

HOW TITANIC STORY WAS REPORTED

AMAZING DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN SECURING THE NEWS OF THE DISASTER.

Not since the blowing up of the Maine in Havana harbor, fourteen years ago has a news event created such an impression in the newspaper offices of the country as the announcement made late Monday afternoon that the mighty Titanic, the queen of the White Star Line, and the biggest ship afloat, had gone down with more than 1,300 human souls on board somewhere in the dreary wastes of the sea off the Newfoundland Banks.

The first intimation that the Titanic had met with disaster was a wireless received late Sunday night saying that the ship had collided with an iceberg and needed assistance. This was quickly followed by another message saying that she was sinking by the head and that the women were being put off in lifeboats. A reassuring feature was that the weather was calm and clear and help in the shape of other vessels near by.

News Associations Alert.
The mere report that the Titanic was in serious trouble was in itself a news even of extraordinary importance and the big news associations were instantly alert. They called in immediate service every available source of information at their command. Correspondents along the entire coast from New York to Halifax and Cape Race were notified and trained men were called in from distant points to help handle the story in its many phases.

Following the first announcement of the accident a multitude of reports began to filter in from various sources along the coast line that the Titanic had not been sunk by the collision and that her passengers were transferred to other vessels. One wireless message alleged to have come from the steamship Virginia, of the Allen Line, which was near the scene of the disaster, stated that she was towing the Titanic with the hope of beaching her in shallow water in the vicinity of Cape Race.

This message, with numerous others of a reassuring character were accepted by the news associations at their face value and were printed without question as to their truth by newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Suspected the Truth.

It was late Monday afternoon when the newspaper men began to be suspicious that something was wrong and at 6 o'clock the news was flashed around the world that the Titanic was at the bottom of the sea and that the first wireless messages which crept in late Sunday night forecasted the greatest disaster in marine annals.

Just who is responsible for the immense amount of misleading information that was sent out has not at this time been determined, although the news agencies and newspapers are sparing no efforts to trace down the author of the report.

It is practically certain that out of the entire series of messages received in New York on Monday but one—that from Cape Race announcing that the Titanic had collided with an iceberg and was sinking by the head—was authentic. The others are so far a baffling mystery.

The absence of further word from the Titanic itself and the silence of the vessels that were in the immediate vicinity of the disaster, together with the announced belief expressed by the officers of the White Star Line that the ship was unsinkable, are, it is believed, largely responsible for the character of much of the misleading information. It is certain that the attitude of the White Star Line officials shaped the color of much of the news sent out under a New York date line.

A. P.'s First Account.

The first account sent out by the Associated Press was from its own correspondent at Cape Race. It follows:

Cape Race, N. F., Sunday night, April 14—At 1025 o'clock tonight the White Star Line steamship Titanic called "C. Q. D." to the Marconi wireless station here, and reported having struck an iceberg. The steamer said that immediate assistance was required.

Half an hour afterward another message came, reporting that they were sinking by the head, and that women were being put off in lifeboats.

The weather was calm and clear, the Titanic's operator reported, and gave the position of the vessel as 41.46 north latitude and 50.14 west longitude.

The Marconi station at Cape Race notified the Allen liner Virginia, the captain of which immediately advised that he was proceeding for the scene of the disaster.

The Virginia at midnight was about 170 miles distant from the Titanic and expected to reach that vessel about 10 a. m. Monday.

2 a. m. Monday—The Olympic in an early hour this morning was in latitude 40.32 north and longitude 61.18 west. She was in direct communication with the Titanic and was making all ste toward her.

The steamship Baltic also reported herself as about 200 miles east of the Titanic and was making all possible speed toward her.

The last signals from the Titanic were heard by the Virginia at 12.27 a. m.

The wireless operator on the Virginia says these signals were blurred and ended abruptly.

Sources of Information.

Later reports sent out by the association were gathered from every available source and credited to these same sources. On this point the Globe quotes General manager McVillie T. Stone as follows:

"When we received information, such as wireless dispatches announcing that the Carpathia was alongside and had taken off twenty boatloads of

women and children, which came from the White Star Line offices, we sent out. If we got the news as a rumour, from the ticker, or from other sources, we told where it came from.

The Associated Press has nothing to apologize for. If you want to find out where such stories as the one about the Virginian towing the Titanic to the Banks came from, you will have to look elsewhere."

Discussing the reliability of the crop of misleading messages that came from every source, Signor Marconi said on Wednesday:

"Every Tom, Dick and Harry can have a wireless outfit of his own. He gets what he thinks is a flash from the Titanic or some other ship, and he deciphers it as best he can. He relays the message to some newspaper, and there you are.

Reason of Long Wait.

"Now, it is perfectly simple to understand why there should have been the long wait between the first wireless message telling of the collision and the message telling of the Titanic's sinking. What happened was this: The Titanic struck the berg, say, at ten o'clock Sunday night. Immediately the ship's wireless sent out the word to land. The instrument on the ship kept working until about midnight and then it stopped, or was silenced.

"The Carpathia had received the flash from the Titanic, but the Carpathia, after reaching the scene, could send no word to shore, for her wireless was too weak. All she could do was to keep on flashing until the Olympic, which had also caught the Titanic's call, got within her range. Then the Olympic, with her more powerful transmitter, relayed what the Carpathia sent to her. Hence, until the Olympic got near enough to receive the Carpathia's waves, there was no means of communicating with land after the Titanic sank. Could you expect any messages that came during that interval to be reliable?"

Twenty-Four-Hour Service.

With the first wireless whisper of disaster to the Titanic the Associated Press called into play every facility possessed by that organization to get the news, and get it correctly. Almost from the start it furnished its subscribers with a twenty-four hour service. It immediately secured from London practically a complete passenger list of the Titanic. The claim is made that this list was exclusive, and was also furnished to the local offices of the White Star Line, giving them for the first time information as to who and how many were on board the ill-fated vessel.

These names were immediately catalogued on cards, as were the names of the survivors when that list began to come in. When a confusion as to the spelling of the name or the identity of the person arose, this confusion was noted, as was also the source of every report that came in concerning that individual. In this way the lists were kept surprisingly accurate. Cities and towns on the A. P. circuit that were vitally interested in the welfare of home folks that were known to be on board the Titanic were kept supplied with every available bit of data concerning the person or persons in question. This service was greatly appreciated by many of the Associated Press subscribers.

How U. P. Got the News.

In the early morning hours of Monday the United Press made its plans for covering the most momentous event in the annals of sea-faring. The "bigness of the story" was apparent at once. No matter how serious the crash, it was instantly understood by the press association men that any accident to the greatest of liners on her maiden trip was a news event of the first magnitude.

Orders were sent out to correspondents along the north coast and the Boston bureau immediately lined up its facilities for quick action. The Canadian correspondents in all the principal cities were in action early Monday. The stage was set promptly in every respect, but in the early hours little of a definite nature came through following the wireless message saying the Titanic was "sinking by the head." In reply came the positive statement from Vice President Franklyn here: "She is unsinkable. She might sink many feet by the head and yet remain indefinitely."

It was a day of zealous effort, bearing but little actual fruit because of the fact that the wireless apparatus on board the Titanic had been put out of commission just after the operator sent the statement that she was sinking. The Cunard liner Carpathia, the first liner to reach the scene, was equipped with a wireless apparatus with a range of only 150 miles. So it was that when the survivors were being rescued from the lifeboats in which they had been set afloat on the ocean the land stations were unable to speak the rescue ship. It was not until other liners with more powerful equipment came into range of the Carpathia that the actual tragedy became known.

Many Bogus Reports.

Wireless operators, inspired by some inconceivable motive, sent messages plying through the air telling first that the Titanic was afloat under the power of her own engines and later that she was being towed by the Virginia. These reports went over the whole world and a sense of great relief settled over anxious friends and relatives Monday afternoon, lulled by the false assurance. The White Star Line received the reports and added authenticity to them by announcing them through official channels so that for several hours there was little or no doubt that they were correct. The origin of these messages is being made the subject of a vigorous investigation.

In the meantime the United Press sent Marlen E. Pew, one of the best known editors and correspondents in the country, to Halifax to await the arrival of the first rescue ship or the first direct news from the scene. The New York bureau was strengthened by bringing in men from the Washington bureau, the Cleveland bureau and other points, so that the normal

working force was doubled and a complete twenty-four-hour service was immediately organized.

New York Bureau Strengthened.

Perry Arnold, manager of the Washington bureau, was called in to take the all-night desk. With him he brought Bond P. Geddes, Robert F. Wilson and W. C. Robertson, all members of the United Press staff in Washington.

From Cleveland came H. N. Rickety, one of the directors of the United Press. He brought Eugene Segal, H. P. Burton and Albert Segal. Half a dozen other points sent men and there were a dozen men who came from various United Press clients, looking up special local features, but working with the United Press forces. In Boston two additional men were put on to cover the situation from there Norman E. Rose, New York correspondent of the Scripps-McRae league, joined the United Press forces here to look out for features.

Special All-Night Service.

This all-night service was somewhat of a novelty to many of the afternoon papers receiving the United Press service, and by taking advantage of it they were able to issue extras and compete with their morning rivals in their "own hours." Many morning papers took advantage of this rare opportunity to receive the United Press service for morning editions on a week day. Under normal circumstances the United Press never conducts a night service except on Saturday night for Sunday morning papers.

The New York city editor covered the White Star offices and numerous news sources in New York, while the acting general manager shifted the outside staff correspondents about to meet the changing conditions. The quick, effective display of organization was one of the most remarkable in the history of this organization, noted for its ability to see and meet big situations quickly.

Especially effective were the stories gathered from wide separated points on Monday night when the truth of the disaster first became known and welded into vivid stories replete with features and reflecting the horror of that darkest of all nights in the annals of the sea.

Every possible preparation for the swift handling of the story was made by the International News Service immediately following the first intimation that the Titanic had met with disaster. The New York staff was augmented by star men of the association, brought in from other points. The New England wire was kept open day and night and the many subscribers to the service throughout the country were furnished with every bit of news obtainable with remarkable promptness. During the entire week a twenty-four-hour service was maintained. Like other news associations, the International News credited reports received from other than its regular correspondents to the proper sources and transmitted them on their face value.

Many papers not regularly on the list of International News subscribers wired for and obtained special service for the week.

When Carpathia Arrived.

The elaborate preparations made by the news associations and the New York newspapers for covering the arrival of the Carpathia with the survivors on board were somewhat upset by orders from the treasury department forbidding the newspaper men from boarding the ship at quarantine. Orders were also issued by Mayor Gaynor forbidding photographers and newspaper men the usual privileges at the pier. This order was amended later, however, and one representative of each of the news associations and one from each of the newspapers were given passes to the pier. The army of photographers contented themselves with lining up just outside the pier.

The New York World and St. Louis Post-Dispatch had a correspondent aboard the Carpathia in the person of Carlos F. Hurd, of the latter paper, who was bound for Europe on a vacation trip. His story was tossed to a waiting tug as the steamer passed quarantine.

During the trip up the harbor the Carpathia was surrounded by a veritable fleet of newspaper tugs, and a representative of the New York American managed to jump on board through an opening gangway. After considerable difficulty he made his way to the bridge where he met Captain Rostron, who placed him under arrest. He was released when the vessel reached her pier.

All of the New York evening papers had extras on the streets before 10 o'clock giving details of the disaster.

The International News claims to have sent out over the wires on Thursday evening the first eye-witness story obtained from a survivor on board the Carpathia.