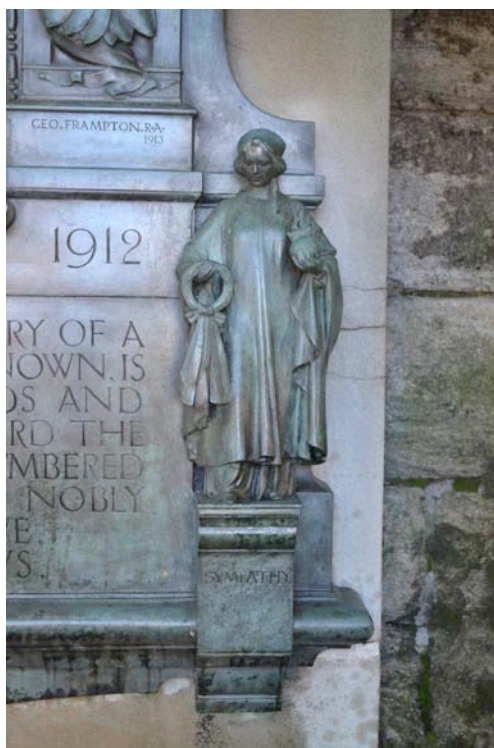


# Memory and Monuments: Some Sites Connected with the *Titanic* in Manhattan

Joseph J. Portanova, Ph.D.



Sympathy: Detail of William Stead Memorial

The sinking of the *Maine* in 1898, which began the Spanish-American War, was commemorated in 1913 by an imposing monument. The *Titanic*, bound for pier 59 in New York City on its maiden voyage, carried seventy-four passengers who resided in New York and a considerable number of immigrants bound for the city. After the sinking of the *Titanic* on April 15, 1912 there were grandiose plans for a public monument: the world's largest lighthouse, or a large sculpture of the sinking with the iceberg rendered in crystal. The memorial committee disbanded without completing its work, and the public monument dedicated in 1913 atop the Seamen's Church Institute at South Street was actually a renaming of a lighthouse and beacon already in the building plans. This monument and its beacon once looked out over the New York harbor. It was moved when the

Seamen's Institute building was demolished, and part of it (the upper story of the lighthouse tower and beacon) now stands incongruously at ground level at the entrance to South Street Seaport.

It has been noted that First Class passengers were most likely to survive the sinking, with 64% surviving although First Class only represented 15% of those on board. Monuments to the wealthy victims of the *Titanic* continue this First Class privilege. The Anna Bliss *Titanic* Victims Memorial at Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx is the largest private monument and also serves as Mrs. Bliss' tomb. Manhattan contains a number of private monuments and sites connected with individuals who died in the sinking. These reflect the varied composition of the city's wealthy elite: Episcopal descendants of the British colonists, plus more recent Jewish and German immigrants. Some memorials have fallen into decay, some have been restored and others have been lost. Many have no plaque or indication of their connection to the disaster, or have been adapted for other uses: Pier 59, where the *Titanic* was to dock upon her arrival, is now a driving range for golf. Some are only ruins, such as the remains of Pier 54, where the *Carpathia* landed with the survivors. Even in their neglect, they evoke memories of the *Titanic*, its passengers and crew.

This essay will discuss a few of these sites, and suggest a possible itinerary for those wishing to investigate places associated with the *Titanic* in Manhattan. This will not be a "walking tour" in the traditional sense, in that the sites referenced are concentrated in separate areas of the city: primarily in Battery Park and South Street, Greenwich Village and Chelsea, and the Upper West Side. Still, with the use of public transportation between sites, an individual could visit these sites in a single day.

## **1. Battery Park and South Street Seaport Area: Wireless Operators' Memorial, Cunard and White Star Line Offices, Titanic Memorial**

**Wireless Operators' Memorial (present location unknown):** The Wireless Operators' Memorial was dedicated to all Wireless (Radio) operators who lost their lives in the line of duty. This included the name John George ("Jack") Phillips, the wireless operator on the *Titanic*. Having just turned twenty-five a few days before the sinking, Phillips was very young to be a senior wireless operator. He stayed at his post radioing for help even after Captain Smith released him from his duties and told him to save himself. Although Phillips reached one of the overturned collapsible rafts, he died of exhaustion and exposure before morning. His hometown in England erected the largest *Titanic* related monument in the world in his memory, but in New York his commemoration was less grand. The Wireless Operators' Memorial was a simple column with a wreath of marine plants and shells, and a

bronze plaque listing the names of operators who lost their lives in the line of duty. Since September 11, 2001 the area has been under renovation, and the present location of this monument is unknown.



White Star Line offices in 1912 after the sinking

**White Star Line Offices at 9 Broadway:** Continuing north up Broadway from Battery Park, you pass a building that recalls the great age of luxury liner travel, though later than the *Titanic*. Facing the park is the International Mercantile Marine Building (1922, now a Citibank), once the offices of the United States Line. Its façade has mosaics of major ports of call, plus entrances labeled “First Class” and “Cabin Class”; the interior continues the nautical theme. Nine Broadway once housed offices of the White Star Line, the British company that owned the *Titanic*. Here relatives and friends waited in 1912 for news---among them Vincent Astor, who inquired for news of his father and like many others left the building in tears. Today the building seems an incongruous setting for tragedy—it houses a Radio Shack store and Subway restaurant. At 25 Broadway is the Cunard Lines Building (1921), with impressive ornamentation. Cunard was a rival of the White Star Line, though the two companies merged in 1934.

***Titanic* Memorial and Park at South Street Seaport:** Proceed east down Fulton Street, until you reach the entrance to South Street Seaport at Water Street. Here is the *Titanic* Memorial Lighthouse and Park, the only public memorial to the *Titanic* in the city. There had been plans for a

significant public memorial, but the monument committee disbanded without ever coming to an agreement.



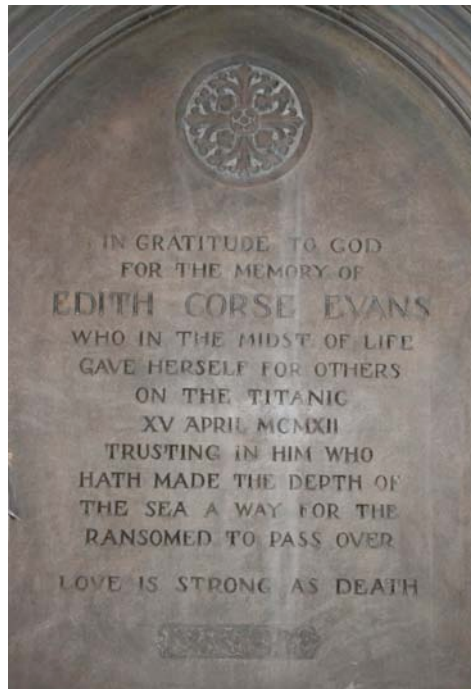
Titanic Memorial Lighthouse

The Seamen’s Church Institute had begun construction of its new building a day before the *Titanic* disaster. Its plans included a Flemish style building (recalling Dutch New York) at South Street surmounted by a lighthouse and beacon. Taking advantage of the publicity from the sinking, the Institute announced that the (already planned) lighthouse would be a memorial to the *Titanic*. With donations from the public, the building and monument were dedicated a year after the disaster. The ceremony included many friends and relatives of those lost on the ship. David Greer, Episcopal Bishop of New York, said “As its light by night shall guide pilgrims and seafaring men from every clime into this port, so...looking at noon toward this place to note the time of day, may they remember that our days pass as the swift ships, and in view of the shortness and uncertainty of human life, strive to fulfill their duty well...” (*NY Times* 16 April 1913).

The lighthouse's green beacon shone over New York harbor, visible as far as Sandy Hook in New Jersey. Atop the lighthouse were a steel pole and a metal ball. The ball was raised every day at five minutes before noon, and slid down to mark the noon hour (the time of the *Titanic's* departure) at a telegraphed signal from the National Observatory in Washington, D.C. This remained in operation until 1967, when the Institute relocated and the building was demolished. A salvage company donated the upper story of the lighthouse to South Street Seaport, where it was moved in 1976. The present monument includes a replica of the original ball, and there are plans to restore the beacon. A bronze plaque on the monument has more information about the history of the monument and its various benefactors than about the *Titanic* it memorializes. From here the #4 or 5 subway from Fulton Street station at Broadway will take you to Union Square and 14<sup>th</sup> Street. Walk from here to Broadway and 10<sup>th</sup> Street.

**2. Greenwich Village and Chelsea: Edith Corse Evans Memorial; 57-59 East 11<sup>th</sup> Street; American Seamen's Friend Society Sailors' Home and Institute; Pier 54 and Pier 59.**

**Grace Episcopal Church: Edith Corse Evans Memorial:** At 802 Broadway and 10<sup>th</sup> Street is Grace Episcopal Church (1846). Here, through a low door at the left of the lobby, is a stained glass window of angels ascending a ladder to heaven. Below this, within the central arch is a carved rosette and the inscription: "In Gratitude to God for the Memory of EDITH CORSE EVANS Who in the midst of life gave herself for others on the Titanic XV April MCMXII Trusting in Him who hath made the depth of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over. Love Is Strong As Death."



Edith C. Evans Memorial

Edith Corse Evans (1875-1912) was one of only four First Class women to die in the sinking of the *Titanic*. She was twenty-five years old at the time. Evans was a member of the Colonial Dames of America, an organization of descendants of British Officers and Military who had served in America before 1775. Financially well off, she spent much of her time travelling. Returning home on the *Titanic* after attending a family funeral in England, she was accompanied by her aunts, Mrs. Cornell, Mrs. Appleton, and Mrs. John Murray Brown.

There are several versions of Miss Evans' actions on the ship. One says that as the lifeboat was being loaded, she told her aunt (Mrs. Brown) "You go first. You have children waiting at home," and helped her into the boat. The crew then lowered the boat without her. Another version says that there was only one seat left in the lifeboat, and Evans told her aunt to go ahead as she would take her chances at finding another. A third account says that the boat was overcrowded, and one person had to get out. "Miss Evans arose, although her aunt put out a restraining hand, [and] announced she would go. 'I must be the one to go,' declared the young woman. 'You stay: you have children at home, I have nobody,' She jumped out and the lifeboat was lowered. That was the last seen of her." (*Bristol Times and Mirror* 27 April 1912). Another sensational element was that Miss Evans had supposedly been warned by a fortuneteller to beware of water (Lord, p.76). Whatever the circumstances, her selfless concern for her aunt led to her own death. A memorial service was held for her at Grace Church on April 22, 1912, attended by the Colonial Dames of America.



57 and 59 East 11<sup>th</sup> Street

**57 and 59 East Eleventh Street: Rosenshine Brothers:** Walk north to 11<sup>th</sup> Street, and then west down 11<sup>th</sup> to 57 and 59 East Eleventh Street. This building, constructed in 1909, was the home of Rosenshine Brothers. They specialized in importing Ostrich feathers, essential for the hats and fans of ladies' fashions of the time. These feathers were so highly valued that the building was wired for alarms, but in 1911 thieves broke in and stole \$3,000 (some \$30,000 in today's currency) in feathers. The business never recovered from this, but closed in January of 1912. George Rosenshine (1866-1912), forty-six years old in 1912, had been president of Rosenshine's. He was travelling in Europe with his girlfriend, Miss Gertrude Maybelle Thorne. As they were unmarried, to avoid scandal he booked passage on the *Titanic* under an assumed name, "George Thorne". Gertrude Thorne was rescued in Collapsible Boat D, but George Rosenshine died in the disaster. His body was recovered, with \$430 (\$4300 today) in his wallet.



Sailors' Home and Institute

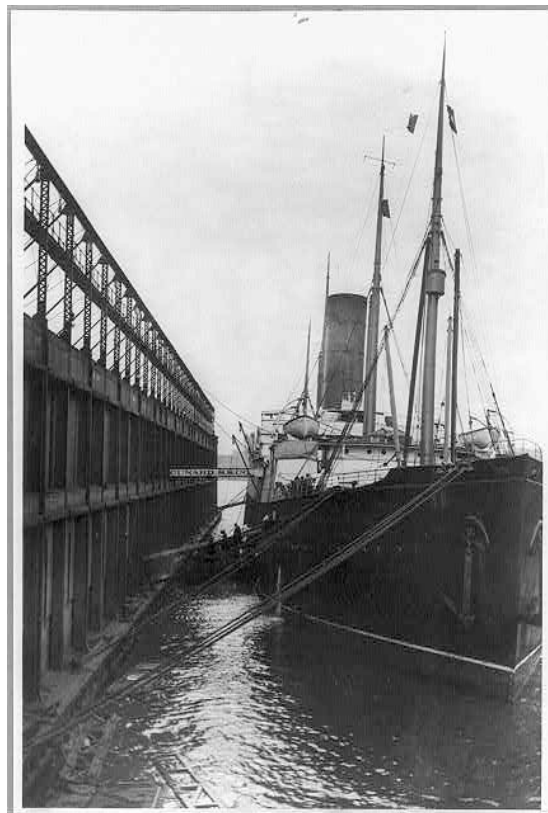
**American Seamen's Friend Society Sailors' Home and Institute (Jane Street Hotel):**

Proceeding up to 12<sup>th</sup> street, and walking west to West Street (just before the West Side Highway and the Hudson River), walk one block north to Jane Street. At the corner of Jane and West Street at 113 Jane is the Jane Street Hotel. This building, designed by William A. Boring (who also designed buildings on Ellis Island) was constructed in 1908 to house the American Seamen's Friend Society Sailors' Home and Institute. Its small rooms were meant to remind sailors of their cabins at sea. The Home had 156 rooms for seamen, plus separate quarters and lounges for officers and others by rank (the larger accommodations going to the officers). It was located opposite Pier 54 (the Cunard Line pier, where the *Carpathia* arrived with survivors of the *Titanic*). Many of the *Titanic's* crew were housed at the Home after the disaster. Some other survivors were taken here after the *Carpathia* arrived, but were said to have been upset by the resemblance of their rooms to steerage quarters on the *Titanic*. A memorial service was held here for the victims of the sinking on April 19, 1912, attended by over a hundred of the surviving members of the crew (who were given new clothes by charitable individuals, as most had been unpaid since the sinking). On the façade of the building are still visible the anchor ornaments of the Institute.





Chelsea Piers, circa 1900-1920



The Carpathia at Pier 54 in 1912

**Pier 54:** Across the West Side Highway at 13<sup>th</sup> Street is pier 54, one of the more fragile and evocative reminders of the *Titanic* (Pier 59 at 18<sup>th</sup> Street is where the *Titanic* was supposed to dock upon arrival in New York-- this is now a driving range). The Beaux Arts style piers, dedicated in 1910, were designed by Warren and Wetmore (they also designed Grand Central Station). The stone and wood buildings with pink granite facades were meant for luxury liner arrivals. The piers fell out of use because they were too small for larger ocean liners. They were used for passenger and cargo ships, and eventually as parking garages. The piers became derelict in the 1960's and were demolished for new uses in the 1990's.



“White Star” visible under “Cunard” on sign at Pier 54

Pier 54 still awaits its fate. This was where the *Carpathia* landed on April 20, 1912 with survivors of the *Titanic*, and where thousands of concerned friends and family waited for news of them. C. W. Thomas, Assistant Director of the White Star Line, was said to have wept openly as survivors arrived. Survivors were rushed to nearby hospitals. The pier's sad reputation continued: on May 1, 1915 the *Lusitania* left here on its last voyage before it was sunk by a German torpedo on May 7<sup>th</sup>. In spite of these historic associations, the City refused landmark status for Pier 54. In 1992 Pier 54, the last remaining building at the piers, was demolished. All that remains of the old building are the foundations of the dock itself, the fence and doorway for arrivals, and the rusted archway over the entrance. Still faintly visible, though fading, are the painted words “Cunard Line” in white, beneath which can still be read “Cunard White Star”. To the right beyond the pier (visible through the fence) are several fragments of a scrollwork and wing design which from comparison to old photographs look like remains of the demolished façade of the pier building.



Ruins of Pier 54

Walk down 14<sup>th</sup> Street to 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Here take the #1 or #2 subway to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and Times Square. Walk to 44<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway, and turn east to 141 West 44<sup>th</sup> street (or, if you are pressed for time head to the Upper West Side—for directions skip to section 5 of this essay).

### 3. Times Square: The Hudson Theatre

**The Hudson Theatre:** The Hudson Theatre at 141 West 44<sup>th</sup> Street, was built in 1903 by the theatrical manager Henry Birkhardt Harris. Harris (1866-1912) was from a prominent Jewish family (his father was also a theatrical manager). Henry Harris prospered and became director of the Theater Managers' Association of Greater New York. He owned three theatres in the city: The Hudson, the Fulton, and the Harris. Among the talents he managed or presented were Lily Langtry and Ruth St. Denis. He was also a member of the Masons, as well as the Elks, and was active in Democratic politics. In 1898 he married Irene Wallach (1876-1969), who had been a legal secretary. He often asked her advice about plays: "He stated once that he always consulted her before

accepting a play, being a firm believer in the value of a woman's point of view regarding matters theatrical." (*NY Times* 16 April 1912).



The Hudson Theatre in c. 1900-1910

The night before the *Titanic* disaster, Mrs. Harris had injured her arm in a fall. Mr. Harris had to help her to the lifeboats. He asked if he could accompany her, but was told that he could not. Mr. Harris was last seen waving goodbye to his wife from the deck of the *Titanic*. He was forty-five years old, and died in the sinking. His body, if recovered, was never identified. Hundreds of his friends and associates waited at the White Star Line offices for news about him. The Elks held a memorial service for him at their lodge at 108 West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, which was attended by over a thousand members. In his will, Henry Harris left \$5,000 (about \$50,000 today) each to The Blind Babies of the Sunshine Society, the Hebrew Infant Asylum, and the Actors' Fund of America.

Irene Harris, thirty-five years old, was rescued in Collapsible Raft D. She was in shock after the disaster, an added blow being the discovery that her husband's estate was in debt. Nevertheless she paid off his debts to the best of her ability, and took over the management of the Hudson Theatre. She was also inspired by recalling his encouraging words "You are a better businessman than I am." (*NY Times* 3 September 1969). Mrs. Harris was the first woman theatrical producer in New York, and gave a part to Barbara Stanwyk in one of her productions that helped launch the actress' career.

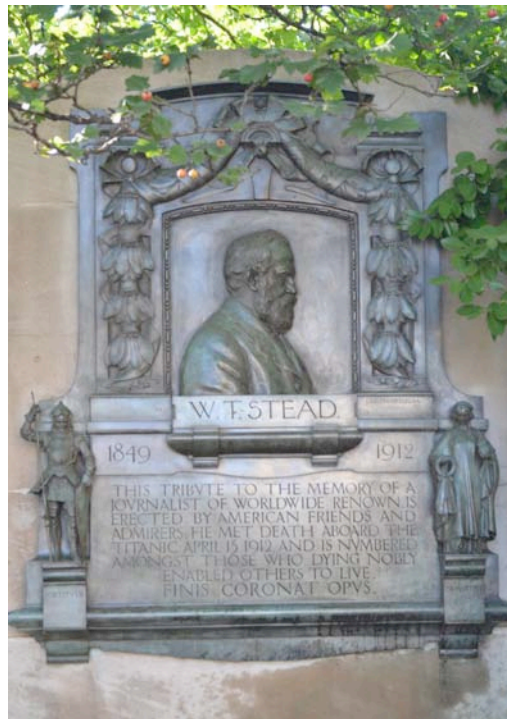
During the Depression in the 1930's she had to sell the theatre. She never recovered financially, and later said that she would look the other way when she passed the Hudson Theatre as it was now a movie house showing sex films.

Mrs. Harris remarried three times, but said that her ten-year marriage to Henry Harris was the best: "I have had four marriages—but really only one husband." (*NY Times* 3 September 1969). She died in 1969 at the age of ninety-three. The Hudson Theatre was landmarked in 1987, and is now part of the Millennium Broadway Hotel (the theatre entrance is generally closed, the only access being through the hotel lobby).

From here you may either proceed to East 91<sup>st</sup> Street or continue on the #1 local at 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the Upper West Side and visit the monuments in section five of this essay. To continue to East 91<sup>st</sup> Street take uptown local #6 train to 86<sup>th</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue. Walk west past Park and Madison to Fifth Avenue, then to 91<sup>st</sup> Street.

#### **4. Central Park at 91<sup>st</sup> Street and Fifth Avenue: William Thomas Stead Memorial:**

The William Thomas Stead Memorial is at 91<sup>st</sup> Street on the wall of Central Park at Fifth Avenue. Stead (1849-1912) was born in England, the son of a Congregationalist minister. He was married in 1873 to Emma Lucy Wilson, and they had six children. In 1870 he began writing for the Liberal paper *The Northern Echo*, and in 1871 at the age of twenty-two became its editor. In 1880 he became Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which he made into a leading reforming journal. He took risks to expose corruption and crime—at one point hiring a thirteen year old girl (who he immediately entrusted to a female chaperone) as a prostitute in order to expose the child prostitution trade in London. This cost him three months in prison, but also led to the Criminal Amendment Act which raised the age of consent to sixteen. He was a man of varied interests, which included spiritualism and the movement for international peace. During a meeting with Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, he was so impressed by the Tsar's concern for peace that he pinned one of his cufflinks onto the Tsar's shirt next to his medals. Stead proposed a permanent international organization for peace. He was sailing on the *Titanic* as the result of an invitation from President Taft to speak at Carnegie Hall at a Peace Conference on April 21, 1912.



William Stead Memorial

In 1886 he had written an article about the dangerous shortage of lifeboats on ships. In 1892 the *Review of Reviews* (which Stead had founded in 1890) had a fictional account of a White Star Line ship called the *Majestic*, which hit an iceberg but was saved due to the warnings of a clairvoyant. Stead himself was not so fortunate in his experience on the *Titanic*. He seems to have taken his fate calmly: Stead was last seen reading a book in the First Class smoking room as the ship sank. His body, if recovered, was never identified. He was 62 years old at the time of his death.

The monument, by the sculptor Sir George Frampton, is a copy of one set up on the Thames embankment in London. A bust of the author is shown within a garland and frame. Below are figures representing Fortitude (a knight) and Sympathy (a mourning woman), the years of his birth and death, and an inscription: “This tribute to the memory of a journalist of worldwide renown is erected by American friends and admirers. He met death aboard the Titanic April 15, 1912 and is numbered amongst those who dying noble enabled others to live. Finis Coronat Opus [His end crowned the work of his life].”

From 91<sup>st</sup> Street and Madison walk to 86<sup>th</sup> Street and take the M86 bus to Broadway, then the #1 subway (Broadway and 86<sup>th</sup> Street) to 110<sup>th</sup> Street.

**5. The Upper West Side: 542 West 112<sup>th</sup> Street; Cathedral of Saint John the Divine; Straus Park and Memorial:** From Times Square or Chelsea, take the #1 subway to 110<sup>th</sup> Street.



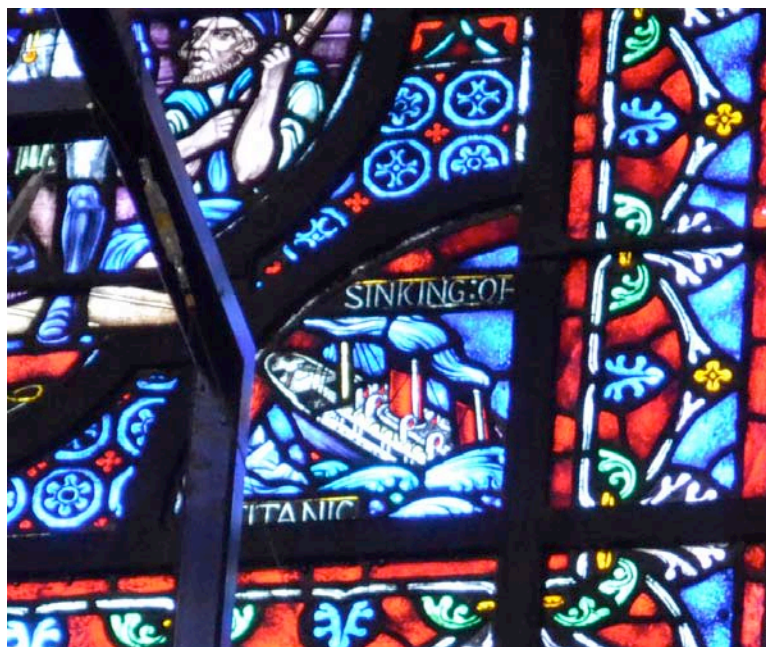
542 West 112<sup>th</sup> Street

**542 West 112<sup>th</sup> Street:** Walk up Broadway to 112<sup>th</sup> street, then right on 112<sup>th</sup>. Just around the corner is 542 West 112<sup>th</sup> Street. Built by the architectural firm Neville & Bagge in 1908, this was the home of Frederic Kimber Seward. Seward graduated from Columbia University in 1899, and in 1902 married Sarah Femington Day. He worked as a corporate lawyer, and boarded the *Titanic* alone as a First Class passenger after a business trip. Seward was playing bridge in the First Class lounge with his church acquaintance Dorothy Gibson and with William Sloper when the ship struck the iceberg. When Gibson and her mother reached Lifeboat 7 they found it almost empty, and she insisted that her bridge companions join her. Both Sloper and Seward thus survived.

Returning to New York on board the *Carpathia* Seward organized a group of survivors to honor the rescue efforts of Captain Rostron and his crew. When the *Carpathia* returned in New York a year after rescuing survivors of the *Titanic*, it was met by a committee headed by Frederic Seward. They presented the captain with a silver cup and gold medal, with individual silver medals for the officers and bronze ones for each member of the crew. Seward told them: "The eyes of the world ... were

upon you when you came to us on the open ocean, when we saw the *Carpathia* coming to us out of the dawn, and to all of you we wish to give our heartfelt thanks. For your hospitality, for your devotion, for your unselfishness, and for all that was done for us we never can be adequately grateful, and as a slight token of that appreciation we wish you to accept the medals that we have had struck for every man and woman of this ship." (*NY Times* 30 May 1912). Seward for some time sought information about the children of his friend John Smart, supposedly left in Europe while their father sailed on the *Titanic*. After a worldwide search, it was found that the Smart children were just one of the many myths connected with the ship. Seward died in 1943, aged sixty-five.

**Cathedral of Saint John the Divine: Astor Memorial Window:** Walk down 112<sup>th</sup> street to Amsterdam Avenue and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Once inside, walk down the left hand aisle to the last chapel on your left, the tomb of Bishop Henry Manning (Episcopal Bishop of New York from 1921-1946). This chapel is the American History Bay, with a stained glass window donated by the family of John Jacob Astor IV (1864-1912), who died in the *Titanic* disaster. The window was designed by Ernest W. Lakeman. The tiny lancets at the bottom of the right hand side of the window show Francis Scott Key, author of the Star Spangled Banner in 1812 (at the left) and (at the right) the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912.



The Titanic on Astor Window, Cathedral of Saint John the Divine



The *Titanic* is shown with its third and fourth smokestacks venting steam, while the other two have already sunk beneath the waves. The stern is rising from the waves as the bow sinks, while the iceberg is shown at left. The decks are represented as clear of people, though accounts indicate they were crowded with passengers. No individual lifeboats are shown in the water around the ship either—possibly due to the small scale of the window panel. The artist mistakenly has given the *Titanic* the red and black smokestacks of the Cunard Line rather than the gold and black smokestacks of the White Star Line. Below the window on the wall is the inscription “This Window is given by members of his Family to the memory of John Jacob Astor who died nobly at the Sinking of the Titanic on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1912.” In front is the tomb of Bishop Manning, who presided at Astor’s funeral.

The Astor family fortune was based on the success of the first John Jacob Astor, who made a fortune trading furs in the Oregon Territory (Astor Place in New York is named after him). John Jacob Astor IV, his great-grandson, was educated at Harvard University. He served as a volunteer in the Spanish-American War, reaching the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. After he took over the family business he built the Hotel Astoria in 1897 next to his cousin William Waldorf Astor’s Hotel Waldorf. These combined to form the old Waldorf-Astoria (later demolished to make way for the Empire State Building). Astor also built the St. Regis (1905) and Knickerbocker (1906) hotels.

He married Ava Lowle Willing in 1891, but divorced her in 1909. Astor’s second marriage (1911), to Madeleine Talmage Force (1893-1940) created a public scandal. His eighteen-year old wife was twenty-five years younger than him, and younger than his own son. The Astors decided to honeymoon in Egypt and elsewhere, hoping the scandal would die down while they were abroad. In 1912 Mr. Astor’s fortune was estimated somewhere between 100 and 200 million dollars (which would be about 100 to 175 billion in today’s currency). They booked First Class passage on the *Titanic* for themselves, their pet Airedale Kitty, Mr. Astor’s manservant Victor Robbins, Mrs. Astor’s maid Rosalie Bidois, and her private nurse Caroline Endres (Mrs. Astor was pregnant).



John Jacob Astor and Madeleine Astor

Astor at first told his wife not to worry when the *Titanic* struck the iceberg, and when the lifeboats were loading said “We are safer here than in that little boat.” (*Encyclopaedia Titanica*). He helped his wife into Lifeboat Four, and asked if due to her condition he could accompany her. Told that the boat was for women and children only, he withdrew. Various stories circulated concerning his last moments on the *Titanic*. One story has him saving a boy, after sailors said the boy was too old to be in a lifeboat—Astor picked up a woman’s hat from the deck, put it on the boy, and deceived the officers. A witness told a heroic version of Astor’s conduct: “We saw Col. Astor place Mrs. Astor in a boat and heard him assure her that he would follow later... He turned to us with a smile and said ‘Ladies, you are next.’ The officer in charge of the boat protested that the craft was full and the seamen started to lower it. Col. Astor exclaimed ‘Hold that boat,’ in the voice of a man to be obeyed, and the men did as he ordered. The boat had been ordered past the upper deck, and the Colonel took us to the next deck below and put us in the boat, one after the other, through a porthole.” (*NY Times* 22 April 1912). Another witness claimed to have seen Astor and William Stead clinging to a raft, until the frozen water made them release their grip and drown. None of these accounts have been corroborated, and some may have been invented. Astor was forty-seven years old at the time of his death. His body was recovered on April 22, and was identified in part by his jewelry (a gold watch, diamond cufflinks, and a diamond ring). He had \$2440 in cash in his pockets (about \$24,400 in today’s currency). He was buried in Trinity Cemetery in Washington Heights, New York.

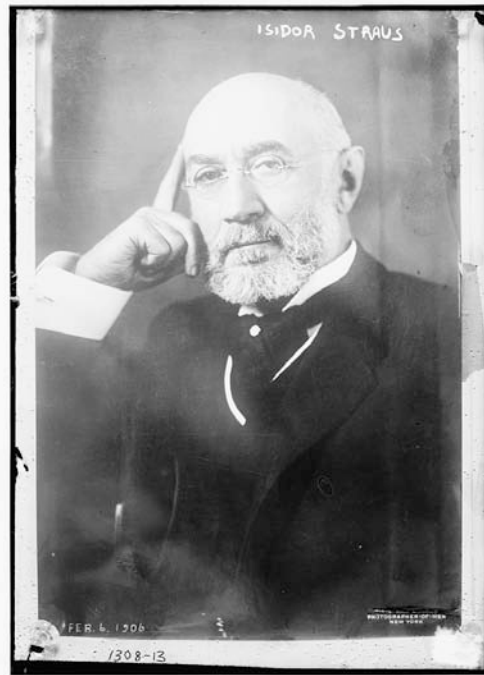
Mrs. Astor's maid and nurse were rescued, but Astor's manservant Victor Robbins died in the disaster. The Airedale Kitty is said to have died with her master. Madeleine Astor and her maid Rosalie Bidois attempted to rescue two men by pulling them into the lifeboat, but one had already died and the other died shortly afterwards. After she was rescued, Mrs. Astor suffered a nervous collapse. She gave birth to a son, John Jacob Astor VI, on August 14, 1912. She remarried (both marriages ended in divorce) and died in 1940 at the age of forty-seven. Astor's will left his fortune to Vincent, his eldest son by his first marriage. Vincent reportedly wore the gold watch recovered from his father's body for the rest of his life.

**Straus Park and Monument:** Once you leave the Cathedral, walk to Broadway and make a left. Walk downtown to 107<sup>th</sup> Street, then cross to the wooded traffic island and park between 107<sup>th</sup> and 106<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway and West End Avenue. Here are Straus Park and the Straus Memorial, one of the larger private monuments to the *Titanic* disaster and dedicated to the memory of Isidor and Ida Straus.

Isidor Straus (1845-1912) had been born in Bavaria to a Jewish family, which emigrated to the United States in 1854. His father, Lazarus Straus, had settled in Georgia and operated a dry goods store. Frustrated in his attempt to fight in the Confederate army, Isidor Straus worked in the family store. After the war, he and his younger brother Nathan moved to New York. In 1871 Isidor Straus married Rosalie Ida Blun (1849-1912), from Hesse. Together they had seven children (four boys, one of whom died in infancy, and three girls). In 1896 Isidor and Nathan Straus took over R.H. Macy and Company, where Isidor Straus is credited with creating the modern department store. He and his brother were also instrumental in the creation of the Abraham and Straus store in Brooklyn. In 1902 Macy's was moved from Fourteenth Street and Sixth Avenue to its present location at Thirty-Fourth Street and Broadway.

Straus was active in Democratic politics in New York, and from 1895 to 1897 served as a Congressman. He and his family lived in an old frame house at 105<sup>th</sup> Street between West End Avenue and Broadway, even as larger apartment buildings and brownstones were being constructed around it. Straus was noted for his charitable work and generosity. He was President of the Educational Alliance of the East Side tenement district for twenty years, and his wife assisted him in his charitable work. He also was active in charity for the Sanitarium for Hebrew Children, The Montefiore Home for Chronic Invalids, and many other institutions: "Isidor Straus was distinguished for his high-minded benevolence, for his noble charity that recognized no distinction in race or creed,

for his broad sympathies for the sufferings of humanity that he sought to relieve.” (*NY Times* 21 April 1912).



Isidor Straus in 1906

Isidor and Ida Straus booked First Class return passage on the *Titanic* after a trip to Europe, along with Mr. Straus' manservant John Farthing and Mrs. Straus' maid Ellen Bird. Isidor Straus was 67 at the time, Ida Straus 63. Both had been urged to get into a lifeboat, but Mr. Straus refused to take the place of younger men. Ida Straus had to be persuaded to enter Lifeboat 8, but climbed back out when her husband did not join her. She refused to leave him, reportedly saying "I will not leave my husband. We've been together all these years and I'll not leave him now." (*North American* 20 April 1912). Another account has her saying "We have been together for many years. Where you go, I go." (*Encyclopaedia Titanica*). Friends reportedly tried to talk her into getting back into the lifeboat, but she refused. Their maid was encouraged to get into the boat and Mrs. Straus gave her a fur coat to wear (the maid was rescued, but the manservant died in the sinking). When the Strauses were last seen they were either sitting together on deck chairs (according to one account), or locked in each others' arms at the rail of the ship. Mr. Straus' body was recovered from the sinking; Mrs. Straus' remains were never found. He was buried at Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, in a ship-shaped mausoleum with a cenotaph for his wife. According to one story, his six-year old favorite horse Bess died of unknown causes the night before her master died.

A memorial service for the Strauses had forty thousand guests, and Andrew Carnegie was one of the individuals who spoke their eulogy. Ten days after the funeral the Straus family sold their West End home to a developer, who built an apartment house (The Clebourne at 924 West End Avenue, still standing) in September of 1913. Employees at Macy's put up a cast bronze monument at the entrance to the store, with portraits of the Strauses and the inscription "Their lives were beautiful and their deaths glorious. This tablet is the voluntary token of sorrowing employees." This used to be in the 34<sup>th</sup> Street entrance vestibule, but the door is now sealed and the monument is reportedly in the office of one of the store managers.

The Straus home used to overlook Bloomingdale Park (now Straus Park) at the intersection of West End and Broadway between 106<sup>th</sup> and 107<sup>th</sup> Streets. In 1913 after a competition involving fifty-nine architectural and sculptural models, the sculptor Augustus Lukeman (a neighbor of the Strauses') and the architect Evarts Tracy were awarded the commission to design the Straus memorial. The monument cost \$20,000 (about \$200,000 in modern currency). It was dedicated on April 15, 1915. During the dedication the Straus family openly wept.



Straus Memorial

The monument consists of a granite fountain and a bronze statue, behind which is a curved granite memorial bench. A bronze sculpture of a young woman representing Memory reclines and gazes into the reflecting pool of a fountain beneath her. A lion's head in bronze pours water into the fountain through its mouth, and similar lion's heads decorate either end of the monument. The bench behind the fountain is inscribed with a verse from the Book of Samuel (2 Samuel 1:23) "Lovely and pleasant were they in their lives and in their death they were not divided." This verse is part of David's lament for Saul and Jonathan. The park and monument fell into neglect in the 1960's. In 1994-1997 the monument was reconstructed and the fountain repaired, though the larger basin of the lower reflecting pool was replaced with plantings. This last, and in many ways most beautiful of *Titanic* memorials in Manhattan, should remind us not only of the famous or wealthy passengers, but also of the many immigrants, steerage passengers, and crew members whose only memorial is the decaying ship itself.



Decaying piers near Pier 59

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