

British Wreck Commissioner's Inquiry

Day 11

Testimony of Samuel Collins

Source : <http://www.titanicinquiry.org/BOTInq/BOTIndx01.php#a>

Examined by Mr. BUTLER ASPINALL.

12971. Were you at the time of this disaster serving as a fireman on the "Titanic"?

- Yes.

12972. Now you, in fact, got away, did you not, in the emergency boat on the starboard side?

- That is quite right.

12973. I am going to take you straight to that. Did you help to lower that boat?

- I helped to lower that boat - to get it ready to lower is not to lower it.

12974. And later on was it lowered?

- It was lowered.

12975. And you got into it?

- I was told to get into it.

12976. Who told you to get in?

- Chief Officer Murdoch.

12977. Did you see some ladies get into that boat?

- I did.

12978. How many?

- Two, I think.

12979. That is right. Do you know how they came to get into it?

- They were ordered by chief Officer Murdoch.

12980. And did three male passengers get into that boat?

- Two male passengers, I think.

12981. Do you know how they came to get into it?

- Because they were ordered by chief Officer Murdoch.

12982. When that boat was lowered to the water, did you hear any orders from that Officer as to what was to be done with that boat?

- I did.

12983. What were those orders?

- Ordered by chief Officer Murdoch to lay handy for further orders.

12984. Now was that boat then rowed away from the ship?

- It was.

12985. How far do you think they rowed away?

- I am not much of a judge of distance, but I will give you a slight idea - say, about 100 yards.

12986. We have been told that a man of the name of Symons was in charge of the boat. Is that right?

- Yes.

12987. When you got the distance you have told us away from the ship, did you see that the "Titanic" was sinking, getting lower in the water?

- We could not realise she was sinking, but we saw her going a bit further down by the head.

12988. After a time did you see her go down?

- I saw her go down.

12989. After that did you hear any cries in the water from people?

- Yes, I did.

12990. Was anything said by anybody about going back in the direction of those cries?

- Nothing at all.
- 26 12991. Are you sure of that?
- Nothing at all.
- 27 12992. Was the man Hendrickson in the boat?
- Yes.
- 28 12993. Did Hendrickson mention or propose going back in the direction of those cries?
- No, no one proposed it at all.
- 29 12994. Did Hendrickson say anything?
- Not that I know of. He was close to me.
- 30 12995. That is just what I was going to ask; where were you sitting?
- In the fore thwart of the boat.
- 31 12996. Which thwart was he in?
- On the fore part of the fore thwart of the boat.
- 32 12997. If he had said anything in an ordinarily loud voice would you have heard it?
- I would, certainly.
- 33 12998. Do you say he did not say anything?
- I would have heard it if he had said anything.
- 34 12999. When the ship disappeared and you heard these cries, was nothing said at all by anybody in that boat?
- Simply the word passed through the boat to pull for a short time to keep away from the suction.
- 35 13000. Who said that?
- I could not tell you; it is impossible to say who said it, but we pulled for a short distance away to keep clear of the suction.
- 36 13001. Was it one of the passengers?
- No, it was not one of the passengers, it was one of the crew.
- 37 13002. One member of the crew did mention the suction, did he?
- Certainly, and it stands to reason there would be a great suction with a ship like that.
- 38 13003. What was done on the boat after this?
- We pulled away a little bit from the ship when we saw her sinking, which was a thing I do not wish to explain to you; I do not wish to give anything at all to you of an idea of the ship sinking, but I wish to tell you we pulled a little away, and the coxswain of the boat brought the boat round. I being in the fore thwart of the boat could see that he steered the boat round, and we must have pulled in the direction of where the ship sank.
- 39 13004. How far?
- It is impossible to tell you how far.
- 40 13005. Do you wish us to understand that the boat was pulled back in the direction of the drowning people?
- Yes, right in the direction of where the ship sank.
- 41 13006. Did you get close to them?
- We got until we came into contact with the boats that left the ship after we left.
- 42 13007. But I meant close to the people where the cries had been?
- Yes, where the cries had come from.
- 43 13008. Is it your evidence that you went back to where the cries came from?
- As far as I can tell you, to my idea.
- 44 13009. Were the cries still going on while you were rowing back?
- They continued about 10 minutes, and we heard nothing afterwards.
- 45 13010. While rowing back towards the direction of the cries, is it your evidence that those cries went on for about 10 minutes?
- That is it.
- 46 13011. According to your evidence, this boat did go back and try to save life?

- Well, of course, we would have saved lives if we had come across any to save.
- 47 13012. Your evidence is that the boat went back with the object of trying to save life?
- To do our level best.
- 48 13013. Is that accurate evidence?
- That is quite right.
- 49 13014. You are sure about this story you are telling us?
- I am quite sure - sure as that I took the oath on that Book.
- 50 The Commissioner:
You have got a proof there, I suppose?
- 51 13015. (*Mr. Butler Aspinall.*) Yes, My Lord; but I do not think it helps me. (*To the witness.*) Did you make a statement before an official when you came to this country?
- I did.
- 52 13016. You did tell him (I see it here.) "We felt a little suction, but we pulled hard with our oars." That was pulling away?
- That is quite right.
- 53 13017. "We went to the spot whence came the cries, but discovered nothing"?
- That is right; that is as near as I can tell you.
- 54 13018. And then you said that as your boat was not full you could have saved quite half a dozen more people?
- That is quite right.
- 55 The Commissioner:
That is substantially what he says now.
- 56 13019. (*Mr. Butler Aspinall - To the witness.*) Did you see a light while you were in the boat?
- Yes, we saw a light.
- 57 13020. What did you think it was, a vessel's light or a star?
- To my idea - I am not much of a sailor, but I have been a fireman for practically all my life - I thought it looked like a stern light, but it might have been a masthead light. In the distance it looked like a stern light.
- 58 Examined by Mr. SCANLAN.
- 59 13021. When something was said about suction, how far were you from the "Titanic"?
- About 100 yards, as near as I can tell you, but I have given you to understand that I am no judge of distances.
- 60 13022. How long had you stopped in that position at 100 yards distant from the "Titanic"?
- That is another hard question to ask me, because at a time like that time seems so long. It may have been 10 minutes or a quarter of an hour.
- 61 13023. Could you give my Lord any notion of the length of time?
- We lay on our oars broadside to the ship.
- 62 13024. At that time did you hear someone in the boat say, "There is danger here; we had better row away from here. This is a light boat, and there may be suction when the ship goes down; let us pull away"?
- No, Sir.
- 63 13025. If a passenger, Mr. Stengel, stated to the American Enquiry that he said that, is it untrue?
- It is untrue.
- 64 13026. Is not this the case, that you were close to the bow of this boat?
- On the fore thwart of the boat.
- 65 13027. And that Mr. Stengel was in the stern?
- They were all in the stern of the boat. There was me and another man in the front of the fore thwart, and there was a sailor on the look-out in front of the boat. I do not know their names.
- 66 13028. Is it not possible that this might have been said by a passenger?
- I would have heard it if it had been said on account of being in a small boat.
- 67 13029. You do not remember one of the passengers saying anything like this?

- No.
- 68 13030. He said that he made this statement, and then he says, "The other passengers agreed, and we pulled away from the 'Titanic'"?
- That is wrong.
- 69 13031. Then he is asked - "(A.) I beg your pardon, it is wrong to a certain extent, but when the suction was on I know there was something passed, but who said it I cannot answer at all. We pulled away just for the time of the suction, and it was for a very short time.
- 70 13032. There was some conversation about suction?
- Certainly.
- 71 13033. But you do not know whether it was by a passenger or by a member of the crew?
- I think the majority of it was passed between the crew.
- 72 13034. But you could not say whether one of the passengers said it?
- I could not say for certain.
- 73 Examined by Mr. CLEMENT EDWARDS.
- 74 13035. Did you hear anything said in the boat about money?
- Nothing at all.
- 75 13036. When did you hear any talk about money?
- When I carried the coat of a gentleman whose name I did not know up the ladder.
- 76 13037. Then it was not Hendrickson who carried the coat?
- No, it was not.
- 77 13038. Was it you who got the names of the crew?
- No, the gentleman asked me to get the names of the crew, but I went naturally enough, as I would do, and told the others who were in the boat, and Hendrickson took it into his own hand.
- 78 13039. But you were the man asked to get the names?
- Yes.
- 79 13040. And up to that time you knew nothing at all about it?
- Not until we received the envelope; we did not know what it was, and it came as a surprise to us.
- 80 13041. Did you hear any lady in the boat say anything about the danger of swamping?
- Nothing at all.
- 81 13042. Did you hear No. 13 boat hail you?
- We heard one boat, but I could not tell you what boat it was.
- 82 13043. What did you hear?
- The only thing I heard was that Hendrickson shouted to that boat passing some name: "Are you all right?" and the order came back, "Yes," and we said "All right." We passed the word right through then: "Keep as close together as we possibly can."
- 83 13044. Right through where?
- As many of the boats as were round about.
- 84 13045. You saw a number of boats?
- Not a number, but two or three. Of course, that is a number.
- 85 13046. Do you remember the number of either of the boats that hailed you?
- I could not see the numbers of the boats in the dark; in fact, I did not know the numbers of the boats at all.
- 86 13047. Did you hear anybody shout out the number of the boat?
- No, I did not.
- 87 13048. Did you hear anybody shout from a boat asking you to take some of their passengers on board?
- No, there was no such thing. That is the only thing that was passed, "Are you all right?" and we said, "Yes," and the order was passed then, "Are you all right?" and they said, "Yes." The order was to keep close together.
- 88 13049. You had a lot of room in your boat?
- Not a lot of room; we had room for a few more.

- 89 13050. Did it occur to you that you ought to go back immediately and try to pick up some people?
- We could not go back quicker than we did.
- 90 13051. How soon after the ship went down did you go back?
- It is hard to tell the time we turned round; as soon as we thought we were clear of the suction, the boat turned round; the coxswain turned the boat round, and I am sure we were pulling that way until we came into contact with these boats. That was the first time we came into contact with the boats.
- 91 13052. From the time the ship went down to the time you got to where you thought the cries had come from, how long a time was it?
- I daresay we were pulling that way for a long while.
- 92 13053. How long?
- I daresay for fully an hour one way and the other. I am not a navigator. I could not tell you. I had no compass to tell us which way we were going, but that is as near as I can tell you.
- 93 Mr. Duke:
I have no questions.
- 94 (The Witness withdrew.)