

Chapter 5 “Superseded”

May 1912 - 1958

Captain Lord fully expected to return to his command; indeed, he even signed on the *Californian* on May 16th. However, the next day, he had been removed. His signing out details on the crew agreement list his departure simply as “superseded” and a new Captain installed in his place – William Masters. Stone and Gibson remained on board.

On May 21st, and with nothing better to do, Captain Lord sat down and wrote a statement of the movements and observations of the *Californian*. When he was happy with his recollections, he typed up his notes.

Most of the statement follows his testimony at the two inquiries, with few salient additions. At 4.30a.m., it is written that “The Chief Officer reported that it was breaking day and that the steamer was still to the starboard that fired the rocket. I replied 'Yes, the second mate said something about a rocket' I then went on the bridge,” thus reigniting the debate about whether Lord had been told of “a rocket” or “rockets.” After arriving on the bridge, Lord reports seeing the yellow funnel steamer bearing SSE. In Washington, he had said this new arrival was to the south-west. After instructing Stewart to wake up Evans, “there was a considerable delay before we received a proper message [about the disaster].”

The most interesting entry is for “6.30 a.m. Cleared field ice. Full speed (70 revolutions) about 7.30 passed *Mount Temple* stopped, Chief Officer remarked to me that she hadn't any boats ready, as there wasn't any sign of disaster about, I proceeded further south, shortly after passing one funnel two masted steamer, bound North (this steamer resembled S.S. “*Albanian*”⁹³) a little later I sighted a four masted steamer SSE of us on East side of ice field⁹⁴, & verbal message from operator that “*Carpathia*” was at scene of disaster steered to South until steamer was nearly abeam, I then steered through ice field heading for the four masted steamer and stopped alongside the “*Carpathia*” at about 8.30 a.m.”

As well as confusing the distance between himself, the *Titanic*, and the *Mount Temple*, Lord was now content to move the position of the *Carpathia* to whatever location suited him. Captain Moore was quite sure that the *Carpathia* was to due east of him, but now Lord placed Rostron's ship well to the south east.

93 Another Leyland vessel, of similar size to the *Almerian*. Why Lord did not name this ship as the “*Almerian*” may be either because he did not consider the *Almerian*'s report credible, or this summary was written before he received the information about the *Almerian*. If the former case, he certainly made good use of the ship's supposed association with the *Titanic* in an affidavit made many years later.

94 Lord's rough draft puts the *Carpathia* SSE at a distance of 9 miles; his fair copy says “sighted 4 masted steamer to the south and east of us”

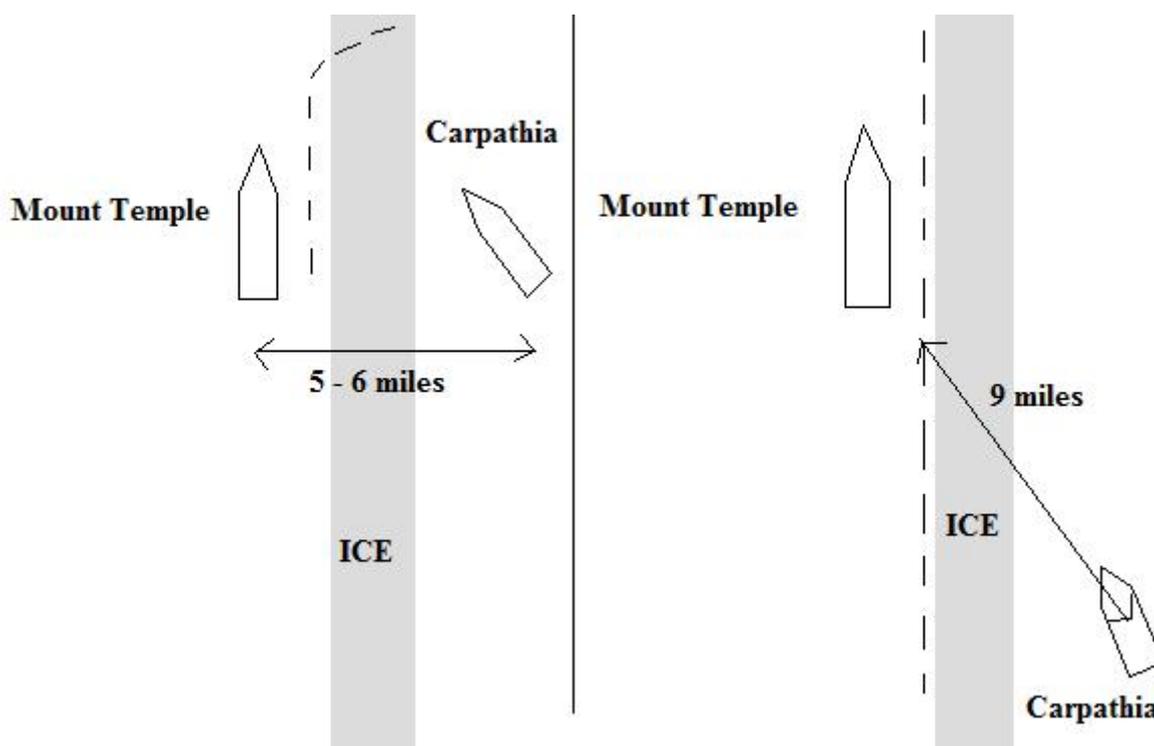


Illustration 22: The locations of the *Carpathia* relative to the *Californian*; (left) according to Moore in Washington and (right) according to Lord. The dashed line indicates the route of the *Californian*.

Interestingly, Lord had indicated that Stewart had noted at 7.30 that the *Mount Temple's* boats were not ready. But it wasn't yet confirmed that the *Carpathia* had picked up all the boats and survivors; it is safe to assume that had the *Mount Temple* been able to pick a route through the ice field, she would have helped in the rescue operation with any apparatus to hand, including lifeboats, so why would Stewart have said what he did about the *Mount Temple's* boats? Moore had already testified that, “We had the gangway ready for lowering, and we had ladders ready to put over the side; we had ropes with riggings in the ends to lower over; we had lifeboats and lifebelts and everybody was on hand and everything was all made ready along the deck.”

Senator Smith's own Inquiry had finally concluded, and on May 28th, he recited his report to the US Senate.

In his speech, encased in typical florid verbiage, Smith blamed his namesake, the master of the *Titanic*, for “his indifference to danger ... [and his] overconfidence and neglect to heed the oft-repeated warnings of his friends” for the disaster.” The ship's high speed was attributed to “the presence of Mr. Ismay and Mr. Andrews [the *Titanic's* designer] stimulated the ship to greater speed than it would have made under ordinary conditions, although I cannot fairly ascribe to either of them any instructions to this effect.” The Michigan Senator condemned the “indifferent” way the radioed ice warnings had been treated.

Smith was highly critical of the organisation immediately after the disaster; “No general alarm was given, no ship's officers formally assembled, no orderly routine was attempted or

organized system of safety begun. Haphazard, they rushed by one another on staircase and in hallway, while men of self-control gathered here and there about the decks, helplessly staring at one another or giving encouragement to those less courageous than themselves.” The lifeboats “were manned so badly that, in the absence of prompt relief, they would have fallen easy victims to the advancing ice floe ... The lifeboats were filled so indifferently and lowered so quickly that, according to the uncontradicted evidence, nearly 500 people were needlessly sacrificed to want of orderly discipline in loading the few that were provided ... And yet it is said by some well-meaning persons that the best of discipline prevailed. If this is discipline, what would have been disorder?”

Once the alarm had been raised, “Some of the men, to whom had been entrusted the care of passengers, never reported to their official stations, and quickly deserted the ship with a recklessness and indifference to the responsibilities of their positions as culpable and amazing as it is impossible to believe. And some of these men say that they 'laid by' in their partially filled lifeboats and listened to the cries of distress 'until the noise quieted down'.”

Smith dealt with Captain Lord's version of the night of April 14th by rejecting it outright. By doing so, he could have been risking criticism; Gill's story, in spite of his assurances that it was true, could be labelled as a fabrication with the intention of making money. Evan's testimony regarding rockets could have been dismissed as hearsay and rumour, and it is surprising that more witnesses from the *Californian* were not subpoenaed immediately. By doing so, the inconsistencies in Gill's evidence and affidavit, now so obvious in retrospect, would have been challenged. How much, if any, of the London *Californian* evidence Smith had followed is not known.

Before providing a summary of the events on board the *Californian*, Smith gave an indication of his feelings towards Lord and his ship; “The steamship *Californian* was within easy reach of [the *Titanic*] for nearly four hours after all the facts were known to Operator Cottam [of the *Carpathia*].”

“Why did the *Californian* display its Morse signal lamp from the moment of the collision continuously for nearly two hours if they saw nothing? And the signals which were visible to Mr. Gill at 12.30 and afterwards, and which were also seen by the Captain and officer of the watch⁹⁵, should have excited more solicitude than was displayed by the officers of that vessel, and the failure of Capt. Lord to arouse the wireless operator on his ship, who could have easily ascertained the name of the vessel in distress and reached her in time to avert loss of life, places a tremendous responsibility upon this officer from which it will be very difficult for him to escape. Had he been as vigilant in the movement of his vessel as he as he was active in displaying his own signal lamp, there is a very strong probability that every human life that was sacrificed through this disaster could have been saved. The dictates of humanity should have prompted vigilance under such conditions”

Smith told his audience that both Great Britain, and, since April 18th, the United States, had regulations placed in law which compelled the master in charge of a vessel to afford assistance, “so far as he can do so without serious danger to his own vessel, her crew, and passengers (if any)⁹⁶.”

95 Recall that Lord had seen no signals himself, and no officers were called from the *Californian* to confirm Gill's statement that “they must have seen them.”

96 *Lloyd's Weekly Shipping Index* (July 4th, 1912) reported that, Senator Nelson, Chairman of the Commercial Committee simultaneously introduced a bill in the Senate identically to the one passed in the house, regarding changes to shipping rules after the Titanic. Section 16, referring to “Assistance at sea”, reads “That the master or person in charge of any vessel of the United States shall, so far as he can do without serious damage to his own vessel, crew or passengers, render assistance to every person who is found at sea in danger of being lost, and if he fails to do so he shall, upon conviction, be liable to a penalty of not exceeding \$1000 or imprisonment for a term not