

Mr Bernt Johannes Johannesen

Bernt Johannes Johannessen 1, 29 2, was born on October 23, 1882 in Avaldsnes, Stavanger, Norway, the son of Johannes Sakariassen and Berta Johanna Andersdatter. He was the fourth of six children.

When he was 15 years old, he got a job in a shop in Haugesund owned by Matias Lillesund. Later he worked in Leversens bakery. There he met Mr Gaut Mathiesen who persuaded Bernt to go with him on the fishing boat *Ingeborg Christina*. He travelled to Iceland for work in 1902 and stayed there until 1904.

In 1905 Bernt was in the military forces in Norway. There were fears that war would break out between Norway and Sweden (Norway gained independence from Sweden that year). Bernt was prepared to fight against the Swedes if necessary, but the conflict was resolved without bloodshed.

Bernt then travelled to America, working on different boats but without great success and in 1910 he returned to Haugesund.

On 28 January 1911 he was married to Ahna Karoline Hansdatter from Avaldsnes in Førdesfjorden church.

In 1912 Bernt sustained an industrial injury. He was advised by his physician to find lighter work in America and thus there was no alternative but to return to the USA. He found a job in New York. Bernt was originally due to travel to New York on the DFD Line's *Hellig Olav*, but a lack of space forced him to book passage on the *Titanic*, which he boarded at Southampton as a third class passenger (ticket number 65306, £8, 2s, 3d). Accompanying Bernt was a family friend, Lena Rasmussen. On the *Titanic* Bernt shared a cabin with fellow Daniel Danielsen Grønnestad, and Ingvald and Konrad Hagland who all came from the Haugesund area.

In interviews in Haugesund newspapers Bernt told what happened after the *Titanic* struck the iceberg:

"We were in the cabin where we undressed. Then we heard something like a vibration in the ship. I dressed, and went upstairs. On the other deck I met a mate who told me that we had struck an iceberg, and boats were being put out as a matter of precaution. It was nice, quiet weather that evening, so I thought I would walk to the cabin to get a coat. But at the fourth deck I was stopped by an officer who told me that I could not get any further. The seawater had got into the cabin.

Bernt was rescued in lifeboat 13 after having seen Lena Solvang Rasmussen to a portside

lifeboat. He claimed, First Officer Murdoch gave him permission to slide down the falls to the lifeboat.

Then I went up again and saw one boat after the other being lowered away. When the second last boat was in the air, I asked if I could come onboard. The officer said I could, on my own responsibility if I managed to get onboard. I found a tow, and let me pull down into the boat. In the boat I found myself among 10-11 Swedish young girls, so in any case, I had good company. There were only four men in the boat who could row, but we managed to get clear of the Titanic. Two hours after the collision, we sat and watched the big ship sinking. When the boat sank, I heard some cries which I can still hear. At dawn the next morning we could see these dangerous icebergs. We started to look for food and water in the lifeboat, but there was nothing. We were picked up by the Carpathia which brought us to New York"

Bernt was initially reported lost in an article in *Haugesunds Avis* 25 April 1912. However, in New York, while resting at St Vincent's hospital, Bernt alerted his wife of his safety by letter. It is unclear whether Bernt received compensation for his loss of property in the disaster.

Bernt returned home after having stayed three months in New York. His wife Ahna Karoline would not let her husband work on boats any more. Bernt eventually got work as a stonemason.

Ahna gave birth to eight children: Any, Alfred, Sven, Kristian, Johanna, Bernhard, Tordis and Johannes between 1913 and 1929. The family also purchased a farm in Bratthammar, Førdesfjorden near Haugesund, and "Bratthammar" became an addition to the family name, and this is how Bernt is frequently listed on passenger lists.

In 1920 Bernt got a job as a postman in his home village. For that purpose he used a bicycle. He was faithful to his duties, even once there was a flood, and had to get help from two ladies to carry him on a string above the flooded area.

In 1952 Bernt was 70 years old, and he retired from his postal duties. When he retired the inhabitants in his home village had a big party for him due to their thankfulness to his long and faithful service.

From 1927 to 1962 he worked for the Førdesfjorden church to keep the church and the graveyard in good order. When the *Haugesunds Avis* came to interview Bernt on his 80th birthday in 1962 he was busy chopping wood as the journalist arrived. In the resulting article he was praised for his ability to recall the experiences of a long life.

Bernt Johannessen-Bratthammar was widowed in 1960, and he passed away on December 1, 1962 aged 80.



Bernt Johannesen in 1956
(*Haugesund Dagblad*, 8 September 1956 Courtesy of Arne Mjaland)

In the obituary in *Haugesunds Avis* 3 December 1962 Bernt was described as a very nice and faithful person, who had many friends and that he could tell in details of his experiences aboard the *Titanic*. In the death notice in *Haugesunds Avis* 5 December 1962 it was announced that Bernt would be buried at Førdesfjorden church the next Friday. Family, friends and others who knew him were asked to come to the funeral.

Notes

1. Bernt's name is usually given as "Bernt Johannessen-Bratthammer", a misconception as he didn't assume the name of Bratthammar until many years after the disaster.
2. His age is often given incorrectly as 32.

References and Sources

Haugesunds Dagblad, 5 December 1962, Death Notice

Contract Ticket List, White Star Line 1912 (National Archives, New York; NRAN-21-SDNYCIVCAS-55[279])

List or Manifest of Alien Passengers for the United States Immigration Officer At Port Of Arrival (Date: 18th-19th June 1912, Ship: Carpathia) - National Archives, NWCTB 85 T715 Vol 4183

Haugesunds Avis, 13 October 1952, 20 October 1962, 3 December 1962

Haugesund Dagblad, 8 September 1956, 22 October 1962, 4 December 1962, 5 December 1962 (death notice)

Verdens Gang (Oslo), December 4 1962, Obituary

Credits

Per Kristian Sebak, Norway

Arne Mjaland, Norway

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<http://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/titanic-survivor/bernt-johannes-johannesen.html>

Titanic Passenger Summary

Name: Mr Bernt Johannes Johannesen

Titanic Survivor

Born: Monday 23rd October 1882

Age: 29 years 5 months and 23 days (Male)

Last Residence: in Haugesund Norway

3rd Class Passengers

First Embarked: Southampton on Wednesday 10th April 1912

Ticket No. 65306, £8 2s 3d

Destination: New York City New York United States

Rescued (boat 13)

Disembarked Carpathia: New York City on Thursday 18th April 1912

Died: Saturday 1st December 1962 aged 80 years

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