

# 'Lost on (the) S.S. Titanic'

## Otsego man slips away from his family

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Staff Writer

COOPERSTOWN —

The Ryerson family plot sits in front of a hillside at Lakewood Cemetery in Cooperstown, overlooking the tree-lined shore and deep April-cold waters of Otsego Lake.

Emily Ryerson is buried there, with her children John, Susan, Emily and Arthur Jr.

Behind their grave markers, up five moss-covered steps in the shadow of a large, stone Celtic cross, is a marker dedicated to Emily Ryerson's husband and the father of her children. The engraved words are understated, but speak loudly.

*In loving memory of Arthur Ryerson of Ringwood, Otsego County, New York — Eldest son of Joseph Turner Ryerson of Chicago and Ellen Larned, his wife — Born January 12, 1851 — Lost on S.S. Titanic April 15, 1912 giving his life for others.*

The tale behind that 6-by-3-foot horizontal slab of stone tells of a wealthy family returning to America for the funeral of a family member, only to lose another in the worst sea disaster of its time. It's a largely forgotten part of a memorable story, a generation-defining moment that began 85 years ago this month and continues to ripple through history.



Photo courtesy of Arthur Clarke

Arthur Ryerson Sr., who died on the Titanic.



Star photo by Julie Lewis

Arthur Clarke, right, and his sister Anne Logan in front of the former Ringwood mansion. The building is now part of the Beaver Cross Episcopal Conference Center in Cooperstown.



The sinking of the Titanic, which claimed 1,522 of its 2,227 passengers and crew, has been told in countless books and movies. Another film is in production. A splashy Broadway musical opened last week. And an exhibit of items culled from the ship's wreckage is on display in Memphis.

The story has followed the spine of the 20th century, and has entwined generations of a prominent Otsego County family.

"It was just always in the background, from the time I was a baby," said Arthur Clarke, 70, whose mother, Emily Ryerson Clarke, survived the Titanic. "I still find it fascinating."

His sister, Anne Logan, is less fascinated, but is going to New York City with her brother today to see the Broadway show.

"I don't know what they can still talk about," said Logan, 73. "The ship went down, there's no doubt about that."

Of all the tales told of the Titanic striking an iceberg off the coast of Newfoundland, none told the full story of the Ryersons. None, that is, until a distant relative, Phyllis Ry-

erse, spent two years researching family accounts and newspaper stories for a 1990 article in "The Official Journal of the Titanic Historical Society Inc.," which is on file at the New York State Historical Association in Cooperstown.

Arthur L. Ryerson, 61, was a successful lawyer whose father founded the Joseph T. Ryerson Steel Co. in Chicago. Arthur owned homes in Chicago, Haverford, Pa. and on Otsego Lake. That home, Ringwood, held many fond memories for Ryerson, his wife and their children, who swam in the water and played in the woods near the summer vacation residence and farm in Springfield Center.

The Ryersons and three of their children — Susan, 21, also called Suzette; Emily, 18; and John, 13, also known as Jack — left in February 1912 for a vacation in France. They took Jack's governess, Grace Scott Bowen of Cooperstown, and Mrs. Ryerson's personal French maid, Victorine Chaudanson.

They left behind two children — Ellen, 17, finishing her last year at a school for girls in Maryland, and Arthur Jr., 20, a student at Yale University, his father's alma mater.

Arthur Jr. spent Easter weekend near Philadelphia with a college friend, John Lewis Hoffman. Hoffman was driving with Ryerson on a dirt road at about 5 p.m. April 8 when he pulled out to pass another vehicle.

The front wheel of his car hit a rock, veered into a ditch and crashed into a telephone pole, sending both men flying over the hood. Hoffman's head struck the pole. Arthur Ryerson was thrown against a fence post.

They were taken to Bryn Mawr Hospital, where Hoffman was pronounced dead at 7:45 p.m. Ryerson died at 11 p.m.

An uncle sent a cable to France, telling Arthur and Emily Ryerson that their son was dead. The family made plans to take the next ship to America for the funeral in Philadelphia on April 19.

That next ship was the Titanic, leaving on its maiden voyage. The Ryersons would head from Cherbourg, France toward New York City on April 10.

The Titanic was an engineering marvel of the industrial age. The largest moving object created by man at the time, the ship was almost 900 feet long and billed by its owner, the White Star Line, as unsinkable.

Arthur Ryerson, wearing a black armband and dark clothes, and his grieving family spent much of their time in their rooms and little time noticing the splendors of the ship. Other first-class passengers such as multimillionaire John Jacob Astor enjoyed the ship's orchestra, a squash court, a swimming pool and a dining room that served roast turkey, lamb, roast duckling, plum pudding and French ice cream.

The Titanic was well into its journey April 13 when Capt. E.J. Smith received a wire from a steamer reporting icebergs 250 miles ahead. Smith showed the report to J. Bruce Ismay, managing director of the White Star Line.

The Titanic held its course.

At about 11:40 p.m. April 14, the ship's lookout reported an iceberg dead ahead. He signaled the bridge, and the ship slowly swung to port before scraping against the side of the iceberg.

Emily Ryerson woke in her cabin and noticed the ship's engines had stopped.

She got up and spoke to a ship steward who said there was talk of an iceberg ahead.

Soon after midnight, she saw passengers hurrying on the promenade deck.

A passenger told her the captain was ordering everyone to the lifeboats.

Mrs. Ryerson ran to wake Jack's governess, Bowen, who was sharing a room with Suzette. Mrs. Ryerson went back to rouse her husband, then Emily and Jack.

Finally she woke her maid, and the group went to the promenade deck to await instructions.

They stood in the cold for half an hour before being ordered at about 1 a.m. April 15 to join the other passengers on the lifeboat deck.

They saw the supposedly unsinkable liner listing to port and dipping down at the bow. Lifeboats were being loaded. Distress rockets were shot into the air.

Arthur Ryerson talked the situation over with Astor, the fabulously wealthy entrepreneur; John B. Thayer, vice president of the Pennsylvania Railroad; and George D. Widener, heir to a streetcar fortune.

A ragtime band was still playing in the ship's ballroom.

The Titanic was listing so badly that the lifeboat the Ryersons were to take had to be hooked to bring it back toward the ship.

Men wouldn't be allowed in until they helped women and children first. Astor helped his pregnant wife, then Ryerson helped his family.

The Daily Star, Oneonta, New York

Monday, April 28, 1997



Photo courtesy of Anne Logan

Mrs. Emily Ryerson, widow of Arthur Ryerson Sr.

*The ship's contents — chairs, pianos, tons of food, chandeliers, a car ... 16 trunks filled with the Ryersons' possessions — tumbled forward with a huge crash.*

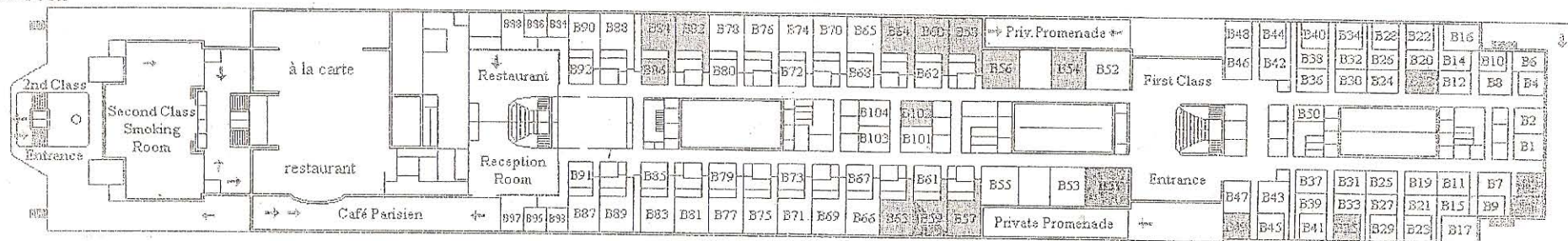


Monday, April 28, 1997

# TITANIC TRAGEDY

The Daily Star, Oneonta, New York

## B-Deck



The Ryersons stayed in cabins B57, 59, 63 and 66 of the Titanic's B Deck.

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Computer generated pictures of Verandah and Palm Court © Dub Media Inc. (1995)

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# Titanic



His two daughters, Emily and Suzette, kissed and hugged him. Victorine Chaudanson suggested he take her place.

"If I died," she asked, "who would mourn?" A ship's officer helped her onto the lifeboat.

The officer told Jack he couldn't get on, but at the urging of the boy's father — who had lost his only other son less than a week ago — the officer relented and let Jack on board.

Arthur kissed his wife and helped her on the lifeboat, which was lowered into the cold North Atlantic.

As her boat reached the water, Mrs. Ryerson noticed the deck she had just been on was tilting 20 feet from the water. The bow was sinking and the sea was filling with chairs, doors and anything the remaining passengers could throw overboard to help them float.

Those in the lifeboat watched the stern of the Titanic rise from the water, standing the ship almost straight up. The ship's contents — chairs, pianos, tons of food, chandeliers, a car purchased by a passenger, 16 trunks filled with the Ryersons' possessions — tumbled forward with a huge crash.

The ship appeared to split, then sank 13,000 feet to the ocean floor. No one knows how Arthur Ryerson died.

Victorine Chaudanson looked at her watch. It was 2:20 a.m. April 15.

Someone on the Ryersons' lifeboat yelled for everyone to pull on the oars, or else the boat would be sucked down with the giant liner. Everyone rowed, partly to get out of danger, partly to stay warm.

Mrs. Ryerson heard cries for help from the dark, 28-degree water. The half-filled lifeboat was turned back to rescue five men, two of whom died despite the efforts of the women in the lifeboat who rubbed their arms and legs.

Some in the lifeboat slept while waiting for help. Others bailed cold sea water that numbed their feet.

Emily Ryerson thought of her husband, a good swimmer and good sailor who had told her before they parted that he would meet them in New York City.

The sun rose and bathed the huge icebergs in cool pink light. It was 8 a.m. when the rescue ship, the Carpathia, came into view.

Emily Ryerson and her family were taken on board. She watched as the last of the lifeboats was emptied.

She scanned a passing ship, the Californian, but saw no sign of her husband. She was being led from the deck when she collapsed in a lounge chair, exhausted.

The Carpathia stopped for a brief memorial at the site where the Titanic went down, then headed to New York.

Like Mrs. Ryerson, most of the women on the Carpathia were now widows.

Relatives of the Ryersons waited at the White Star Line office on Broadway to find out who survived.

Papers in Philadelphia, near the family home in Haverford, initially reported all the Ryersons were safe, but later indicated Arthur and Jack Ryerson may be lost.

Arthur and Emily's daughter, Ellen, was among tens of thousands waiting as the Carpathia arrived in New York the night of April 18. She was relieved to see young Jack get off the ship, but saw no signs of her father.



Photo courtesy of Anne Logan

Grace Scott Bowen.



Photo courtesy of Anne Logan

The Ryerson children, circa 1901. Left to right: Arthur Jr., Emily, Ellen, Suzette and Jack.



The Philadelphia papers reported the demise of a dozen passengers worth a total of \$162 million. Astor was valued at \$125 million, Ryerson, \$5 million.

A headline in the April 19 edition of the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin said "Ryerson Waved Farewell to Wife — Victim of Titanic Wreck Saw Loved Ones Safe in Lifeboat and Sank To His Death."

"Standing at the rail of the main deck of the ill-fated Titanic," the story reported, "Arthur Ryerson waved encouragement to his wife as the lifeboat in which she and her three children had been placed with his assistance glided away from the doomed ship. A few minutes later Mr. Ryerson met death in the icy water into which the crushed ship plunged.... The widow and children now mourn a double loss."

Another story told how the family arrived in New York, only to prepare for the funeral of Arthur Jr.

"Upon leaving the Carpathia, Mrs. Ryerson was almost too exhausted and weak to tell of her experiences. With her were son Jack and her two daughters, Miss Emily and Miss Susan Ryerson.

The young women were overcome with grief as they walked up from the dock, and the lad who had witnessed such sites of horror and tragedy clung to his mother's hand, wide eyed and sorrowful."

Mrs. Ryerson awoke in her New York hotel room two days later to see her name in the newspapers.

She had told another passenger that Ismay, the White Star Line official who survived the mishap, had said officials on board knew icebergs were ahead and they planned to speed through rather than slow down.

She was asked to testify at a Senate hearing across the street at the Waldorf-Astoria to determine if Ismay was negligent.

Doctors determined she was too exhausted to testify, and Ismay was never formally declared responsible for the accident.

Doctors also felt Mrs. Ryerson was too exhausted to attend her son's delayed funeral, but she and the family went to the service April 22 in Philadelphia.

There was only one casket, but the minister spoke as if there were two.

Arthur Jr.'s body was brought to Cooperstown. His casket was drawn through town on a farm wagon by a pair of horses from the Ringwood estate. Farm employees acted as bearers as Arthur Jr. became the first Ryerson laid to rest at Lakewood Cemetery.

Arthur Clarke and Anne Logan said their mother, Emily Ryerson Clarke, rarely spoke of the Titanic.

It was too traumatic to think of her father's last moments.

"(Arthur Ryerson Sr.) put them all in the lifeboat and went back to stand by the rail," said Logan, who lives in Cooperstown. "That's the last mother saw of him. I asked mother if she saw him at the rail and she said, 'No, it was too dark.'"

"They tried to keep warm (in the lifeboat) by rowing. It got darker and darker and when the ship went down it was very quiet. Nobody talked much."

As Logan got older, she left the Titanic behind. She and her late husband, John, raised a child.

Anne Logan spent 20 years working as a technician at Bassett Hospital and also ran a shop in Cooperstown, the Tourist Trap.

For her, the Titanic is a dusty part of the past. "It sort of blew far away," she said.



Photo courtesy of Anne Logan

Arthur Ryerson Jr., shortly before his death.

*"(Arthur Ryerson Sr.) put them all in the lifeboat and went back to stand by the rail," said Anne Logan of Cooperstown. "That's the last mother saw of him."*

Arthur Clarke has had a full life also.

He and his late wife, Rosanna, raised two children, and he worked at a meat-packing firm in Chicago before returning to Otsego Lake to run the Otsego Golf Club in Springfield Center, where he still lives.

He's had a full life, but it still has room for the Titanic.

He appreciates the continuing attention toward an event that was not only significant for his family but for his family's generation.

Confidence was high in 1912. The successes of the industrial revolution left man thinking everything he created was better, stronger and faster than what had been created before. The sinking of the Titanic changed that.

"I think it will always be one of those haunting things of the 20th century," Clarke said. "It's going to be looked upon with the First World War and other things that signaled the end of the Victorian innocence."

The survivors of the Titanic also went on to live full lives.

Victorine Chaudanson, the family's maid, married Henry Perkins, the Ryerson's driver, less than two months after the Titanic sank.

They raised a family and lived in New York City. She died in 1962 at age 86, and was buried in Broomall, Pa.

Grace Scott Bowen, the Ryersons' governess, was principal of the St. Christina School of the Susan Fenimore Cooper Foundation and later headed the Latin department at the Knox School for Girls in Cooperstown.

She died of a cerebral hemorrhage in Cooperstown in 1945 at age 78, and was buried in Lakewood Cemetery.



The Ryersons who were on the Titanic eventually came to Lakewood Cemetery to rejoin Arthur Jr., whose death set in motion the dramatic course of the family's history.

Suzette Ryerson was a bacteriologist at an Army hospital in France during World War I, and while on leave met and later married Lt. George Patterson.

She died of ether pneumonia during an appendectomy in 1921, at age 30.

Emily Borie Ryerson, Arthur Ryerson Sr.'s widow, worked with future President Herbert Hoover as head of the American Fund for French Wounded and the Society for Fatherless Children during World War I. She established a scholarship at Yale University in memory of Arthur Jr.

In 1927 she married Forsythe Sherfese, a financial adviser to the Chinese government, and they built a home on the French Riviera.

She died of a heart attack at age 76 in 1939, while vacationing with Sherfese in Uruguay.

Her daughter, Emily, married George Hyde Clarke in 1915 and lived at Hyde Hall until their 1932 divorce.

Their seven children included Arthur Clarke, Anne Logan and Susan Parker, a Women's Air Force Service Pilot (WASP) who was killed in a crash in 1944 and is buried with the family at Lakewood Cemetery.

Emily married Stephen Beach Cooke of Cooperstown in 1932 and died at age 66 in 1960.

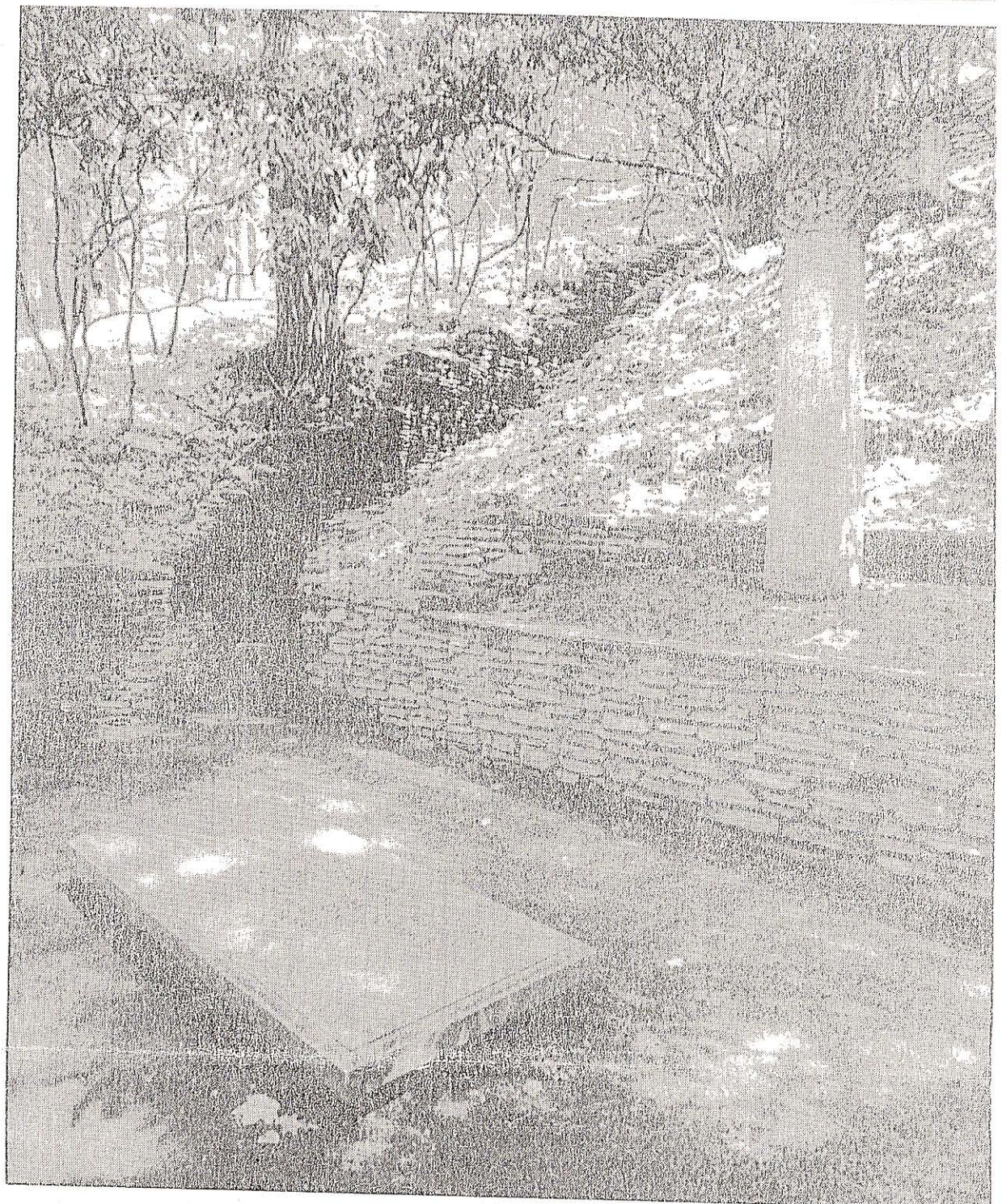
Jack Ryerson was an avid golfer who was in "Ripley's Believe It Or Not!" for having played more than 1,000 courses.

In the early '60s he deeded the Ringwood estate of 28 rooms and 37 acres to the Episcopal Church, and the Ryerson summer home is now known as Beaver Cross Episcopal Conference Center.

Jack married Jane Morris in the 1950s and died at age 87 in 1986.

He was the family's last remaining survivor of the Titanic.

Behind all those gravestones overlooking Otsego Lake, a cold stone tablet is all that remains to remember Arthur Ryerson Sr., who sank to the bottom of the cold North Atlantic 85 years ago.



The memorial to Arthur Ryerson Sr. in Cooperstown's Lakewood cemetery.

Star photo by Julie Lewis