

Emilee Johnson  
843-871-7939  
savedbygrace95@afo.net  
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## **The True Monument**

*Based on the true story of Marjorie Newell*

“Look at that iceberg!”

Turning toward the voice, I made my way to the front of the ship. We have spotted hundreds of icebergs while traveling through the North Atlantic, so I wondered at the excitement. Taking the stairs two at a time, I finally stepped onto the top deck. A blast of cold air hit me in the face as I gripped the railing and gazed over the wild sea. Gasping, I blinked a few times to make sure my eyes weren't deceiving me.

“Isn't that the biggest iceberg you've ever laid eyes on?” a sailor asked, sauntering up and leaning over the railing. “Wouldn't be surprised if one of its relatives brought the Titanic to its knees.”

“How much longer until we get there; I mean, where the Titanic sank?” I asked turning to my new companion.

“Oh, maybe in about 15 minutes...hard to know for certain when you're 'there.' You know, there's no statue or monument or the like to mark the place. Kind of sad, I guess, since all those people died there.” With a slight chuckle he added, “Well, I'd better go make sure the helmsman has changed course so we don't meet the same fate.”

The sailor's steps grew faint behind me as I sat down on a nearby bench and took in the glories of the Arctic Sea. I pulled my windbreaker closer as a sudden gust swept across the ship. When my fingers ran over my jacket pocket, I felt transported back in time to the early 1900s. I closed my eyes and imagined porters running here there across the ship bearing drinks and other dainties to first class passengers. I imagined standing on the bow of the largest passenger ship christened unsinkable. Ready to resume the story, I unzipped my pocket and pulled out a small, worn, leather-bound book: a journal.

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*April 10, 1912*

*This morning, father, Madeleine, and I stood on deck as the RMS Titanic was pushed from the dock. It was thrilling! This was such a wonderful surprise Father gave us at the end of our trip to the Holy Land. We are first class passengers, and our room is simply magnificent! The carpet is a deep scarlet and extremely soft. Our bed looks fit for a queen with lace curtains and the plumpest pillows. Madeleine and I played together on our violins tonight. I am so glad father had us bring them because my violin is one of my closest friends. We played a few hymns including my favorite, "Nearer my God to Thee." Strange it may seem, but I feel close to God tonight out on the open sea.*

*April 14, 1912*

*It is very late, but I can't go to sleep until I write about our wonderful day. This afternoon, father, Madeleine, and I sat on deck and chatted for quite a while about all the*

*ancient sites we have visited on this trip. I loved to see how pleased father was. He has always wanted to visit the Holy Land where Jesus walked, and now he has fulfilled this mission. I am so proud of him.*

*This evening we went down to dinner. A lady sitting next to me made an interesting remark during our meal. She said “Don’t you think the ship is going too fast? We are in the icebergs and I think we should slow down.”<sup>1</sup> If there is any danger, I certainly am not aware of it. Anyhow, how could this “unsinkable” ship go down? I do not want to dwell on such a dreadful thought!*

*April 16, 1912*

*How can I write? I wish I could awake out of this horrid dream! Madeleine and I are not onboard the Titanic anymore, but on the Carpathia, a passenger steamship. We have been searching all day but cannot find father anywhere. I must tell this awful story from the beginning. About an hour after I laid down my pen two nights ago, I was awakened by a sudden vibration. Madeleine and I were in the process of getting dressed when someone knocked on our door. It was our dear loving father. He told us to put on our warmest clothes and follow him. Upon reaching the deck, father quietly went to find out what had happened. Father’s calmness amazed me! When he returned, he told us that the ship had hit an iceberg and that he needed to get us on a lifeboat. He helped my sister in first and then turned to me. “Oh Father,” I cried, tears running down my cheek, “please let me stay with you!” He drew me close and said, “God is with us Marjorie. We must trust that He knows best. I love you dear. It does seem more*

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<sup>1</sup> Findlay, Michael A. and Merchant, Arthur. “Mr. Arthur Webster Newell.” [www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/titanic-victim/arthur-webster-newell.html](http://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/titanic-victim/arthur-webster-newell.html)

*dangerous for you to get into that boat than to remain with me here but we must obey orders.”<sup>2</sup>*

*Having said this, he placed me beside my sister and then turned to help other women into the boat. That is the last time I ever saw him. It was dreadfully cold and dark out on the open sea in that little boat. About an hour after we left the Titanic, I heard something. The ship was clearly sinking now, but the sound of music was coming from her. My heart seemed to stop as I recognized the tune: “Nearer My God to Thee.”*

*I will never forget seeing the Titanic sink. Her stern was lifted high above the water, and she was dropping rapidly. Suddenly, there was a great rush of water and a tremendous, awful groan as the ship submerged. Oh father, where are you?*

*My eyes are blurring with tears and I cannot write anymore.*

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“Say, I thought I might find you up here still. Aren’t you cold?”

I started at the voice of my sailor friend and looked up from the journal. “No, I guess not,” I replied with a smile.

“Well, just wanted to tell you that we’re ‘here.’

“Here?”

“Yes sir! ‘Here’ where the Titanic sank. Say, what’s that you’re reading?”

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<sup>2</sup> Findlay, Michael A. and Merchant, Arthur. “Mr. Arthur Webster Newell.” [www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/titanic-victim/arthur-webster-newell.html](http://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/titanic-victim/arthur-webster-newell.html)

“It’s the journal that my grandmother, Marjorie Newell, kept while she was onboard the Titanic. She passed away last year so I’ve heard her story, but this is the first time I’ve read it.”

“Wasn’t it hard for her to tell about that awful experience?”

I gazed out over the waves, lapping at the side of our craft. “It was very hard for her. I remember when she was telling the Titanic Society her story, she looked down and in a broken voice said, ‘I’ll never forget the screams of the drowning. It was absolutely terrible.’<sup>3</sup> My grandma loved her father very much. She wanted to tell his story out of respect and honor for him.”<sup>4</sup>

My sailor friend listened with his elbow on the rail, kicking a clump of seaweed off the deck.

“Remember when you said there was no monument to mark the place of the sinking of the Titanic?” I continued, joining him at the railing.

“Yes” he replied, turning towards me.

“Well, I’ve been thinking. There *is* something much more important than a monument...there’s a legacy. My grandma told me the story of my great-grandfather’s bravery in putting women and children first. He died living out Christ’s example of the strong dying for the weak. That legacy is now for me to carry on. The remembrance of that ship, two miles beneath us, depends on those who will learn from and live out the principles that were practiced on its final night.”

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<sup>3</sup> Gowan, Philip and Findlay, Michael A. “Miss Marjorie Anne Newell.” [www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/titanic-survivor/marjorie-anne-newell.html](http://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/titanic-survivor/marjorie-anne-newell.html)

<sup>4</sup> From [www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/titanic-survivor/marjorie-anne-newell.html](http://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/titanic-survivor/marjorie-anne-newell.html).

Silently we gazed at the ocean before us: the place of tragedy and the place of hope.

“Oh Lord,” I whispered. “May my life be a worthy monument of Titanic’s legacy!”