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Considered one of *Titanic's* "heroes," Harold Bride - along with Jack Phillips - was a Marconi wireless operator during the ship's maiden voyage. Both men continued to send messages until the captain relieved them of duty. This image depicts Bride's arrival in New York, as he leaves the *Carpathia*. Online, courtesy Library of Congress.

Many people were heroes the night *Titanic* sank. Some of their stories are well known. The band members, for example, reportedly continued to play until the waters came. But others, with less glamorous positions who also took their work seriously, died on the job. People like the mail men.

RMS *Titanic* was a Royal Mail Steamer. She was carrying at least 200 sacks of registered mail. At Queenstown, in Ireland, stacks of letters and packages were taken on board. (Note *Titanic's* lifeboats in this linked picture from *The Irish Picture Library*.)

Five members of the British and American postal crew were assigned to the ship. A survivor reported seeing all of them working furiously, sloshing about in water, trying to get the registered mail to the top decks as the ship was sinking. None of the postal crew survived.

After *Titanic* struck the berg, her mail clerk, John Richard Jago Smith, was called to the bridge to report damage to the mail room. It was bad.

Oscar Scott Woody - an American postal clerk - died on his 44th birthday. He left New York on April 2nd, travel orders in hand, specifically to work *Titanic's* maiden voyage. His pocket watch was found on his body.

The daughters of John Starr March had tried to convince their father to stay off the ships. He told them he'd never drown at sea. He was wrong. His watch, recovered on his body, stopped ticking at 1:27. This tends to confirm the reports of survivors who said postal clerks had not been drowned by the first in-rush of water but continued to try to save the mail.

As *Titanic* continued to take on water, James Bertram Williamson, a Brit, died with his colleagues. His mother later wrote a letter acknowledging the praise her son was given as he tried to save the mail instead of himself. So did Smith's father, whose letter expresses both regret at John's death and pride in his son's heroism.

William Logan Gwinn was serving as a *Titanic* postal clerk because he needed to return to the States as quickly as possible. Florence, his wife, was very ill, and Gwinn believed she was dying. Instead, Will died when *Titanic* sank, but Florence lived. The U.S. government paid her \$2,000 for the loss of her husband.

In addition to the sacks of registered mail, totaling around 1.6 million pieces, the ship carried 3,164 standard mailbags each holding about 2,000 pieces of mail. Total mail loss was estimated at 6-9 million pieces plus

700-800 parcels.

Registered mailbags were reportedly used to help recover the infant survivors of the disaster.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/HEROES-Fatal-Voyage-The-Titanic>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/HEROES-Fatal-Voyage-The-Titanic>

Questions 2 Ponder

Is It Ever a Lost-Cause to Do One's Job Effectively?

When the five mailmen, traveling aboard the *Titanic*, realized that their ship was sinking, they kept doing their jobs. Why do you suppose they thought the mail could be saved?

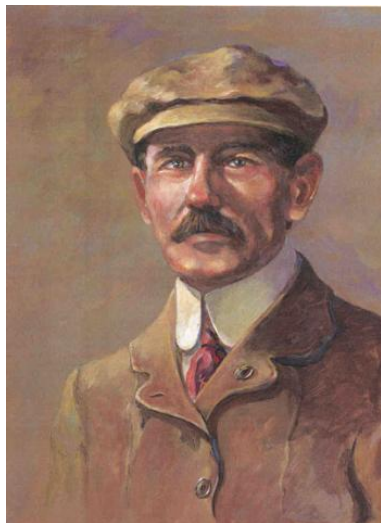
How difficult is it to put one's job ahead of oneself? Is it reasonable to do that? Under what, if any, circumstances?

Does Dedication to Duty Ever Surpass Our Obligation to Protect Ourselves?

Titanic's mailmen are examples of people who are so dedicated to their work that they put their own safety in second place. Do you know anyone who is as dedicated to their job as these men on the sinking ship? How would you compare and contrast such individuals with the *Titanic* postal clerks?

Why do you suppose John Starr March's daughters were so worried about their Father working on board transatlantic ships? And ... why was March himself sure he would never drown during any of his Atlantic crossings?

Media Stream



Titanic Mail Clerk - John Richard Jago Smith

Image of John Richard Jago Smith, online courtesy U.S. National Postal Museum.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Titanic-Mail-Clerk-John-Richard-Jago-Smith>

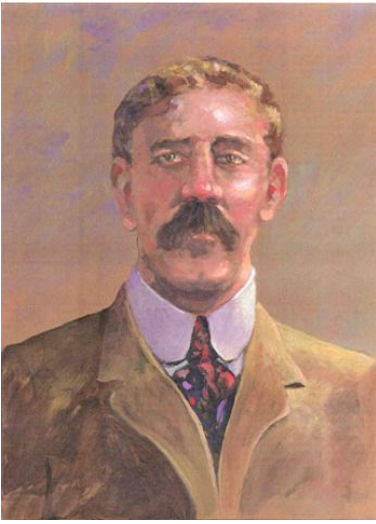


Titanic Mail Clerk - Oscar Scott Woody

Image online, courtesy U.S. Postal Museum.

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Titanic Mail Clerk - James Bertram Williamson

Image online, courtesy U.S. Postal Museum.

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Titanic Mail Clerk - William Logan Gwinn

Image online, courtesy Gwinn family member via Encyclopedia Titanica.org.

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