



## MAJOR ARCHIBALD BUTT: PRESIDENTIAL AIDE & HIS LEGENDARY BOURBON NEW YEAR'S WHITE HOUSE EGG NOG!

Major Archibald Willingham DeGraffenried Clarence Butt—yes, a name so long it needs its own parade—served not only as a trusted military aide, but as a distinguished officer of the White House Military Office, the elite command responsible for the President’s day-to-day security, logistics, and ceremonial order. He stood at the right hand of both Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, moving through the mansion with the crisp grace of a man born for service. When Taft entered the White House in 1909, he kept Archie close—steady as a sunrise over the Potomac, loyal as an old friend who understands every unspoken word.

Through the years of political heartbreak—especially the Roosevelt-Taft split that shook Washington like a family thunderstorm—Butt served as Taft’s emotional ballast. He was the calm voice behind closed doors, the man who kept the gears oiled, the quiet guardian who held the White House together when tempers and alliances came unstitched. In an era that sometimes felt like a knife fight in a phone booth, Butt brought dignity, discipline, and heart. But it wasn’t all politics and protocol. Archie had a lighter side—one flavored with cream, bourbon, and just enough mischief to make history taste sweet. The President wasn’t much for “hard stuff,” but he had no qualms about Archie indulging. Butt enjoyed the occasional scotch and soda, yet his greatest pride was his mother’s legendary New Year’s eggnog, a concoction so thick it practically had its own gravitational pull.





In a glowing 1910 letter to his sister-in-law, he described the eggnog event of the century: Major Cheatham came in to help wrangle the monstrous mixture, and the White House guests went wild. “Too thick to be drunk,” Butt declared, almost boasting. The recipe called for ten quarts of double cream whipped stiff, twelve dozen eggs, six quarts of bourbon, and one pint of rum. Overflow was stored in pantry tubs, each layer as dense as the next. “It was mother’s recipe,” he wrote, promising to send it along, insisting that nothing in his life had ever equaled its richness. This was Butt in full: disciplined officer, warm soul, creator of a holiday tradition that could stand up straight on its own spoon.

But fate had its own design. In April 1912, Major Butt boarded the RMS Titanic, heading home from Europe on presidential business. When the great ship struck ice, witnesses later recounted that Butt became the very embodiment of courage. Calm, commanding, unshakeable—he helped women and children to lifeboats with the same steady confidence he once brought to the Oval Office. Not a single account places him panicking, pleading, or stepping forward for rescue. Instead, he was seen standing tall on deck, shoulders squared, prepared to go down with honor. And so he did.

The Atlantic took him, but not his legacy. President Taft mourned him with a grief that echoed through the nation, speaking of him not simply as an aide, but as a beloved friend—one whose loyalty, bravery, and integrity had shaped the very soul of his presidency. Archibald Butt lived with duty, served with heart, and died with heroism. And somewhere in the swirl of presidential history and ocean tragedy, his memory endures—strong, steady, and forever rising like cream whipped stiff in a punch bowl big enough for legends.

**By Master Chef Marti Mongiello**

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