows that boat No. 6 was already lowered to the level of the deck and ready for loading as early as 12:40am, 15 minutes *before* that wireless message was sent to *Carpathia* saying that steam was still venting off.

This is what Charles Lightoller actually wrote concerning when it was that steam had stopped venting off, and which was the first boat lowered to the level of the deck, in his 1935 account:

“Having got the boats swung out, I made for the Captain and happened to meet him near by on the boat deck. Drawing him into a corner, and cupping both my hands over my mouth and his ear, I yelled at the top of my voice, ‘Hadn’t we better get the women and children into the boats, sir?’ He heard me, and nodded [a] reply. ... However, having got Captain Smith’s sanction, I indicated to the Bosun’s Mate, and we lowered down the first

⁴⁵ American inquiry, p. 571.

⁴⁶ C. H. Lightoller, *Titanic & Other Ships*, 1935.

⁴⁷ Cottam on *Carpathia* was overhearing messages when he contacted *Titanic* to tell them that *Olympic* was calling them, and that *Titanic* told him {Cottom} that “he could not read him because of the rush of air and the escape of steam.” (American inquiry p. 106-107.) From the PV of *Ypiranga*, there was an entry logged at 10:52pm New York time that read: MKC [*Olympic*] tries calling MGY [*Titanic*]. With a time difference between *Titanic* time and New York time of 2 hours and 2 minutes, this contact attempt by *Olympic* would have taken place at 12:54am. It was then assumed that Cottom’s call to *Titanic* and her reply message came one minute later at 12:55am, thereby showing (from Cottam’s statement) that steam was still venting off from *Titanic* at that time.

boat level with the boat deck, and, just at this time, thank heaven, the frightful din of escaping steam suddenly stopped, and there was a death-like silence a thousand times more exaggerated, fore and aft the ship. It was almost startling to hear one's own voice again after the appalling din of the last half hour or so.

I got just on forty people into No. 4 boat, and gave the order to 'lower away,' and for the boat to 'go up to the gangway door' with the idea of filling each boat as it became afloat, to its full capacity. At the same time I told the Bosun's Mate to take six hands and open the port lower-deck gangway door, which was abreast of No. 2 hatch. He took his men and proceeded to carry out the order, but neither he or the men were seen again...

Passing along to No. 6 boat to load and lower, I could hear the band playing cheery sort of music. I don't like jazz music as a rule, but I was glad to hear it that night. I think it helped us all."

Any serious student of the disaster knows that the first lifeboat Lightoller swung out and lowered for loading was boat No. 4, that he had it lowered to A deck for passengers to embark, and then had to countermand that order when he was informed that the windows on A deck were all closed. Yet in 1935, Lightoller gets all confused and says that he put 40 people into boat No. 4 and lowered away soon after the steam had stopped venting off. Then, after sending some crewmembers down to open a gangway door,⁴⁸ he moves on to boat No. 6 and could hear the band playing cheery music.

It should be obvious from reading all of this, that what Lightoller wrote in 1935 cannot be taken as reliable evidence. Yet, the authors chose to say that Lightoller "had just lowered boat #6 level with the Boat Deck, in preparation for loading, when the steam stopped venting." Clearly, as quoted from his book above, that is *not* at all what Lightoller said, and one must seriously question the accuracy of much of what was put into that 1935 book regarding some of the details behind what really happened that night.

The second problem that we find regarding this claim about steam blowing off comes from testimonial evidence cited within the W-F-B article from Quartermaster Robert Hichens which proves that boat No. 6 was already swung out and lowered to the level of the deck well before 12:55am, the time when *Carpathia's* Harold Cottam heard from *Titanic* that steam was still blowing off making it difficult for *Titanic's* wireless operators to hear.

According to Quartermaster Robert Hichens, he left the wheel at 12:23am when Quartermaster Perkis came by to replace him as originally scheduled. Both were then told that they would not be needed at the wheel any longer, and both were sent to help uncover and clear the boats. Hichens was initially sent to uncover collapsible lifeboat D, which was lying on the port-side of the deck alongside the davits that were holding emergency lifeboat No. 2. (See Figure 06.) After getting the cover and then the grips off the boat, Hichens was ordered by Second Officer Lightoller to go to boat No. 6 which was already swung out and ready for loading. The time he spent taking the cover and grips off collapsible boat D would have been only about 10 to 15 minutes. This means it would have been around 12:40am, or thereabouts, that Hichens had arrived at boat No. 6 to begin loading it with women and children as ordered; a time that was also noted and used in the W-F-B article to support the timing of when distress signals were first sent up.

Robert Hichens testified that he spent about 15 to 20 minutes getting passengers into the boat before it was sent away, and it was during that time that he noticed that distress socket signals were being fired from *Titanic*.⁴⁹ That gets you to a time of 12:55 to 1:00am when boat No. 6 was ready to be lowered; a launch time that was supported by Lookout Frederick Fleet who said, "I think I got into the water in the boat about 1 o'clock." This evidence, which was used in the W-F-B article in support of the time that the first socket distress signal was sent off, not only shows that boat No. 6 was already swung

⁴⁸ In 1912, Lightoller said he ordered the Boatswain to take some men down to open the gangway doors. In 1935, he said it was the Boatswain's Mate. *Titanic's* Boatswain was Alfred Nichols, who did not survive; while the Boatswain's Mate was Albert Haines, who did survive.

⁴⁹ British inquiry, 1201.

out and ready for loading around 12:40am, but also supports a launch time for boat No. 6 as early as 12:55 to 1:00am.

Another piece of new “additional evidence” cited in the revised W-F-B article had to do with a certain claim by first-class passenger Margaret Brown in an account that she wrote for *The Newport Herald*.

To begin with, the authors point out some factual information from Steward Frederick Ray. Ray went below to retrieve a few personal effects from his quarters on E Deck at the time that lifeboat No. 9 was being swung out. After leaving his quarters with an overcoat, Ray walked forward along Scotland Road and noticed that water had advanced as far as the emergency door that led to the first class staircase, the same staircase where Steward Joseph Wheat had seen water falling down from E deck onto F deck earlier. They also point out that Ray noticed that the water level was even between Scotland Road on the port side of the ship and the first class companionway and cabins on the starboard side of the ship. This indicated that *Titanic* at the time of Ray’s observation was carrying very little or no list at all.

Recall that when Joseph Wheat was at that same location, water had reached the point of the staircase from the starboard-side companionway only, and therefore showed that the ship was carrying some list to starboard at the time of Wheat’s observation.

The W-F-B authors then make the claim that Ray’s observations, “were clearly not long after Leading Fireman Barrett escaped from Boiler Room No. 5 onto Scotland Road” where he saw some water coming down the alleyway from forward.⁵⁰ They then said that this happened at 1:10am by Barrett’s own estimate. (It should be noted that in the W-F-B sequence, the launch time put down for lifeboat No. 6 was also 1:10am.) What they then said next was:

“Ray’s observation seems to align with First Class passenger Margaret Brown’s observation of water pouring through a porthole on E Deck, as boat No. 6 was alongside the ship just abreast the forward Entrance where [Steward Frederick] Ray saw water. While Mrs Brown referred to this porthole as being on D Deck, the water had not advanced that far when No. 6 was still alongside, and she must have been referring to an E Deck porthole.”

The intent here was to clearly link an alleged claim from Margaret Brown, who was lowered in lifeboat No. 6, with Leading Fireman Barrett seeing floodwater in the working alleyway at 1:10am. However, to do so, they had to change the deck that Brown said she saw that water coming out from, from D deck to E deck. Furthermore, and most important of all, in her written account Margaret Brown wrote:

“While being lowered by jerks by an officer from above, I discovered that a great gush of water was spouting through the porhole from D deck, and our lifeboat was in grave danger of being submerged.”

An obvious, or at least it should be obvious, pile of nonsense about seeing water gushing from a porthole as her boat was being lowered down the side of the ship. Water that floods into a ship cannot ever get above the level of water that is outside the ship. Water flows from the sea into a vessel, not from inside a vessel to the sea below. What Margaret Brown described was simply a very imaginative dramatic tale.

(For reader reference, the location of the escape door on E deck used by Barrett, as well as the location of the first class stairway where Josheph Wheat, and afterward Frederick Ray, saw floodwater, are shown back in Figure 05.)

⁵⁰ British inquiry, 2348-2353.

A Question of List

This now brings us to the question about there being a list to starboard when boat No. 6 was lowered (as Robert Hichens claimed there was), and a possible list to port when No. 8 was lowered (as agreed to by Steward Alfred Crawford) if those two boats were launched relatively close together in time, as I believe they were?

The answer has to do with separating what was believed to be true from what was actually seen. Recall that Hichens said there was a list to starboard when his boat was being loaded and when it was being lowered. This starboard list was indirectly supported by the account given by Margaret Swift that we quoted from earlier. Even Caroline Bonnell, who we talked about earlier, had mentioned “that the boat was beginning to list to the starboard considerably” after she had gone up to the boat deck following the collision. She also said, “After we had been on the top deck for a while, considerably more than an hour, I should say, the women were told to stand in a group by themselves and to be ready to get into the lifeboats.” Caroline Bonnell eventually went away in lifeboat No. 8, “the second to let down over the side.”

A list to port during the launching of boat No. 8, however, was suggested by Lord Mersey to Steward Alfred Crawford who testified that boat No. 8 did not have to be kept off the side of the ship as it was being lowered. This is a bit reminiscent of Crawford agreeing with Senator Fletcher when being questioned at the American inquiry about the direction his boat was heading in as they rowed toward this light seen in the distance, and then the direction that they took to get back to the rescue ship *Carpathia* when it was first sighted.

Crawford, who really didn’t know what compass direction they rowed toward, agreed to the compass directions suggested by Senator Fletcher. Fletcher, who thought that the stopped *Titanic* was facing westward, suggested to Crawford that his boat first went to the southwest, and then came back by going to the northeast after Crawford said they went this way (pointing) and came back that way (pointing). Crawford’s response to Fletcher’s suggestions was to answer “probably so” to both.⁵¹ The fact is that *Titanic* was facing northward not westward after she came to a stop, and boat No. 8 first rowed northwestward, toward the light of this stopped steamer, and came back to *Carpathia* heading southeastward, the direction that *Carpathia* actually came up from.⁵²

As it turns out, if *Titanic* was carrying a list to starboard of about 2-degrees, or less, at the time boat No. 8 was launched, then the boat would not have touched any part of the ship’s side as it was being lowered, assuming the davits for No. 8 were fully swung out at the time. This can be seen below in Figure 08, which also takes into account the level of the sea in the vicinity of the forward port-side boats close to 1 o’clock in the morning, around the time when Joseph Wheat saw water coming from the starboard side of the ship flowing down the first-class staircase from E deck onto F deck. If, however, there was a list to starboard of about 3-degrees or more when boat No. 8 was being lowered, then there would have been some difficulty with the boat touching the ship’s side when first being lowered even if the davits were fully swung out, and even more so if they were not fully swung out. This can be seen in Figure 09. Since it was reported that boat No. 8 did not touch the ship’s side when it was lowered, one can conclude that the ship was either carrying a list to port, no list, or a list to starboard no greater than about 2° at the time it was lowered.

For boat No. 6, a list to starboard was reported when it was being loaded, as well as having some difficulty with rubbing along the ship’s side as it was being lowered. Although we cannot determine the exact degree of the list to starboard when boat No. 6 was first launched with certainty, what we can say is that the list had to be greater than about 2-degrees no matter what angle the davits were swung out to.

⁵¹ American inquiry, p. 830.

⁵² This is covered in quite a bit of detail in Ch. V of my book, *Strangers on the Horizon: Titanic and Californian – A Forensic Approach*, November, 2019.

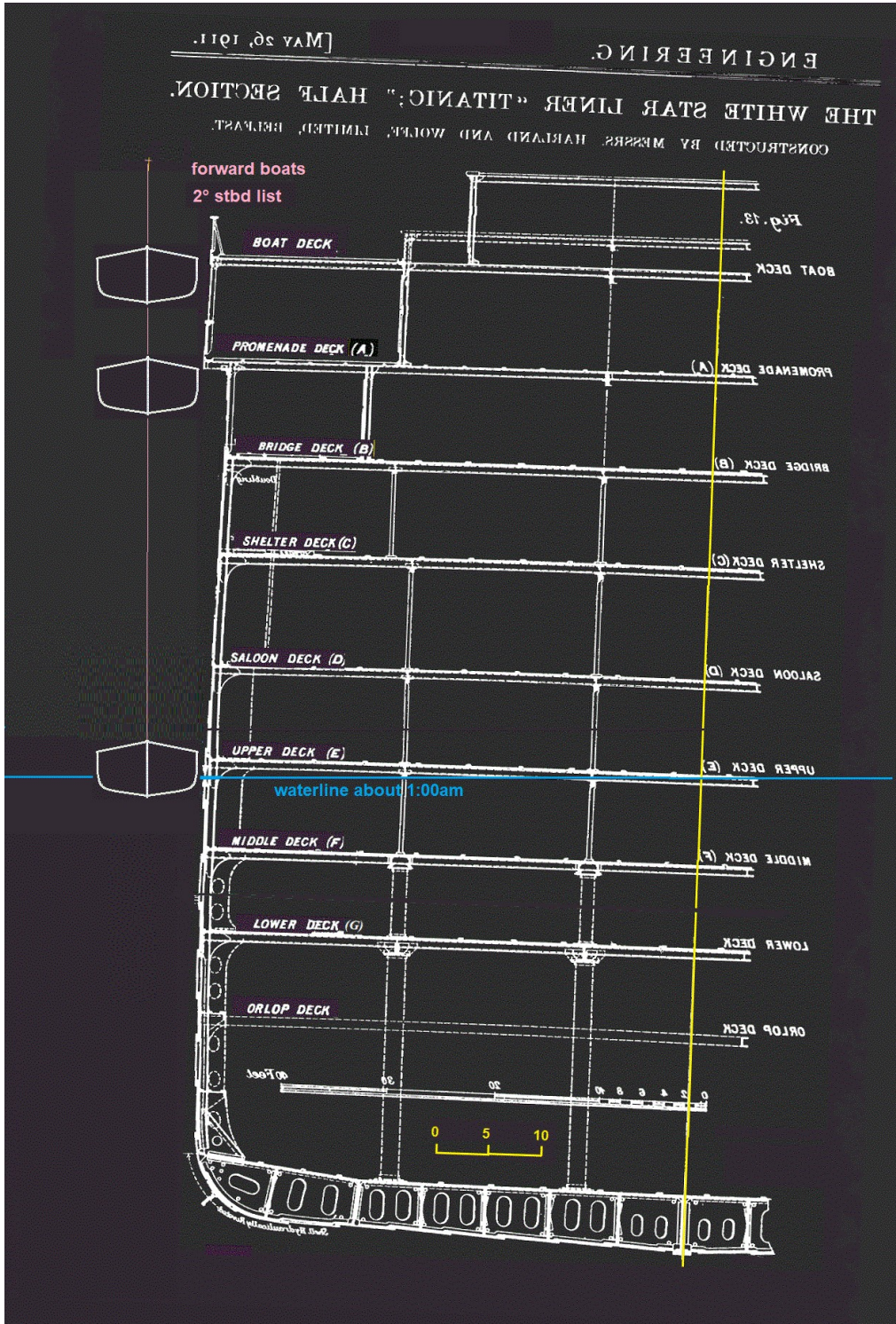


Fig. 08 – Half cross-section of *Titanic* showing a 2° starboard list in the vicinity of boats No. 6 and No. 8 looking forward around 1am.

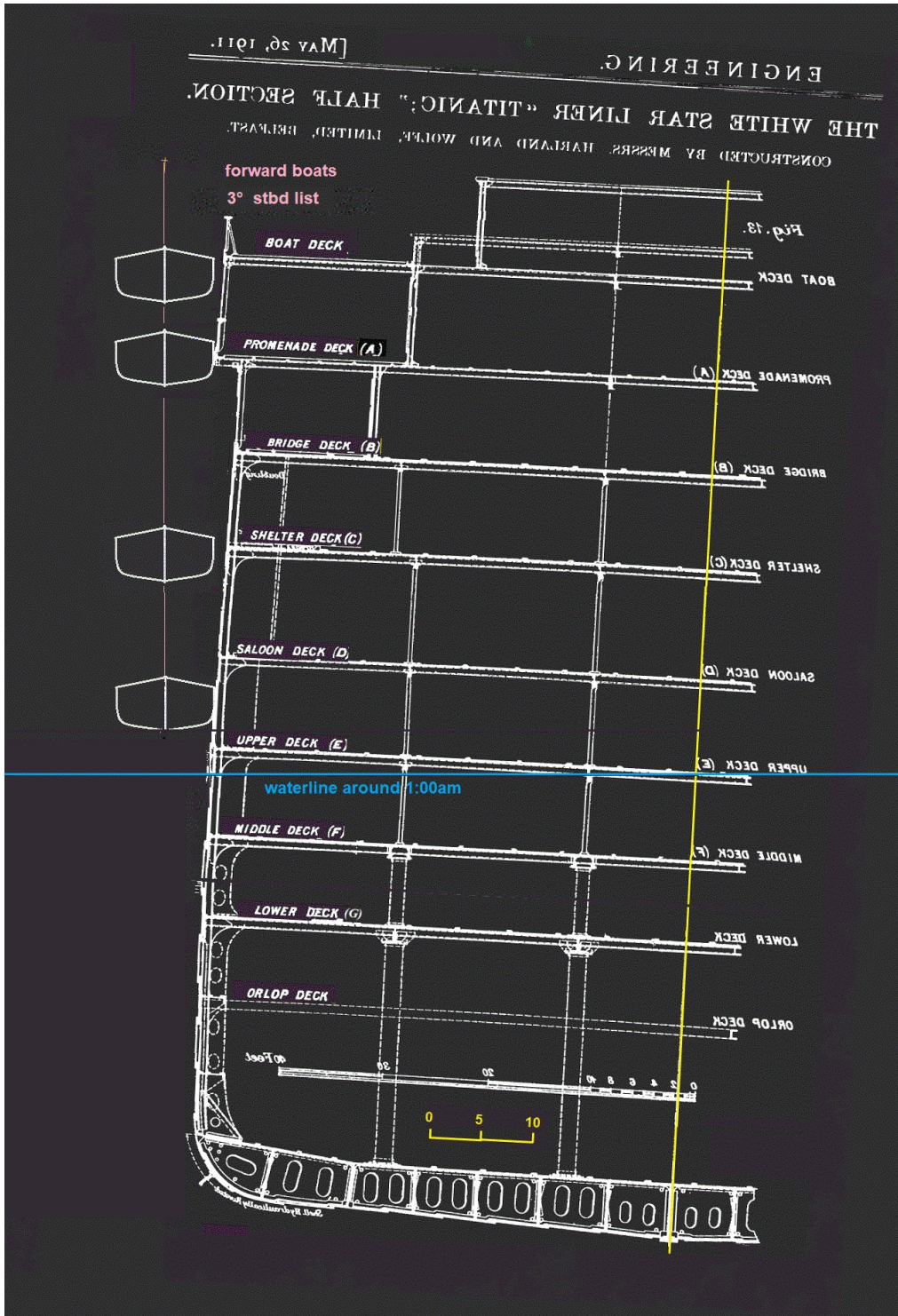


Fig. 09 – Half cross-section of *Titanic* showing a 3° starboard list in the vicinity of boats No. 6 and No. 8 looking forward around 1am.

In their revised lifeboat article, the W-F-B authors spent some time explaining about the difficulty of determining the list of a vessel from a reported gap between a lifeboat and the side of the ship. They claimed that some of the lifeboat davits seen on the ocean floor at the site of the wreck showed that some were not fully swung out, and therefore one cannot conclude anything about the list of the ship from a reported gap at particular boat station without knowing how far the davits of that boat were swung out to begin with. That would be correct if the list of the vessel was such as to cause a boat to swing away from

the hull. In fact, under that situation, such as when the forward starboard boats were swung out while the ship carried a list to starboard, it is possible that some of the davits there were not fully swung out in order to keep the gap between a boat and the side of the ship short enough to allow people to get in safely. On the other hand, a port-side boat would tend to swing close to, if not up against, the side of the ship when the ship was carrying a list to starboard. In that case it is likely that the davits would be nearly, if not fully, swung out so that the boat would not rub up against the side of the hull as it was being lowered. In any case, if the list of the vessel is such that a boat would tend to swing *away* from the hull, such as a starboard boat with starboard list, or a port boat with a port list, that boat could not rub against the hull as it was being lowered even if the davits had been swung in tight for loading.

Another point that should be noted is that the davits for boat stations No. 1 and No. 2 were reused to launch the collapsible boats, and therefore they had to be swung back in and then swung out again when the collapsible boats were connected up and launched.

Appendix-A in Part-II of this article has a report from researcher Ioannis Georgiou on the condition of the davits that were found at the wreck site.

The Aftermost Port-Side Lifeboats

As for the other port-side lifeboats, we have already seen that the W-F-B sequence listed No. 16 as being launched at 1:20am, followed by No. 14 at 1:25am, and No. 12 at 1:30am, and described how those times were tied to the releasing of firemen and trimmers from the engine room at a reported time of 1:20am. We also saw how a time of 1:20am for the launching of boat No. 16 would have allowed Fifth Officer Lowe, who was involved with loading and launching the forward starboard-side boats, to see that boat No. 1 reached the water safely before crossing over and show up by the aftermost port-side boats. We know from Lowe's testimony and others, that Fifth Officer Lowe met up with Sixth Officer Moody who had about finished loading boat No. 16, and suggested to him that one of them should go away in one of the boats there. We also know from Lowe and others that the three aftermost port-side boats (No. 12, 14, and 16) were all launched very close together in time.

After ascribing a launch time for boat No. 12 at 1:30am, the W-F-B sequence shows a gap in time of some 20 minutes before the launching of boat No. 10 at 1:50am. This gap was explained by allowing about 5 minutes for the seamen, AB William Lucas and AB Frank Evans, to lower boat No. 12 to the sea, then allowing another 5 minutes for AB Frank Evans and AB Edward Buley to go over and swing out boat No. 10 and lower it to the level of the deck, and then allowing 10 minutes for No. 10 to be loaded with passengers before being lowered down to the sea. (Refer to Figure 10.) So a time of about 1:50am for the launching of No. 10 was obtained by simply adding those three time durations to the launch time for No. 12, thus getting to 1:50am for the launching of boat No. 10. According to Edward Buley, who left the ship in No. 10 along with Frank Evans, boat No. 10 was launched about 25-30 minutes before the *Titanic* sank, which also supports a launch time for No. 10 of about 1:50am.

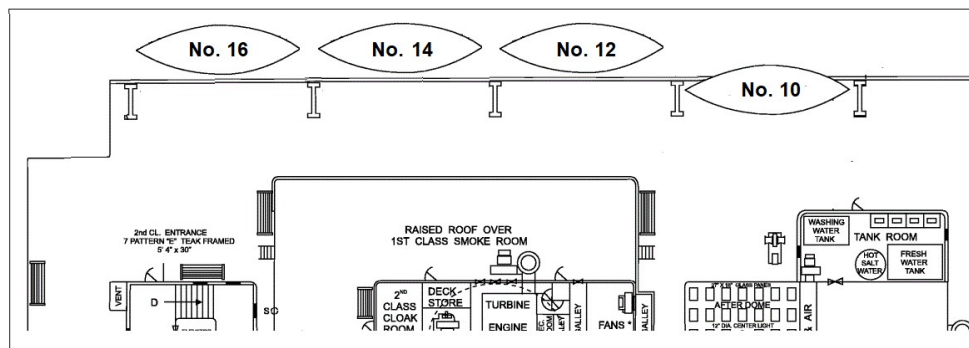


Fig. 10 – Aft portside boats showing No. 16, 14 and 12 swung out for loading and No. 10 still on its chocks.

We also know there was a very large gap of about 2½ feet between the gunwale of boat No. 10 and the side of the ship while it was being loaded, and children had to be picked up and “chucked” across the gap to get into that boat. By the time No. 10 was launched, it can be shown, based on a gap of 2½ feet, that the ship had taken on a list to port of about 10 degrees.⁵³

In the Georgiou sequence, No. 16 was shown as being launched at 1:30am, followed by No. 12 at 1:35am, then No. 14 at 1:40am, then No. 10 at 1:45am, then No. 2 at 1:50am, and finally No. 4 at 1:55am. Why those specific times were chosen, with exactly 5 minute intervals between each one, was not explicitly explained. However, showing boat No. 12 being launched *ahead* of No. 14 in the Georgiou sequence is quite different from what was shown in the W-F-B sequence for the aftermost port-side boats.

The major evidence cited in the W-F-B sequence for No. 12 being launched *after* No. 14 comes from AB John Poingdestre, who with Second Officer Lightoller, was involved with the loading of boat No. 12. According to Poingdestre, “There were hundreds gathered round waiting to get into the three boats...Nos. 12, 14, and 16...We filled her [No. 12] up with women and children – me and Mr. Lightoller, the Second Officer.” Poingdestre was also asked how many women and children he thought were put into the boat, and he said “about 40.” Poingdestre was then further questioned about his work around the boats:

2929. Q. Now having, to use your own phrase, filled it up with about 40, what was done with that [No. 12] boat? - A. [Poingdestre] It was left there.

2930. Q. Left on a level with the boat deck? - A. Yes, with the boat deck.

2931. Q. How long was it left there? - A. I went away, and helped fill another boat after that.

2932. Q. Which boat did you go to help with? - A. No. 14.

2933. Q. That is a boat immediately abaft No. 12? - A. Yes.

2934. Q. How long were you away with No. 14? - A. A matter of about ten minutes.

2935. Q. Was there any officer looking after No. 14? - A. Yes.

2936. A. Who? - A. Mr. Wilde, the Chief Officer.

2937. Q. Anybody besides him? - A. *No* [my emphasis].

2938. Q. So you helped the First Officer? - A. Yes, the Chief Officer.

2939. Q. Were people put into that boat? - A. The boat [No. 14] was filled with women and children also.

2940. Q. About how many? - A. About 40.

2941. Q. And was that boat left, as you call it? - A. No, the boat was lowered.

2942. Q. That boat was lowered into the water, and who went away in that boat? - A. I could not say.

2943. Q. Did the officer [Wilde] go away? - A. No.

2944. Q. What did you do next? - A. I went to my own boat.

2945. Q. No. 12? - A. Yes.

2946. Q. When you got back to No. 12, was there any officer there? - A. Yes.

2947. Q. Who? - A. Mr. Lightoller.

2948. Q. Any seamen, firemen, or anybody else? - A. Yes, there were some sailors there.

2949. Q. Do you know their names? - A. Yes.

2950. Q. What were their names? - A. There was Lucas [AB William Lucas], who lowered the boat, and another man who lowered the other end I did not know, but another man I asked to come in the boat by the name of Clinch [AB Frederick Clench].

⁵³ This assumes that the davits were fully swung out. If they were less than fully swung out, then the list of the vessel would have been much greater than 10° at that time.

We know that boat No. 12 was lowered by two seamen, AB William Lucas and AB Frank Evans. We also know that it was AB Frederick Clench that was sent away, along with Poingdestre, in boat No. 12.

So what do we gather from Poingdestre's testimony? After he and Lightoller loaded boat No. 12 with a bunch of women and children, he leaves No. 12 where it was and goes to the next boat aft, No. 14, to help load it up with women and children, and that the loading of No. 14 was being supervised by Chief Officer Henry Wilde. He then says he was there about 10 minutes, and then came back to his own boat, No. 12, where Lightoller was. When asked specifically, "was that boat [No. 14] left, as you call it?" meaning left hanging at the level of the boat deck with passengers in it, Poingdestre replied, "No, the boat was lowered." He then was asked if he knew who went away in boat No. 14, and Poingdestre said that he could not say, but that the officer supervising the loading of No. 14 [Wilde] did not go away in it. He also was asked if there was anyone else besides Chief Officer Wilde looking after No. 14 boat, to which Poingdestre surprisingly replied, "No."

What is interesting here is that Fifth Officer Lowe had arrived at boat No. 14 as the last group of people were being loaded into it, and he himself loaded that last group and then went away in that boat. In his deposition before the British Consulate General in May 1912, Lowe wrote:

"I then proceeded to the port side [after lowering boat No. 1 on the starboard side], and found sixth officer Moody filling boat No. 16 with women and children. I then carried on with filling No. 14 with women and children. No. 12 was also filled with women and children. I stated to Moody that I had seen five boats go away without a responsible person in them, meaning by this an officer. And I asked him who was it to be, him or I, to go in the boat, he said 'You go. I will get away in some other boat.'

I went in boat 14. That was the boat I was loading. Boats Nos. 16, 14 and 12 were loaded much about the same time."

In his testimony and in his deposition, Lowe talked about Sixth Officer Moody being by boat No. 16, and the brief conversation that they had about one of them going away in one of the boats there. So the question is, did Poingdestre actually see the final loading and lowering of No. 14, or did he simply mean that the boat was not left hanging alongside the deck, but was eventually lowered to the sea?

When we look at the testimony of three other individuals, AB Frederick Clench, who was asked by Poingdestre to come into boat No. 12 and left the ship in that boat, AB William Lucas, who was one of seamen who lowered both No. 16 and No. 12, and Steward Frank Morris, who helped with the lowering of No. 12 and who left the ship in boat No. 14, we get a very different picture of which of the two boats, No. 12 or No. 14, was lowered ahead of the other.

According to AB Frederick Clench:⁵⁴

"We had instructions when we went down [in No. 12] that we were to keep our eye on No. 14 boat, where Mr. Lowe, the fifth officer, was, and keep all together as much as we could, so that we would not get drifted away from one another... We got the boat out, I suppose, a quarter of a mile away from the ship; then we laid on our oars and stood by, and all stopped together."

Clench was then asked about the number of passengers that had been loaded into the boats he helped load, who did the rowing in the boats, and did any passengers row. In his answer to the question about seeing any passengers rowing, Clench said: "I could not say about No. 14 boat, sir; *we* [in No. 12] *had gone ahead of them* [my emphasis]." This statement seems to indicate that No. 12 was launched ahead of No. 14, and considering what he was told as his boat was being lowered, it appears that Clench was instructed

⁵⁴ American inquiry, p. 636. It is possible that it was Lightoller who gave those instructions to Clench. However, Clench did not identify who it actually was that gave him those instructions.

to make sure that boat No. 12 should not pull too far away from the ship so as to lose sight of boat No. 14.

Beside Clench we have the testimony of AB William Lucas who, along with AB Frank Evens, had lowered boat No. 12 to the sea:

1474. Q. Where did you see the first people get into the boats? - A. [Lucas] The afterpart of the ship where I first started lowering boats.

1475. Q. What boat was that? - A. That was number 16, 12.

1476. Q. How many people got into that? - A. They were not fully manned by a long way.

1477. Q. Not full? - A. No not full.

1478. Q. Was any order given about filling up? - A. Yes, but there was not anybody there handy – No women. I was singing out for women myself.

1479. Q. Had you received the order that women were to be put in the boats? - A. Yes.

1480. Q. Whom did you receive that from? - A. Mr. Moody, the sixth officer.

1481. Q. Was he there or was he by the falls? - A. He was near me when I was lowering.

1482. Q. And you called out for women and there were no more? - A. That is right, Sir.

1483. Q. That was right at the afterend was it? - A. Yes, the afterend of all.

Lucas mentioned that the first boats he started to lower were No. 16 and 12 at the afterend of the boat deck, and specifically mentioned Sixth Officer Moody as being there as he was lowering one of them. That had to be boat No. 16 from what we know from the testimony of Fifth Officer Lowe. So it seems from Lucas, that after lowering No. 16 he went over to lower No. 12 next, and Poingdestre confirmed that Lucas was one of the seamen who lowered No. 12. Lucas did not mention anything about No. 14. However, Steward Frank Morris, who was ordered into boat No. 14 by Fifth Officer Lowe shortly before No. 14 was launched, gives us some additional insight about that.

Morris went to his assigned boat, "Port 16," when he first came up to the boat deck and saw it was being loaded with passengers. He then assisted with the loading of that boat, but did not stand by No. 16 all the time. He did not see No. 16 being lowered because, "it was being lowered away while I was standing by No. 14" helping to load that boat as well. Morris also said that they had some difficulty getting the women and children to go into boats because they were crying, and they had to be pushed into the boats. Additionally, he also said that men did not try to get into boat No. 16 but some did try to get into boat No. 14, but they did not succeed in doing so. Morris was asked if an officer was in charge of No. 14, and Morris said, "Well, there was in the last part, when the boat was pretty well full, Officer Lowe came along." It was Lowe who eventually ordered Morris into the boat, and according to Morris, "I think there were two firemen, two sailors, and I think there were two more stewards besides myself" who were allowed into the boat.

Then a very telling question was put to Morris about other boats being launched on the port side around the time that boat No. 14 was launched:

5398. Q. Had many other boats been launched at this time on that side? - A. [Morris] I helped to lower 12 away.

Morris was speaking about helping one of the two seamen who were lowering boat No. 12, either William Lucas or Frank Evans, with the falls. So how could Morris end up going away in No. 14 unless boat No. 14 was launched *after* No. 12 was lowered? As pointed out before, when Morris was asked about boat No. 16, the first boat launched in that aft group of boats, he said that he helped to get passengers into that boat first, but did not actually see No. 16 being lowered because he had gone over to help with the loading of No. 14. All of this supports a launch sequence for the aftermost port-side boats of No. 16, followed by No. 12, then by No. 14, and much later on by No. 10.

We know from ABs Edward Buley and Frank Evans, who came over to the port side after helping to launch some of the boats over on the starboard side, that they started to work on boat No. 10 soon after boat No. 12 was lowered to the sea. It was AB Frank Evans who lowered No. 12 along with AB William Lucas, and Evans was called over to work on No. 10 by John Buley after completing that task:⁵⁵

“No. 12 was the last boat before me [in No. 10] to be lowered, and Evans was one of the men that lowered that boat, and after he lowered that away I called him and told him Chief [sic] Officer Murdoch gave me orders to find a seaman and tell him to come in the boat with me, and he jumped in my boat.”

Although Buley said that “No. 12 was the last boat before me to be lowered,” he never said anything about any of the other boats in that aft group of four. As we have seen from AB Clench and Steward Morris, No. 12 appears to have been lowered just ahead of No. 14. When AB Evans, who lowered No. 12 before going over to No. 10, was asked, “The boat that preceded No. 10 was what number?” his honest reply was, “I could not tell you, sir. No. 10 was the last boat, the big boat.”⁵⁶ What we do know for certain, is that No. 10 was the last of the four aft port-side boats to be prepared and then lowered, and that it was launched sometime around 1:50am.

What all of this seems to imply is that the launch sequence for the aft port-side boats was No. 16, followed by No. 12, followed by No. 14, all within a few minutes of each other, and then, somewhat later, by boat No. 10.

It is also interesting to note that in his testimony before the British inquiry, Fifth Officer Lowe was asked:

15851. Q. Then you got to the water and you slipped her, as you say? - A. [Lowe] Yes.

15852. Q. Did you take command of the boat? - A. Yes.

15853. Q. What did you do with her? - A. I took, I think it was, No. 12 to a distance of about 150 yards from the ship, and told him to stay there until I gave him orders to go away or any other orders. I then came back to the ship and escorted another boat, and so on, until I had five boats there.

15854. Q. You gathered five boats together? - A. Yes.

We already saw that AB Frederick Clench, who was sent away in No. 12, was told to keep an eye on No. 14, where Lowe was, as No. 12 was being lowered, and not to get too far away. Then, after No. 14 was lowered, Fifth Officer Lowe escorted the two boats out to a distance of about 150 yards [about ½ ship’s length] from *Titanic* where No. 12 remained while No. 14, with Lowe in it, went back to the ship to escort another boat to where he left No. 12. That other boat would have been No. 10. After escorting No. 10 out to where he left No. 12, Lowe, in No. 14, went back to the ship to pick up boat No. 4 to join his growing flotilla. Finally, it was collapsible boat D, the last boat launched from *Titanic*, that Lowe escorted to join his little flotilla of five boats. Eventually, all of them (No. 4, 10, 12, 14, and D) were tied together fore and aft, with No. 14 out in front of the pack. It should be noted that boat No. 16, the first of the aft port-side boats to be launched, had already gone far ahead, and was obviously not told to wait around as those in No. 12 were told.⁵⁷

A launch sequence of No. 16, followed by No. 12, then by No. 14, and then by No. 10 was the sequence shown in the Georgiou study. However, what does not follow, in my opinion, is showing No. 10 being launched only 5 minutes after No. 14 in that particular sequence. We know for certain that the

⁵⁵ American inquiry, p. 613.

⁵⁶ American inquiry, p. 752.

⁵⁷ Boat No. 16, with Master-at-Arms Joseph Bailey in command, eventually met up with boat No. 6, with QM Robert Hichens in command, and placed a fireman into boat No. 6 to help them row.

three aftermost boats (No. 12, 14 and 16) were all launched within a very short time of each other, and from AB Frank Evans' testimony, it appears that boat No. 10 had to be first swung out and lowered to the level of the deck before it could be loaded up with passengers:⁵⁸

“I lowered that boat [No. 12], sir, and she went away from the ship. I then went next to No. 10, sir, to that boat, and the chief [sic] officer, Mr. Murdoch, was standing there, and I lowered the boat [to the level of the deck] with the assistance of a steward. The chief officer said, ‘What are you, Evans?’ I said ‘A seaman, sir.’ He said ‘All right; get into that boat with the other seamen [Buley].’”

Evans then got into the bows of the boat, and there he helped to put women and children into it. He also mentioned “a young ship’s baker [Charles Joughin] was getting the children and chucking them into the boat, and the women were jumping. Mr. Murdoch made them jump across [the gap] into the boat.” As originally pointed out in the W-F-B study, it appears that boat No. 10 was still in its chocks on the boat deck waiting to be swung out and lowered to the level of the deck after No. 12 had been lowered to the water. Swinging the boat out and lowering it to the level of the deck, then loading it with women and children takes quite a bit of time, as we had pointed out earlier.

The Remaining Port-Side Lifeboats And The Four Collapsible Boats

As for the remaining port-side lifeboats that we have not yet talked about, No. 2, 4, and all four collapsible boats, both modern-day lifeboat launch studies have these boats being launched after the three aftermost port-side boats were launched. The W-F-B sequence has No. 2 launched at 1:45am, with No. 10 and No. 4 launched at 1:50am. The Georgiou sequence has boat No. 10 being launch at 1:45am, followed by No. 2 at 1:50am, and then No. 4 at 1:55am.

We know from Fourth Officer Boxhall, who went away in the emergency lifeboat No. 2, that “there was one boat hanging on the davits on the port side when I left...No. 4 lifeboat...I noticed as I was being lowered that they were filling No. 4 boat.” He also said that he was sent away “nearly half an hour” before the ship sank, and that Chief Officer Wilde supervised the lowering of his boat, No. 2. We also know that it was Second Officer Lightoller who supervised the loading and launching of No. 4 lifeboat, and No. 4 was finally loaded from A deck.

As far as the collapsible boats, both C and D were being worked on at the time that boat No. 2 was sent away. These collapsible boats used the same set of davits that were used by the emergency lifeboats No. 1 and No. 2. Both modern day lifeboat studies have collapsible boat C, which was over on the starboard side, as the first collapsible boat launched at 2:00am. This of course fits well with QM George Rowe’s testimony that he believed that he left the ship “twenty minutes” before she sank.⁵⁹ It was Rowe who was told to go to boat C after he had fired the last socket distress signal from *Titanic* around 1:50am.⁶⁰

As for boat D, the W-F-B sequence has D being launched at 2:05am, while the Georgiou sequence has boat D being launched at 2:10am. Of course boat D had to be attached to the davits used by Boxhall’s boat No. 2 before it could be swung out, then loaded, and then launched. Of course, all that could not have

⁵⁸ American inquiry, p. 675.

⁵⁹ American inquiry, p. 524.

⁶⁰ QM Rowe testified that he was ordered to the boat by Chief Officer Wilde around 1:25am (American inquiry, p. 524). However, Rowe was carrying partially adjusted time on his watch, not knowing that *Titanic*’s clocks had not been put back that night because of the accident. The adjustment on his watch would have been about 23 minutes, making the unadjusted time on *Titanic* about 1:48am when he fired the last distress socket signal and went to take charge of boat C. The last distress signal as seen from the bridge of the SS *Californian* was estimated by her second officer, Herbert Stone, as occurring about 1:40am, *Californian* time. *Titanic*’s clocks were 12 minutes ahead of those on *Californian*. This would give a time of about 1:52am on *Titanic* for when the last distress signal was fired.

taken place until boat No. 2 was detached from the falls after it had reached the water, and those falls pulled back up and coiled up on the deck. Both lifeboat studies allowed 20 minutes between the launching of boat No. 2 and the launching of boat D. However, in the Georgiou sequence, having boat D being first lowered at 2:10am, just ten minutes before the ship sank, appears to me to be a little too late. Why?

We know from Wireless Operator Harold Bride's testimony, that he and Phillips vacated the wireless cabin about 10 minutes before the ship sank, and at that time, "they were trying to fix up a collapsible boat [boat B] that was up there, and I went to help them."⁶¹ We also know from Lightoller that he, along with Lamp Trimmer Samuel Hemming, were directly involved in that work. It was Lightoller who had launched collapsible boat D from the davits previously used by boat No. 2 just prior to his going on top of the officer's quarters to work on freeing boat B. As Lightoller explained it:

"I called for men to go up on the deck of the [officer's] quarters for the collapsible boat up there. The afterend of the boat was underneath the funnel guy. I told them to swing the afterend up. There was no time to open her up and cut the lashings adrift. Hemming was the man with me there, and they then swung her round over the edge of the coamings to the upper deck, and then let her down on to the boat deck. That is the last I saw of her for a little while...No, [there was no time to open her up,] the water was then on the boat deck."

Things were happening very fast by that time. When Lightoller launched boat D, the boat had to be dropped only about "ten feet" to reach the water.⁶² The ship at that point had trimmed down well by the bow and was listing heavily over to port. As boat D was being lowered, first-class passenger Hugh Woolner and his friend, Mauritz Håkan Björnström-Steffansson, tried to jump into boat D from the bulwark located on the open part of A deck below, just ahead of the enclosed promenade. Steffansson managed to just make it into the boat, but Woolner missed, and had to be pulled into it.⁶³ Woolner also said, "as we went out through the door [onto the open area of A deck] the sea came in onto the deck at our feet." (See Figure 11.) It should be noted that A deck is exactly 9½ feet below the level of the boat deck.

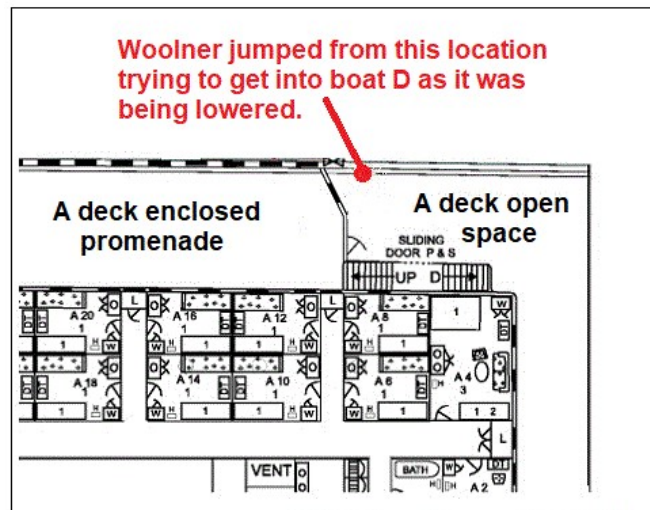


Fig. 11 – Hugh Woolner's jump toward boat D.

⁶¹ American inquiry, p. 158-160.

⁶² British inquiry, 14020.

⁶³ American inquiry, p. 887-888.

Second Officer Lightoller also recalled that two men jumped to reach boat D as it was being lowered:⁶⁴

“As this boat [collapsible D] was being lowered, two men jumped into her from the deck below. This, as far as I know, was the only instance of men getting away in boats on the port side. I don’t blame them, the boat wasn’t full, for the simple reason we couldn’t find sufficient women, and there was no time to wait – the water was then actually lapping round their feet on ‘A’ deck, so they jumped for it and got away. Good luck to them.”

After boat D reached the water and its falls released, Lightoller soon noticed that water was rapidly coming up from A deck onto the boat deck. As he explained it (and with reference to Figure 12 below):

“Almost immediately afterwards [after launching boat D] the water came from the stairway. There is a little stairway goes down here just abaft the bridge, which goes right down *here* [on the boat deck] and comes out on *this* deck [A deck] for the use of the crew only and it was almost immediately after that the water came up that stairway on to the boat deck.”

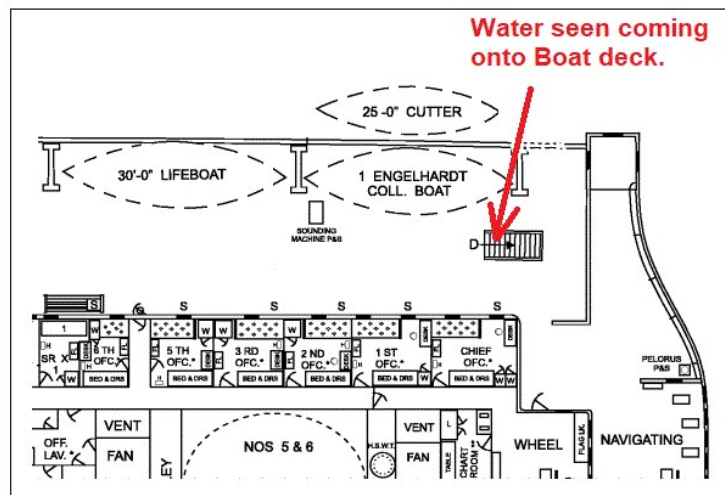


Fig. 12 – Lightoller sees water coming onto Boat deck by the stairs soon after lowering collapsible boat D.

We also know the ship split in two around 2:17am, just about 2 to 3 minutes before it completely disappeared out of sight.⁶⁵ Launching boat D as late as 2:10am leaves only 7 or 8 minutes for Lightoller and others to see that boat D was lowered safely to the water and its falls released, then climb up on top of the officer’s quarters and get collapsible boat B loose, then manage to get it thrown down onto the boat deck below (where it landed upside down), and then for Lightoller to go around the funnel to the starboard side of the roof in time to see First Officer Murdoch and others still working on boat A. All of this happened before this great induced wave swept by as the bow section took a sudden dip. A launch time closer to 2:05am for boat D, as in the W-F-B sequence, seems to me to be much more realistic.

⁶⁴ Commander Charles Lightoller, *Titanic and Other Ships*, originally published by Ivor Nicholson and Watson in 1935, Chapters 30 to 35.

⁶⁵ On *Californian*, the lights of the steamer they were watching disappeared at 2:05am, *Californian* time, as seen on her wheelhouse clock. That corresponded to 2:17am on *Titanic* when all her lights went out.

What About The Launce Times Of The Aft Starboard Boats?

As you may recall, Saloon Steward William Ward, who was told that he was not needed at his assigned lifeboat (No. 7) while it was being loaded, had gone aft to No. 9 where he assisted in removing the cover and saw it swung out and lowered to the level of the boat deck. He also witnessed QM Walter Wynn come by and throw his kit bag into the boat and take charge of the boat, a role that was later relinquish to Boatswain's Mate Albert Haines when Haines came by with the rest of his boat crew (consisting of AB William Peters and AB George McGough) and finished the loading of the boat with a group of women that were brought over from the port side by Murdoch shortly before it was lowered. William Ward was ordered into boat No. 9 by Purser McElroy and took an oar. When asked if the ship was listing badly when No. 9 was being lowered, Ward replied, "No, sir; she was not listing at all. She was down by the head, but not listing. I could not give you any degree she was down to; a very slight angle, at that time."⁶⁶ As we shall see in Part-II, *Titanic* had trimmed down by the head to about 4° by about this time, enough for Ward to notice that it was down by the head by some small angle. Yet, Ward seemed adamant that "she was not listing at all" at the time No. 9 was lowered to the sea. He also said that they did not have any problem in lowering the boat to the water, which would have taken about 5 or 6 minutes to lower to the sea.

When Steward Joseph Wheat came up on deck after inspecting the Turkish Bath attendant's quarters on F deck, where he witnessed water from the starboard-side corridor on E deck running down the first-class staircase onto F deck sometime around 12:55am, he noticed that lifeboat No. 9 was in the processes of being loaded. Based on the path Wheat took to get to the boat deck, as well as what transpired along the way, we generously allowed 10 minutes for him to get up to the boat after witnessing the water flowing down the staircase. This puts him by boat No. 9 around 1:05am, or thereabouts, where he saw First Officer Murdoch "with quite a number of our men passing women and children over from the port side into No. 9 boat." It could not have been much later that Boatswain's Mate Albert Haines arrived back at No. 9 with his boat crew to take over control of the boat from QM Walter Wynn and complete the loading process. Allowing another 10 minutes to complete the loading of boat No. 9, it brings us to about 1:15am when the order from Murdoch to lower No. 9 away was likely given, certainly not as late as 1:30am as in the W-F-B timeline.

Is there any more direct, first-hand, primary-source evidence to suggest that the launching of boat No. 9 was not as late as that shown in the W-F-B timeline? According to Bath Steward James Widgery:⁶⁷

"I went up on deck to my boat, No. 7...[on] the starboard side. When I got up there, it was just about to be lowered. The purser sent me along to No. 9. They had taken the canvas off of No. 9 and lowered it [to the level of the deck], and just then some biscuits came up from the storekeeper. I helped him put one of the boxes into the bottom of the boat, and the purser took hold of my arm and said, 'Get in the boat.' He said, 'Get in the boat and help the boatswain's mate [Haines] pass the ladies in.' So I got in the boat, and stepped on the side, and we passed the ladies in. We thought we had them all in, and the purser called out, 'Are there any more women?' Just then someone said, 'Yes.' This woman came along, rather an oldish lady, and she was frightened, and she gave me her hand. I took one hand, and gave it to the boatswain's mate, and he caught hold of the other hand, and she pulled her hand away, and went back to the door and would not get in. One of them went after her, but she had gone down the stairs.

The chief officer was there and called out for any more women, and there seemed to be none, and he told the men to get in, four or five of them. We were filled right up then. Then they started to lower away...We got into the water, and I cut loose the oars - I was the

⁶⁶ American inquiry, p. 597-599.

⁶⁷ American inquiry, p. 602.

only one that had a knife amongst us - and we stood off a little ways. Of course, we gradually got a little farther away from them all the time.”

Widgery’s story tends to confirm what Steward William Ward had to say. After seeing boat No. 7 about to be lowered, which places the time around 12:40am, Widgery was sent aft to No. 9 where they took the canvas off and lowered it to the level of the deck for loading. He then helps place a box of biscuits into the boat after the storekeeper came by, and was told by the purser [McElroy] to go and help the boatswain’s mate [Albert Haines] put women into the boat. Although he was not asked about how long it took to load boat No. 9 before it was lowered, he certainly does not suggest that there was any great gap in time between getting the boat prepared to when it was lowered.

Steward Joseph Wheat was not the only one see water down on E deck by the first-class staircase that night. When Saloon Steward Frederick Ray first came up to the boat deck he went to his assigned lifeboat, which was No. 9. When he got there it was already uncovered and was just being swung out. (We also know from William Ward and James Widgery that this took place sometime close to when boat No. 7 was about to be lowered.) Ray mentioned that there was an officer there at the time it was being swung out, but it was one who did not survive, and it was not Mr. Murdoch who he knew. We do know from QM Walter Wynn, that Sixth Officer Moody was there because Wynn was ordered by Moody to initially take charge of the boat when he came by with his kit bag. (It also seems that Moody was helping Murdoch to get women to go over to boat No. 9 until he was sent over to the port side where crowds had gathered at the three aftermost boats that were being loaded initially by Wilde and Lightoller.)

According to Frederick Ray’s story,⁶⁸ there were about 8 to 10 men working around No. 9 at the time he showed up. He then said that he went to the side of the ship and looked over and saw what he thought was the first boat to leave the ship on the starboard side, obviously one of the boats that was lowered from the forward group of four boats on the starboard side.⁶⁹ Ray then said that he was very cold and went down to his quarters (which was located on E deck) the same way he came up. After spending an undisclosed amount of time in the “glory hole,” as the stewards called their quarters, he put on an overcoat and went forward along the working alleyway on E deck to the same door that led to the first-class staircase used by Wheat sometime earlier. In Ray’s own words:

“I went along E deck and forward, and the forward part of E deck was under water. I could just manage to get through the doorway into the main stairway. I went across to the other side of the ship where the passengers’ cabins were; saw nobody there. I looked to see where the water was and it was corresponding on that side of the ship to the port side.”

This is somewhat different from what Steward Joseph Wheat experienced when he saw water at that same location. Wheat said:

“It was coming from forward...from the starboard side. The working alleyway was quite dry.”

Wheat also described the water at the time he was there as “not very much,” while Ray described what he saw as enough for him to “just manage to get through the doorway.” It is quite clear that by the time Ray was at this location, the list of the ship had straightened out enough so that the water level on both port and starboard sides of the vessel was about the same, and the water had advanced a little further aft along the alleyways from what Joseph Wheat had seen earlier. When Wheat was there, the list of the vessel was

⁶⁸ American inquiry, p. 803-804.

⁶⁹ It is possible that it was the same boat that QM George Rowe saw in the water when he called the navigating bridge to inform them that he saw a boat in the water. That call was answered by Fourth Officer Joseph Boxhall who had started to fire off distress socket signals.

still over to starboard, and the water inside the vessel at the vessel's centerline had just reached as far back as the connecting corridor by the first-class staircase on E deck. (See Figure 05.)

So what did Frederick Ray do next after reaching the forward first-class stairway?

"I walked leisurely up to the main stairway, passed two or three people on the way, [came out onto C deck and] saw the two pursers in the purser's office and the clerks busy at the safe taking things out and putting them in bags, and just then Mr. Rothschild left his stateroom and I waited for him...I spoke to him and asked him where his wife was. He said she had gone off in a boat [No. 6]. I said, 'This seems rather serious.' He said, 'I do not think there is any occasion for it.' So we walked leisurely up the stairs until I got to A deck and went through the door. I went out there onto the open deck and along to No. 9 boat. It was just being filled with women and children. I assisted. I saw that lowered away."

The time of Ray's encounter with first-class passenger Martin Rothschild was sometime well after boat No. 6 was launched, which we know was around 1 o'clock as previously discussed. But did Ray actually go along A deck to the open area where boat No. 9 was as he said he did? Ray said that he assisted in loading No. 9 and seeing it lowered away. Following that, according to his story:

"Then I went along to No. 11 boat, and saw that loaded with women and children and then that was lowered away. Then I went to No. 13 boat. I saw that about half filled with women and children. They said, 'A few of you men get in here.' There were about nine to a dozen men there, passengers and crew. I saw Mr. Washington Dodge there, asking where his wife and child were. He said they had gone away in one of the boats. He was standing well back from the boat, and I said, 'You had better get in here, then.' I got behind him and pushed him and I followed."

The problem with Ray's story is that there is overwhelming evidence that boat No. 9 was loaded exclusively from the boat deck. As Boatswain's Mate Alfred Haines testified, all the occupants of boat No. 9 got in from the boat deck, and the boat was then lowered down to the sea from that deck. He said that the only other deck that someone could get in from was A deck, but nobody got into the boat as they passed that deck while his boat was being lowered.⁷⁰ (See Figure 13.)

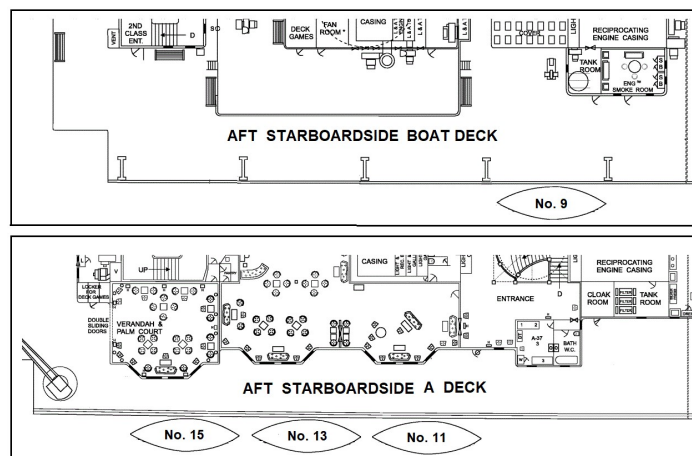


Fig. 13 – Boat No. 9 was launched from the boat deck; while No. 11, 13 and 15 were launched from A deck.

⁷⁰ American inquiry, p. 662.

It is very likely that Frederick Ray got somewhat confused about which boat he first came to after coming out onto A deck after meeting up with Martin Rothschild when he was being questioned on April 27th at the US Senate Investigation. He may have been thinking that the boat he came to was No. 9 because that was his assigned boat, and that would seem to be the boat that he would likely go to. However, boat No. 9 never stopped at A deck, and nobody got in from A deck. The more likely scenario is that Ray found out that they were loading the aft starboard-side boats from A deck, possibly from Rothschild, and assumed that he would find his assigned boat there. What he saw instead were people being loaded into boat No. 11 from A deck, and went to help out. After that, he went aft to boat No. 13, also being loaded from A deck, and that was the boat that Frederick Ray got into.

We also have the testimony of Bathroom Steward Charles MacKay to consider.⁷¹ After the bedroom stewards were called to get passengers up to the boat deck with warm clothing and their lifebelts, MacKay, a bathroom steward, went up to the boat deck and assisted passengers with getting their lifebelts on. He also assisted some passengers with getting into some of the forward starboard-side boats, and then went aft to boat No. 9 where he said he only watched as it was being loaded. MacKay seemed somewhat confused about the order of boat launchings, having believed that No. 3, which was his assigned boat, was the first to be lowered, then No. 7, then No. 5 and then No. 9, in that order. He said that he did not know anything about No. 1, other than it was on its davits, and did not see it loaded or lowered when he went aft to boat No. 9. From many other sources, we know that the correct order of launchings was No. 7, followed by No. 5, then by No. 3, then No. 1, and then No. 9.

MacKay said that he also saw an empty boat No. 11 being lowered from the boat deck down to A deck, and overheard First Officer Murdoch give Assistant Second Steward Joseph Wheat an order to take command of No. 11, and to get it loaded from A deck. MacKay then said that they collected women from the boat deck and escorted them down to A deck where they were then placed into the lifeboat. All of this checks well with what Joseph Wheat had said.

When boat No. 9 reached the water, Steward William Ward, who was in No. 9, had noticed that people were still being put into lifeboat No. 11, the next boat aft, from A deck high above. He also said that it took some time for No. 9 to pull away from the side of the ship because the oars were all lashed together and they needed someone to first find a knife to cut the lashings.⁷² According to Ward, “We got away from the ship’s side before No. 11 was in the water.” From all of this, we see that it must have been about 10 minutes after No. 9 was launched, for No. 11 to be launched. This would allow enough time, around 5 to 6 minutes, for No. 9 to be lowered to the water while No. 11 was still in the process of being filled, and then allow another 4 or 5 minutes to find a knife, cut the lashings on the oars, have those oars distributed to those who would row, and then for boat No. 9 to start and pull away from the ship’s side before boat No. 11 started down.

It should also be noted that Steward Ward told Senator Fletcher at the American inquiry, “We pulled off about, I should say, a couple of hundred yards, and Haynes gave orders to lay on the oars, which we did.” He was then asked by Fletcher, “How long after you got out there and stopped rowing was it before the ship went down?” Ward’s response was, “About an hour, sir.”⁷³ If No. 9 was first lowered to the sea from the boat deck around 1:15am, which I believe it was, and then first pulled away from the ship’s side close to 1:25am as No. 11 started down, then an hour from that time would make it close to the time when *Titanic* disappeared beneath the Atlantic.

The next boat that was lowered on the starboard side after No. 11 was lifeboat No. 13. A launch time of 1:30am was assigned to the launching of boat No. 13 in this study, which was five minutes after

⁷¹ British inquiry, 10706-10773.

⁷² QM Wynn said that he got his knife when he went below to get his kit bag before coming back up on deck and being ordered by Sixth Officer Moody to take control of lifeboat No. 9. However, it was not Wynn’s knife that was used to cut through the lashings on the oars so they could pull away from the ship. The knife used was from Steward James Widgery. (American inquiry, p. 602.)

⁷³ American inquiry, p. 598-599.

the 1:25am launch time we assigned for boat No. 11. We know that No. 13 had to be let down very soon after No. 11 was launched because Steward Charles Mackay, who went away in No. 11, said that No. 13 started down just as they, in No. 11, reached the “water’s edge,” before they even had a chance to pull away from the ship.⁷⁴ Mackay mentioned that the after fall of his boat, No. 11, would not run clear after they reached the water, and it took three men to keep the stern of the boat away from the rush of water that was coming from the ship’s starboard-side main condenser circulating pump discharge. This discharge was located just above the waterline, and proved to be a major problem for boat No. 13 as well when it came down to the water soon after No. 11.

In this study we assumed that it took only about 5 or 6 minutes to lower No. 11 from a height of about 60 feet above the water at that location, thus reaching the water’s edge sometime close to 1:30am. We then would have to allow a minute or two more for the clearing of that after fall that MacKay talked about before boat No. 11 could actually pull away from the ship while No. 13 was coming down. It should be noted that Stewardess Annie Robinson stated in her testimony before the British inquiry, “I do not think we were in the boat [No. 11] more than three-quarters of an hour” when *Titanic* disappeared.⁷⁵ Subtracting three-quarters of an hour from 2:20am would make it close to about 1:35am for when her boat would have pulled away from the side of the ship, and for when boat No. 13 would have been close to reaching the water after starting down close to 1:30am.

According to what second-class passenger Lawrence Beesly wrote in his book, *The Loss of the SS Titanic*, “We were spared the bumping and grinding against the side which so often accompanies the launching of boats.” Beesley attributed that good fortune to the sea being so calm that night. Although Beesley also wrote that he did not remember having to fend the boat off from the ship’s side, according to Fireman George Beauchamp, he had to hold the boat away from side of the ship with an oar when it reached the water.⁷⁶

“I was keeping the boat off the ship’s side with an oar...Everything lowered easily right till she got to the bottom, to the discharge, then we had a difficulty in keeping it away from the ship’s side, to prevent the water coming in.”

Leading Firemen Frederick Barrett also mentioned having to push No. 13 off the ship’s side:⁷⁷

“When we found the discharge was coming out we stopped lowering and all the hose [rope] was tied up in the boat. I had a knife and I cut the hose adrift and shoved two oars over the forward end to shove the lifeboat off the ship’s side. We got into the water and there was a bit of a current and it drifted us under No. 15 boat, and I sung out ‘Let go the after fall.’ Nobody seemed to realise what I was doing. I walked across the women to cut the fall, and the other fall touched my shoulder.”

The story of what happened after boat No. 13 reached the water with regard to the circulating pump discharge near its bow has been well documented. Nobody was able to find the release lever to disconnect the falls from the boat, and the falls had to be cut away with a knife as Barrett said. As No. 15 was being lowered, it nearly came on top of No. 13, and people shouted up for them to stop lowering the descending boat. Finally, with the falls cut away, boat No. 13 managed to get clear of the area, thereby allowing No. 15, which was launched just a few minutes after No. 13, to continue down to the sea.

There were several accounts of people who had noticed a list to port while No. 15 was being lowered, and that has been well documented. One of the more direct statements came from Fireman

⁷⁴ British inquiry, 10842-10843.

⁷⁵ British inquiry, 13302.

⁷⁶ British inquiry, 719 & 731.

⁷⁷ British inquiry, 2171.

William Taylor who said that as No. 15 was being lowered, “we kept the boat off the ship, to keep from rubbing down her side.”⁷⁸ So it seems that over the period of time from the lurching of boat No. 9 around 1:15am, to around the time when boat No. 15 was launch, about 15-20 minutes later, the list of the vessel had shifted from having no noticeable list, to a noticeable list to port.

A Few Unconvincing Arguments

In their 2023 revision to the W-F-B article, some “additional evidence” was cited trying to support the claim that boat No. 9 was launched *after* boat No. 14 was lowered to the sea. As previously mentioned, their initial conclusion was primarily based on a single eyewitness, AB Joseph Scarrott, who claimed that seaman George McGough was working the falls when lifeboat No. 14 was being lowered. Since it was clearly established that McGough left the ship in lifeboat No. 9, then boat No. 9 had to be lowered sometime after No. 14 reached the water if Joseph Scarrott was not mistaken. Unfortunately, the so called “additional evidence” does not in any way offer confirmation that McGough was anywhere near lifeboat No. 14 that night.

One of the accounts mentioned as so-called “additional proof” that boat No. 9 left after No. 14 is that of Lily May Futrelle given 20 years later in 1932.⁷⁹ They say that Futrelle was on A Deck over on the port side when Sixth Officer Moody saw her there, and asked her “What are you doing below Mrs. Futrelle? All the women are gone.”⁸⁰ Futrelle then describes how Moody took her to the starboard side and placed her in boat No. 9, “the last boat to leave” [which is what she said], as they were just beginning to lower it. The W-F-B authors then claimed that this could only have happened after the aft port boats, with the exception of No. 10, had all been loaded up or were in the process of lowering, or else Moody would have taken her to one of the aft boats on the port side instead of No. 9 on the starboard side.

This is clearly a fallacious argument that is predicated on the premise that Moody found Mrs. Futrelle on his way to the starboard side after lowering boat No. 16 on the port side. Because of their belief that No. 9 was launched after No. 14, the concept that Moody may have met her before going over to the port side to help Wilde and Lightoller with the three aftermost boats there, never seemed to occur to them. (Recall that Murdoch and others were gathering women from the port side and taking them to the starboard side while No. 9 boat was still loading.) Furthermore, one has to question the veracity of any detail that came from Mrs. May Futrelle, who had written a number of long-winded published accounts that contained demonstrably false claims of what she herself had witnessed, such as Fifth Officer Lowe dragging every swimmer he could reach into *her* boat,⁸¹ or how she managed to see Colonel Astor stepping out of boat No. 4 after seeing his wife Madeleine comfortably seated in it.⁸² (Lowe was only in boat No. 14, and lifeboat No. 4 with Madeleine Astor in it was one of, if not the last, full-sized lifeboats to be loaded and launched from *Titanic*.)

In their revised article, the W-F-B authors said that Sixth Officer Moody was involved in the loading and lowering of boats No. 13 and No. 15 after being at No. 9, and that he appeared to have remained on the aft starboard side after crossing over from the port side. Yet, we know that No. 11 was still being loaded as No. 9 reached the water, and Moody was not reported at No. 11, but he was seen later at No. 13 and 15. Of course, all of that could easily be explained if the order of boats that Moody went to after leaving No. 9 sometime before it was launched was to go over to the port side to help out at No. 16, then back over to the starboard side and down to A deck to help with the loading of No. 13 and No. 15.

⁷⁸ American inquiry, p. 553.

⁷⁹ It can be shown that May Futrelle was indeed rescued in lifeboat No. 9, and not in collapsible boat D as some others have speculated based on the content of her accounts.

⁸⁰ April 17th 1932 edition of *The Daily Boston Globe*.

⁸¹ *The Seattle Daily Times*, April 22 & 23, 1912.

⁸² *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, April 29, 1912.

The W-F-B authors also stated that “Wynn’s testimony is additional proof that Moody was near No. 9, *and thus*, that boat No. 9 left after boat No. 16 and No. 14.” As we had shown, Wynn’s testimony confirms that Moody was by No. 9, but he was there right after it was swung out and lowered to the level of the deck according to Steward William Ward, before any loading began. If, as implied by the authors’ statement, Wynn first showed up about the time that Moody came over from seeing No. 16 lowered, then that would suggest that Moody arrived at No. 9 no earlier than about 1:25am in their timeline, and that in the next five minutes, Wynn, Moody, Murdoch and McElroy somehow managed to get No. 9 fully loaded so that it could be launched by 1:30am. This is clearly absurd, and does not line up with all the evidence that we have cited in this study.

Other newspaper accounts were cited by the W-F-B authors trying to convince the reader that all of the aft starboard-side boats were launched after all of the aftermost port-side boats were launched. For example, they included an account from third-class passenger Charles Dahl where he was quoted as saying that the “starboard boats were the first to be lowered. I waited on the port side for a boat half an hour, then went over to the starboard side” where he got into boat No. 15.⁸³ Somehow, it seems that the intent was to convey to the reader that all of the aftermost port-side boats had gone away, and that the only boats left were over on the aft starboard side. However, if one looks at the account that Dahl gave to T. P. Shaver on his way from Toronto to Winnipeg,⁸⁴ we get a totally different and much clearer picture of what was happening:

“I went to the port side and waited for half an hour or more, but no one was allowed into the boats. Some of the passengers came from the starboard side and said that all the lifeboats had left that side. There were hundreds of people waiting on the port side, and when I saw that, I thought there was no chance of being saved on that side of the boat. I ran over to the starboard side and to my surprise saw a boat half lowered nearly full of people.”

Charles Dahl climbed down the falls to get into boat No. 15, probably the last person to get into the last lifeboat to leave the ship from the aft starboard side.

Perhaps one of the strongest indications that boat No. 9 was actually lowered before No. 14 is the list that *Titanic* herself took on that night. By the time the No. 9 was lowered, it was reported that the ship carried no list at all, but was down by the head by a few degrees [William Ward]. When No. 14 was being lowered, *Titanic* was reported as having a noticeable list to port [Frank Morris and Cecil Fitzpatrick]. *Titanic* first took on a list to starboard just minutes after the impact with the iceberg, then straightened herself out, and then shifted over to port before the ship finally lost longitudinal stability and broke in half.

What’s Covered in Part-II?

In Part-II of this work we will present a revised lifeboat launch time sequence based on some of the additional evidence and lines of reasoning that we have put forth in this article. We will also attempt to quantify the list that the ship took on over time using a regression analysis model and several key data points from the event timeline. We will also use a regression analysis model along with some key eyewitness data points to quantify how the ship trimmed down by the head over time, and compare that to the 1996 theoretical analysis of Harland & Wolff naval engineers C. Hackett and J. G. Bedford.⁸⁵

⁸³ The Ward County Independent, May 2, 1912.

⁸⁴ George M. Behe, *On Board RMS Titanic – Memories of the Maiden Voyage*, Lulu.com, 2011, p. 258; *The Manitoba Free Press*, April 29, 1912.

⁸⁵ Hackett and Bedford, “The Sinking of S.S. *Titanic* - Investigated by Modern Techniques,” 1996 *RINA Transactions*.