



Thursday, May 17, 2012

## A Titanic experience of artifacts, stories

Posted: April 28, 2012 - 7:20pm

By Linda A. Thompson-Ditch

SPECIAL TO THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

KANSAS CITY, MO. — The sinking of the Titanic on April 14, 1912, is one of the most well-known and romanticized tragedies in history. Now, it's possible to experience the event first-hand and just in time for its 100th anniversary.

"Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition," which runs through Sept. 3 at Union Station in Kansas City, Mo., features more than 250 authentic artifacts recovered from the ship's final resting place on the bottom of the North Atlantic Ocean.

"One of the most compelling parts of the exhibit is to read the stories of people onboard and to learn why they were on the Titanic," Joy Torchia, director of strategic marketing at Union Station, said. "For many, they were headed to America to begin a new life. The human stories make everything in the exhibit come alive 100 years later."

Sally Lykins and her daughter, Haley, of Lee's Summit, Mo., went through the exhibit on a recent Sunday because they are fans of the 1997 movie and had visited the Titanic Museum attraction in Branson, Mo.

"It's kind of unreal, looking at things that have been at the bottom of the ocean," Lykins said. "All of the mistakes that could have been fixed, like the lifeboats and the binoculars that were forgotten (before the ship set sail). It's hard to believe that it happened to people."

Attendees are welcomed aboard with a replica of the White Star Line Titanic boarding pass, complete with the name and information about an actual passenger on the ship. At the end of the exhibit is a complete list of who survived and who didn't, so visitors can check out the fate of their passenger.

The first artifact seen is the bell that hung over the Titanic's crow's nest. It was used to signal the warning of trouble ahead and is presented in dramatic fashion — lit in a case alone in a darkened room. Visitors then are taken through a time line of the ship's only voyage, complete with music to welcome passengers, rumbling in the engine room and the creaking sounds below deck.

The Titanic was the largest ship of its time, built to be both sturdy and opulent. One of the ways the exhibit highlights this wealth is through a re-creation of a first-class cabin, complete with mahogany furniture, wood paneling, velvet wallpaper, a chaise lounge and a table set with china. A passenger in this class would have paid between \$2,500 (\$57,000 in today's money) and \$4,500 (\$103,000 today.)

Conversely, the re-creation of a third-class cabin shows a simple room with four beds set up bunk-style and a simple fold-down table, while sounds recreate the noise of the engines. The White Star Line took comfort of third-class passengers into consideration by providing real mattresses, instead of straw, for their beds and an open-air deck area. A third-class ticket cost \$40 (\$900 in today's money).

As visitors move through a recreation of the captain's bridge and into the other exhibit areas, they become aware of how cold it was that fateful April night. There were numerous reports of icebergs in the area from other ships. Still, the Titanic continued forward at close to top speed.

One of the rooms features an iceberg for visitors to touch. Many left their hands on the iceberg long enough for a handprint to melt into the ice.

The exhibition's end focuses on the discovery of Titanic's wreckage in 1985 in 12,500 feet of water. Many of the artifacts in this area have a photo of where they were found, and a model depicts what the ship looked like under the ocean.

The artifacts are provided by RMS Titanic Inc., the only company permitted by law to recover objects from the wreck. All are preserved, not restored, to allow them to look like they've been through a tragedy without suffering further deterioration.

The ship itself is being consumed by iron-eating microbes. Scientists predict it will implode and collapse on itself sometime in the next 40 to 90 years.

[Back to Top](#)

---



---

The Topeka Capital-Journal ©2012. All Rights Reserved.

[User Agreement and Privacy Policy](#) [About Our Ads](#) [Terms of Service](#) [Copyright Notice](#) [Contact Us](#)



CLOSE X