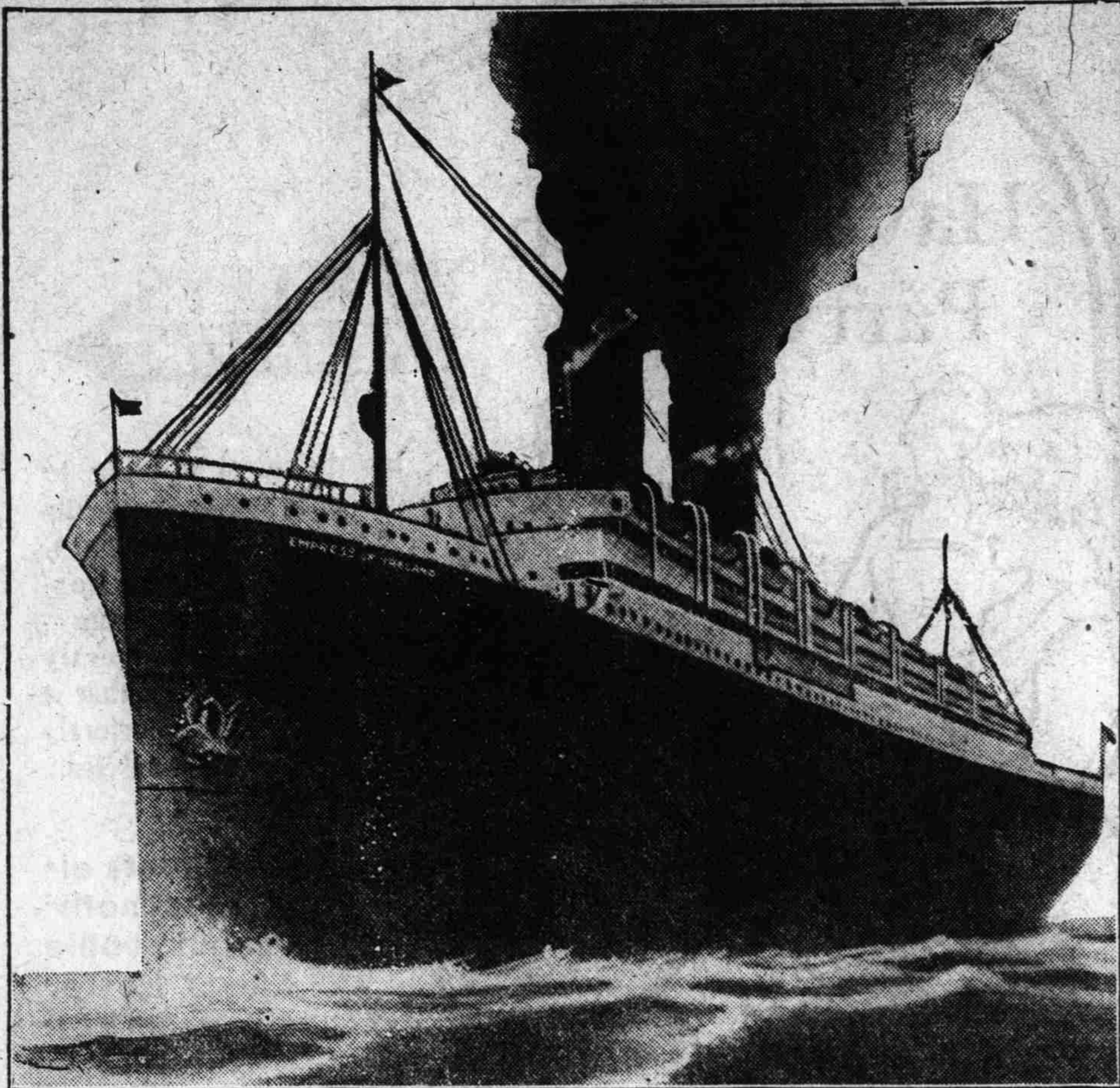


LOST OCEAN LINER EMPRESS OF IRELAND



964 PERISH IN SEA DISASTER

Great Liner Goes to Bottom at Mouth of St. Lawrence River Following a Collision With a Collier.

Rimouski, Que., May 31.—Nine hundred and sixty-four persons lost their lives Friday morning when the great Canadian Pacific twin screw liner Empress of Ireland was rammed amidships in a thick fog off Father Point in the St. Lawrence and sunk by the Norwegian collier Storstad.

Four hundred and three survivors were picked up from floating wreckage and two lifeboats.

And only 12 of the saved are women. Gathered piecemeal from survivors the horror of this wreck grows with the telling.

Waters Quickly Engulf Ship.

The doomed ones had little time even to pray. They were engulfed by the onrushing waters that swallowed the big ship inside of nineteen minutes from the time she was struck.

The wireless operators on the Empress, sticking to their posts to the last, had time only to send a few "S. O. S." calls for help when the rising waters silenced their instruments. That silence told the rescuers miles away more potently than a bugle that doom had overtaken the ship.

Only six hours before this fateful collision the passengers sang as a good-night hymn "God Be With You Till We Meet Again," played by the Salvation Army band on board.

The members of that band and most of the 165 Salvationists were among the lost.

Survivors Tell of Fog.

It was foggy, according to survivors, when the Empress of Ireland, a steel-hulled, steel-bulkheaded ship of more than eight thousand tons, left Montreal at 4:30 Thursday afternoon in command of H. G. Kendall of the Royal Naval Reserve, one of the most skilled of transatlantic navigators.

Forest fires also obscured the atmosphere and the big ship, in charge of a pilot, proceeded slowly on her way to sea. At midnight the pilot aide left near Father Point, shouting a merry "Bon Voyage" as he went down their ladder to his waiting boat.

The darkness at this time was intense and the ship under the slowest speed possible with steerageway held her course. Her decks were deserted. The passengers had all sought their berths with no thought of impending death.

Out of the darkness, on the port side, soon after 2:30 in the morning there loomed the little Norwegian collier, not half the size of the Empress, but fated to be her destroyer.

Not until the collier was almost abeam of the big liner was the danger known on either ship. The fog had blotted out the lights as well as the port and starboard lights of both ships. Quick orders trumpeted on both vessels were heard. But they came all too late.

Strikes Ship Amidship.

The steel-pointed prow of the Storstad struck the liner amidships and then forged aft, ripping and tearing its way through the Empress of Ireland.

Clear to the stern of the Empress of Ireland was this great steel shaving cut from her side, from the top of the

hull far below the water line. Into that rent the water poured with the force of a Niagara.

The bow of the Storstad smashed its way through berths on that side of the ship, killing passengers sleeping in their berths and grinding bodies to pieces.

Reaching the stern of the big liner, the Storstad staggered off in the darkness, her bow crumpled by the impact. Her commander was ready a few minutes later, when he found his ship would float, to aid the crippled and sinking Empress, but he was too late to save the majority of those on board.

Carried to Bottom.

The Empress of Ireland recoiled almost on her starboard beam ends from the blow of the collier and passengers were flung from their berths against the walls of their staterooms.

Many were stunned and before they had time to recover were carried to the bottom with the ship.

The vast torrents pouring into the great gash on the port side, aft, filled the corridors and flooded every stateroom abaft the midship section inside of four minutes.

There was never a chance for the helpless ones in the after cabins and staterooms of the liner. With her port side laid open for half its length from the midship section to the stern, a seive had more chance to float than the Empress of Ireland, and the trapped passengers in that after section were doomed from the moment the Storstad struck.

Reeling from the blow the ship began to settle almost immediately as the water rushed into the big rent.

From the forward cabins, however, men and women in night attire stumbled along the corridors and up the companion way to the promenade deck—the deck below, the one on which the boats rested.

Swarm to Deck.

Up they swarmed on deck in their night clothing to find the ship heeling away to port and the deck slanting at a degree that made it almost impossible to stand even clinging to railings.

Men and women, shrieking, praying, crying for aid that was fated to arrive too late, fell over one another in that last struggle for life on board the doomed Empress of Ireland.

Frenzied mothers leaped overboard with their babies in their arms. Others knelt, on deck and tried to pray in the few moments left to them. Some were flung overboard by the heeling of the sinking ship and some broke their legs or arms in trying to reach the lifeboats.

Above the din of the struggle on the great promenade deck could be heard Captain Kendall shouting commands for the launching of the lifeboats. Several were launched in the 19 minutes that the ship floated.

There was no time to observe the rule "Women first" in this disaster, for those nearest the boats scrambled to places in them.

But even as they were being launched, while the wireless still was calling "S. O. S." there came a terrific

explosion that almost rent the ship in twain.

It was the explosion of the boilers struck by the cold water. A geyser of water shot upward from the midship section, mingled with fragments of wreckage, that showered down upon the passengers still clinging to the rails forward and upon those struggling in the water.

The explosion destroyed the last hope of the ship's floating until succor could arrive, for the shock had smashed the forward steel bulkhead walls that had up to then shut out the torrents invading the after part. The water rushed forward and the Empress of Ireland went swiftly to her doom, carrying down with her hundreds of passengers who stood on her slanting deck, their arms stretched upward and their last cries choked in the engulfing waters.

One of the survivors, relating that last tragic scene on the decks of the liner, said:

"I was asleep like most of the passengers when the collision came. There was a sickening crunching of wood and steel and then a grinding, ripping sound as the Storstad smashed her way along the port side of our ship.

"I knew that we had been struck and I rushed to the staterooms of some friends and shouted to them to get up, as the ship was sinking. Stateroom doors flew open all along the corridor and men and women began to rush for the grand companion forward. Those aft must have been drowned in their berths.

Darkness Is Intense.

"On deck officers of the ship, partially dressed, were rushing about urging passengers to be calm. Sailors under orders were trying to launch the lifeboats.

"The darkness was intense and a few minutes after I reached the deck the electric lights went out. At that time there were still hundreds of passengers below trying to grope their way through the darkened corridors to the companionway and reach the deck. Most of them went down with the ship, for the corridors below filled right after the explosion of the boilers.

"I leaped overboard in despair just before the ship went down and managed to find a bit of wreckage to which I clung."

Intense darkness covered the waters when the Empress of Ireland made that final plunge, but the fog lifted a few minutes later and then came the first faint streaks of dawn.

It lighted waters strewn with wreckage and struggling passengers, who strove to keep afloat.

The crippled Storstad, which had wrought this tragedy of the waters, had lifeboats out picking up as many survivors as possible.

The gray dawn revealed the government steamers Lady Evelyn and Eureka near the scene of the disaster and hastening to aid.

Some of those in the water tried to swim to the Eureka as she neared the point where the Empress had gone down. One woman, wearing only an undervest, swam to the Lady Evelyn, and was helped on board, but died of exhaustion soon afterwards.

The work of rescue still was going on when the sun arose in a cloudless sky.

Men and women were clinging to spars and bits of broken planks. Many of the survivors were injured. Some had broken legs, others fractured arms and still others had been injured internally in that last mad rush to get away from the sinking liner.

Women clinging with one hand to little ones, while with the other they tried to keep clutch on pieces of wreck-

age, were picked up by the lifeboats and carried on board the rescuing vessels.

Captain Kendall, dazed and unable to give any coherent account of the loss of his ship, was found clinging to a broken spar.

J. W. Langley, rancher, of Canford, B. C., went down with the ship, but held his breath, and, coming to the surface, found a piece of wreckage and clung to it until picked up.

One of the survivors, in explaining the quickness with which the Empress of Ireland went down, said:

"The collier, being only something over 3,000 tons, did not reach up even to the upper or topmost deck of our hull. Her bow cut under the upper deck and took a peeling off the side of our ship that allowed the water to rush into the lower decks. Then the liner heeled over, and even those in the superstructure deck rooms had no chance to save themselves. Hundreds of them must have been dumped out of their berths and slammed against the walls with stunning force."

Scenes on Shore.

Father Point, Que., May 29.—"The Empress of Ireland passed and landed her pilot here at 1:30 this morning," said an official of the Canadian Pacific. "There was a haze at the time. At 1:50 a. m. I was awakened by an "S. O. S." ring on my door bell and, rushing down, was informed by a Marconi operator that the Empress of Ireland was sinking, having been struck by some vessel. In undress I started to help. No other signal could be got from the doomed vessel. She had no time to give another, as she sank ten minutes after being struck.

"Mr. Whiteside, manager of the Marconi station, rendered effective service by notifying the government steamer Eureka, at Father Point wharf, and the Lady Evelyn at Ramouski wharf.

Help Rushed to Scene.

"Capt. J. B. Belanger of the Eureka immediately rushed to the scene and Captain Poulot, with the Lady Evelyn, followed later, his ship being three miles farther away.

"Meanwhile daylight broke and scanning the horizon with a telescope I saw the two government steamers, nine lifeboats and a collier in the vicinity, going here and there. Later the Eureka arrived at Father Point wharf with 32 survivors and several poor drowned bodies, also several of the survivors who had been wounded.

Agent in Narrow Escape.

"The scene on the Eureka was most distressing, the survivors walking around their dead shipmates, stretched out in their last sleep. The Eureka was sent to Remouski wharf with all on board, and the Canadian Pacific agent, Mr. Webber, who was here, having just got off the ill-fated vessel with the pilot, engaged all the cabs he could find and telephoned for all possible medical assistance. As the company's agent here, I advised all the survivors that their cables and telegrams to their families would be paid by the Canadian Pacific railroad.

"The Lady Evelyn passed into Remouski wharf about 4 a. m. with some more survivors and bodies. Among the survivors was Captain Kendall, commander of the ill-fated ship, who was picked up by a lifeboat from the wreckage after the ship had gone down.

Survivors Almost Naked.

"Most of the survivors were almost naked in the cold morning, with the temperature at 35 degrees and white frost on the ground.

"At 6:10 the Norwegian collier Storstad, coal laden, from Sydney, N. S., for Montreal, came along slowly. When her bow had been smashed in it became known that she was the vessel that had struck the Empress of Ireland the fatal blow. The Storstad was too much damaged to allow her to proceed to Quebec under her own steam, but before proceeding she landed a few survivors and some dead bodies, which were taken off by the steamer Eureka and Lady Evelyn and landed on the Remouski wharf."

Sing "God Be With You," on Ship

Montreal, Que., May 30.—When the liner Empress of Ireland steamed away from here Thursday, she carried 165 members of the Salvation Army from the United States and Canada, bound for the world convention in London. To the accompaniment of the army band, they were singing, "God Be With You Till We Meet Again."

This prelude to the accident in the St. Lawrence made the disaster a near parallel to the sinking of the Titanic, whose passengers sang, "Nearer My God, to Thee," as the White Star liner went down.

Irving, Actor and Author.

New York, May 31.—Laurence S. B. Irving, drowned on steamship Empress of Ireland, is an actor, author and manager. He received his education at Marlborough college, College Rollin, Paris, and spent three years in Russia studying for foreign office. His plays are widely known. In 1908 and 1909 he presented sketches of his own authorship in England and America. On May 3, 1910, Mr. Irving addressed the Equal Suffrage league at New York.

Scenes at Liverpool.

Liverpool, May 30.—Pathetic scenes were enacted at the office of the Canadian Pacific railway in this city Friday. Crowds of weeping men and women begged for news of the officer and crew of the Empress of Ireland, the majority of whom were gathered here. When confirmation of the disaster was received several of the women fainted. Friday's scenes were duplicate of those witnessed at the time the Titanic went to the bottom.

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