AWESOME stories

Harold Thomas Cottam - from Southwell (Nottinghamshire, England) - was a 20-year-old wireless operator on board the *Carpathia* when *Titanic*'s wireless operators were sending their distress calls. His actions greatly contributed to the survival of about 700 *Titanic* passengers and crew members. Image online, courtesy "Our Nottinghamshire" website.

The *Carpathia*, meanwhile, was racing to the scene. That she knew about *Titanic's* distress at all was "absolutely providential," according to the testimony of her captain.

Thomas Cottam, the wireless operator, had decided to follow up on messages he'd sent earlier in the day to the *Parisian*. It was after 11 p.m. Ready to leave his wireless station, Cottam thought he would wait "a couple of minutes" before removing his headsets.

Although he'd heard nothing from the *Parisian*, he did hear Marconi's Cape Code Atlantic station transmitting "press communications." The messages were intended for *Titanic*.

Before he went to sleep, Cottam thought he'd ask *Titanic's* operators whether they'd received those Cape Code transmissions. Nothing was urgent; he could have waited until morning. Instead, as he testified at the U.S. Senate hearing, conducted by Senator Alden Smith:

> *I asked him if he was aware that Cape Code was sending a batch of messages for him.*

Cottam heard a completely unexpected response from *Titanic*:

> *Come at once. It is a distress message; C.Q.D.*

With no hesitation whatsoever Captain Arthur H. Rostron, the *Carpathia's* commander, immediately changed course to help the stricken ship. Cottam stayed in touch with *Titanic* until he heard her last message:

> *Come quick; our engine room is filling up to the boilers.*

Cottam sent a final message to the sinking ship:

> *The captain told me to tell the Titanic that all our boats were ready and we were coming as hard as we could come, with a double watch on in the engine room, and to be prepared, when we got there, with lifeboats. I got no acknowledgment of that message.*

Jack Phillips had abandoned ship. It is believed he waited until the last possible minute, trying to reach any

nearby vessel. He and Bride stayed long after Captain Smith released them from their duties. The two wireless operators left the ship together. Bride survived. Phillips did not.

Questions 2 Ponder

What Can Happen If a Worker Does More than the Job Requires?

Harold Thomas Cottam—from Southwell (Nottinghamshire, England)—was a 20-year-old wireless operator on board the *Carpathia* when *Titanic's* wireless operators were sending their distress calls. His actions greatly contributed to the survival of about 700 *Titanic* passengers and crew members.

Describe the role Thomas Cottam played in rescuing *Titanic's* survivors. What do you think motivated him to keep his headsets on, and then check-in with *Titanic's* wireless operators, before he shut-down his own wireless station for the night?

Cottam was technically off-duty when he performed his life-saving tasks. What he accomplished shows what can happen if a worker does more than the job requires. Can you think of a time when someone did more than the job required, thereby making a difference to others? Describe that event.

Media Stream

Arthur H. Rostron
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Jack Phillips - Titanic Hero
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