

Titanic memory stays afloat 100 years after tragedy

Written by Darci Tomky

The unthinkable became a reality when the unsinkable Titanic sank in the North Atlantic early morning April 15, 1912. Even though over 1,500 people lost their lives that fateful day, the memory of this legendary luxury liner lives on 100 years later.

Museum exhibits, documentaries, books and Titanic-era events are all commemorating the ship in 2012, a century after the tragedy.

“Epic disasters—the anguished cries, the stories of heroism—are the central narratives of our age, both enthralling and horrifying,” said Seth Borenstein in his article “Titanic’s legacy: A fascination with disasters.”

Yes, of course there have been other famous disasters in the last 100 years of history, but the Titanic had a very unique way of captivating the world.

The personal stories of survivors who made it into the lifeboats in the 160 minutes they had after the ship hit an iceberg, the bravery of those who stayed on the ship and sank with it into the icy waters and the high-profile investigations of ignored warnings and technical scenarios all feed into the fascination with the Titanic.

“It was more than news,” said Borenstein. “It was a macabre form of entertainment.”

Even local newspapers like the State Herald and the Holyoke Enterprise gave extensive coverage to the Titanic tragedy in 1912, giving descriptive details so people here, hundreds of miles from the ocean, could relive the events of that April day.

In Colorado, Denver’s Margaret Brown—better known as the Unsinkable Molly Brown—became famous after she survived the sinking of the Titanic. Only around 700 of the 2,200 people on board survived, so each person had a very unique story to tell.

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That's one of the things that makes the Titanic so captivating. People are less concerned about how the ship hit the iceberg and what went wrong and are more interested in what that important businessman was thinking as his wife and children boarded a lifeboat and how the third-class passenger survived after she was saved on the Carpathia in the cold Atlantic waters.

Or maybe it's the fact that the Titanic boasted it was "unsinkable," and it gives people that strange feeling in the pit of their stomach to think all that fine china, expensive furniture and top-of-the-line equipment lay at the bottom of the ocean, in a ship that seemed so safe and so certain.

The 1985 discovery of the sunken Titanic and the 1997 Hollywood movie brought further popularity to the tragedy and gave people a way to visualize the colossal ship and connect with the passengers who experienced the Titanic's fateful maiden voyage from Southampton, England to New York City, N.Y.

Now as the world looks at the 100th anniversary, the obsession with this 1912 vessel only increases day by day. "Somewhere between the black Titanic teddy bears and the pale Iceberg beer, the Titanic Barbie doll and the 'Tubtanic' bath plug, the global obsession with the story of the doomed ocean liner began to border on the absurd," said Raphael Satter in an article on "Titanomania." There's even a new museum in England which documents all these crazy Titanic "souvenirs" of sorts.

It appears that the memory of the Titanic is here to stay, a mystery that will continue to haunt, captivate and preoccupy society for perhaps another 100 years.

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