

Connaught Telegraph

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Loss of the Titanic

*Flower of Mayo's Youth Sank with Hands Joined on The Titanic
Of Fifteen Merry Lads and Colleens Seeking Fortune only Two Arrive*

The Chicago "Evening World" says:- Of twelve young Irishwomen and girls, two young men and a boy comprising a party of fifteen from the County Mayo who started for Chicago on the Titanic, only two have arrived here - two colleens, Annie Kelly and Annie McGowan. The Rest are at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, for they went down with the Titanic, and there is grief here in Chicago, where relatives mourn, and grief back in County Mayo, over the sudden end to the dreams and plans of thirteen of the flower of Ireland's youth.

It was a family party, all the members being bound by the ties of kinship or of lifelong companionship. In it were John Bourke, a sturdy young farmer, and his Kate, the bride of less than a year and John's sister Mary, all from the farming country around Crossmolina; Kate McGowan, a former resident of Chicago, and her niece Annie McGowan, a girl of sixteen; Annie Kelly, aged 18 of Castlebar, the County town of Mayo, and a few miles from Crossmolina; Patrick Canavan 18 a cousin of Annie Kelly; Mary Manion bound to join her brother in Chicago; a boy Patrick, and Mary Flynn his sister; three blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked girls named O'Donohue, and Mahan Driscoll and Nora Fleming and Mary Glynn.

The mysterious workings of destiny contributed to the formation of this ill-fated little squad of ocean travelers. Some ten years ago Kate McHugh and Kate McGowan then little more than children, came to Chicago from their homes near Crossmolina.

Romance of Ireland Comes into Kate's Life.

They prospered, and bout fifteen months ago Kate McHugh went back to Ireland for a visit. She met John Bourke, a playmate of her childhood days, and he married her out of hand, for an old affection both had almost forgotten, quickly leaped into love. It was the intention of Bourke and his wife to live out their lives in Ireland.

Kate McGowan went back to Ireland last October. She owned a rooming house in this city, and it was her intention to return in the spring. Right industriously did she sing the praises of Chicago at the homes of those she visited in Co. Mayo, and the result of it was that when she came to start back there were fourteen ready to accompany her, among them the Bourkes, who had sold their farm and planned to invest their money in a teaming business in this city.

The night before the fifteen started for Queenstown to board the Titanic there was what the Irish call a "live-wake" at Castlebar. Hundreds of friends of the young people gathered and made merry that they start with light hearts and merriment. Never were fifteen voyagers to a strange land launched on their journey with such a plentitude of good will and good wishes.

The immense Titanic overshadowing everything in Queenstown harbour was a revelation to thirteen of the little party as they came alongside in the tender. Some of them had never seen an ocean liner before. The Mayo delegation was given a section of the third class quarters

remote from the Lithuanians and Herzegovinians and Slavs. Who had boarded the vessel the day before at Cherbourg and were already filling the steerage with strange odours.

Although travelling third class this little party of fifteen was prosperous. All had money and good clothing and many little trinkets they were carrying to loved ones who had gone before to the far-off and mysterious and magical Chicago. The fifteen kept to themselves spending the days on deck in the fresh air and sunshine.

They were all asleep, when the Titanic, rushing along at twenty-three knots an hour tore a hole in her hull against an iceberg. The jar did not disturb the third cabin, where the rush of waters and the throb of the engines was always felt and heard. It was half an hour or more after the Titanic struck when a steward roused the County Mayo travelers and told them the ship had struck something, but there was no danger.

Although they believed the steward, they did not go to sleep again. There was apprehension in the hearts of the lads and colleens from Mayo, and when Mrs. Bourke suggested prayer they all knelt. One of them recited the rosary and the others with their beads in their hands, intoned the responses aloud. They were calm then but they did not sleep.

Just twenty minutes before the boat went down stewards ran through the steerage shouting orders for all passengers to go on deck. There was no time for those who had neglected to clothe themselves to dress. They swarmed to the companionway leading to the upper decks, but were held back by officers, who said things were not ready.

John Bourke and Patrick Canavan knew there was a ladder leading to the upper decks. Gathering the women and girls about them they started for the ladder. Just then a steward, who had talked on several occasions to Annie Kelly, a roguish miss, happened along and saw her, frightened and confused, dropping behind her friends.

Grasping her hand the steward dragged her up the stairway to the deck where the lifeboats were loading. She was clad only in a nightgown. A boat was just about to be launched. The steward pushed her in. It was only half full.

Then John Bourke and his wife and his sister Mary and the little Flynn boy appeared on the deck. The stewards tried to push the two women into the boat after Annie Kelly. "I'll not leave my husband," said Kate Bourke. "I'll not leave my brother," said Mary Bourke.

The crew of the lifeboat would not let little Flynn aboard, although he was a slight boy and not able to take care of himself. The last Annie Kelly saw of John Bourke and his wife and his sister and little Patrick Flynn they were standing, hands clasped in a row by the rail, waiting for the end. The end came in a few minutes. The great Titanic went down and of all that left County Mayo on that ship Annie Kelly thought she was the sole survivor. But the next day, when she had recovered from the effects of the shock and exposure she found Annie McGowan lying beside her.