

Titanic

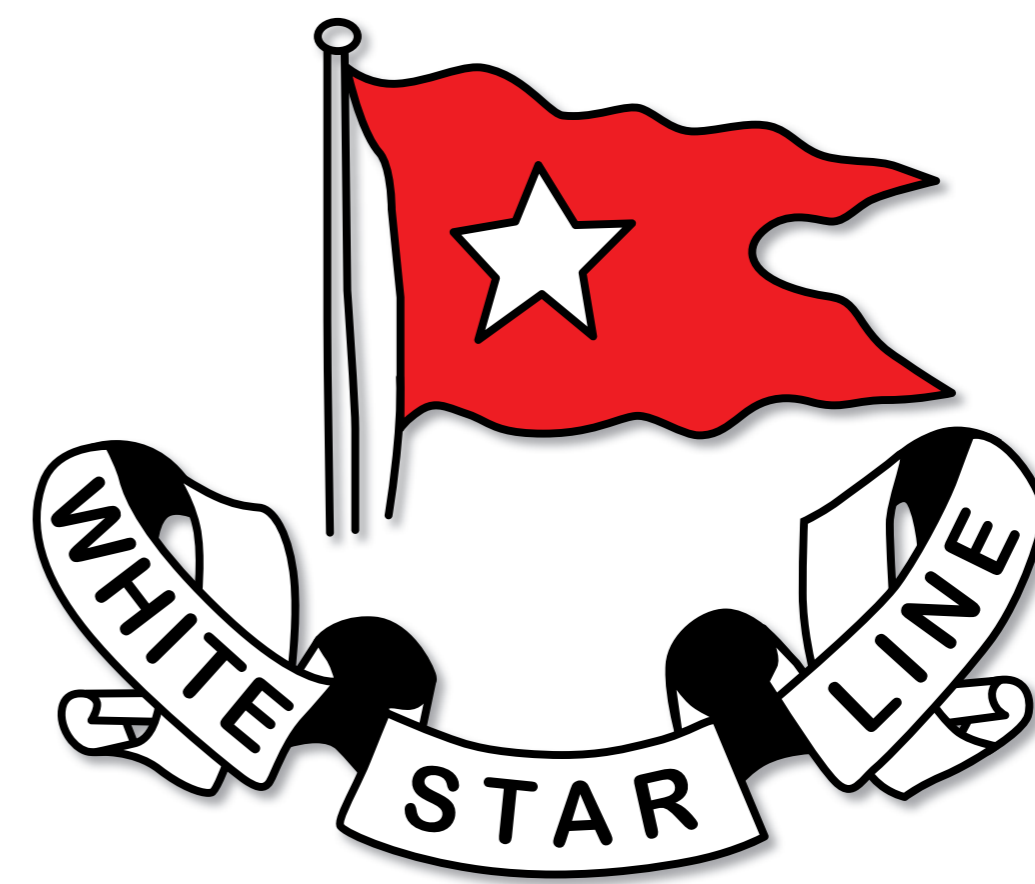


Table Story

From 1912, this Edwardian mahogany D-end extending dining table, as designed by Gilbert Logan at the cabinet workshops of Harland & Wolff Belfast, is constructed from satinwood with banded edges and moulding over a panelled inlaid frieze on four stout square fluted legs and bulbous feet, and with a winding handle and 2 leaved for extension.

A set of four Edwardian Hepplewhite style single sided chairs from 1912 and a pair of Queen Anne style elbow chairs circa 1912, also by Gilbert Logan, surround the table. The Edwardian chairs are constructed, with shield backs and pierced vase splats centred by oval fan segment inlays, with wheat sheaves at the top, on stuffed seats and square tapering moulded legs and spaded feet. The Queen Anne elbow chairs are constructed with shaped open backs and solid vase splats, drop in seats and shell-carved cabriole legs united by shaped stretchers.

The table was designed to be block mounted [raised by 6-8 inches] and fixed to a base to prevent movement at sea. This piece of furniture was commissioned, alongside a sideboard, for the White Star Liner R.M.S. Titanic for use in the private quarters of the Captain and Master, Captain Edward John Smith. It was intended that these pieces would be finished and installed in time for the vessel's maiden voyage departing from Southampton on Wednesday 10 April 1912. Unfortunately, at the time, the furniture was not quite ready, and the ship left for Southampton, bound for Cherbourg, Cork and then New York, without these items on board.

In a matter of days the furniture became available, and was shipped over to Southampton to await the first homecoming of Titanic later in the month. On passage from Cork to New York at 11.40 pm on the night of Sunday 14 April 1912, R.M.S. Titanic struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic and a short time after in the early hours of Monday 15th April 1912 at 2.20 am, finally

slipped beneath the surface and sank, with great loss of life. This infamous tragedy later came to represent the final passing of the Edwardian era whilst acting as a harbinger of the Great War of 1914-1918.

In the aftermath of the tragedy, it was clear that this furniture was no longer considered of any relevance, and it lay undisturbed and forgotten in store for many years. Eventually it was retrieved by Harland & Wolff, its Custodian. It is only a consequence of the slightly late delivery that these items did not go to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean in Titanic and their survival is therefore most remarkable and poignant.

The sideboard designed for Captain Smith's cabin is currently on display by Belfast City Council in the newly refurbished City Hall. The table displayed in the Harbour Office is set for dinner using glassware and ceramic reproductions of pieces which were a feature of First Class Travel on board a White Star liner.

In 2009, the table was a centrepiece of the Antiques Roadshow visit to the Titanic Quarter development within the old Harland & Wolff Drawing Offices. The expert valuer from the programme found the craftsmanship of the table to be quite unremarkable; however, the story of Titanic and the mythology surrounding the ship across the globe meant that a value couldn't be placed on the table. He added: -

“I've had very exciting and very thrilling moments on the Roadshow but this has to be one of the best”.