

United States Senate Inquiry

Day 15

Affidavit of Mahala Douglas

Source : <http://www.titanicinquiry.org/USInq/AmInq01Indxa.php>

Her husband's name was Walter D. Douglas, but she has signed the affidavit as [Mahala D. Douglas](#).

The affidavit of Mrs. Douglas is as follows:

We left Cherbourg late on account of trouble at Southampton, but once off, everything seemed to go perfectly. The boat was so luxurious, so steady, so immense, and such a marvel of mechanism that one could not believe he was on a boat - and there the danger lay. We had smooth seas, clear, starlit nights, fresh favoring winds; nothing to mar our pleasure.

On Saturday, as [Mr. Douglas](#) and I were walking forward, we saw a seaman taking the temperature of the water. The deck seemed so high above the sea I was interested to know if the tiny pail could reach it. There was quite a breeze, and although the pail was weighted, it did not. This I watched from the open window of the covered deck. Drawing up the pail the seaman filled it with water from the stand pipe, placed the thermometer in it, and went with it to the officer in charge.

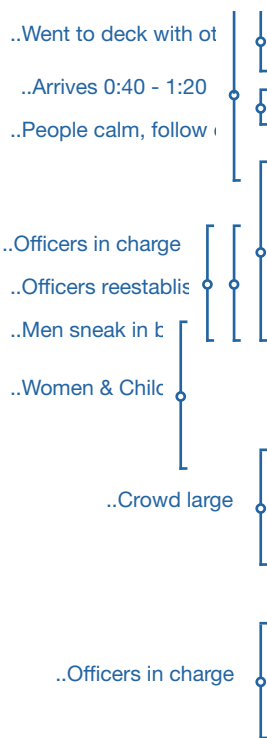
On Sunday we had a delightful day; everyone in the best of spirits; the time the boat was making was considered very good, and all were interested in getting into New York early. We dined in the restaurant, going in about 8 o'clock. We found the people dining, as follows:

(See sketch of dining room.)

As far as I have been able to learn, not a man in that room; all those who served, from the head steward down, including [Mr. Gatti](#), in charge; the musicians who played in the corridor outside, and all the guests were lost - except [Sir Cosmo Gordon Duff](#), [Mr. Carter](#), and [Mr. Ismay](#). All stories of excessive gaiety are, to my mind, absolutely unfounded. We did not leave the tables until most of the others had left, including Mr. Ismay, [Mr. and Mrs. Widener](#), and their guests, and the evening was passed very quietly. As we went to our stateroom - [C-86](#) - we both remarked that the boat was going faster than she ever had. The vibration as one passed the stairway in the center was very noticeable. The shock of the collision was not great to us; the engines stopped, then went on for a few moments, then stopped again. We waited some little time, Mr. Douglas reassuring me that there was no danger before going out of the cabin. But later Mr. Douglas went out to see what had happened, and I put on my heavy boots and fur coat to go up on deck later. I waited in the corridor to see or hear what I could. We received no orders; no one knocked at our door; we saw no officers nor stewards - no one to give an order or answer our questions. As I waited for Mr. Douglas to return I went back to speak to my [maid](#), who was in the same cabin as [Mrs. Carter's maid](#). Now people commenced to appear with life preservers, and I heard from some one that the order had been given to put them on. I took three from our cabin, gave one to the maid, telling her to get off in the small boat when her turn came. Mr. Douglas met me as I was going up to find him and asked, jestingly, what I was doing with those life preservers. He did not think even then that the accident was serious. We both put them on, however, and went up on the boat deck. Mr. Douglas told me if I waited we might both go together, and we stood there waiting. We heard that the boat was in communication with three

..Went to deck with ot

..Arrives 0:40 - 1:20



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other boats by wireless; we watched the distress rockets sent off - they rose high in the air and burst.

No one seemed excited. Finally, as we stood by a collapsible boat lying on the deck and an emergency boat [No. 2] swinging from the davits was being filled, it was decided I should go. [Mr. Boxhall](#) was trying to get the boat off, and called to the [captain](#) on the bridge, "There's a boat coming up over there." The captain said "I want a megaphone. Just before we got into the boat the captain called, "How many of the crew are in that boat? Get out of there, every man of you"; and I can see a solid row of men, from bow to stern, crawl over on to the deck. We women then got in. I asked Mr. Douglas to come with me, but he replied, "No; I must be a gentleman," turning away. I said, "Try and get off with [Mr. Moore](#) and [Maj. Butt](#). They will surely make it." Maj. Butt and Clarence Moore were standing together near us, also [Mr. Meyer](#), and I remember seeing [Mr. Ryerson's](#) face in the crowd. There were many people about. I got into the boat and sat under the seats on the bottom, just under the tiller. Mr. Boxhall had difficulty about getting the boat loose and called for a knife. We finally were launched.

13

[Mrs. Appleton](#) and a man from the steerage faced me. Mrs. Appleton's sister [[Malvina Cornell](#)] was back to me, and on the seat with her, the officer. Mr. Boxhall tried to have us count in order to find the number in the boat. but he did not succeed in getting any higher than 10, as so many did not speak English - I think there were 18 or 20. There was one other member of the crew. The rowing was very difficult, for no one knew how. I tried to steer, under Mr. Boxhall's orders, and he put the lantern - an old one, with very little light in it - on a pole which I held up for some time. Mr. Boxhall got away from the ship and we stopped for a time. Several times we stopped rowing to listen for the lapping of the water against the icebergs. In an incredibly short space of time, it seemed to me, the boat sank. I heard an explosion. I watched the boat go down, and the last picture to my mind is the immense mass of black against the starlit sky, and then nothingness.

14

Mrs. Appleton and some of the other women had been rowing and did row all of the time. Mr. Boxhall had charge of the signal lights on the [Titanic](#), had put in the emergency boat a tin of green lights, like rockets. These he commenced to send off at intervals, and very quickly we saw the lights of the [Carpathia](#), the captain of which stated he saw our green lights 10 miles away, and, of course, steered directly to us, so we were the first boat to arrive at the [Carpathia](#).

15

When we pulled alongside Mr. Boxhall called out, "shut down your engines and take us aboard. I have only one sailor." At this point I called out, "The [Titanic](#) has gone down with everyone on board," and Mr. Boxhall told me to "shut up." This is not told in criticism; I think he was perfectly right. We climbed a rope ladder to the upper deck of the [Carpathia](#). I at once asked the chief steward, who met us, to take the news to the [captain](#). He said the officer was already with him.

16

The history of our wonderful treatment on the [Carpathia](#) is known to the world. It has been underestimated. We reached the [Carpathia](#) at 4.10, and I believe by 10 o'clock all of the boats had been accounted for. We sailed away, leaving the [Californian](#) to cruise about the scene. We circled the point where the [Titanic](#) had gone down, and I saw nothing except quantities of cork, loose cork floating in the current, like a stream - nothing else. In the afternoon I sent a brief Marconigram with the news that Mr. Douglas was among the missing. I went myself to the purser several times every day, and others also made inquiries for me in regard to it, but it was not sent.

17

We heard many stories of the rescue from many sources. These I tried to keep in my mind clearly, as they seemed important. Among them I will quote Mrs. Ryerson, of Philadelphia. This story was told in the presence of [Mrs. Meyers](#),

of New York, and others.

18 (Mrs. Ryerson speaking.) "Sunday afternoon Mr. Ismay, whom I know very slightly, passed me on the deck. He showed me, in his brusque manner, a Marconigram, saying, "We have just had news that we are in the icebergs."

19 "Of course, you will slow down," I said. "Oh, no"; he replied, "we will put on more boilers and get out of it." An Englishwoman, who was going to her sons in Dakota, told me: "I was in a boat with 5 women and 50 men - they had been picked up from the London unemployed to fill out the crew. They would not row, told frightful stories to alarm the women, and when the *Carpathia* was sighted, said; "We are jolly lucky. No work tonight; nothing to do but smoke and yarn. Back in London next week with the unemployed."

20 The history of the quartermaster's [[Hichens](#)] conduct was told by many women; his brutality is known. His inefficiency is shown by his asking "is that a buoy?" when they were out in the small boat on the ocean.

21 [Maj. Peuchen](#) came to me just before landing in New York with Mr. Beattie, of the London Times. They asked me to repeat some things I had said, which I did. They took my address. Maj. Peuchen said, "I have just been called up (I took this to mean before the officers of the *Titanic*) and asked what I meant by getting testimony and stirring up the passengers." I replied, "You have not answered my questions; I will not answer yours."

22 All the women told of insufficient seamen to man the boats; all women rowed; some had to bail water from their boats. [Mrs. Smith](#) was told to watch a cork in her boat, and if it came out to put her finger in place of it.

23 When we arrived in New York the crew of the *Titanic* was ordered to get off in the lifeboats before we could dock.

24 I sat in a deck chair and listened and looked. The unseamanlike way of going at their simple tasks without excitement showed me more plainly than anything I had seen or heard the inefficiency of the crew, and accounted, in some measure, for the number of the crew saved and the unfilled lifeboats. A passenger on the *Carpathia* also spoke to me of this.

25 [Mr. Lightoller](#) and Mr. Boxhall were extremely courteous and kind on board the *Carpathia*. I think them both capable seamen and gentlemen.

26 MAHALA D. DOUGLAS

27 [MAXQDA12_MARKER]

28 Subscribed and sworn to before me, a notary public in and for the county of Hennepin, State of Minnesota, this 2nd day of May, 1912, at Minneapolis, Minn.

29 [SEAL.] A. F. BERGLUND,
Notary Public, Hennepin County, Minn.

30 My commission expires May 28, 1917.