

Titanic Commutator

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May - July 1996

Dear Sir or Madame:

I read of the Titanic Historical Society in Wyn Craig Wade's *The Titanic: End of a Dream* and hope that you may be able to direct me further in my family history research. Please use the enclosed SASE and small donation to provide me with basic materials.

My great aunt Honora (Honor, Honnie) Fleming was a steerage passenger on the *Titanic*; she did not survive. Her story was deeply traumatic to her sister, my grandmother, and I heard only the barest of details regarding Honor's death. I recount those details as follows:

Honora Fleming, daughter of Thomas Fleming and Mary Callaghan was born in the Townland of Carrowskeheen, Parish of Addergoole, County Mayo, Ireland, and as per the Census of Ireland, 1901, twenty-three years old (dates are suspect - my grandmother was three years older than the age listed in the census).

In 1911, her sister, Catherine Fleming Wynne, a domestic working in New York, sent money for Honor's passage in 1911. The family, however, needed the cash and spent it (according to legend) on the purchase of a cow. Catherine sent money again in 1912, and Honora purchased her *Titanic* ticket.

Supposedly, Honora had "no time" to buy a ticket in advance, and bought it "on the boat" (at the dock? ...on the tender? ...on the *Titanic*?). Still a resident of Mayo, she may have left from Queenstown.

Catherine's guilt over her sister's death was staggering if irrational. She told us she waited "at the docks." She also worked in Boston, in Somerville -- until 1920, but we don't think she went to Massachusetts until after Honora's death; we think she went to get away from New York and its associations, but that's also conjecture. I do not know how she was officially informed of Honora's death. I do know that her body was not found or perhaps I should say



CENSUS OF IRELAND, 1901.

FORM A.

No. on Form B. 2

RETURNS of the MEMBERS of this FAMILY and their VISITORS, BOARDERS, SERVANTS, &c. who slept or staid in this House on the night of SUNDAY, the 31st of MARCH, 1901.

NAME AND BIRTHDAY	RELATION TO HEAD OF FAMILY	RELIGIOUS PROFESSION	EDUCATION	AGE	SEX	RANK, OCCUPATION, OR BUSINESS	MARRIAGE	WHERE BORN	IRISH LANGUAGE	IF Deaf and Dumb, Blind, or Idiots, State of Blindness, or Condition of Mind
1. Honora Fleming	Wife	Catholic	Read only	43	M	Unmarried	None	Co. Mayo	Irish & English	
2. Mary Fleming	Daughter	Do	Can't read	13	F		None	Co. Mayo	Irish & English	
3. Michael Fleming	Son	Do	Read & write	21	M	Freeman	Do	Co. Mayo	Irish & English	
4. Anthony Fleming	Son	Do	Read & write	19	M	Do	Do	Co. Mayo	Irish & English	
5. Thomas Fleming	Son	Do	Read & write	17	M	Do	Do	Co. Mayo		
6. Bridget Fleming	Son	Do	Read & write	16	M	Scholar	Do	Co. Mayo		
7. Catherine Fleming	Son	Do	Read & write	14	F	Scholar	Do	Co. Mayo		
8. Honor Fleming	Son	Do	Read & write	13	F	Scholar	Do	Co. Mayo		
9. Mary Fleming	Son	Do	Read only	8	F	Scholar	Do	Co. Mayo		
10. Bridget Fleming	Son	Do	Can't read	5	F		Do	Co. Mayo		
11. Ellen Fleming	Son	Do	Can't read	3	F		Do	Co. Mayo		
12. Joseph Fleming	Son	Do	Can't read	1	M		Do	Co. Mayo		

I hereby certify, as required by the Act 63 Vic, chap. 6, s. 4 (1), that the foregoing Return is correct, according to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I believe the foregoing to be a true Return.

James A. O'Leary (Signature of Enumerator)

Thomas Fleming (Signature of Head of Family)

Photo top: Thomas, Honora; middle: Bridget, Ellen, Mary; bottom, Thomas, Joseph Mary (Callaghan)
Honor Fleming is listed No. 8 on the 1901 Census of Ireland form. Photo: Patricia Nesbitt

identified.

Some survivor (Irish? a woman?) told my grandmother that Honora was exceptionally brave at the end; she sang beautifully (this was true) and her voice could be heard above all others. Needless to say, this anecdote was surely said in kindness more than veracity. If true, it gives me the picture of Honora being one of those kneeling around the priest, praying for a good death.

I enclose a copy of the 1901 census, a copy of the Fleming's family photo, circa 1910. I look forward to receiving material from the Society and wish you and your staff continued success in your work.

Patricia Nesbitt, New York

Dear Ms. Nesbitt,

Your great aunt was indeed on board the *Titanic's* passenger list, although for some reason she is listed as Norah Hemming rather than Fleming. Unfortunately the list compiled by the United States Senate, which gives addresses for many of the passengers, does not give one for Norah.

The Irish newspaper *Cork Constitution* of April 17, 1912 stated that Norah Fleming was of Castlebar, Ireland. Some years ago I was in touch with a woman in Illinois whose grandmother's aunt was from Addergoole Parish in County Mayo. She had identified twelve *Titanic* passengers from there, but stated that her grandmother recalled a thirteenth. This woman's memory was that it was a *man* named Fleming. Your great aunt is the only person named Fleming who boarded the ship in Ireland.

The woman who recalled Norah singing was surely Margaret Devaney, who, as Mrs. O'Neill, was a member of our organization until her death in 1974. She was interviewed by the *New York Herald*, which was picked up by the *Savannah (Georgia) Morning News* of May 1, 1912. It gave her name as "Mary" Devaney, and stated that she was from County Sligo. At the time of the collision she and a group of others were singing and having a good time. "A girl from my own parish, Anna Fleming, was entertaining us with Irish songs when the first word of trouble came. She went down with the *Titanic*, poor girl, and I believe she was singing or joking at the time, she was that jolly."

The *New York American* of April 29, 1912 had an interview with Margaret Murphy in which she stated that "Annie Fleming" was traveling with John and Phillip Kiernan, "John" Farrell (real name was James Farrell), Thomas Conlin and Michael Murphy. All were neighbors, and were lost. The *New York Herald* of April 29, 1912 stated that the Kiernans were from Foster, County Longford. The *Cork Constitution* stated that Thomas Conlin was from Arragh, Cavan. I do not have an address for James Farrell, and there is no Michael Murphy on the passenger list.

The officers of the Titanic Historical Society do very much appreciate your donation and photograph of your great aunt, it will surely be of interest to our members.

Dear Mr. Lynch,

Thank you for your most informative letter regarding my great-aunt Honor (Norah) Fleming. The Devaney family from Sligo was related to my grandfather's family; it is interesting to think that Mary Devaney may have been the one who told my grandmother about her sister's singing. I have sent my membership dues to the Society and hope to visit soon.

Gratefully, Patricia Nesbitt, New York
