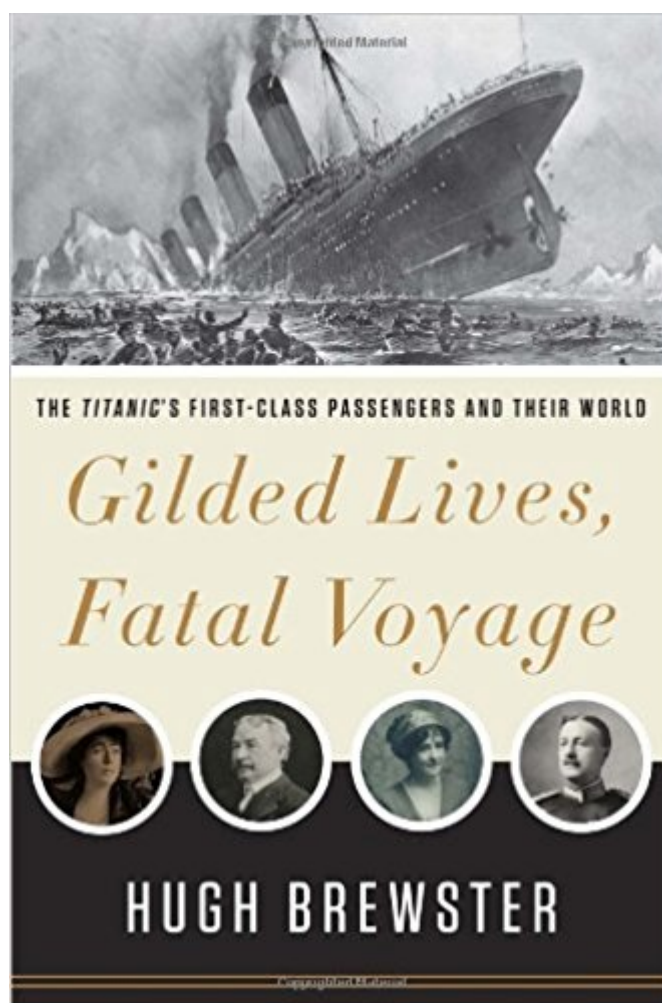


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Gilded Lives, Fatal Voyage: The Titanic's First-Class Passengers And Their World



Synopsis

Gilded Lives, Fatal Voyage takes us behind the paneled doors of the Titanic's elegant private suites to present compelling, memorable portraits of her most notable passengers. The intimate atmosphere onboard history's most famous ship is recreated as never before. The Titanic has often been called "an exquisite microcosm of the Edwardian era," but until now, her story has not been presented as such. In Gilded Lives, Fatal Voyage, historian Hugh Brewster seamlessly interweaves personal narratives of the lost liner's most fascinating people with a haunting account of the fateful maiden crossing. Employing scrupulous research and featuring 100 rarely-seen photographs, he accurately depicts the ship's brief life and tragic denouement, presenting the very latest thinking on everything from when and how the lifeboats were loaded to the last tune played by the orchestra. Yet here too is a convincing evocation of the table talk at the famous Widener dinner party held in the Ritz Restaurant on the last night. And here we also experience the rustle of elegant undergarments as first-class ladies proceed down the grand staircase in their soigné evening gowns, some of them designed by Lady Duff Gordon, the celebrated couturière, who was also on board. Another well-known passenger was the artist Frank Millet, who led an astonishing life that seemed to encapsulate America's Gilded Age—from serving as a drummer boy in the Civil War to being the man who made Chicago's White City white for the 1893 World Exposition. His traveling companion Major Archibald Butt was President Taft's closest aide and was returning home for a grueling fall election campaign that his boss was expected to lose. Today, both of these once-famous men are almost forgotten, but their ship-mate Margaret Tobin Brown lives on as "the Unsinkable Molly Brown," a name that she was never called during her lifetime. Millionaires John Jacob Astor and Benjamin Guggenheim, writer Helen Churchill Candee, movie actress Dorothy Gibson, aristocrat Noelle, the Countess of Rothes, and a host of other travelers on this fateful crossing are also vividly brought to life within these pages. Through them, we gain insight into the arts, politics, culture, and sexual mores of a world both distant and near to our own. And with them, we gather on the Titanic's sloping deck on that cold, starlit night and observe their all-too-human reactions as the disaster unfolds. More than ever, we ask ourselves, "What would we have done?"

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Customer Reviews

"Brewster's nuanced account introduces us to a plutocracy frolicking in the sunset of England's Edwardian era and America's Gilded Age. He pushes past stereotypes to vividly describe the elite realm on deck. New York Times Book Review "You needn't be an avid Titanic scholar or enthusiast to find this story spellbinding. No fiction author could ever concoct a tale of greater tragedy, irony, pathos, and what ifs and heroism, cowardice, wealth and poverty. Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star "[A] brilliant account of the first-class passengers who went down with the ship, giving us a glimpse into a Gilded Age about to disappear forever. Brewster's method is simple and highly entertaining. Minneapolis Star-Tribune "classy, delicious, wonderfully readable" Christian Science Monitor "A lively tour through the lives of a handful of noteworthy first-class passengers" San Antonio Express-News "This is one of those rare books on the subject that provides information both new and relevant, in a scholarly but readable way. Highly recommended to anyone interested in the social history of the early 20th century. Library Journal (starred review) "[A]n impressive amount of information, often directly pulling from firsthand accounts. The author vividly renders the collision, the sinking, the chilling wail of unseen swimmers calling from the cold water and the shipwreck's aftermath....a welcome, interesting addition to Titanic-related literature. Kirkus Reviews "Full of delicious details, from champagne flutes to the careless luxe of furs and

satin, this is a spell-binding story, fresh, original and totally absorbing. —Marian Fowler, author of *In a Gilded Cage* —“Focuses on an area of the disaster that has long been overlooked — that of the prominent people who were involved....a compelling account of who they were and how this select group of names came together in one enormous tragedy. —Don Lynch, author of *Titanic: An Illustrated History and Ghosts of the Abyss* —“A fascinating and engaging account of the Titanic disaster....a definite "must-read" for the centenary of the Titanic disaster, and I feel certain it will quickly be regarded as a standard work on the subject. —George Behe, author of *On Board RMS Titanic and The Carpathia and the Titanic*

Hugh Brewster has twenty-five years of experience in creating books about the Titanic as an editor, publisher, and writer. He worked with Robert D. Ballard to produce the 1987 international bestseller *The Discovery of the Titanic* and oversaw the creation of *Titanic: An Illustrated History*, a book that provided inspiration for James Cameron's epic movie. Brewster is also the author of *Inside the Titanic*, *882 1/2 Amazing Answers to All Your Questions About the Titanic*, and *Deadly Voyage* and has written twelve award-winning books for young readers, including *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*, which was chosen as one of the best books of 2007 by the *Washington Post*. He lives in Toronto.

Quite a few good books have been released recently in anticipation of the centennial of the sinking of the luxury steamship Titanic. This book looks at the gilded age which essentially gave birth to this ship, the passengers who were part of strata of society that traveled first class, the sinking of the Titanic, the lives lost, and the survivors. This book profiles many of the prominent and wealthy first class passengers, providing background information as well as the reason for their being on the Titanic. For many, they were returning to the United States following a grand tour of the capitals of Europe or returning after stays in their second homes (a practice favored by many Americans of wealthy circumstances). The names that popped up on the passenger list were either legendary or would become so. Astor and Strauss are among the most prominent, while J. Pierpoint Morgan managed to avoid the Titanic only to die the next year. Margaret Brown, a Denver socialite, became known as unsinkable and "Molly". There are interesting and often gossipy stories imbedded in the narrative. We find that Benjamin Guggenheim is booked on the Titanic with his newest mistress located a respectable distance down the hall. Writer Helen Candee is romantically involved with a younger scoundrel. They both survive, but her love interest soon moves on to a younger

woman. This book is loaded with great stories and small vignettes related to the sinking, the search for victims, and the fates of the living. It also looks at the sinking as a harbinger of a world in flux; the gilded age would soon come to an abrupt end with the introduction of an income tax, the world would be at war, and a depression would greatly diminish personal fortunes. The accounts of the sinking and the later recovery efforts are chilling and haunting and stand in stark contrast to the golden lives of the first class passengers. Despite the fact that little is mentioned regarding the third class passengers who had little to no chance of survival or the reasons why the unsinkable sunk so quickly and without mercy, this is an interesting book that delivers on what is promised: gilded lives and a fatal voyage.

This book was pretty interesting, I liked getting to know the passengers better. I especially liked the pictures of various places on the ship. Wow, the layers of richness in the designs almost hurt the eye, they really were into "a lot more is better" back then. Seeing the likenesses of a lot of the privileged made the reality more human. I really think that most of the people thought they were going to be saved, or there would have been a lot more fighting for the lifeboats. Nobody pays much attention to the fact that 2/3 of the steerage class perished, and that the gates were locked to keep them below! I am from Denver, and I was heartened that Molly (Margaret) Brown worked hard to help the poor survivors after being rescued. This was a well researched and interesting book!

This was an illuminating look at the lives of various first-class passengers on the Titanic: who they were, why they were there, how their lives intertwined before, during and after the disaster. It takes a while to pick up steam (much like a large ocean liner), but accelerates as it takes us closer to the calamity. We are shown how the people we have come to know react, and eventually how even the survivors are often haunted by this "night to remember".

I now must see the movie "A Night to Remember"... several years ago, in Chicago, I saw the Titanic exhibition, and wish I could see it again with this additional knowledge and insight. When I think of the carelessness with which news of the icebergs ahead was repeatedly ignored by several different people who had the position to act on the news, and perhaps especially Philips, who told the communications fellow on the ship trying to save them to shut up because he was too busy sending private messages to people...

I love all things Titanic. I've seen just about every documentary ever made on it and read my fair

share of books as well. This book is excellent and I enjoyed it very much. It was very informative and interesting and I learned quite a bit.

When I was 12 years old, I met with then-85-year-old Edwina Celia (Troutt) McKenzie who had survived the sinking of the Titanic. She told me the tale not only of the famous night to remember but also of a different time in history when society was obsessively class conscious and opulence was revered. As a middle class 60's kid from California, this period was difficult for me to imagine. Fast forward to a few weeks ago when I saw this book title and bought it on a whim. I thought that it looked kind of boring, but I was very favorably surprised. Most of all I enjoyed the descriptions of various high society people's lives at the turn of the century and seeing the irony of how, for some of them, all they cherished & obsessed about in life was quickly rendered moot by the chance presence of an iceberg along the course of the most magnificent ship in the world.

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