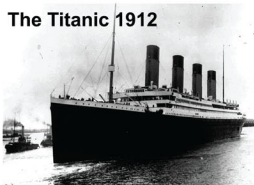


# The Lebanese of the Titanic Centennial (1912-2012)

Sunday 15th of April 1912 is the centennial of the sinking of the Titanic and the disappearance of 1,514 passengers. Among those who perished were Lebanese who left their homeland in search for a better life.

## The Titanic 1912



Source: news.com.au

It was reported that there were 154 Lebanese passengers on the Titanic and only 29 survived. Anecdotes tell of a very eerie story about the reaction of the Lebanese on board the ship. When fate struck the liner, passengers from Hardine, Tibnine and Kfar Michki) and from other Lebanese villages danced the Dabke to the rhythm of a piper. There reaction to the sinking of the ship might seem uncanny, however one needs to know that culturally dancing is part of funeral rites that is still practiced in Lebanon especially during the funeral of people who die young or perish in a disaster. The Lebanese of the Titanic performed this ritual and danced in their own funeral lamenting their fate and that of their family members.

These Lebanese villagers hailed from Hardine, Kfar Michki, Tibnine, El Shweir, Zgharta, and Serhel were of different ages including children.

Several books were written about the Titanic, those who perished on that ill fated day and those who survived. Among the survivors were Anna Thomas (Touma) and her son Georges. A book has recently been written by Joseph Thomas, one of Anna's grandchildren. The book is entitled "Grandma Survived the Titanic". Anna with tears in her eyes reported to her grandson that "there were a dozen families from her tiny village that accompanied them on this trip to America and who drowned on the Titanic since they were locked in staterage." When the ship hit the iceberg, Anna was asked to pray by two Lebanese males who reported that to her, her response was "I will do but I better find out what I have to pray about."

### Stories

Shaaninee Abi Saab wife of George Joseph Whabee, "known as: The better known of the Arabs who traveled on the Titanic was born in Thoum, Lebanon on Palm Sunday, 1874. She was the youngest of seven children, the daughter of Thomas George Abi-Saab and Katoole Deeb Abi-Saab. She married George Joseph Whabee and came to America in 1906, hoping to make enough money to return to Lebanon and buy land for her family. But, when her husband died in 1908, she remained in Youngstown, Ohio, where she raised her children, Joseph, Thomas, Albert, Rose and Mary, who had stayed behind in Lebanon. Around 1910, her son Thomas became seriously ill. Doctors told her to send him back to Lebanon where the fresh mountain air was expected to help nurse him back to good health. She later learned that her son's illness had worsened, and, fearing his death, she returned to Lebanon, arriving 10 days after he had died. She had left her daughters, Rose and Mary, in the care of the Christ Mission Society. It was in April 1912 that Shawnee traveled to Cherbourg, France where she purchased her ticket (26889) aboard the Titanic. It cost her 4 pounds 4 shillings. She boarded with three other cousins, named above. A survivor, she witnessed the sinking of the ship, and saw her male cousins remain on-board. Members of the crew, using guns, fired into the air to prevent some of the men from rushing the few lifeboats. She sat with other passengers in the life boat, dressed only in a nightgown and life-jacket, shivering in the cold. Several passengers in the boat died from the cold during the six hour wait.



Grandma Anna (center) with (left to right) George Thomas, Sam Thomas and Dr. Joseph W. Thomas in the early 1970s.  
Source: Joseph Thomas, Grandma Survived the Titanic, Bloomington: Author House, 2008, page 106.

Part of her story was told to the Sharon Herald on April 1937, 14, commemorating the sinking 25 years later: "Banoura and I were placed into the next to the last lifeboat to be lowered from the ship. A scared young man leaped over the side of the liner and landed in the bottom of the lifeboat. Women shielded him with their night gowns so the sailors wouldn't see him. They would have shot him," she recalled. "After being pulled about a half-mile away, the sailors stopped rowing. We watched the lights of the big boat with our hearts in our throats. Then we saw it sink." Shawnee was cared for by the Hebrew Sheltering Society when she arrived in New York. She later boarded a train for Youngstown after being paid 150\$ by the Titanic company for her lost belongings. Witnessess and relatives reported that when she left for Lebanon to see her dying son, her hair was jet black. A year after the Titanic tragedy, her hair was completely white."

Source: Ray Hanania, Arabs on Titanic: We Share the Pain but Not the Glory, Mediaoasis, Originally published on April 1998, 8, updated Dec. 2009, 19.



ميشال كرم  
التباينون في التباينات  
مؤسسة كاش للكتابة  
٢٠٠٠ ص ٤٧.

### List of Names of the Lebanese Passengers on Titanic.

#### Survivors

Abraham, Mary Sophie Halaut. Albimona, Nassef Cassem. Assaf, Mariana. Ayoub Daher, Banoura. Baclini, Latifa. Baclini, Marie Catherine. Baclini, Eugenie. Baclini, Helene Barbara. Hannah, Borak. Leeni, Fahim ("Philip Zenni"). Mamee, Hanna. Moubarek, Omine. Moubarek, Gerios ("George \_"). Moubarek, Halim Gonios. Moussa, Mantoura Boulos. Mousseilmani, Fatima - Najib Kiamie, Adele "Jane". Nakid, Sahid. Nakid Waika "Mary". Nakid, Maria. Nasser, Adele. Nicola Yarred, Jamila ("Ameila Garrett"). Nicola Yarred, Elias ("Louis Garrett"). Peter / Joseph, Catherine (Rizk). Peter / Joseph, Michael J. Peter / Joseph, Anna ("Mary Joseph"). Thomas, Thamine "Thelma". Thomas/Tannous, Assad Alexander. Touma, Hanna Youssef - Touma, Maria Youssef (Thomas). Touma, Master Georges Youssef (Thomas). Yazbeck, Selini "Celine"

#### Killed

Attalah, Malake. Badt, Mohamed. Barbara, Catherine David. Barbara, Miss Saïide. Betnos, Tannous. Caram, Maria Elias. Chehab/ Shihab, Emir Farres. Elias, Joseph Jr. Elias Nasrallah, Tannous. Gerios Thamah, Assaf. Hanna, Boulos. Hanna, Mansour. Ibrahim Shawah, Yousseff. Joseph (Shahin), Elias. Khalil, Betros. Khalil Zahie "Maria". Lahoud Ishaq Mowad, Sarkis. Leeni, Fahim ("Philip Zenni") Nakid, Toufik. Nassr Alma, Mustafa Farm. Nassr Ricq, Saade. Norfal, Mansour. Razi, Raihed. Saad, Amin - Saad, Khalil. Samaan, Hanna. Samaan, Elias. Samaan, Yousseff ("Joseph"). Seman, Betros. Thomas, Charles R'ad. Torfa, Assad. Yazbeck, Antoni. Wazli, Mr Youusif Ahmed. Youusif (Sam'aan), Gerios. Yousseff (Abi Saab), Gerios.

Source: Ray Hanania, Arabs on Titanic: We Share the Pain but Not the Glory, Mediaoasis, Originally published on April 1998, 8, updated Dec. 2009, 19.