

Jack Binns
and the
First Rescue at Open Sea
using Wireless
and What It Meant for the
Titanic disaster

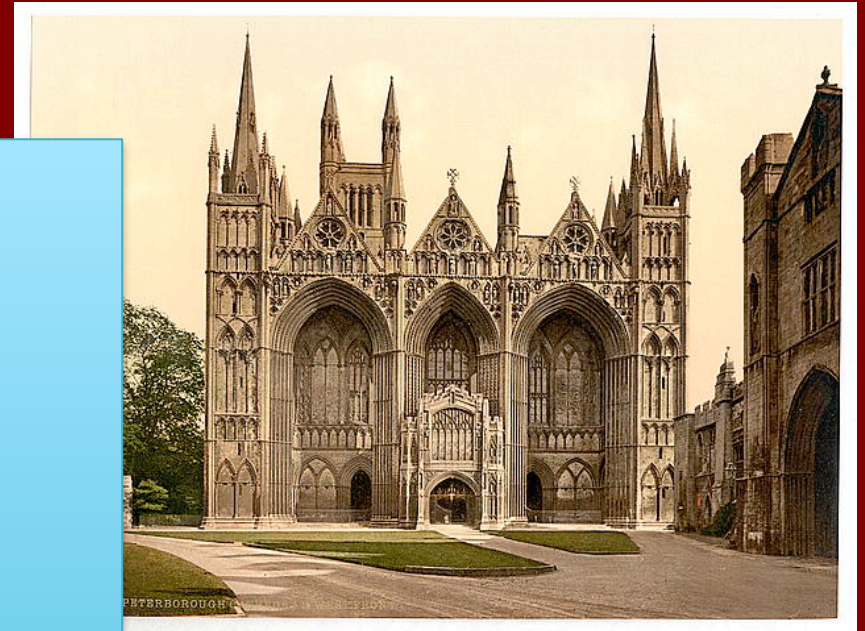
© 2021 Virginia Utermohlen Lovelace
January 19th, 2021

Binns' Childhood and Youth

John Robinson Binns was born
in the Union Poorhouse
in Brigg, Lincolnshire,
September 16th, 1884.

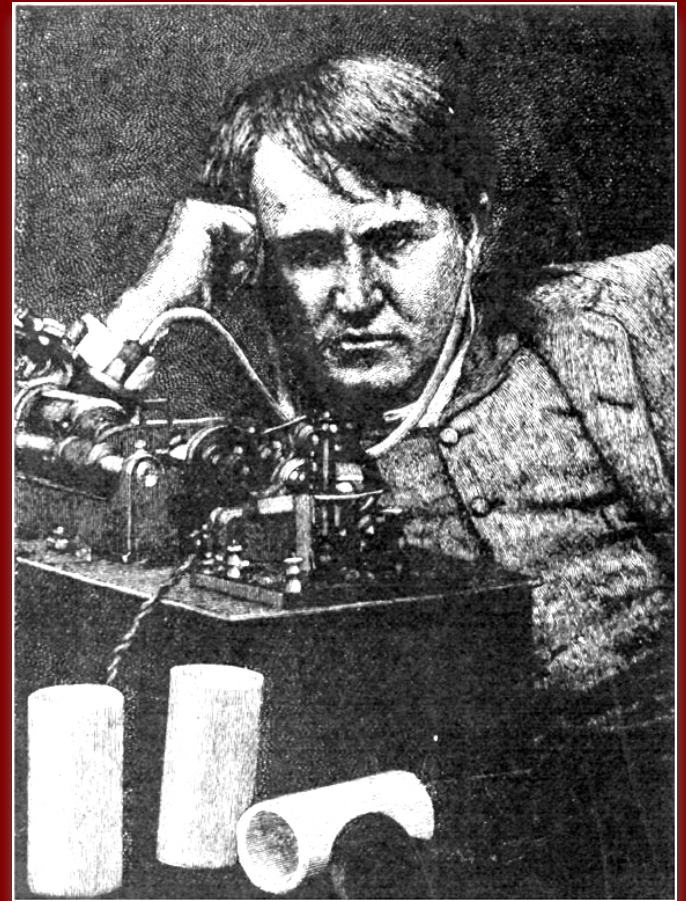


A plan of Brigg, c. 1906.



Binns grew up in Peterborough with his uncle William Binns, a tailor, and William's family, and then with his uncle Walter, who worked on the railroad

When he was 10,
Binns heard a
recording of the
Lord's Prayer
at an agricultural fair
in Peterborough



Edison and his Phonograph



Telegraph office

At age 13,
Binns became a messenger at the
Great Eastern Railway
Telegraph Office.



Due to a horrific accident at age 14 that nearly severed his legs, Binns spent a year in traction, lying on his back...

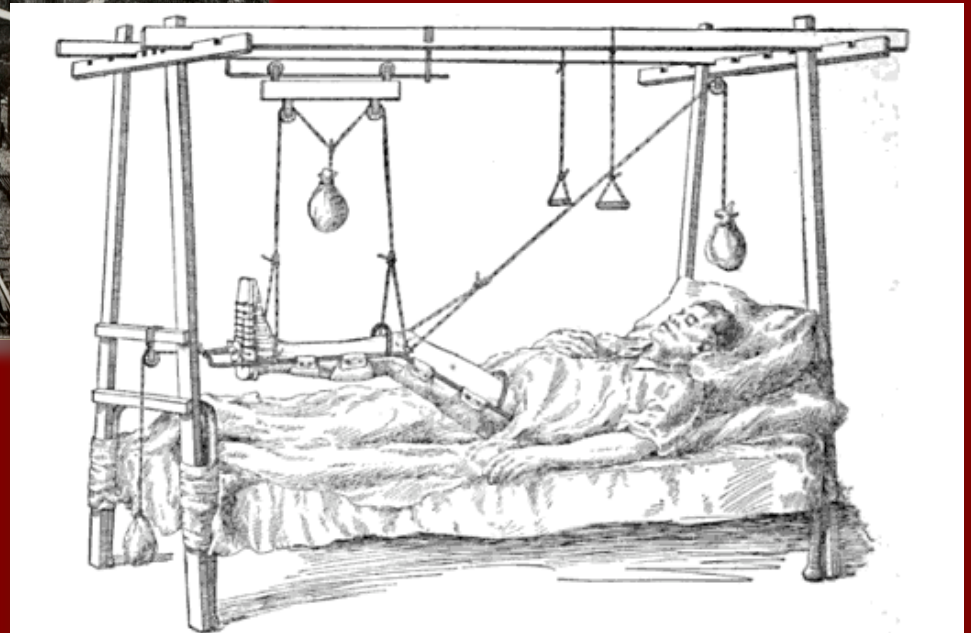
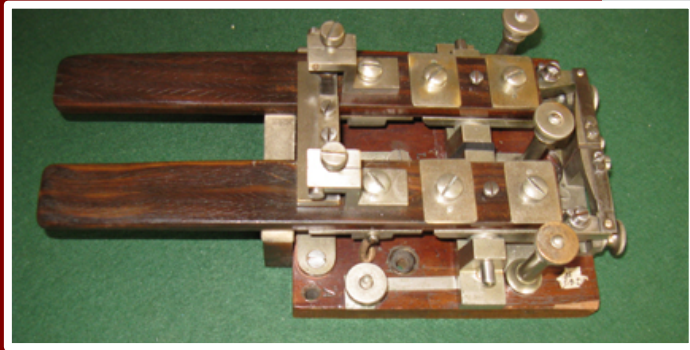
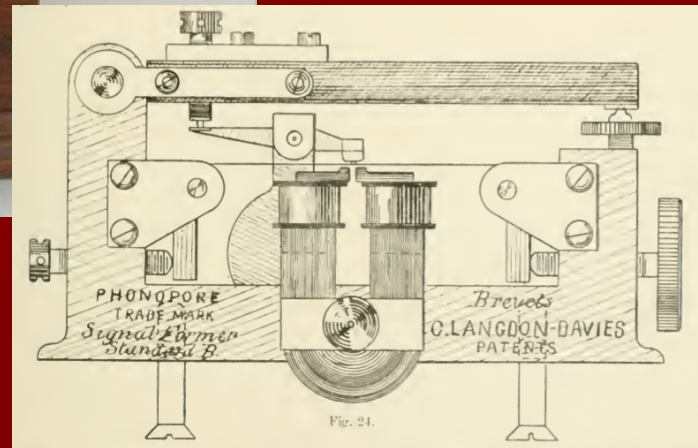


FIG. 191.—METHOD OF TREATING FRACTURES OF THE LEG USING THE HODGEN SPLINT AND THE SINCLAIR FOOT BOARD. THE HODGEN PERMITS MORE MOTION OF THE KNEE AND THIGH AND IS BETTER THAN THE THOMAS SPLINT WHEN TRANSPORTATION DOES NOT HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED. In order to illustrate the foot-board the foot has been drawn in a position of eversion, which is incorrect.

...now he had plenty of time to study!



When he returned to work at the railroad, he was promoted to junior operator. He learned how to use all three methods of communication available.



Single needle apparatus and double paddle key from the Peterborough Great Eastern Railway Telegraph Office. Photos courtesy Sidney Harbour, Peterborough UK; Phonophore drawing from Langdon Davies Langdon-Davies, C. An Explanation of the Phonophore and More Especially of the Simplex Phonophore Telegraph. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., London, 1891



1901 (age 17): senior officer
second in charge at the
Colchester offices:
Binns learned how to modify
and repair instruments



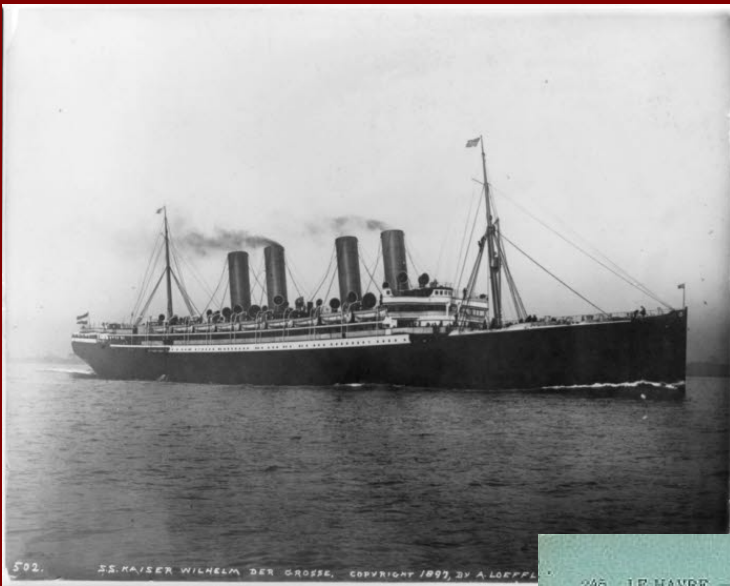
Joining the Marconi Companies

In 1904, went to
Marconi Company's
Wireless Telegraphy
training school at Liverpool,
finished training
in 3 months
(usual time: 6 to 10 months)



*Jack Binns
in his
Marconi
Cap*

Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse



*Kaiserin
Augusta
Viktorja*



Blücher



Grosser Kurfürst

Some German ships on which
Binns sailed, 1905 ~ 1908

Daily news at sea made possible!

In 1906 Marconi equipped German ships to receive messages from both Poldhu and Cape Cod, making daily newspapers with headlines available for the first time.



SELLING THE DAILY NEWSPAPER ON BOARD THE HAMBURG-AMERICAN LINER AMERIKA AS SHE CROSSES THE ATLANTIC.

The news it contains is obtained by wireless telegraphy, which thirty-one governments are represented, is sitting down to regulate, if possible, the method of exchanging messages by wireless telegraph systems.

New York Tribune,
October 7th, 1906



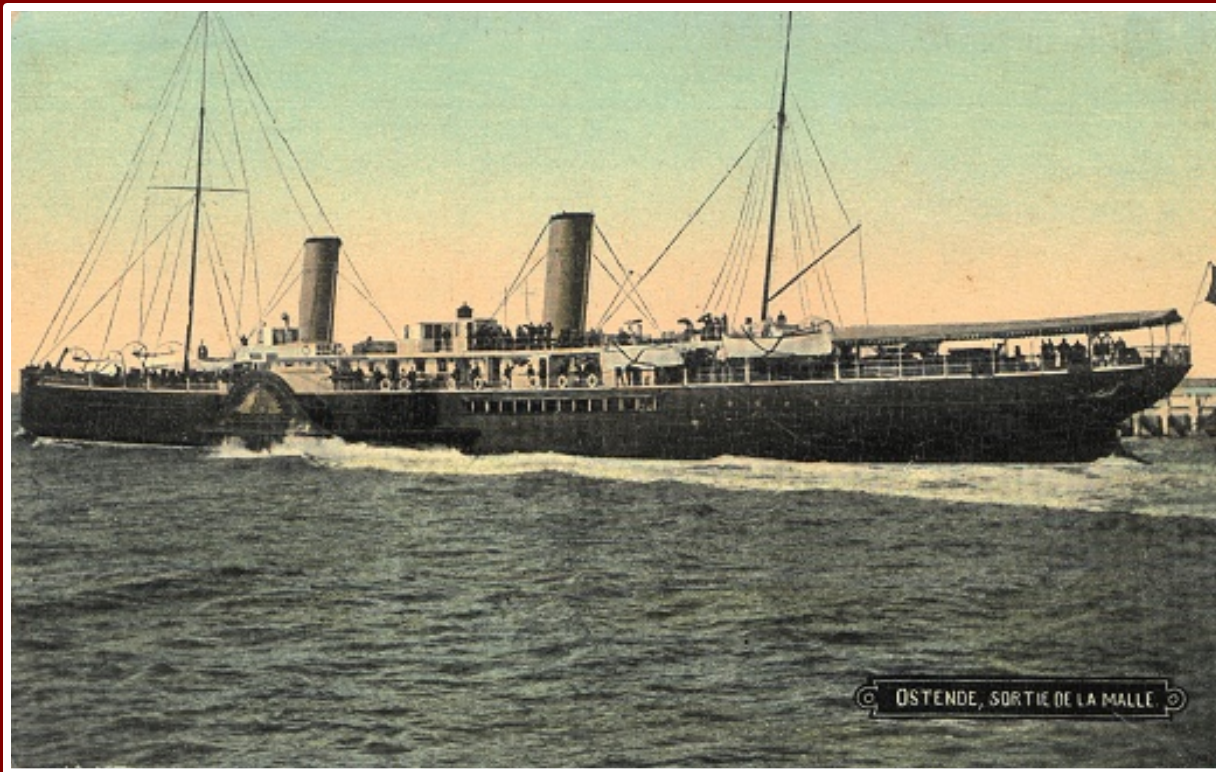
First wireless message sent in
the Arctic,
by Binns, July 1906

“While the midnight sun
shines down upon the
Northern seas, the
steamship *Blücher*
greeted old Arcticus with
the first radio message
ever transmitted within
his magic and
mysterious circle.”

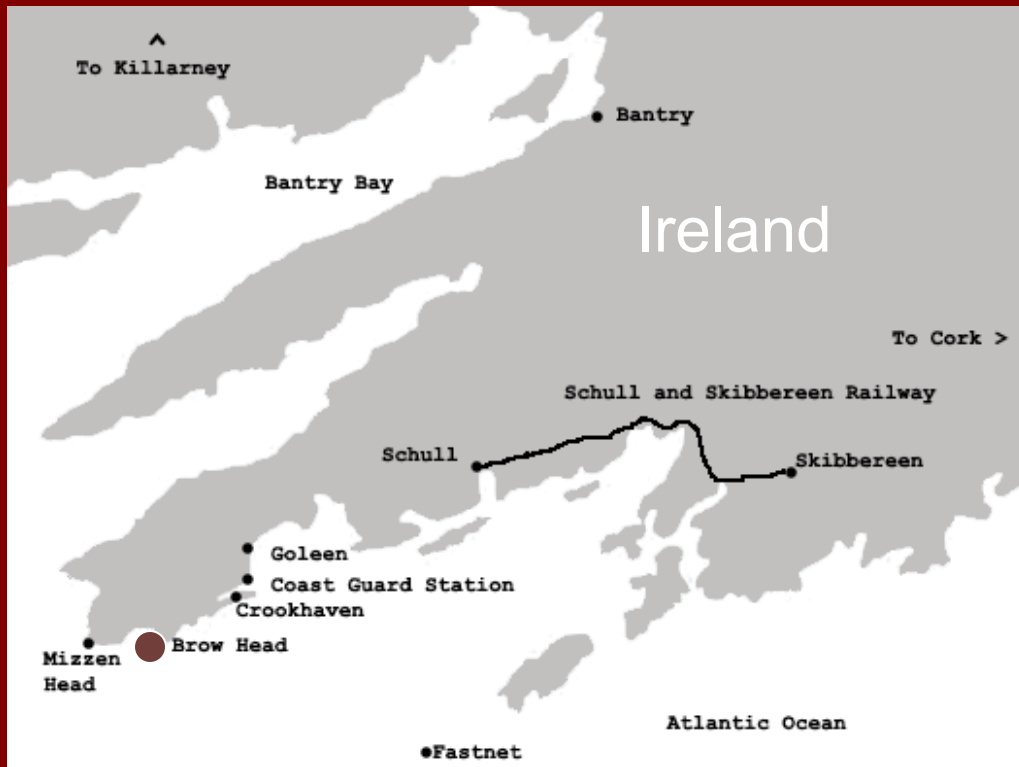


...but there was nobody to answer.

In 1908, non-Germans were barred from operating wireless on German ships =>
Binns assigned to carry out research on counterpoise wireless antenna performance in the sands of the English Channel coast



*Paddle steamer,
Ostende-Dover*

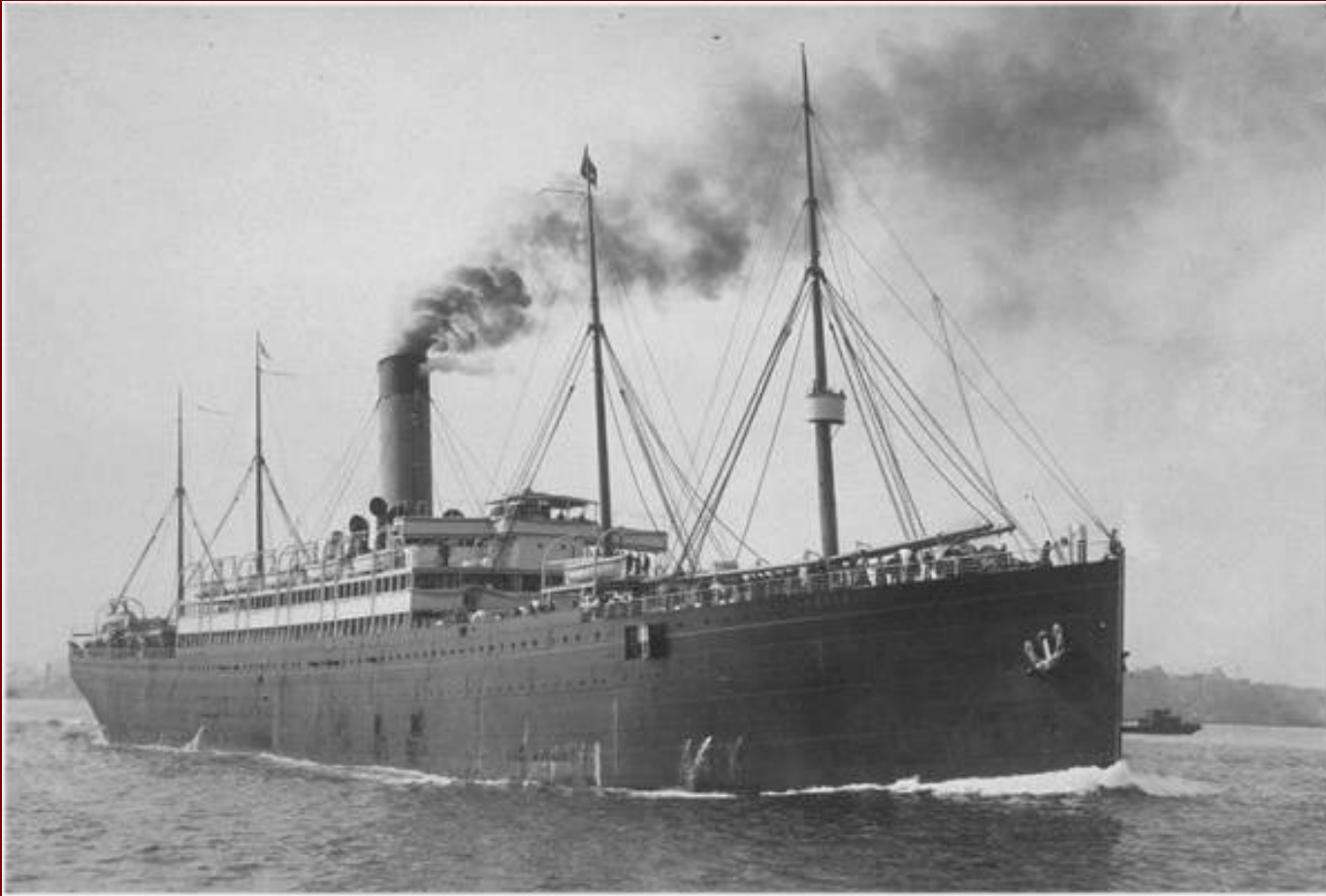


An Irish Interlude: Crookhaven/ Brow Head August-December 1908



*Photo of Brow Head
by Pieter Bos, 2008*

The *Republic*



RMS *Republic* - 1903-1909

Certificate of Proficiency in Radiotelegraphy

granted by the Postmaster-General.

This is to certify that, under the provisions of the Radiotelegraphic Convention, Mr. *John Robinson Binns* has been examined in Radiotelegraphy and has passed in—

- (a) The adjustment of apparatus.
- (b) Transmission and sound-reading at a speed of not less than 20 words a minute.
- (c) Knowledge of the regulations applicable to the exchange of radiotelegraphic traffic.

The holder's practical knowledge of adjustment was tested on a *Morse* set of apparatus.* His knowledge of other systems is shown below:—

It is also certified hereby that the holder has made a declaration that he will preserve the secrecy of correspondence.

Signature of examining officer

F. Long

R. Mackay for Secretary, G.P.O., London.

25 November 1908 (Date).

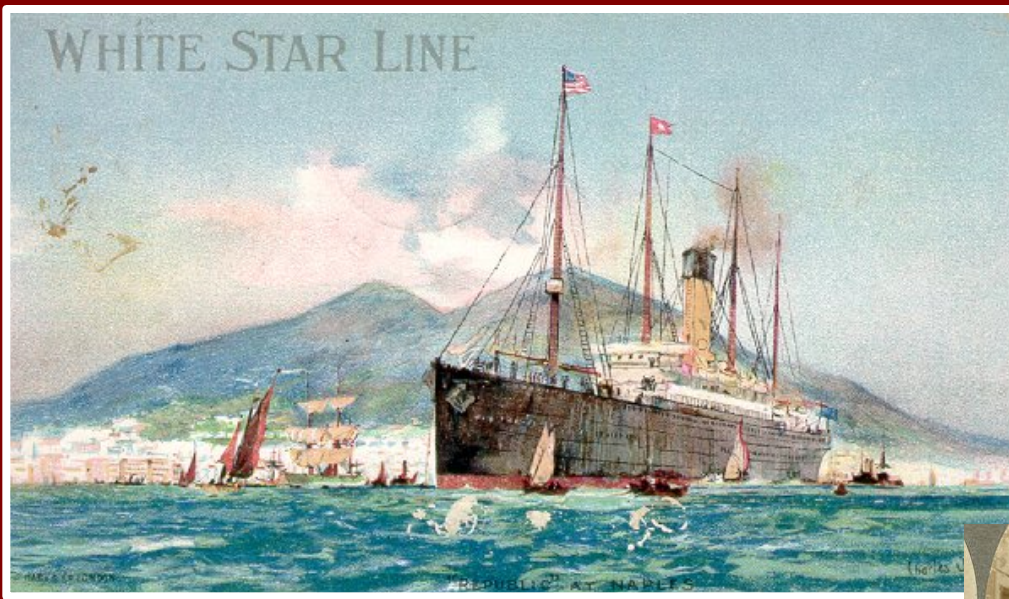
Signature of holder

J. R. Binns

Date of Birth *16 September 1884* Place of Birth *Brigg, Lincs.*

*It is not intended to limit the employment of the holder to a particular system, but merely to indicate the particular system in which he was tested for adjustment of apparatus.

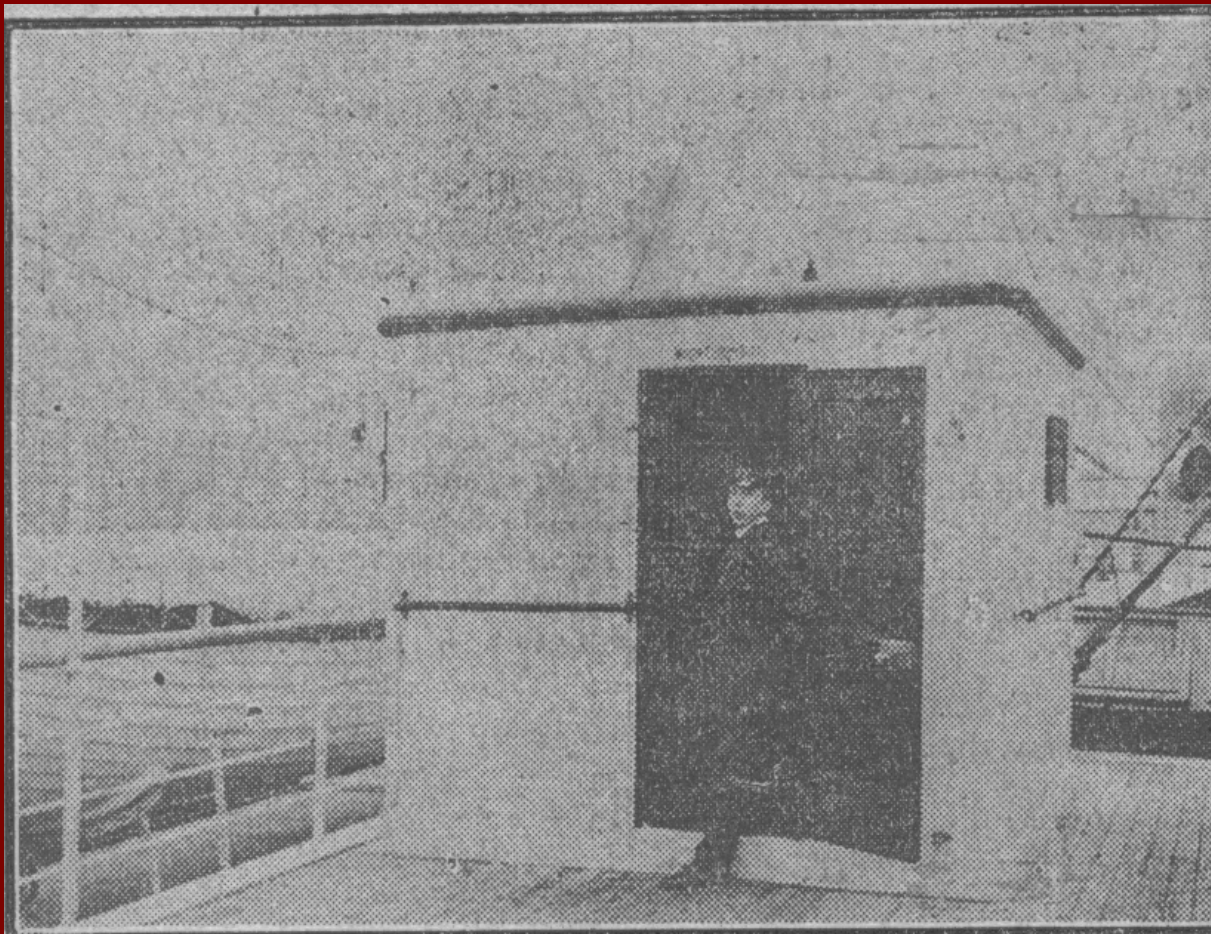
Assignment to the
RMS Republic
required that
Binns obtain a
Certificate of Proficiency
in Radiotelegraphy
25 November 1908



RMS Republic *at Naples*

Binns witnessed the
aftermath of the Messina
earthquake of December
1908





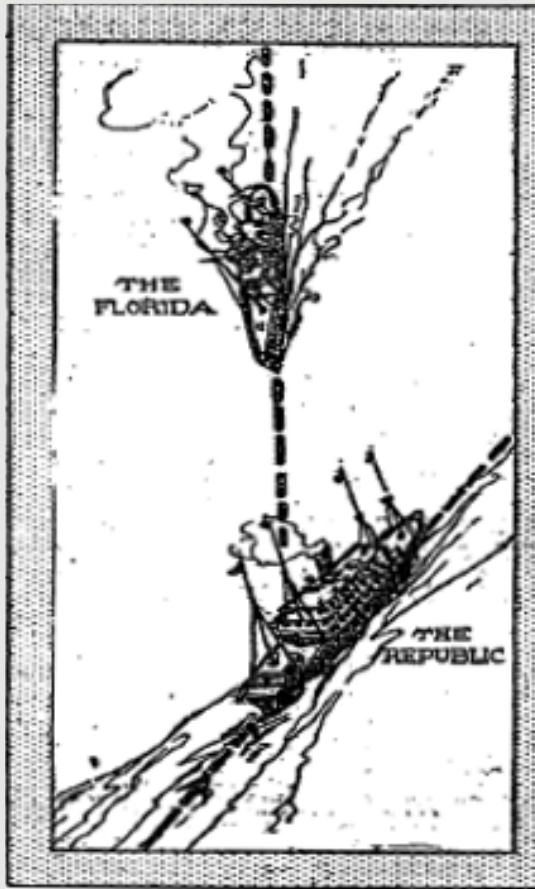
MARCONI STATION, WHITE STAR LINER REPUBLIC.

*The Marconi cabin
on the RMS Republic (?)*

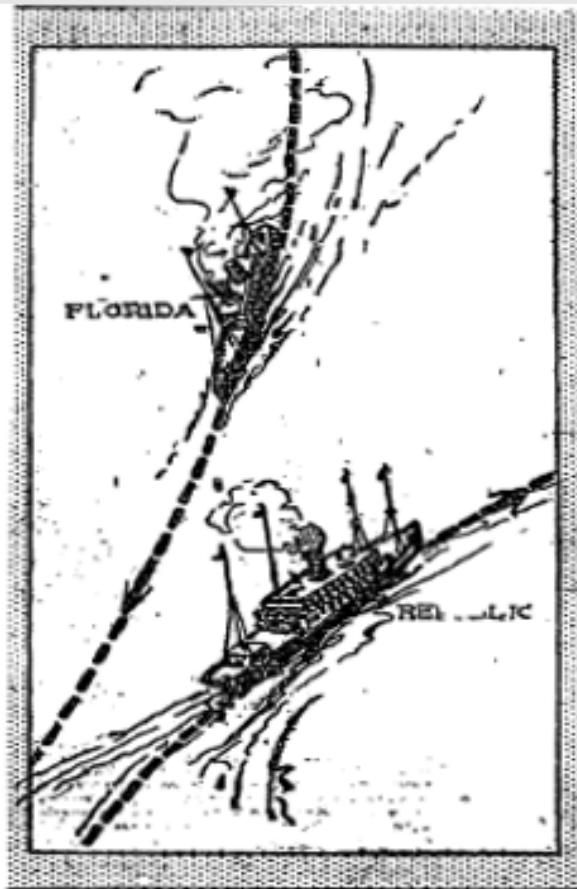


The Republic's wireless equipment

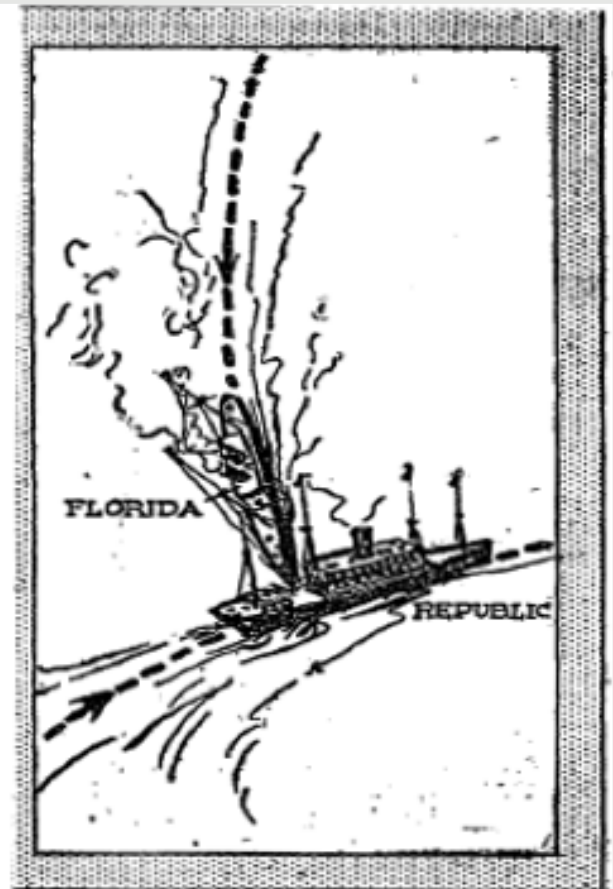
The collision between the
Florida and the *Republic*



AS THE SHIPS APPROACHED
EACH OTHER.



AS THEY SHOULD HAVE
PASSED.



THE COLLISION.

The collision, January 23rd, 1909



The wrecked deck of the *Republic*, with the carpenter and the carpenter's assistant

The “CQD”

A short history of CQD and SOS - I

- Marconi adopted CQ in 1902 from the wired telegraph signal “CQ,” meaning calling all stations
- “D” added in 1904, because of minor misunderstandings; letter chosen to stand for “distress.”
- “SOS” introduced for German ships in 1905 -- does NOT represent any specific letters, but is easy to recognize.

A short history of CQD and SOS - II

- Second International Radiotelegraphic Convention, 1906, adopts SOS, to go into effect in 1908.
- *Not used by Marconi operators* because the U.S. had not ratified the Convention
- The US Senate ratified the Convention April 3, 1912, to become effective May 25, 1912, after the sinking of the *Titanic*.



Taft returning to the U.S., 1908. On ship, he talked about SOS with Binns. As president, he pushed ratification of the Convention.

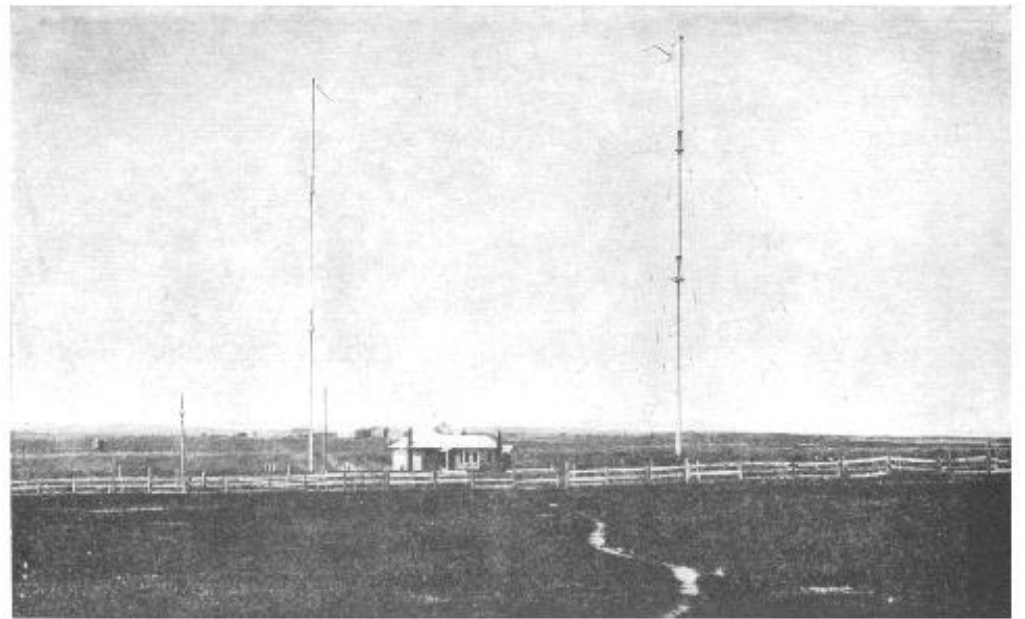


*Marconi wireless key with side lever
Photo courtesy Tom Perera, <http://w1tp.com>*

In the dark, Binns broke the side key, and had to hold it together in order to transmit.

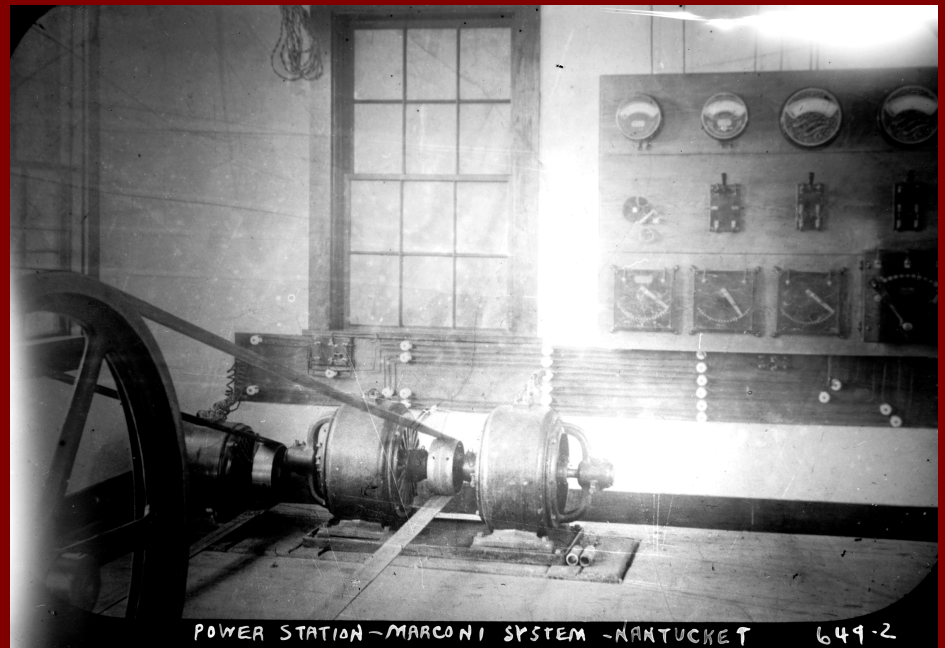


*The Marconi Station
at
Siasconset*



Wireless station, Siasconset, Mass., where the "C. Q. D." message was received from the *Republic*

Jack Irwin was on duty and picked up the signal, and passed on the CQD to ships in the vicinity, and news of the event to the world.



Dynamo at Siasconset

POWER STATION - MARCONI SYSTEM - NANTUCKET 649-2



700 PASSENGERS AND CREW SAVED BY STEAMER FLORIDA

WEATHER—Foggy and mild tonight and Monday.

The



World.

LATEST EXTRA

"Circulation Books Open to All."

"Circulation Books Open to All."

PRICE ONE CENT.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JANUARY 23, 1909.

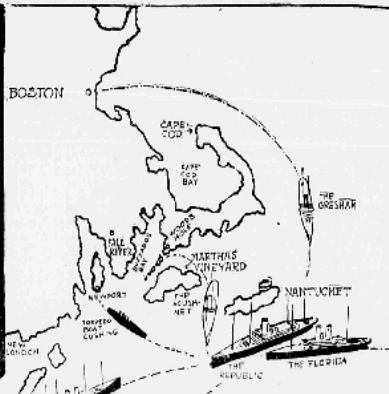
PRICE ONE CENT.

Vessel That Rescued Republic's Passengers, and Diagram of Boats Called by Wireless

"C. Q. D." was the code message flashed by wireless from the disabled liner and was caught by shore stations, which sent boats to her assistance, and by the Baltic and La Lorraine, which turned back to the rescue.



THE S. S. FLORIDA



WOMAN FATALLY BURNED

VIOLENT SHOCKS

SHRUBB-INDIAN RACE POSTPONED FOR TEN DAYS

BIG WHITE STAR LINER REPUBLIC HIT IN FOG AND ABANDONED AT SEA

Wireless Tells of Disaster and Brings Many Boats to Aid of Steamship Disabled by Collision Off Nantucket

OTHER VESSEL IN CRASH IS MISSING; MAY HAVE SUNK

Italian Liner Florida Takes Off Passengers and Crew—"Republic Will Sink Within Two Hours" Said Last Message

The White Star liner Republic, which left New York yesterday afternoon with 441 passengers, bound for Naples, was warned by another vessel twenty miles south of Nantucket early to-day in a thick fog. Her engine and boiler rooms were flooded through a hole torn in her side and she drifted helplessly until the Italian immigrant steamer Florida, bound for New York from Naples, with 900 in the steerage, happened along and took off her passengers. **REPUBLIC IS SINKING.**

From unable to locate the drifting, helpless Republic. The Florida, it is supposed, feeling her way through the fog, got into range of the Republic's fog bells and was informed of the condition of the liner vessel by word of mouth spoken through the mist through megaphones.

Immediately after the collision, which happened, it is believed, about daylight, wireless messages were projected from the Republic. These messages consisted of the letters "C. Q. D.," which in the wireless code notified all ships in the wireless zone that some ship is in danger.

GOT THE "CALL FOR HELP."

As this signal is recorded, all business is suspended in every wireless office it reaches. After a time there is a lull, and then, in response to an answering signal, the cause of distress and location of the vessel in danger are sent out.

This was the course pursued by the commander of the Republic. He announced to all within the reach of his wireless electric arm that his ship was filling with water and helpless in latitude 70.10, longitude 40. This message reached the Baltic and La Lorraine at sea and was received in the wireless offices at Charlestown Navy-Yard, Boston, Newport, Woods Hole, Sarsenset, and Vineyard Haven.

MANY BOATS TO RESCUE.

The revenue cutter Actonnet started out from Woods Hole, the revenue cutter Gresham started from Boston, the torpedo boat Cushing started from Newport and the revenue cutters Mohawk and Seneca picked up the message somewhere along the coast and headed out in the general direction of latitude 43, longitude 73, south of Nantucket lightship.

The fog was thicker up there even than the fog that smothered down on this city like a blanket, and the vessels bound for the Republic were obliged to proceed with caution, because that section of the Atlantic is thickly sprinkled with ships. It is right in the line of travel between New

The story arrives in the press as it was happening,
thanks to wireless!
New York Evening World, January 23, 1909.

The Rescue

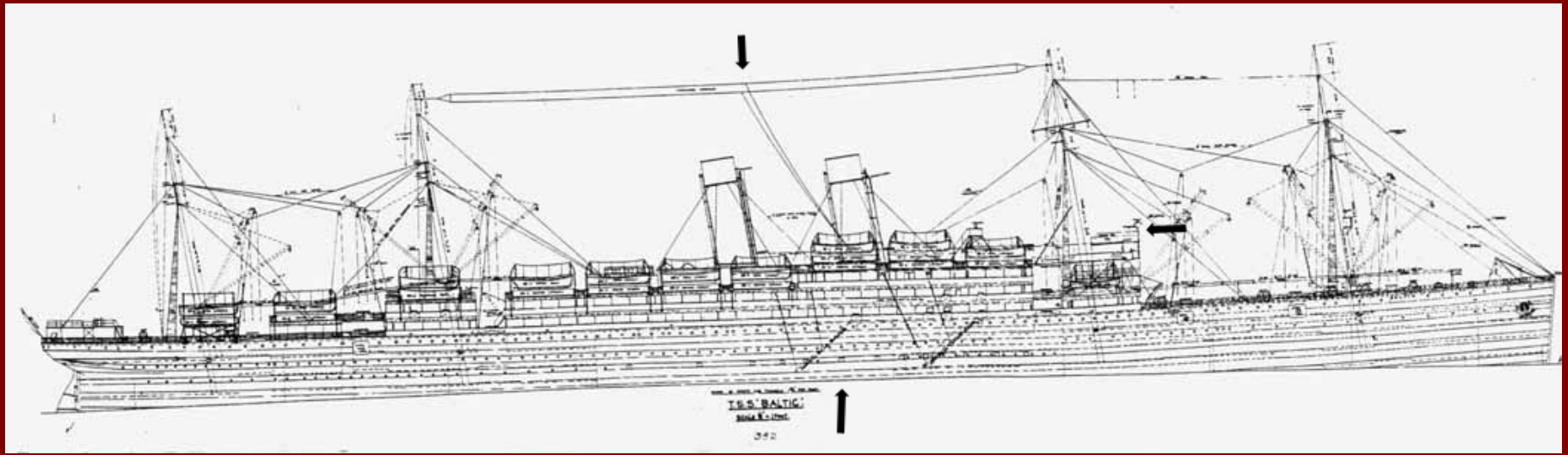
Transfer
from the
Republic
to the
Florida

New York Evening World
January 25, 1909



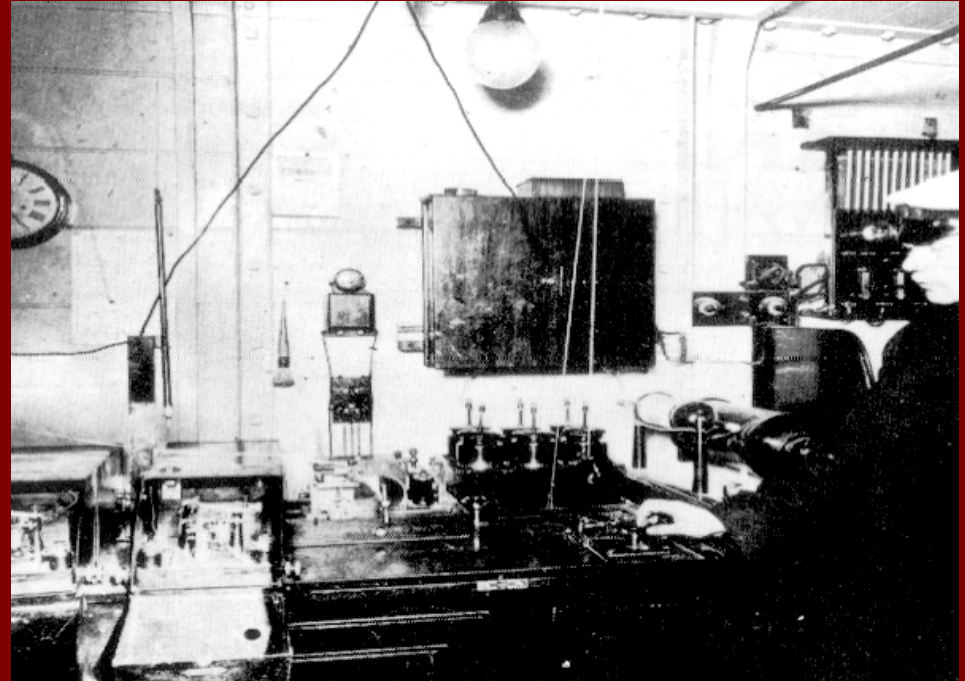


The doughty men of the *Republic* who rowed and rowed!
Photo courtesy Paul O'Brien, whose uncle was the
Republic's quartermaster



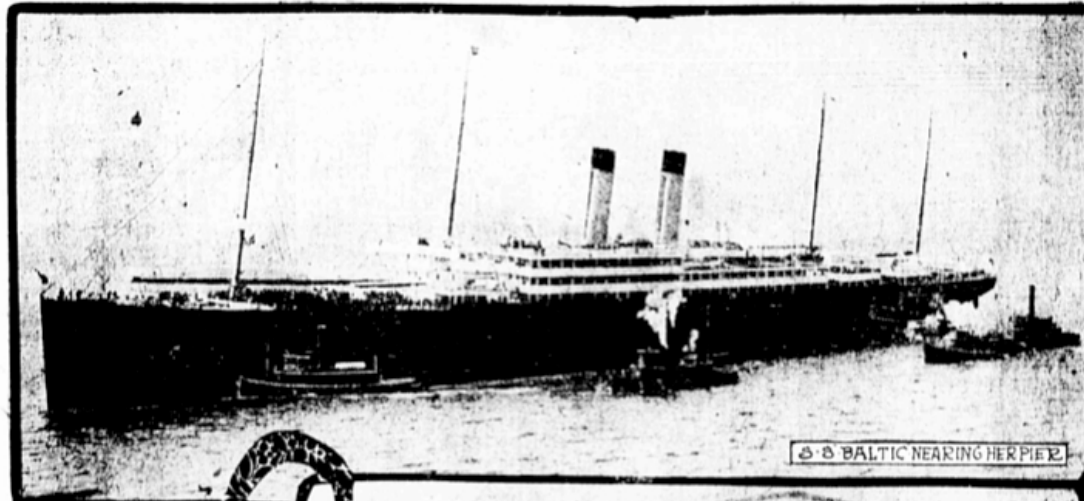
The Baltic

*The Radio Room in
the Baltic with
H. J. Tattersall
at the key*



*Rescued Survivors of Ship Crash Cheering
Capt. Ranson on Bridge as Baltic Reaches Pier*

(Photographed Especially for The Evening World by a Staff Artist.)

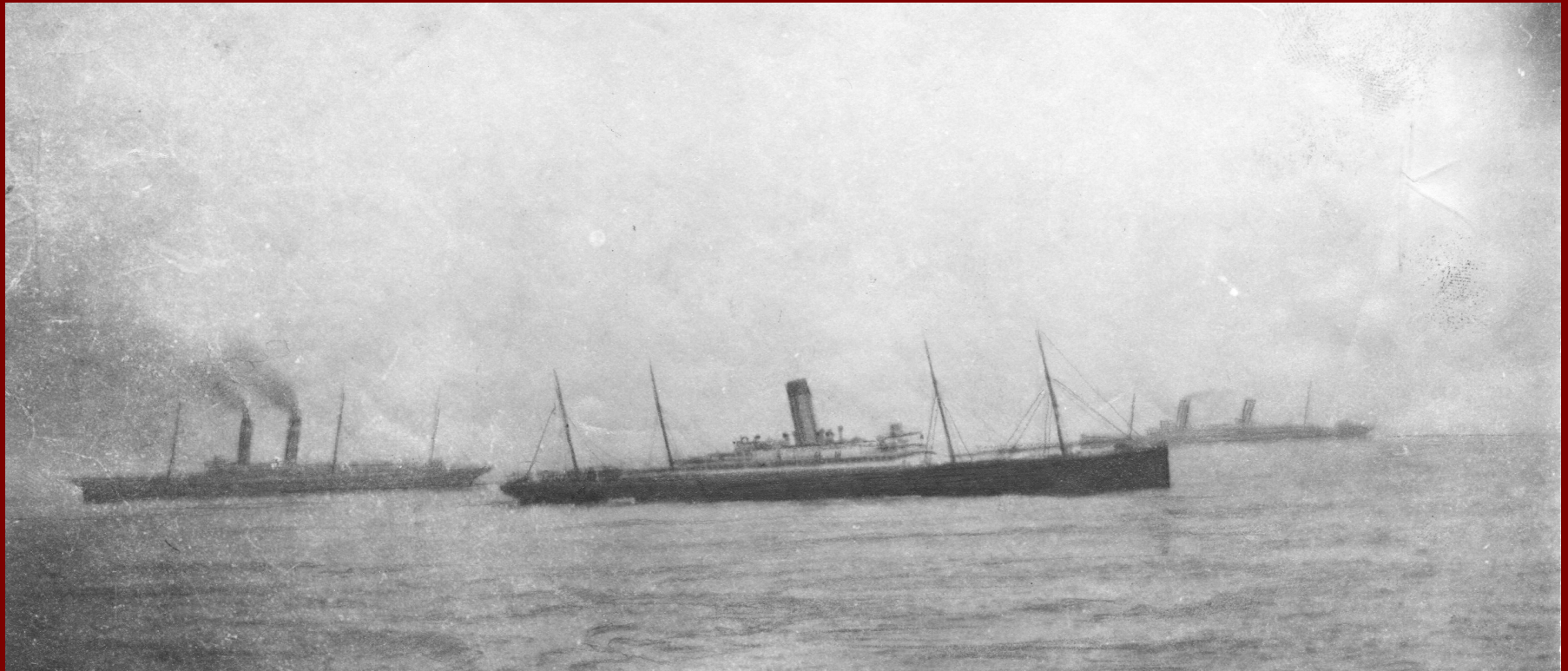


CAPT. RANSON

PASSENGERS CHEERING CAPT. RANSON

*RMS Baltic ~
the rescue
ship
Passengers
and crew from
both the
Florida and
the Republic
were rowed to
her -
1522 people
in all.*

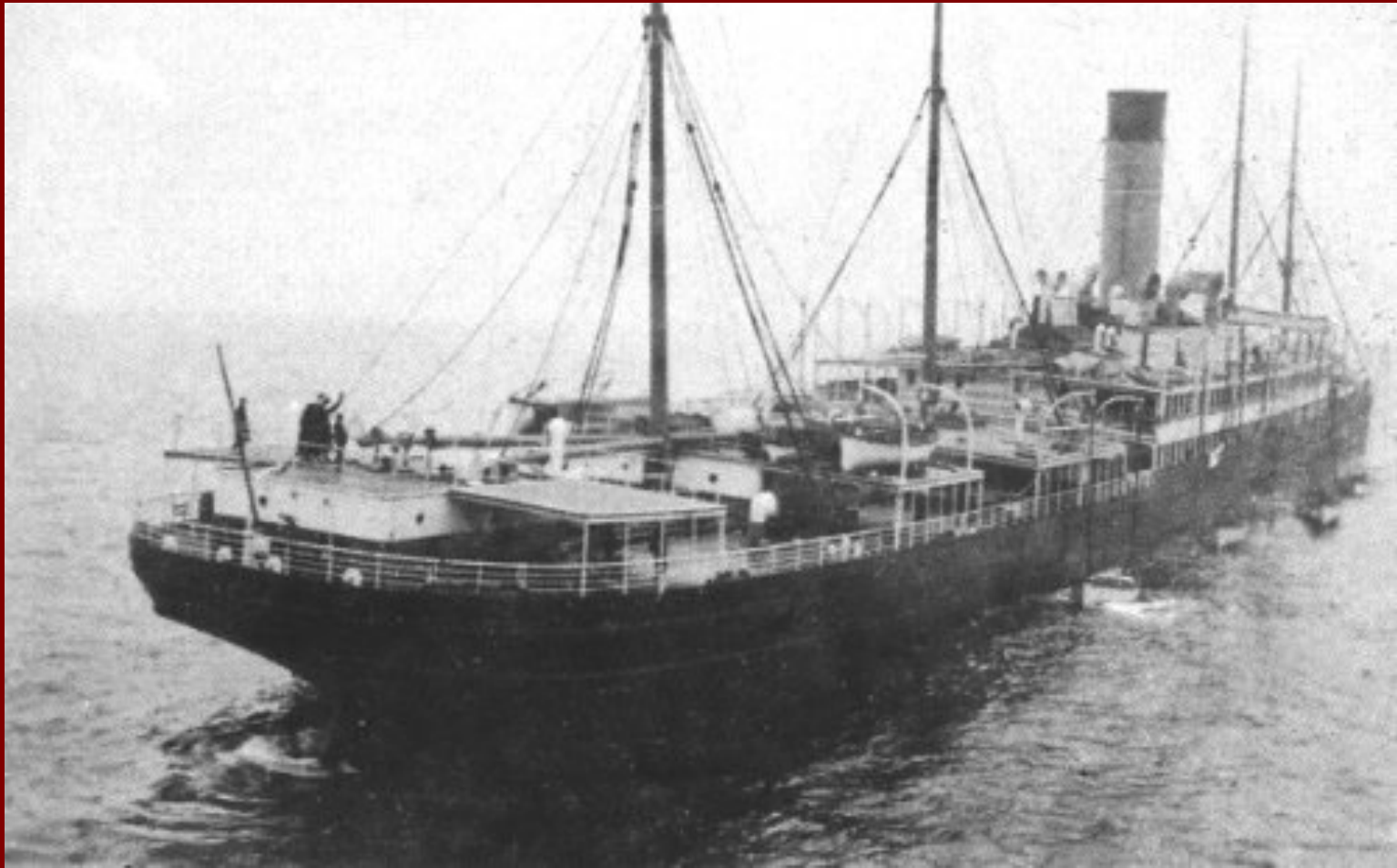
Ships congregating around the *Republic*



Lucania

Republic

New York

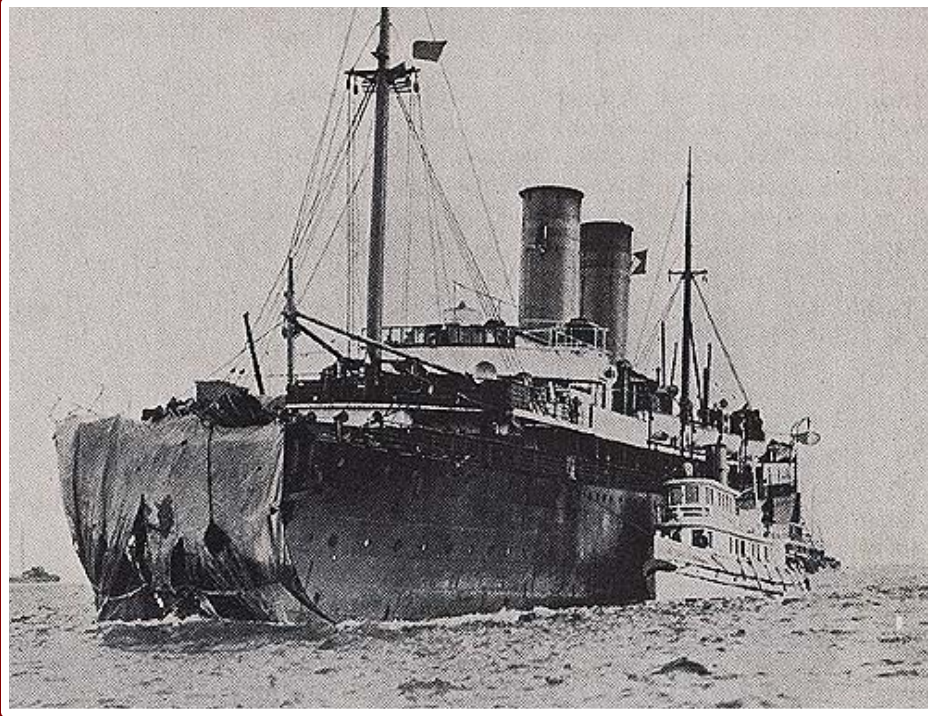


Lifeboats being hoisted on board after bringing crew back to the *Republic* -- Binns and Sealby are aft.

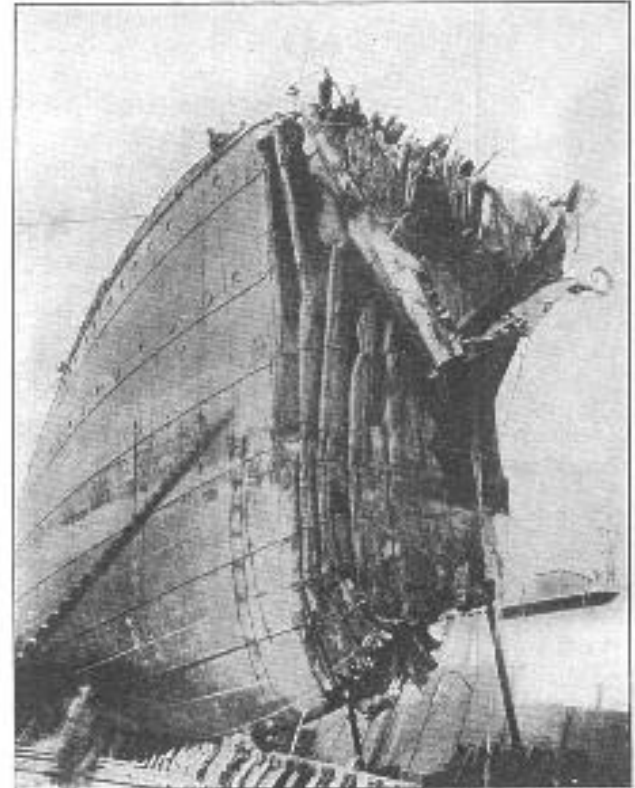


The Republic, January 24th

Photo taken by a Republic passenger from the Baltic.



*The crushed bow
of the Florida*



WHAT HAPPENED TO THE "FLORIDA"
This is all that remained of her bow
after the collision. This photograph
was taken in a Brooklyn dock.

The aftermath



The Chorus Girls Flushed Around Blons and Tried to Reconvert Him.

The recognition!

BINNS'S STORY OF WIRELESS WORK

**Republic's Operator Gives The
Times the First Account of
His Long Vigil.**

SIGNALS FROM BROKEN KEY

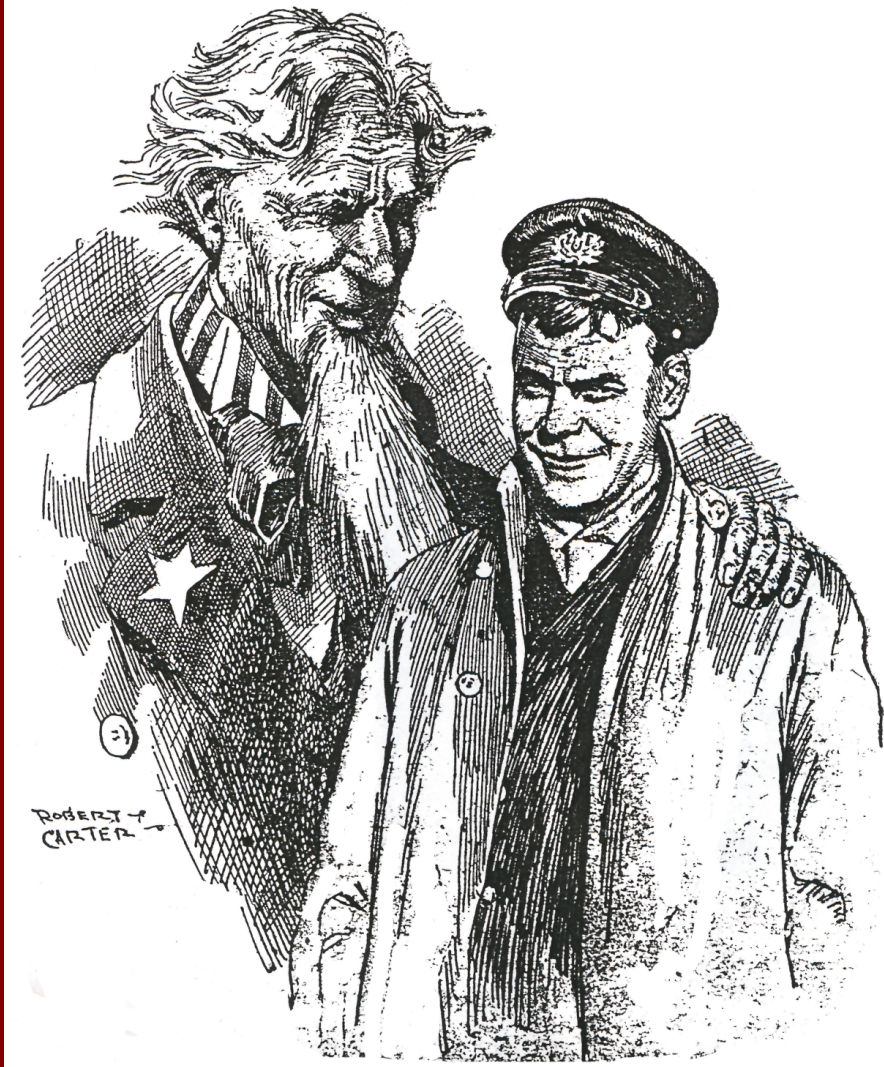
**With One Hand He Holds It To-
gether and with the Other
Flashes Appeals for Aid.**

SIASCONSETT REPLIED FIRST

**"All Right, Old Man; Where Are You?"
—Then Came the Baltic and Other
Ships—Tribute to Capt. Sealby.**

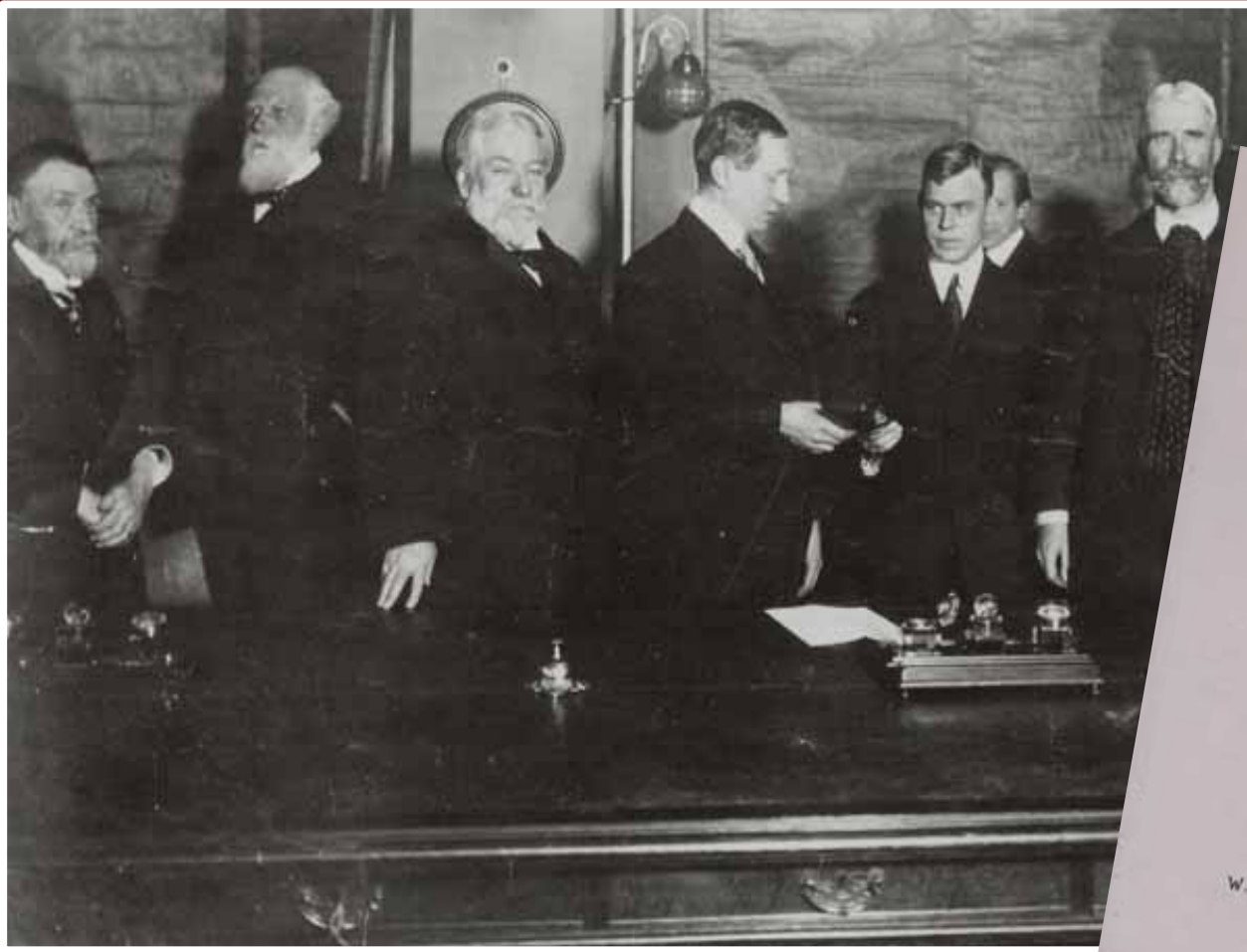
New York Times
January 27, 1909

Talk of Binns, and America Grins

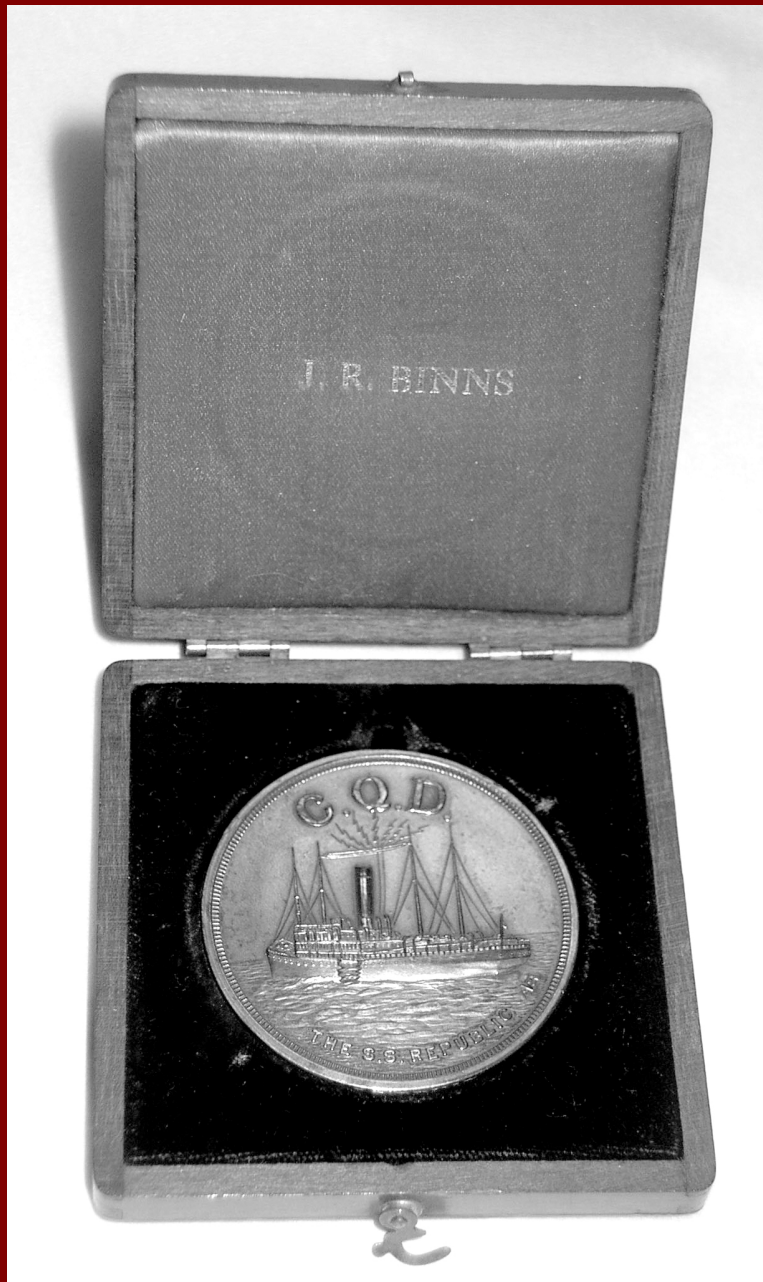


“CQD” Binns

Cartoon by Robert Carter in the New York American, January 27, 1909



Binns and Tattersall receive gold watches from Marconi



The CQD medal
presented to the
crews of the
Republic, the
Florida, and the
Baltic by the
Republic's
passengers

OUR NOTE BOOK



THIS is a portrait of Jack Binns, the "wireless" hero of the *Republic*, who has been awarded a life-saving medal by the French Government, fêted in New York, and enthusiastically welcomed back to his native English city. To an offer to appear on the music-hall stage at 250l. a week he replied, "I am a wireless operator, and simply did my duty. I can't act, and I don't want to be made into a tin god." When the *Florida* crashed into the *Republic*, it may be remembered, it wrecked Binns's little room but left his apparatus intact, so he quietly sat at his instrument, and sent out the messages that brought assistance. Binns is a Peterborough man, only twenty-two years old. He began business as a telegraph messenger at the Great Eastern, and then learned the Marconi system,

From the "Boy's Own Annual" 1909



Medal from the Société des
Sauveteurs de la Seine

Publicity for Marconi's wireless!



Marconi was thrilled about the advertising value of the disaster!

C.Q.D. C.Q.D. C.Q.D. C.Q.D.
 { CROSSING THE ATLANTIC WITH WIRELESS HERO
 "JACK" BINNS--TO-DAY'S EVENING WORLD }
 C.Q.D. C.Q.D. C.Q.D. C.Q.D.

Newspaper articles, advertising cards, "Via Wireless" at Luna Park, and the 3rd ever Electrical Show at Madison Square Garden


AMUSEMENTS. AMUSEMENTS.

**THE ELECTRICAL SHOW
 MADISON SQUARE GARDEN**
 Continues Open
 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday.
 Monday is Ladies' Day.
 See These Features—Take the Whole Family.


ELECTRICAL SHOW. Jack Binns sends wireless messages free.	ELECTRICAL SHOW. The Wireless Telephone.
ELECTRICAL SHOW. Wireless messages received by J. R. Irwin—who received Jack Binns's famous "Republic" message.	ELECTRICAL SHOW. Electric Laundry in full operation.
ELECTRICAL SHOW. Hatching Chickens by Electricity.	ELECTRICAL SHOW. Complete Printing Plant in working operation.
ELECTRICAL SHOW. Air Ships controlled by Wireless.	ELECTRICAL SHOW. Visit the Electric Tea Room.
ELECTRICAL SHOW. See the mysterious "Stunt" Table.	ELECTRICAL SHOW. Current of two million volts sent harmlessly through a man's body.
ELECTRICAL SHOW. Hear the Pianochestra.	ELECTRICAL SHOW. Free Moving Picture Show.
ELECTRICAL SHOW. Illuminated by 75,000 Incandescent Lamps.	ELECTRICAL SHOW. Military Band—day and night.
ELECTRICAL SHOW. Food Cooked by Electricity.	ELECTRICAL SHOW. All manner of manufacturing processes shown.
ELECTRICAL SHOW. Sewing and cleaning by Electricity.	ELECTRICAL SHOW. Washing and Ironing by electricity.

Show Open From 10 A. M. to 11 P. M.
 For personal examination of the various exhibits the morning and afternoon hours are suggested.

C. Q. D.



STANLEY COLES
IN CHARGE
MARCONI STATION
S.S. SLAVONIA



JACK R. BINNS
IN CHARGE
MARCONI STATION
S.S. REPUBLIC

Above is the "MARCONI" Signal of Distress used in summoning aid to the sinking Republic, Jan. 23d, 1909.

This Signal was also instrumental in bringing help to the S.S. Slavonia, wrecked at the Azores, June 10th, 1909.

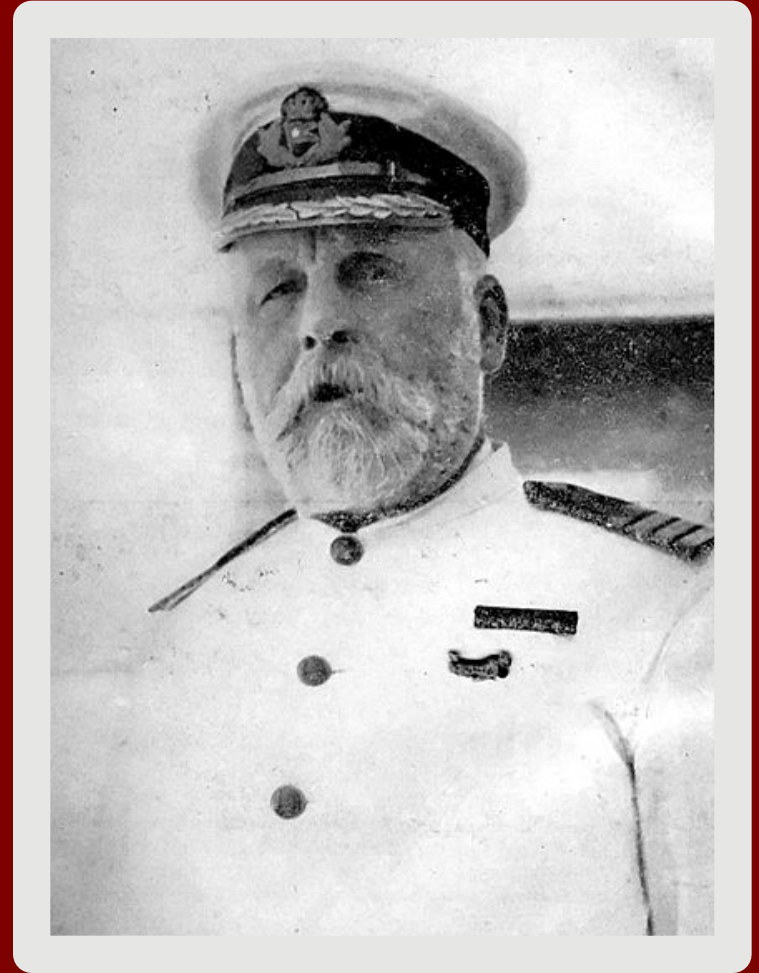
MARCONI WIRELESS TELEGRAPH SERVICE.
 Wireless Messages can be sent from any part of the United States to incoming or outgoing transatlantic steamers. Via Sea Gate, L. I. 4 hours out; via Sagaponack, L. I. 8 hours out; via Siasconset, Mass. 14 hours out. For rates apply at any WESTERN UNION or POSTAL TELEGRAPH Office, or Phone (Marconi Office) 5545 Broad.

MARCONI WIRELESS TELEGRAPH CO., OF AMERICA
 27 William Street, New York, N. Y.

Binns goes back to sea



Binns on the Adriatic, 1910



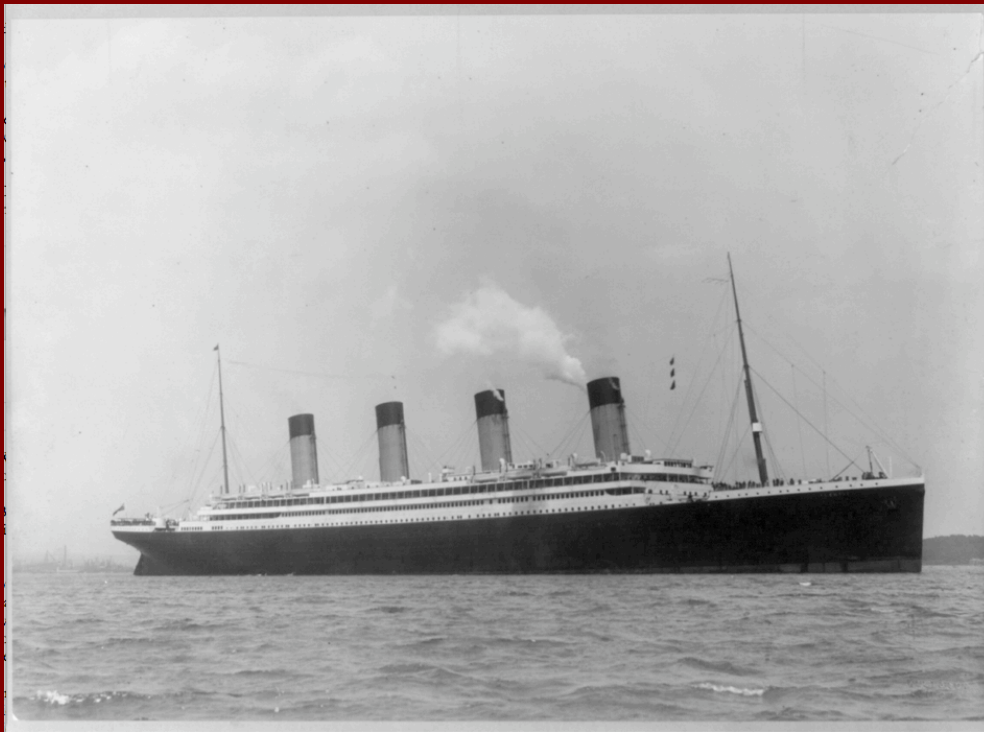
*Captain E J Smith
of the Adriatic, Olympic,
and Titanic*



There was no
inquiry into the
sinking of the
Republic,
(why?)
so no lessons
were learned...

The sinking of
the *Titanic* may
have been the
result.

Captain Inman Sealby
*After the sinking of the
Republic he could no longer
captain a
British ship because there
was no inquiry.*



The *Olympic*
leaving Belfast

Binns was scheduled to sail on the Olympic with Smith, but...

...Ismay was worried that Binns would bring bad publicity to his new ships.



J. Bruce Ismay,
Head of the
White Star Line

Alice Ann MacNiff
at the time of her marriage to
Jack Binns, 1914

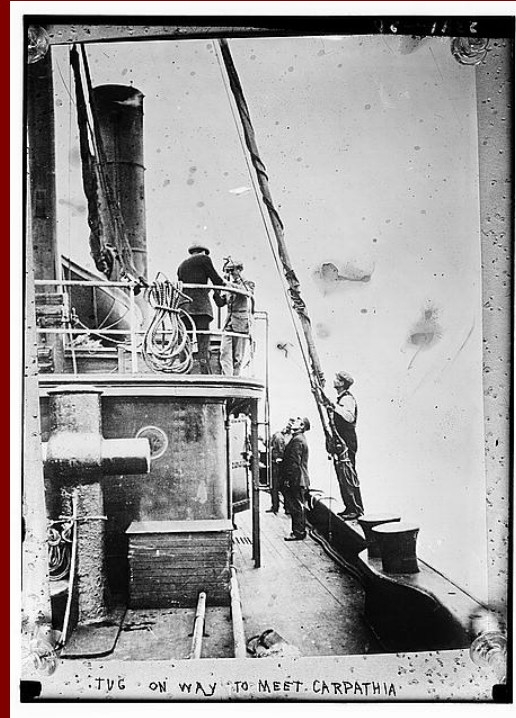


Binns, now newspaperman, and the *Titanic* disaster



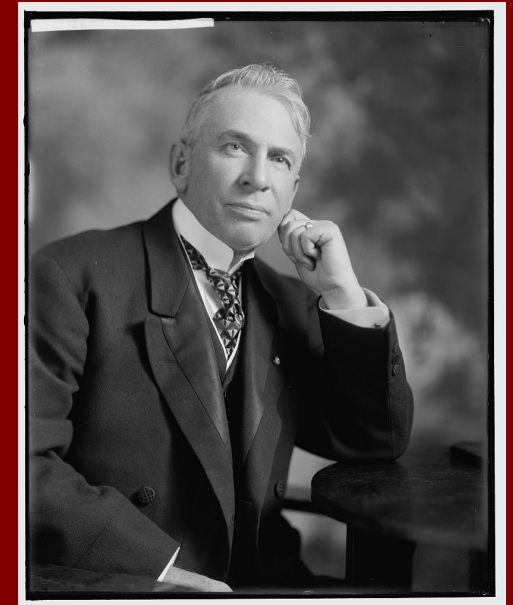
This illustration shows the wireless station atop the Wanamaker store in New York City.

*Wanamaker
wireless*



*On the tug
Mary Scully*

Senator Smith





Binnsy and his girls 1958



The future?