

## MRS. ASTOR IS ABLE TO TELL OF RESCUE

### *New York Times*

Monday 22 April 1912

Thinks She Got Into Last Boat as She Left Husband on Deck

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COMPELLED TO HANDLE OAR

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Rowed Back After Liner Went Down and Helped to Rescue six struggling Men----Maid Aids

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Mrs. John Jacob Astor and her maid, Rosalie Birdsie, who were saved in the disaster to the Titanic, have been able to give to members of the Astor household some account as to what took place in the lifeboat which carried them away from the wrecked steamship.

The condition of Mrs. Astor, her physician, Dr. Reuel B. Kimball of 135 East Fifty-fourth Street, announced yesterday, is improving. Mrs. Astor is by nature a strong young woman, and, considering the hardships she endured following the wreck of the Titanic, she is bearing up well physically.

She is still confined to her bed, but yesterday she was able to sit up for ten minutes for the first time since she was removed to the Astor residence at 840 Fifth Avenue after her arrival on the Carpathia. Her nerves, however, are badly shattered, and in her waking hours she spends much of her time weeping with the recollection of the horror of the experiences she underwent. She is being attended by both Dr. Kimball and Dr. Hermann M. Biggs, and the two physicians are in consultation daily over her condition. Vincent Astor spends much of his time with her, as do the members of her family.

Left In Last Boat

Mrs. Astor, her friends say, believes she left the Titanic in the last lifeboat. The steamship was then sinking rapidly. Col. Astor, after placing her in the boat, started to climb in beside her, believing she and the other women needed his protection. As has been told, an officer of the Titanic informed Col. Astor that the boat was for women and children only, and unhesitatingly he stepped gallantly aside, telling Mrs. Astor he would follow in another boat.

In the boat there were twelve other women, and it was in command of one of the ship's pursers, it is believed. As the boat was slowly being lowered from the ship's side a man in a state of great excitement fought his way through the throng of men gathered on the deck, and before the officers of the ship could stop him jumped into the boat with the women.

As the lifeboat pulled slowly away from the Titanic it began to ship water rapidly. The Titanic was then sinking rapidly, and the boat was almost swamped in the suction created by the big steamer.

After he found himself in the lifeboat the man seized the few available blankets which had hastily been thrown into the boat for the women, many of whom were thinly clad, and, wrapping them about himself, groveled in the bottom of the boat.

As the lifeboat found the water Mrs. Astor seized an oar, as did several other women. The women, with the exception of Mrs. Astor, handled the oars clumsily, having had little experience in rowing, and it was with difficulty that they were able to pull away from the fast-sinking steamer.

About the big steamship the ocean was swelling and sinking, and the women found themselves in m sort of whirlpool. It looked for a time as if the small boat would surely be swamped. The women pleaded with the man groveling at their feet to take an oar, but the trembling creature paid no heed to their entreaties, wrapping himself more securely in the blankets he had taken from them.

#### Mrs. Astor Bails Out Water

When the lifeboat began to fill rapidly with water Mrs. Astor with undiminished strength helped the other women to bail it out. Several of the women, badly frightened, were unable to give Mrs. Astor and the other women in the boat any assistance.

After the Titanic disappeared the women rowed back to the spot where the ship had gone down, to see if there were any lives they could save. They could see several men in the water, and they rowed toward them.

In the work of rescue Mrs. Astor's maid played a conspicuous part. Six men believed to be seamen were dragged by the women into the boat One of the men was dead when they found him, and another died shortly after he was pulled into the boat.

On reaching the water near where the Titanic disappeared they found only wreckage floating about them. The lifeboat circled several times about the spot which marked the grave of the Titanic, but found no signs of human life.

Mrs. Astor, from the time she entered the lifeboat until the long interval which followed before she and her companions were picked up by the Carpathia, displayed the greatest courage and fortitude. After being taken aboard the rescue ship she experienced a nervous collapse.

Courtesy of Mark Baber

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