

# The *Titanic* and the Telegram

By Jessica Larsen

(Based on a true story)

Liverpool, England, April 13, 1912

Elder Alma Sonne lifted his nose and inhaled the smell of the Liverpool dock—a mixture of wet rope, steam from ships, and bustling crowds. He'd spent hours here as the mission secretary, arranging travel from England to America for both Saints and missionaries. Now it was his turn to travel home to his family and his sweetheart.

"The *Mauretania*," he announced to the four missionaries who would be traveling with him, gesturing to the ship before them. "She's over 750 feet long and weighs 30,000 tons—"

"I'm sure she's a nice ship, but she's no *Titanic*." Elder Chambers sighed.

"The *Titanic*! The Ship of Dreams! The Wonder Ship! The Millionaire's Special!" Elder Sayer said, quoting the nicknames for the new luxury liner that had set sail just three days before. The *Titanic* was 11 stories high and almost three football fields long!

Alma had originally booked tickets for all of the missionaries to sail home on the *Titanic*. But those plans had changed when Alma had received a telegram from Elder Fred Dahle, one of the missionaries who was supposed to travel with them. The telegram said that he had been delayed and wouldn't arrive on time to sail on the *Titanic*. So Alma had canceled everyone's tickets.

"I know you're disappointed, but we couldn't just leave Fred," Alma told the other elders again. They weren't too happy to miss the *Titanic*'s first voyage across the Atlantic.

"Where is Fred, anyway?" Elder Sayer asked.

"Here!" Fred called, coming toward them. He wore a big smile, and Alma grinned back. His friend had changed a lot over the past couple of years. Two years ago Fred hadn't gone to church much. When he and Alma received mission calls to Great Britain at the same time, Alma had convinced Fred to accept the call to serve. Fred had turned out to be an excellent missionary, and



Alma looked forward to spending time with him on the journey home.

The six missionaries all boarded the *Mauretania* and waved goodbye to the Liverpool Saints as the ship pulled away from the dock.

The journey was uneventful until four days later, when a member of the crew pulled Alma aside.

"Did you hear about the *Titanic*?"

"No, what about it?" Alma asked.

"She sunk two days ago, on April 15," the man said quietly. "Hit an iceberg on a cold, moonless night."

Alma felt like all of the air was sucked out of his lungs.

"And the passengers?"

"Only 705 survivors, according to the latest reports. The



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### WHAT HAPPENED TO ALMA?

Alma Sonne returned home safely and married his sweetheart, Geneva Ballantyne. He later served as an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He never forgot about the lessons he learned from the *Titanic*.

ship didn't have enough lifeboats. More than 1,500 of the passengers and crew were lost."

More than 1,500 people lost. Alma felt like his head was spinning as he walked to the cabin to share the news with the other elders. They sat in stunned silence.

"That could have been us," one of the elders finally said. The other missionaries nodded.

"I'm going to the deck to get some fresh air," Alma said. Fred came with him. The two friends stared silently into

the dark, icy waters of the Atlantic.

"You saved my life," Alma said, thinking of Fred's telegram. If it hadn't been for Fred, they all would've been on that ship.

"No," Fred said. "By getting me on this mission, you saved my life."

Alma put his arm around Fred. Heavenly Father had preserved their lives in more ways than one. ♦

The author lives in Arizona, USA.