



Jack Binns

## **Jack Binns**

### **The Ships Sparky who made history**

On January 26 2009 remembrance events were organised on both sides of the Atlantic in honour of the very first time that a rescue at sea was brought about by a distress call radioed from a ship.

The ship was the White Star liner "RMS Columbia" the Sparkey who made the famous call was Jack Binns a British Marconi Radio operator, he stayed at his post and sending out the distress call and later passing messages for 36 hours in a flooded radio room as the ship slowly sunk.

The BBC ran several radio programs in honour of the day as did Radio hams around the world and in Cape Cod near the scene of the sinking the Cape Cod national seashore Parks and the US government Radio station there Hosted two programs during which the radio station re-broadcasted Jack Binns' 1909 message in Morse code

CQD CQD CQD MKD MKD MKD – MKD was the call-sign of the "RMS Republic" in the presence of the Binns Family.

Jack Binns' eldest grandchild, Dr. Virginia Utermohlen Lovelace, presented a one-hour program focused on ship-to-shore communication in 1909, her grandfather, and the surprising connection between the 1909 wreck and the sinking of the Titanic three years later. Virginia remembers her grandfather well and called him "Binnsy".

She said: "My family are so grateful to the radio amateurs who will use the airwaves to mark this important centenary, in which more lives were saved than were lost on board the Titanic."

Jack Binns who was born in a Workhouse in Brigg, Lincolnshire, September 16th 1884 and raised by his maternal Grandmother had a very tough beginning but he was a great achiever and had a most amazing life.

The drama of the sinking of the "RMS Republic" because of the radio messages became the first 'live media event' that took America & England by storm, on Jack's arrival in New York he was hailed as a hero and given a 'Ticker Tape' parade through the city.

Below the New York Times story about that day.

### **Remembering Jack Binns, Heroic Radio Operator**

By SEWELL CHAN Jan 26 2009

The ticker tape parade today to mark the Yankees World Series victory is but the latest of nearly 200 processions held over the years to celebrate New York City's individual and collective heroes. While the procession has been most often associated with sports teams, military commanders and heads of state, it has also been used to mark acts of valor by the lesser-known.

A century ago, New York held a parade to honor one Jack Binns, a 24-year-old British wireless operator on the crew of the White Star liner Republic, whose quick thinking and persistence helped save scores of lives when the liner was rammed by a cargo ship off the coast of Nantucket on the early morning of Jan. 23, 1909.

The collision killed two passengers and flooded the cabin that contained his radio equipment, but Mr. Binns found some spare batteries, and transmitted a distress signal for 36 hours, even as he suffered from hunger and cold.

Finally, he managed to make contact with another White Star liner, the Baltic, which arrived to save the Republic.

Mr. Binns was quickly lauded as a hero. On Jan. 26, 1909, The New York Times published an account of his deeds, quoting one Mathew Tierney, the Marconi operator on another ship, the Seneca, and a friend of Mr. Binns's, as saying: "Binns, to my mind, is the hero of this wreck. Not one man in a thousand would have done what he did."

Mr. Binns — whose full name was John Robinson Binns — was evidently modest about his accomplishments. A Times article published on Feb. 10, 1909, reported that he was feted in his hometown of Peterborough, England. "There were greater heroes on the ship than I," he said. "There was a man in the engine room who remained below, when almost up to his neck in water, to open the steam valve and so save the ship from being blown to pieces."

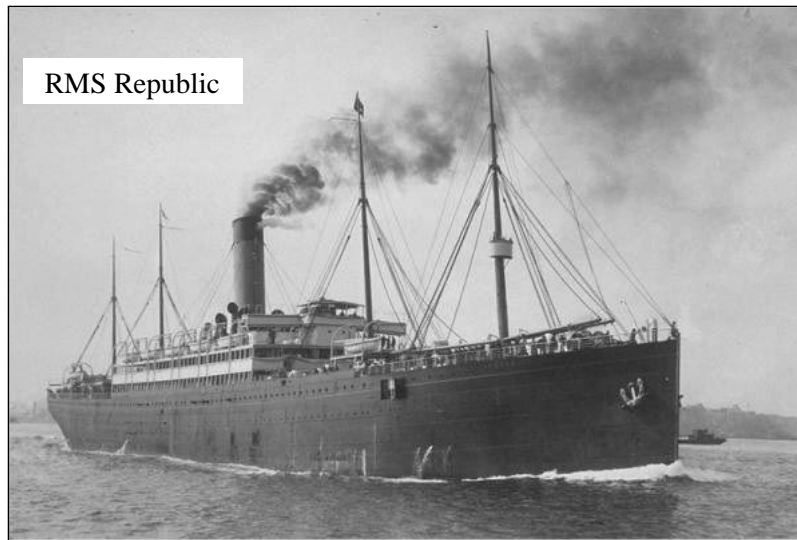
**Right**— Civic parade to welcome Binns (wearing bowler hat) home to Peterborough UK



The rest of Mr. Binns's life had its ups and downs. He later won an invasion-of-privacy lawsuit against Vitagraph, a company that made a film about him. He testified before Congress about the need for mandatory wireless coverage on ships, but the legislation was not enacted. According to PBS, Mr. Binns continued to work as a radio operator until 1912, when he turned down an assignment on the ill-fated Titanic.

He later embarked on a career in journalism. *End of New York Times report*

***The next merchant seaman to get a Ticker Tape parade was Captain H. Kurt Carlson following the loss of the SS Flying Enterprise in 1952***



RMS Republic

### **The Life of Jack Binns**

1884 ~ Jack Binns is born in Brigg, Lincolnshire, September 16th. He is raised by his maternal grandmother and uncle in Peterborough, Lincolnshire, where his uncle is a tailor.

1898 ~ Passes his school leaving examinations and goes to work at age 14 as a messenger for the Great Eastern Railway in Peterborough.

1898 ~ Binns' legs were nearly severed by a railway car. The doctors do not amputate because they believe he will not survive. But survive he does! He takes advantage of the year he spends in traction to read every book his doctors can bring him. Eventually he is able to walk on crutches and returns to work, this time as a junior operator.

The wounds finally heal two years after the accident!

1901 ~ Offered the position of senior operator, second in charge, of the important Colchester Telegraph office, the main switching line between England, continental Europe, and the East, and the headquarters of the Eastern Command of the British Army. Teaches himself how to repair broken lines, apparatus, and connections, and devises ways to get around sunspot interference.

1903 ~ Passed tests and was accepted as an expert operator in the British Post Office Telegraph Service at Newmarket, the racing town.

1904 ~ Starting in December, Binns attends the Marconi training school in Seaforth, and is certified as a wireless operator after the standard three months' training.

1905 ~ He receives his first assignment, on the Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse of the Hamburg Amerika Line. He sails on German ships until 1908.

1908 ~ All foreign wireless operators are barred from working on German ships by order of the Reichstag, so Binns is sent, first to test new equipment for the Ostende-Dover ships, then to the Marconi Station at Crookhaven in Ireland for six months.

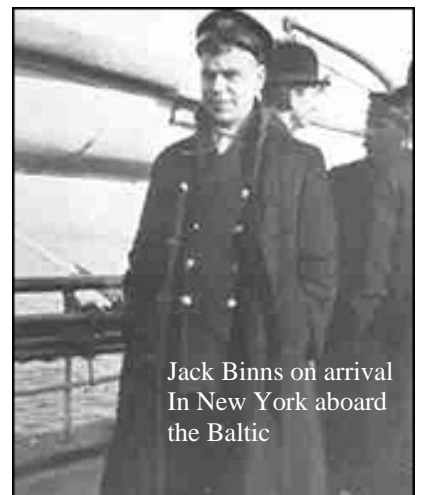
1909 ~ Assigned to the RMS Republic.

1909 ~ January 23rd, collision of the Florida with the Republic. Binns hailed as hero.

1910 ~ Assigned to Adriatic, where his captain is E.J. Smith, later captain of the Titanic.

Binns as wireless operator on the Adriatic, 1910

1911 ~ Due to be assigned to the Olympic and then the Titanic with E.J. Smith, but J. Bruce Ismay, head of the White Star Line, is worried that he might bring bad luck and bad publicity to these new ships. Therefore he is assigned first to the Caronia and then to the Minnewaska, and also receives the post of traveling inspector, created for him.



Jack Binns on arrival  
In New York aboard  
the Baltic

1912 ~ Resigns from the Marconi company to work for William Randolph Hearst at the New York American. Two days after he begins his new career, the Titanic strikes an iceberg and sinks. He reports extensively on the disaster for the New York American. He testifies at the Titanic inquiry himself.

1917 ~ Joins the Royal Flying Corps of Canada and the Royal Air Force of Great Britain as a flight and wireless instructor.

1918 ~ Returns to newspaper work, and is radio and aviation editor of the New York Tribune, editing the weekly radio supplement.

1924 ~ Joins Hazeltine Corporation as assistant treasurer. Hazeltine was formed to handle the patents developed by radio pioneer Louis Alan Hazeltine, and to develop and license new electronics patents for other inventors and corporations.

Hazeltine developed the neutrodyne circuit, that made radio commercially viable by decreasing interference and the high-pitched squeals of static.

1926 ~ Becomes treasurer of Hazeltine.

1927 ~ Becomes member of the Board of Directors of Hazeltine.

1935 ~ Becomes vice-president of Hazeltine.

1942 ~ Elected President of Hazeltine.

1952 ~ Elected Chairman of the Board of Hazeltine.

1955 ~ Resigned from the Presidency of Hazeltine.

1957 ~ Elected Honorary Chairman of the Board of Hazeltine.

1959 ~ Dies of a stroke December 8th, 1959, in New York City.



**A Tarp is stretched over the hole –trying to stem the inflow**

**The SS Republic**, a Royal Mail Ship (qualified to carry both the British and U.S. mails, hence her "RMS" designation), one of the largest and most luxurious passenger liners of her era, flagship of the White Star Line steamship company's Boston-European Service and one of that line's most prized vessels, departed New York at 3 p.m., Friday, January 22, 1909, outbound to Mediterranean ports. In the early morning hours

of January 23rd, 1909, in a dense fog, she collided with the in-bound immigrant ship SS Florida. The Florida struck the Republic almost a square blow port side abaft midships, at the Republic's engine room, knocking out her engines, boilers and dynamos. She lost all power, motive, electrical, and steam. However, she did have some secondary battery power for the use of her just-recently installed wireless telegraph.

Six persons (3 Republic passengers and 3 Florida crew members) were killed as a direct result of the collision, but over 1,500 passengers and crew were rescued.

The survivors attributed their deliverance to the steamship company's prompt use of the recently invented Marconi wireless telegraph to call for assistance. Within minutes of the collision, the Republic's Marconiman sent the "CQD" ("CQ" = "[Attention] All Stations," "D" = "Distress"), the predecessor to today's "SOS" distress signal, over the airwaves to the world at large. No less than seven ships, including several major liners, responded. This was the first practical demonstration of this "new" technology's ability to aid victims of disasters at sea - and this "miracle" captured the world's attention.

It was the world's first "breaking-news" "live" mass-media event.



**Right**– The wreckage of the first class saloon were the bow of the Florida came in, the mangled bodies of the people killed are under the blankets just to the left of the men who are left the Carpenters mate and the Carpenter, they are taking soundings, the mate holds the sounding line.



The Republic's passengers were transferred twice, first to the less damaged Florida, then to the called-to-the-rescue White Star liner Baltic.

The Republic's passengers were transferred to other vessels primarily out of concern for their comfort (from the heatless, lightless Republic), with some concern for their safety (the "unsinkable" Republic's water-tight bulkheads were under a severe test, and, because she could not maneuver, with the fog, she might be hit by yet another vessel in the busy shipping lane).

Ultimately, however, the Republic's bulkheads did not hold. The next day, while under tow back to New York, she sank 50 miles south of Nantucket Island - beyond the grasp of that era's technology to recover. She was the largest, most technologically advanced vessel to sink in history to her day; she was succeeded in that ignominious role only by the loss of another virtually unsinkable White Star Liner, Titanic, which was to sink just three years later.

The Republic's cargos, however, did not fare as well as her passengers. All baggage and other cargos were lost. After all, there was no need to remove cargo from an "unsinkable" ship. And there was also no power to operate her winches, and no time; passengers always came first.

It took 83 boatloads and 10 hours to complete the second transfer of passengers. This open water rescue maneuver still stands today as the largest ever recorded.

### Treasure

Irrepressible rumors from that date and which continue to this day - forming the greatest legend in lost-treasure lore - suggest that, in addition to a \$265,000 US Navy Payroll (consigned to the U.S. Navy Atlantic Fleet at Gibraltar, 1909 value, worth today perhaps fifty to seventy million dollars), thousands of dollars in relief monies destined to aid the survivors of an earthquake in Italy, a several hundred thousand dollar consignment of silver ingots and the hundreds of thousands of dollars of personal jewelry and other valuables of her wealthy passengers (all 1909 values), she also carried to the bottom of the sea a politically sensitive and secret shipment of gold that had been consigned to the Czar of Russia: a \$3,000,000 (1909 face-value) five-ton shipment of mint condition American Gold Eagle coins.

The required legal inquiry concerning Republic's loss was never held. That lack of public scrutiny of the events surrounding her loss directly precipitated White Star Line's 1912 Titanic disaster. At the time of Republic's loss, the newspapers had raised serious questions regarding a ship's speed under adverse conditions, bulkhead construction, wireless telegraphy (monitoring, effectiveness and proximity of rescue vessels), and adequacy of lifeboats and lifesaving equipment. Certainly these questions would have been addressed in the official inquiry concerning the Republic's loss - if one had been held. The loss of 1,500 lives on Titanic was the cost of inaction, a crime of omission. But why was the official inquiry never held? Winston Churchill, then President of the British Board of Trade, the agency responsible for conducting the Inquiry, would have known. Others in power at the time would have known as well. No doubt, Theodore Roosevelt, President, would have known. And Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Acting Secretary of the Navy, would have known. Could it be that the Republic does indeed carry a cargo that may be worth today as much as five billion dollars, a cargo if its loss had been revealed at the time would have caused public panic in the world financial markets and jeopardized the very existence of the Government of the Tsar of Russia - and placed the world into war?

Originally built for the Dominion Line and christened COLUMBUS, she was placed into service between Liverpool and Boston, touching at Queenstown. Accommodations were available for 280 persons in her first cabin and 250 in her second cabin, while her steerage could hold 2,300 passengers.

She had a crew of about 300. She made her first trip across the Atlantic in October, 1903 and shortly thereafter was transferred to the White Star Line and employed in the Boston-Mediterranean service.

Salvage expert Captain Martin Bayerle located the Republic in 1981. He has devoted many years to the study and research of events surrounding her loss. In 2005, Captain Bayerle's exclusive salvage rights to the wreck were reconfirmed by the United States District Court, District of Massachusetts. A re-survey of the vessel is planned for 2009 followed by a major salvage for the summer of 2010. A "section lift" of the vessel is planned.

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## The Engine Room

What happened in the engine room of the Republic when sudden sharp orders began to come from the bridge, to be followed almost immediately by the crash of the Florida's bow as it forced its way through the Republic's side and into the midst of the startled watch in the engine room, was told yesterday afternoon [upon the Baltic's arrival in New York on January 25th, 1909] by two oilers from the Republic, John Hart and Thomas McNerny, the former narrating and the latter corroborating.

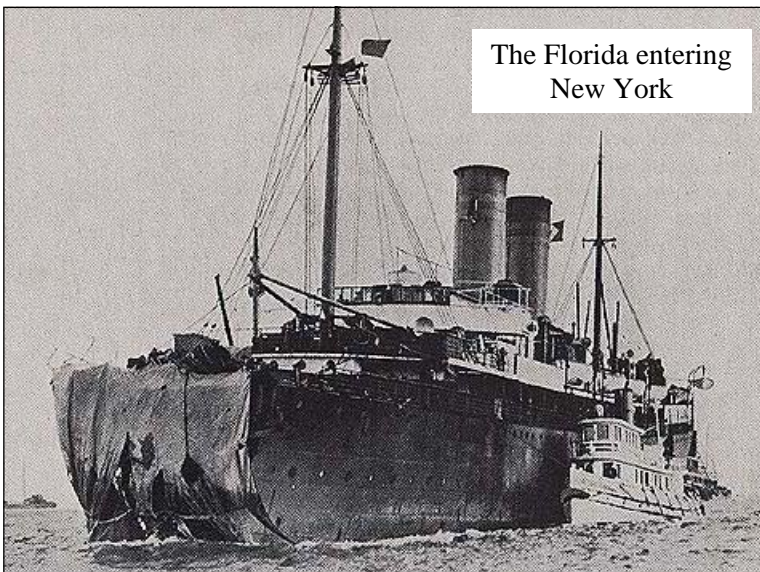
"The second engineer was in charge in the engine room and the fourth engineer, Mr. Lagg, was standing by," said Hart. "I was on duty at the main engine and McNerny was at the refrigerating engine. It was between half-past five and ten minutes to six, and we were proceeding under reduced speed. Suddenly the telegraph from the bridge sounded 'stop.' A minute later the order came, 'Full speed astern.' The propellers had not been turning sixty seconds when 'Full speed ahead' was ordered.

"Then in less time than it takes to tell came a terrible crash on the port side, and an instant later the big stem of a ship crashed through the steel plates, outer and inner, shoving aside frames and forcing its way in to within five yards of where I was standing. The vessel tore away everything on that side for twenty feet aft and then disappeared, and we could see the water rushing in below.

" 'Close the water tight doors!' the second engineer shouted. Within ten seconds this was done, every one of the five hand screwed doors being shut as tight as a drum. These should have kept the water from the rest of the ship, but didn't, for apparently one of the engine room bulkheads had been torn away. Then we began climbing up the iron ladder to the boat deck. The electrical apparatus had been put out of action immediately [when] the water came in, but a few emergency oil lamps were burning and it was not difficult to find our way up the 160 steps to the open air.

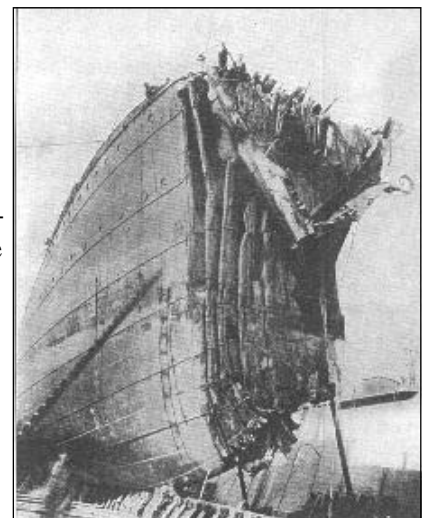
"Mr. Lagg at the risk of his life probably saved the ship from blowing up. While the rest of us were making our way to the ladder he rushed to the deck below and waded through water up to his waist to the main feed checks on the boilers and opened them all. Had he not done this the boilers must have burst when the rush of cold water reached them.

"When we got to the top deck we received our next order from the Captain. I helped to get Mr. Mooney's body and put it into a coffin, and also that of Mrs. Lynch. A shoe belonging to Mrs. Lynch was found cut in two as if by a sharp axe."



The Florida entering  
New York

The FLORIDA, an Italian registered vessel, reportedly lost in fog and 30 miles off course, penetrated the REPUBLIC's engine room and extended the damage to below the waterline and breached a longitudinal bulkhead which separated her two engine compartments. One of five watertight doors on this longitudinal bulkhead was carried away and both engine compartments began to flood. The REPUBLIC's boilers were immediately shut down to prevent explosion, which resulted in the loss of all motive and electrical power, except the electrical power remaining in her storage batteries for limited use of the wireless telegraph. Emergency lighting was not available.



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

Three crewmembers, asleep in the forecastle of the FLORIDA, were also killed. [After the Florida arrived in New York,] The bodies of the three dead of the Florida's crew were prepared for burial. Two victims were mere boys - Balogero Martuscelli, sixteen years old, and Salvatore D'Amico, the fourteen-year-old cabin boy. The third, Pasquale La Valle, was twenty-three years old.

All but d'Amico were from Naples. He was from the region of the earthquake near Messina. Driven from home by that disaster, he was just starting in to work in the transatlantic trade. D'Amico's body was recovered from the wreckage of the fore-castle by the crew on the way into port. The two other bodies were not pried loose until last night, after the Florida reached her pier. All were mangled beyond recognition from the frightful crashing in of the fore-castle.

The Florida's bow, which once ended in an overhanging arched yacht stem was reduced to a tangle of twisted steel beams and crumpled plates, all the way from somewhere below the water line up and back for thirty feet.

### A chronological list

FRIDAY 3 p. m.- The Republic leaves New York Harbor. [Republic casts off from White Star Line's Pier 48.]

SATURDAY 4:00 a. m.- Steamer Florida, of Lloyd-Italian Line, rams the White Star liner Republic two hundred miles from New York in a dense fog.

4:05 a. m.- The Florida and the Republic separate in the fog.

4:10a. m.- Watertight compartments closed on injured ships.

4:20a. m.- Operator J. R. Binns transmits 'C. Q. D.' distress marconigram to Siasconset, Mass., and all steamships.

Messages are received by the White Start liner Baltic, the French liner La Lorraine, the Cunard liner Lucania, the United States torpedo boat Cushing and the revenue cutters Gresham, Acushnet, Seneca, and Mohawk.

6:35 a. m.- The cutter Acushnet called to the assistance of the steamer Nantucket, aground near Newport.

7:00 a. m.- The Florida reappears to the Republic's passengers.

7:30 - 11:30 a. m.- The Republic's passengers are transferred by small boats to the Florida.

9:45 a. m.- First wireless message from La Lorraine received on the Republic.

10 a. m.- The Mohawk, on way to aid the Republic, runs ashore an Tilmer's Island.

11 a. m.- La Lorraine encourages the Republic's passengers by message saying she is only twenty miles distant.

12:45 p. m.- La Lorraine hears submarine bell of the Republic.

4:30-5:30 p. m.- The Baltic locates the Republic by submarine bell and discovers her in fog near the Florida.

6:00 - 11:00 p. m.- The Baltic may have offloaded sacks of mail from the Republic.

6:40 p. m.- The Baltic asks La Lorraine to follow the Florida.

7 p. m.- La Lorraine steams on toward New York, searching for the Florida.

8 p. m.- Republic located by City of Everett. Assistance offered but refused.

11 p. m.- It is decided to transfer passengers of the Republic and the Florida to the Baltic.

11:40 p. m.- Transfer begins.

### SUNDAY

7:30 a. m.- Anchor liner Furnessia comes to near the Florida.

8:45 a. m.- The Furnessia goes in search of the Republic, leaving the Florida.

9:00 a. m.- City of Everett departs for New York. Offers of assistance rejected.

10:00 a. m.- Transfer of passengers from both injured steamers to the Baltic is completed.

10:05 a. m.- Captain Ranson of the Baltic sends marconigram to White Star offices at Bowling Green, announcing safe removal of passengers and intention to find the Republic.

10:20 a. m.- The Republic is again seen by the Baltic.

10:30 a. m.- The Furnessia finds the Republic.

10:45 a. m.- The Baltic abandons the Republic and steams for New York.

(11:00 a. m.- The New York (left) and Lucania passed by. Florida in background (right). Photo taken from Baltic.)

11:35 a. m.- Gresham stands by Republic. Republic drawing 40 feet aft.

12:30 p. m.- The revenue cutter Gresham makes fast to bow of the Republic, while the Furnessia makes fast to her stern.

2:00 p. m. The Seneca reaches the Republic.

3:00 p. m.- The New York comes alongside the Republic.

3:30 p. m.- The Florida and the New York start for harbor together.

6:22 p. m.- The Gresham and the Furnessia begin to tow the Republic.

6:35 p. m.- Stern hawsers are carried away and both ships lie to.

7:30 p. m.- Tug Scully arrives.

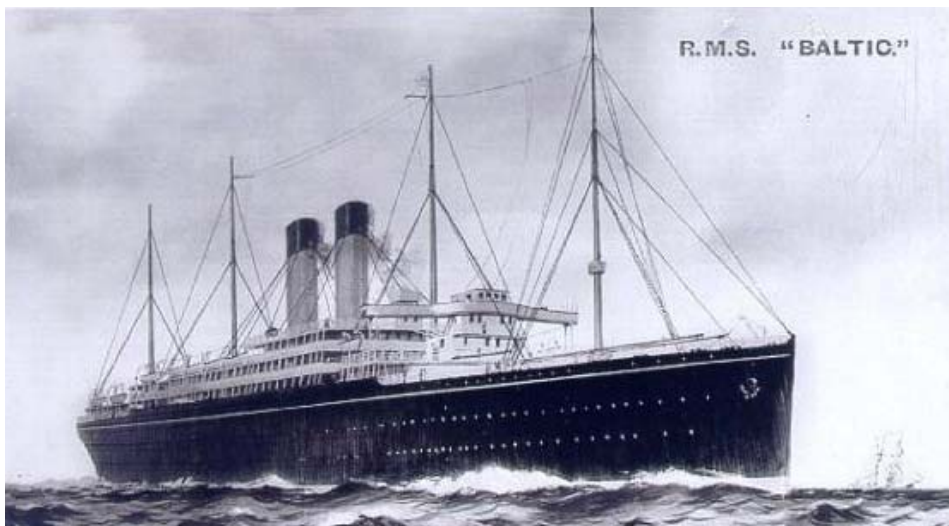
8:40 p. m.- The Republic sinks. Captain Sealby and volunteer crew rescued from the sea by small boat from the Gresham.

10:30 p. m.- The Furnessia starts for New York.

10:31 p. m.- Captain Sealby informs White Star officials by wireless that the Republic has foundered, all hands saved.


11 p. m.- The revenue cutters Seneca and Gresham get under way for Gay Head, Martha's Vineyard with Captain Sealby and volunteer crew.

N. Y. Tribune, January 26



HARPER'S MAGAZINE ADVERTISER.

# TO THE MEDITERRANEAN



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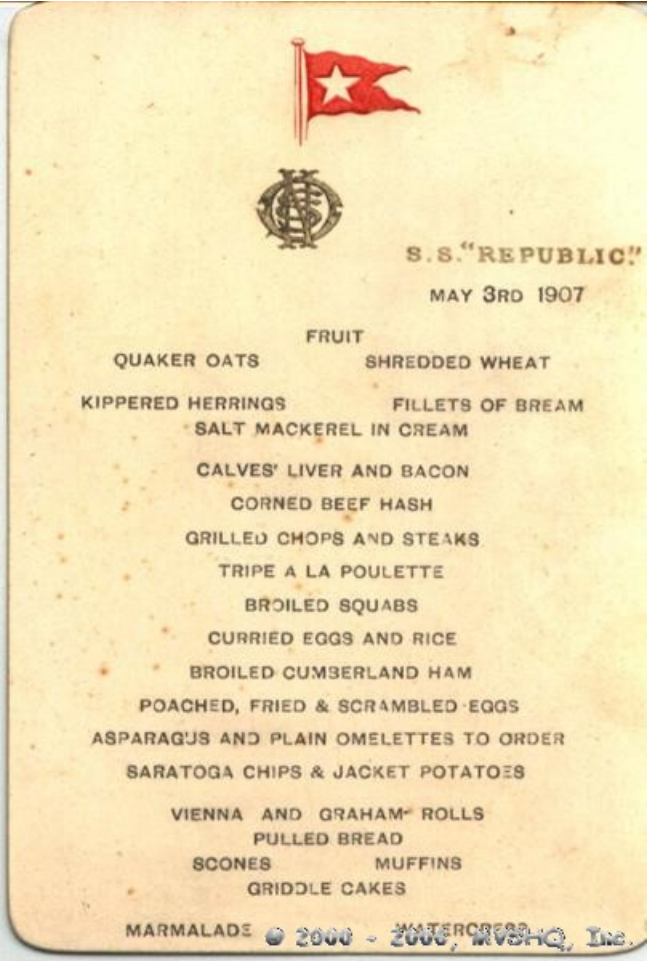
**Capt Ruspini  
Of the Florida**



**Jack Binns in tropical kit**

**Right  
Breakfast  
Menu**

**Below  
Medal made by  
grateful passen-  
gers & presented  
to every crew  
member of the  
Republic  
Florida  
&  
Baltic**



**S.S. "REPUBLIC"**  
MAY 3RD 1907

QUAKER OATS	FRUIT	SHREDDED WHEAT
KIPPERED HERRINGS		FILLETS OF BREAM
		SALT MACKEREL IN CREAM
		CALVES' LIVER AND BACON
		CORNED BEEF HASH
		GRILLED CHOPS AND STEAKS
		TRIPE A LA POULETTE
		BROILED SQUABS
		CURRIED EGGS AND RICE
		BROILED CUMBERLAND HAM
		POACHED, FRIED & SCRAMBLED EGGS
		ASPARAGUS AND PLAIN OMELETTES TO ORDER
		SARATOGA CHIPS & JACKET POTATOES
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		PULLED BREAD
		SCONES
		MUFFINS
		GRIDDLE CAKES

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**AND TO END!**

**The collision between the Republic & the Florida happened in  
Virtually the same spot as the collision between the  
Andrea Doria & the Stockholm  
In 1956  
So nothing was learnt in all those years  
Still traveling to fast in bad visibility**

