

John B. Thayer memorial collection of the sinking of the Titanic

Ms. Coll. 968

Finding aid prepared by Holly Mengel.

Last updated on July 24, 2014.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2014 April 7

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Thayer, John B. (John Borland), 1894-1945
Title	John B. Thayer memorial collection of the sinking of the <i>Titanic</i>
Call number	Ms. Coll. 968
Date [inclusive]	1912-2012
Extent	0.4 linear feet (1 box)
Language	English
Abstract	John "Jack" Borland Thayer (1894-1945) and his mother, Marian Longstreth Morris Thayer (circa 1872-1944), survived the sinking of the <i>Titanic</i> along with only 705 other people. His father, John Borland Thayer (1862-1912) died during the only voyage of the "unsinkable" ship. The John B. Thayer memorial collection of the sinking of the <i>Titanic</i> , contains first-hand accounts of the sinking, Thayer family material, and more recent material documenting the continued interest in and efforts to memorialize the tragedy.

Cite as:

John B. Thayer memorial collection of the Sinking of the *Titanic*, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

John "Jack" Borland Thayer (1894-1945) and his mother, Marian Longstreth Morris Thayer (circa 1872-1944), survived the sinking of the *Titanic* along with only 705 other people. His father, John Borland Thayer (1862-1912) died during the only voyage of the "unsinkable" ship.

John Borland Thayer (1862-1912) was the Second Vice-President of the Pennsylvania Railroad. He and Marian Longstreth Morris Thayer lived in Haverford, Pennsylvania and were the parents of Margaret, Pauline, John, and Frederick. In 1912, John, Marion, and Jack traveled to Europe, choosing the *Titanic* for their return voyage.

On April 14, 1912, as the *Titanic* sank, Marian Longstreth Morris Thayer eventually boarded lifeboat 4. Jack, who appears to be referred to as both John Borland Thayer, Jr. and III, jumped from the sinking ship just before it split in half and was pulled underwater by the suction of the sinking vessel. He climbed aboard an overturned lifeboat and was subsequently picked up by lifeboat 12. Finally, he and his mother were reunited on the *Carpathia*. His father's body was never recovered.

Following the sinking, Jack Thayer graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1916, served as a captain in the United States Army in World War I, and began his career in banking. He served as treasurer and, later, financial vice-president for the University of Pennsylvania from 1939 to 1945. He and his wife, Lois Cassatt Thayer, were the parents of two sons, Edward and John, both of whom served during World War II; and three daughters, Lois, Julie, and Pauline.

According to Jack Thayer, "the spectacle of nearly 1,500 people struggling in the ice-cold waters of the Atlantic, and the steady roar of their voices, which kept up for 15 or 20 minutes, is a memory that does not become dim, even after 20 years" ("Sinking of *Titanic*," box 1, folder 4). Over the years, he revisited the tragedy by providing accounts of the sinking, first to the press in 1912, then in 1932 for an article in *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, and finally, in 1940, in a small publication "written primarily as a family record for the information of [his] children and perhaps their children in memory of [his] father, John Borland Thayer, the third of that name, who lost his life in the disaster," (*The Sinking of the S.S. Titanic*, box 1, folder 6). Thayer was reported to have suffered greatly from depression and, in 1945, he took his own life, shortly after learning of his son's death in World War II.

The Thayer family continues to be involved in the memorialization of the sinking of *Titanic* and honoring both those who survived and those who died during the event.

Scope and Contents

The John B. Thayer memorial collection of the sinking of the *Titanic*, contains first-hand accounts of the sinking, Thayer family material, and more recent material documenting the continued interest in and efforts to memorialize the tragedy. The first series, First-hand accounts of the sinking of the *Titanic*, consists of accounts by Archibald Gracie, Martha Eustis Stephenson and Elizabeth Mussey Eustis, and John B. Thayer (1894-1944). Thayer described his experiences in three separate documents over the

years.

The second series, Thayer family material, contains photographic prints and biographical sketches of John Borland Thayer (1862-1912), Marian Longstreth Morris Thayer, and John "Jack" Borland Thayer (1894-1945). The photographs are not original and all biographical sketches are taken from the *Encyclopedia Titanica*. Of particular value in this series is the correspondence to Marian Thayer from Bruce Ismay, a fellow survivor of the sinking and the CEO of the White Star Line which commissioned the *Titanic*. In the year following the sinking, Ismay sent ten letters, a cabinet card photograph, and a verse framed in an engraved silver-plated frame to Marian Thayer. The letters are consoling in nature and regularly mention Marian Thayer's grief, but also address Ismay's own depression, as well as the questioning of him during an enquiry into the sinking of *Titanic* which took place during the summer of 1912.

The final series includes correspondence, newspaper articles, and stories which describe the sinking of *Titanic* by those who did not experience it: writers, publishers, and filmmakers. Much of the correspondence is addressed to Pauline Thayer Maguire (daughter of Jack Thayer) and her husband Robert Maguire. Included are newspaper articles published just after the sinking of *Titanic* as well as articles written as recently as 2012 and which document the continued interest in this event and the determination to understand the reasons for it. These articles describe efforts to rescue artifacts and remnants of the ship from the ocean floor, the death of survivors, and anniversaries of the sinking. This series also contains correspondence regarding the re-publishing of Jack Thayer's *The Sinking of the S.S. Titanic*, first released in 1940.

Administrative Information

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2014 April 7

Finding aid prepared by Holly Mengel.

Access Restrictions

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Custodial History note

Gift of Robert and Pauline Maguire, 2014.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

At Independence Seaport Museum, J. Welles Henderson Archives and Library: Thayer family collection, 1892-1986

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- Titanic (Steamship).

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Clippings (information artifacts)
- Correspondence
- Memoirs
- Photographs
- Typescripts

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Ismay, J. Bruce (Joseph Bruce), 1862-1937
- Thayer, John B. (John Borland), 1862-1912
- Thayer, Marian Longstreth Morris, 1873-1944

SUBJECT(S)

- Shipwrecks--North Atlantic Ocean

Collection Inventory

SERIES I. FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS OF THE SINKING OF THE *TITANIC*.

	Box	Folder
Gracie, Archibald, letter to John Hagan regarding statements made by Hagan; also includes responses by Gracie clarifying events surrounding the sinking of <i>Titanic</i> (3 copies), 1912 September 26.	1	1
Stephenson, Martha Eustis, and Elizabeth Mussey Eustis, " <i>The Titanic: Our Story</i> ", undated.	1	2
Thayer, John B., account of the sinking dictated by Thayer and published in newspapers across the United States, 1912 April 21-26.	1	3
Thayer, John B., "Sinking of <i>Titanic</i> ," written for the <i>Philadelphia Evening Bulletin</i> (includes original ribbon typescript and published newspaper article), 1932.	1	4-5
Thayer, John B., <i>Sinking of the S.S. Titanic</i> , (includes original carbon typescript, original ribbon typescript, galley proofs [1 clean and 1 corrected copy], and Library of Congress certificate of copyright registration), 1940.	1	6-9

SERIES II. THAYER FAMILY MATERIAL.

	Box	Folder
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Thayer, John B. (1862-1912), newspaper clippings and order of services at the Church of the Redeemer, paying tribute to, 1912 April 23-27, 1914 June 25.	1	10
Thayer, John B. (1862-1912), photographic prints and biographical sketch, before 1912, 1999.	1	11
Thayer, John B. (1894-1945), photographic prints and biographical sketch, circa 1912-1917, 1999.	1	12
Thayer, Lois Cassatt (wife of John B. Thayer (1894-1945), letter from Robert Morris regarding Marian Longstreth Morris Thayer's death in 1944, 1974 August 13.	1	13
Thayer, Marian Longstreth Morris, letters from, photograph of, and silver-plated framed verse endorsed by Bruce Ismay, 1912-1913.	1	14-16
Thayer, Marian Longstreth Morris, photographic prints and biographical sketch, before 1912, 1999.	1	17

SERIES III. EFFORTS TO MEMORIALIZE THE SINKING OF THE *TITANIC*.

	Box	Folder
Academy Chicago Publishers, correspondence with Richard Fremont-Smith and Pauline Thayer Maguire regarding re-publishing <i>The Sinking of the S.S. Titanic</i> , by John B. Thayer, 1997-2006.	1	18
Baldwin, Hanson, story entitled, "R.M.S. <i>Titanic</i> ," possibly published in <i>Harpers Monthly Magazine</i> , 1932.	1	19
Lists of and articles about artifacts, books, and collections relating to <i>Titanic</i> , 1985-2012.	1	20

Lord, Walter, letters to Robert Maguire regarding Life Boat 1, 1983 July-September.	1	21
Maguire, Pauline Thayer, letters to Vermont senators and representatives regarding the "RMS <i>Titanic</i> Maritime Memorial Preservation Act of 2006", 2007 April 14.	1	22
Newspaper clippings regarding the sinking of <i>Titanic</i> and its aftermath, 1912 April 16-17, June 1.	1	23
Newspaper clippings regarding and obituaries for <i>Titanic</i> survivors, 1996-2007, undated.	1	24
Thornwillow Press, letters from Luke Ives Pontifell to Robert Maguire regarding special limited edition of <i>The Sinking of the S.S. Titanic</i> , by John B. Thayer, 2012.	1	25
Wallace, Merie Weismiller, letters to Robert and Pauline Maguire regarding James Cameron's film, <i>Titanic</i> , 1996.	1	26
Wilson, Frances, correspondence to Robert Maguire regarding Wilson's writings on <i>Titanic</i> and Bruce Ismay, 2012.	1	27
