

The last of the survivors of the sinking of the RMS *Titanic* were rescued by the RMS *Carpathia* by around 9:00 am on Monday April 15, 1912. The immediate priority, in the aftermath of the disaster, was seeing to the physical needs of the 700 or so new passengers aboard the little Cunarder – getting medical attention for the wounded, clothing for the underdressed, placing survivors in staterooms, and reuniting families who had been separated in the rush for the lifeboats. But after the initial commotion died down, and *Carpathia* began her return journey to New York, there was nothing to do aboard but talk. The *Titanic* survivors shared remarkable stories of the night of the sinking with their new neighbors. There were tales of the heroism of the men and officers aboard, of celebrities and titans of industry gallantly stepping aside to allow the women and children to board first; business magnate J.J. Astor and writer Jacques Futrelle lit cigarettes on deck and calmly watched their wives be lowered away, knowing they likely wouldn't survive to see either of them ever again. There were rumors of other men who snuck into boats dressed as women. There were descriptions of the pandemonium near *Titanic*'s final plunge, of how the band heroically played on, to say nothing of the miraculous survival of those who'd spent the night balancing on the back of the overturned Collapsible B.

It's no wonder it wasn't long before someone thought: "hey, this would make a great movie." And by "wasn't long", I do mean before the survivors even made it back to New York, because only a few short days after the *Carpathia* docked, survivor and actress, Dorothy Gibson began filming what would become the first of dozens of films, plays, and television shows that came out "after *Titanic*".

There have been several film and television depictions of the *Titanic* disaster, ranging from straightforward docudramas and documentaries to Nazi propaganda films to quick jokes and references in episodes of *The Simpsons* to episodes of *Futurama*, *Doctor Who*, and multiple made for tv movies all featuring some version of a *Titanic II* going down in a manner similar to her predecessor. There is also at least one *Titanic* opera, a *Titanic* musical by Maury Yeston, the critically acclaimed juke-box musical, *Titanique*, which is actually an adaptation of the 1997 James Cameron film as told through the eyes of Celine Dion who believes she was actually aboard the *Titanic* when it sank, and an RSC production of *Hamlet* that takes place aboard the *Titanic*. I heard the *Hamlet* production was pretty bad, but I probably would have loved it if I'm being honest. They had a hydraulic *Titanic* set that lifted up and cast members apparently slid down as each of their characters died. That is high camp. That is beauty. That is art.

Saved From The Titanic starring Dorothy Gibson was released a mere 29 days after the sinking. Dorothy Gibson was only 22 years old when she boarded *Titanic*. After an early career in musicals on Broadway and as a model for illustrated magazines, Gibson transitioned to the emergent film industry, beginning with several bit parts before she was eventually hired as a leading lady under contract with the American branch of Éclair, a French film manufacturing and production company. The American branch of Éclair would be absorbed into Universal Pictures shortly after the release of *Saved From The Titanic*.

In March of 1912, after wrapping on a few Éclair films, Gibson and her mother, Pauline, traveled to Europe for a much needed vacation. But shortly after arriving, Éclair producer (and Dorothy

Gibson's secret lover) Jules Brulator, wired Gibson to ask her to return to the United States in order to complete a new roster of pictures. So, Dorothy and Pauline Gibson booked First Class passage home on the RMS *Titanic*, boarding in Cherbourg.

On the evening of April 14, 1912, Dorothy was playing a late night game of bridge with First Class passengers William T. Sloper and Frederick K. Seward in a first class saloon, when the threesome heard a "long, drawn sickening crunch" at around 11:40 pm. After finishing the game of cards, Dorothy went out on deck and noticed that *Titanic* now had a pronounced list. She ran to wake her mother and the two escaped aboard lifeboat 7, the first of the lifeboats to be lowered from *Titanic*'s starboard side.

According to a press release from Éclair, Dorothy Gibson was initially hesitant to make *Saved From The Titanic*, but "valiantly conquered her own feeling and forged ahead." There's no indication in the press release if her lover, Jules Brulator, perhaps pushed her to make the film. He's credited alongside Harry Raver as a producer on the film.

Dorothy's relationship with the married Brulator would not be revealed until May of 1913, when she struck and killed a pedestrian while driving Brulator's car and the nature of their relationship was revealed in the ensuing court case. Jules Brulator would eventually divorce his wife and marry Dorothy Gibson in 1917, but the couple would ultimately separate in 1919 and Dorothy never remarried.

Saved From The Titanic is now considered a piece of lost media: the only known print was destroyed in a fire and all that remains of it are some publicity stills and contemporary descriptions of the film in articles and press releases. In the ten minute silent film, Dorothy played a fictionalized version of herself. The cardigan she wears in one of the remaining publicity stills is allegedly the same cardigan she wore the night she escaped the foundering *Titanic*. Shortly after the release of *Saved From The Titanic*, Dorothy Gibson quit acting altogether.

By the late 1920s, Dorothy and her mother had quietly relocated to France, where they were both initially sympathetic to the rising fascist movement in Europe. Near the end of World War II, Dorothy seemed to renounce fascism and was arrested by the Gestapo in Italy as a resistance agitator. She managed a break from San Vittore Prison in Milan in 1944, with the help of a Catholic resistance group, and she died in Paris two years later, at the age of 56.

Given Dorothy Gibson's *Titanic* and fascist ties, one has to wonder if she was aware of *Titanic*, the 1943 Nazi propaganda film about the disaster and the first to singularly use the name of the ship as its title. *Titanic* premiered in Paris in November of 1943 and depicts J. Bruce Ismay engaging in some insider trading before setting sail aboard *Titanic* where he encourages Captain Smith to run the ship at full speed in order to break speed records – now a classic trope in the genre of *Titanic* narratives. A fictional German officer is the only dissenting voice as they plow through the ice field and eventually into the iceberg. This German officer, Petersen, places Ismay in his seat on the lifeboat so that he can face trial on land before diving into the ocean to

save a little girl and being pulled into a lifeboat. Not all propaganda is subtle. In the end, British greed is blamed for the sinking.

Oddly, the film was screened in several cities in German-occupied Europe but banned in Germany itself, due to the depictions of mass death and also the depiction of the fictional First Officer Petersen who was defiant and critical of his British superiors. Criticism of the British was good, but talking back to your superiors not so much. The Nazi *Titanic* was filmed aboard the passenger ship the SS *Cap Arcona*, which later tragically went down in the Baltic Sea after a Royal Air Force strike. Unbeknownst to the aircraft squadron, there were over 5000 concentration camp prisoners aboard. Only around 350 escaped with their lives.

In 1955, Walter Lord published *A Night To Remember*, the first “definitive” history of the *Titanic* disaster compiled from numerous survivor interviews, memoirs, and documents about the disaster. It’s a work of monumental historical importance both in terms of its contributions to history as whole and also as a foundational text for the kind of nerds who can argue for days on message boards over just how far away the *Californian* really was. It was also a critical and commercial hit. A certified banger by late 1950s standards. So, of course the book was immediately eyed for adaptation.

The first adaptation of *A Night To Remember* was a *Kraft Television Theatre* television production on NBC in 1956. That’s Kraft as in Kraft Foods, who sponsored the show. As tacky as it sounds, it was apparently a very lavish and well-received production. Borrowing from the style of earlier radio plays, it was a live production (filmed at 30 Rockefeller Plaza, the current home of *Saturday Night Live*) and employed Claude Rains as a narrator.

The second adaptation of *A Night To Remember* was the 1958 film directed by Roy Ward Baker and filmed at Britain’s famous Pinewood Studios. This was a bit of a sleeper hit, not seeing great commercial success immediately after release but coming to be regarded as one of the greatest *Titanic* films of all time.

Both adaptations of *A Night To Remember* were critically acclaimed in their time, and both featured an ensemble cast rather than any one definitive protagonist. The 1958 film has been credited for going on to inspire the disaster films of the 1970s, which then went on to inspire another crop of disaster films in the 1990s... including *Titanic* (1997) by little-known director James Cameron. In fact, a number of shots in James Cameron’s *Titanic* are homages or even complete recreations of many of the shots and sequences from 1958’s *A Night To Remember*.

Actually, a really fun drinking game to play with anyone who has watched the 1997 film just a few too many times is to just put on *A Night To Remember* and drink every time you spot something that James Cameron lifted. You will not be disappointed or sober by the end of the movie. Jim, if you’re listening I want to be clear that I’m not accusing you of being a thief, I’m accusing you of being a *neeerd* and I love you.

The 1958 film is also recognized as one of the most historically accurate *Titanic* adaptations. The filmmakers actually hired three survivors - Fourth Officer Joseph Boxhall, First Class passenger Edith Russell (*née* Rosenbaum) and passenger Lawrence Beesley - as historical advisors on the film. Lawrence Beesley allegedly even snuck onto the set one day during shooting, attempting to pass as an extra, but he was politely asked to leave. Union rules are union rules and this was not a non-Equity production, *Lawrence*.

After the release of the film, many of the *Titanic* survivors who saw it were said to have remarked upon its authenticity. Millivina Dean, who'd only been two months old when she survived the disaster, was interviewed in a newspaper article in which she mentioned having attended a screening of *A Night To Remember* with a handful of other survivors. She said she hated it and one of her companions had nightmares about it for weeks. Millivina Dean was also one of only 7 survivors to be alive when the 1997 film was released... she declined to see that one. May Futrelle, in contrast, referred to *A Night To Remember* as a "remarkably accurate, honest, and exciting film."

Another really fun drinking game (for an admittedly more niche demographic) is to drink every time an obscure *Titanic* fact is shoehorned somewhere into the script. My personal favorite is when Bruce Ismay describes himself pejoratively as "the office boy" – a needlessly obscure reference to being humiliated by his father while he was interning at the White Star Line offices as a young man. 10/10 character building right there.

Sidebar: I actually love *A Night To Remember's* depiction of Ismay. He feels more well-rounded and like less of a pantomime villain than what we might call a "more traditional" adaptation. Frank Lawton plays him as a nervous and insecure man, for certain, but with a good nature who ultimately succumbs to his own anxious tendencies when he boards the lifeboat.

Weirdly, a couple of the exterior shots of *Titanic* in 1958's *A Night To Remember* were recycled from the Nazi *Titanic* from more than a decade earlier. In addition to contemporary documentary footage of *Titanic* leaving Southampton, *A Night To Remember* reused some of the shots of the miniatures made for *Titanic* (1943) and thus, an anti-British Nazi propaganda film unknowingly helped contribute to a masterpiece of British cinema that is still highly regarded to this day.

Okay, so we have to talk about the James Cameron *Titanic*. And why wouldn't I want to talk about the James Cameron *Titanic*? The James Cameron *Titanic* absolutely slaps and anyone who tells you otherwise is either being contrarian for contrarianism's sake, hates fun, or has an opinion tainted from surviving a traumatic boating accident or similar disaster.

It is one of the highest grossing films of all time and spent nearly 30 years tied with *All About Eve*, *Ben-Hur*, *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* and *La La Land* for the most Academy Award wins of any film until that record was finally broken by *Sinners* in 2026. At the time of this recording, *Titanic's* record was broken *three months ago* by a film that came out eleven months before that. That is how long Jim Cameron's *Titanic* has reigned supreme. That's not to say that the Academy Awards are necessarily the best metric for determining that a film is *good*... in my

honest opinion, a lot of hot turds have won Oscars, including Best Picture, but *Titanic* (1997) is not one of those turds. It's a wild ride that holds up from start to finish. It's the shortest three hour movie I've ever seen in my life. If you have been living under a rock and have not seen *Titanic* (1997) yet, please stop listening to this podcast right now and go stream, rent, or pirate it. I can wait.

Following the runaway commercial success of films like *Aliens*, *Terminator[s] I & II*, and *The Abyss*, Cameron was essentially given carte blanche by Fox Studios to make the movie of his choosing. A long time freak for the deep ocean and marine archeology, James Cameron pitched a retelling of the *Titanic* story featuring a "Romeo & Juliet" narrative at its center. The studio was hesitant at his pitch, but they ultimately decided to let him cook. He was James Cameron. And they were letting him cook with a lot of ingredients, by which I mean "greens", by which I mean "cash money" because he didn't just want to make a *Titanic* movie... he wanted to film the *Titanic*. The actual ship. At the bottom of the ocean.

The footage of the *Titanic* wreck used in the framing device of the movie wasn't licensed from other documentaries of the wreck, it was filmed by Cameron himself and a team of Russian and American scientists aboard the Russian submersible *Mir*. In order to capture the wreck, James Cameron commissioned his brother, Mike, to design a special camera housing that allowed for the team to take high quality cinema cameras over 4000 feet deep and adjusted for the lens distortion that occurred at those depths. Altogether, Cameron's crew risked their lives 12 times to make trips down to the *Titanic* wreck for the super secret film production codenamed "Planet Ice".

After getting his undersea footage, Cameron began writing the script for what the public would soon learn was not "Planet Ice", but his planned *Titanic* epic. The contemporary sequences featuring Old Rose and Brock Lovett's crew were filmed first, in Nova Scotia, before the production moved down to Baja, Mexico to film the majority of the film on an outdoor soundstage featuring a replica of *Titanic*'s starboard side built 90% to scale. (Shots from the movie of her port side are mostly flipped, or shots of a smaller scale model built for the film.)

Some time around midnight on August 8, 1996, just as the cast and crew were ready to wrap in Nova Scotia and move the production down to Mexico, James Cameron began feeling woozy. Thinking he'd contracted food poisoning, he stepped away from set to vomit and when he returned no one was there. The entire set was abandoned. It hadn't been food poisoning, after all, but PCP-laced seafood chowder that had been served to the cast and crew at lunch, and every single person who'd eaten it - including James Cameron and Bill Paxton - was high as a kite. By the time the affected production members made it to Dartmouth General Hospital - still thinking they were suffering from some kind of food poisoning - all hell had broken loose. People were crying and throwing up, while others were racing wheelchairs down the hallways of the hospital and breaking out into conga lines. Someone stabbed James Cameron in the face with a pen and he broke out into hysterical laughter. A toxicology report later revealed that PCP was the true culprit, but the identity of the person or persons who drugged the *Titanic* cast and crew remains... one of her most enduring mysteries.

PCP-laced chowder was not the only source of drama on the *Titanic* set. As is a hallmark of any production helmed by the perfectionist and mercurial Cameron, *Titanic* went tens of millions of dollars over budget and finally wrapped with many hurt feelings and genuine injuries. Kate Winslet allegedly chipped her elbow and contracted pneumonia during filming and when all was said and done, she told *The Guardian* “you’d have to pay me a lot of money to work with Jim again.” This was a woman who campaigned hard for her role, as James Cameron initially didn’t want to hire her thinking that casting Kate Winslet in a period piece was a little too obvious. But she ended up being a one and done James Cameron collaborator until 2022 when “a lot of money” finally came in the form of the *Avatar* sequel, *The Way of Water*.

And in the end, almost killing Kate Winslet paid off. *Titanic* is one of the most critically and commercially successful films of all time, and the catalyst for a whole new generation of Titanophiles. It’s inspired dozens of parodies and references and even the aforementioned jukebox musical, *Titanique*. After the film’s 20th anniversary in 2017, it was accepted into the United States Library of Congress. For better or for worse, no *Titanic* adaptation has come anywhere close to the cultural significance and dominance of the Cameron piece. It is a literal cultural touchstone, almost as historically significant as the actual sinking. Almost.

The story of *Titanic* is one that still captivates us to this day - one that continues to inspire films, stage and television shows... even podcasts like this one. The productions I talked about in this episode don’t even represent the tip of the iceberg (pun intended) when it comes to *Titanic* media. I didn’t even touch on the numerous documentaries or Julian Fellowes’ incredibly underwhelming miniseries produced for the 100th anniversary of the sinking. To get into the meat of every piece of *Titanic* media would be a herculean effort worthy of its own podcast. There is something about *Titanic* that brings us back time and time again. Perhaps on some level we hope that with each retelling of the narrative some piece of this grand puzzle might reveal itself; that some part of the tragedy might suddenly make sense.

But our fascination with this historic disaster doesn’t just extend to the silver screen. *Titanic* is an entire industry - from \$700 LEGO sets to traveling exhibitions of pieces salvaged from her debris field to commercial expeditions to visit her wreck. Our obsession with *Titanic* is big business. And that might be a disaster of its own. Next time, on “After *Titanic*”...

“After *Titanic*” is a podcast by Bash Back Productions. Written, recorded, and edited by Amanda Hootman. Music by Neilly Farrell. Artwork by Paul Scott Canavan. Full cast list, transcripts and sources are available on aftertitanic.com. “After *Titanic*” is supported by our generous Indiegogo backers and patrons. Help support the podcast by heading to Patreon.com/AfterTitanic where you’ll get exclusive access to our Discord server, and join an entire community of fellow Titanophiles to hang out with between episodes. I’ve been your host, Amanda Hootman. Thanks for listening.

[Wilhelm Dieter Siebert Untergang der Titanic - Opera](#)

[Titanic \(musical\) - Wikipedia](#)

[Titanique - Wikipedia](#)

[“Hamlet” – RSC ★★☆☆☆ – Broken Legs Blog](#)

[Saved from the Titanic - Wikipedia](#)

[Dorothy Winifred Gibson : Titanic Survivor](#)

[Eclair Film Company of America](#)

[Titanic \(1943 film\) - Wikipedia](#)

[The strange sinking of the Nazi Titanic - The Telegraph](#)

[A Night to Remember \(book\) - Screen Adaptations - Wikipedia](#)

[Survivors give their impressions of Titanic movies](#)

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