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Press Materials: [http://thirteen.org/pressroom](https://www.thirteen.org/13pressroom/) or [http://pbs.org/pressroom](http://pressroom.pbs.org/Programs/s/SECRETS-OF-THE-DEAD)

***Secrets of the Dead: Abandoning the Titanic***

*Premieres Wednesday, November 4 at 10 p.m. on PBS (check local listings),* [*pbs.org/secrets*](http://www.pbs.org/secrets) *and the PBS Video app*

**Synopsis**

The sinking of **RMS Titanic** on April 15, 1912 is one of the deadliest peacetime maritime disasters in history. Mainstream retellings of the tragedy often overlook that the “unsinkable” Titanic was not alone when it sank. A mystery ship was spotted within view of the sinking ship, but instead of sailing closer to aid the drowning passengers, the mystery ship seemingly ignored a fusillade of rockets and signals and sailed away. American and British inquiries accused the **SS Californian** and its captain, **Stanley Lord**, of abandoning the Titanic. Decades later, the discovery of Titanic’s wreck exonerated Lord and the Californian’s role in the disaster, re-opening accounts that implicate another ship.

In ***Secrets of the Dead: Abandoning the Titanic***, join a team of investigators as they search for the identity of the mystery ship that turned away from the Titanic in its darkest hour, abandoning thousands of lives to the icy waters and their untimely demise.

**Short Listing:**

Join experts searching for a mystery ship that could have saved Titanic passengers but sailed away.

**Long Listing:**

Join a team of investigators as they search for the identity of a mystery ship that turned away from the “unsinkable” Titanic in its darkest hour, abandoning thousands of lives to the icy waters and their deaths.

**Running Time:** 60 minutes

**Film Interviewees:**

* Charles A. Haas - Titanic Historian and Author
* Caroline Heaven - Titanic Historian and Lecturer
* Stephen W. Hines - Titanic Author
* David Hutchings - Naval Architect and Titanic Author
* Marc Isaacs - Maritime Law Expert
* Dorothy Kendle - Daughter of Edith Brown (Titanic 2nd Class Passenger)
* Jean Legg - Daughter of Sid Daniels (Titanic 3rd Class Steward)
* Senan Molony- Journalist and Titanic Author
* Bill Sauder - Titanic Historian
* Paul Slish - Titanic Researcher
* Parks Stephenson - Titanic Historian and Naval Officer
* Capt. Ronald Warwick - Commodore, Cunard Line (Ret.)

**Timeline**

* On April 10, 1912, the RMS Titanic departed the English city of Southampton on its maiden voyage heading to New York City. The British passenger liner, operated by the White Star Line, was under the command of Capt. Edward John Smith and carried 1,300 passengers and a contingent of 900 officers and crew.
* Believed to be “unsinkable,” the Titanic was built to withstand a blow from another ship but not an iceberg. Up to the point of collision, the ship was not in an ice field and the icebergs in view were seen at a great distance. Smith was not stationed on the ship’s bridge at the time of collision.
* TheSS Californian was one of several ships in the area on April 14, 1912. The 440-foot-long ship with general cargo had a crew of 47, headed by Capt. Stanley Lord. Earlier that day, Californian’s wireless operator, Cyril Evans, exchanged messages about ice, weather conditions and its location with other ships in the area. Titanic telegraph operator Jack Philips ignored this message while receiving information from a relay station in Cape Race, Newfoundland. Evans thensigned off from the wireless room of Californian.
* At 11:40 p.m. on April 14, 1912, three bells pierced the night, signaling that something lay directly in the Titanic’s path. It was an iceberg and there was not enough time for the ship to turn and avoid colliding with it. In just 30 seconds, Titanic struck the iceberg, then made the fatal mistake of sailing on for another 10 minutes. The water flooding into the damaged hull created tremendous pressure, forcing Capt. Smith to stop the ship.
* Shortly after midnight on April 15, 1912, Titanic’s wireless operators began sending SOS signals to nearby ships. The SOS reached Titanic’s sister ship, the Olympic, as well as Mesaba, Mount Temple, Baltic, Frankfurt, Californian, Virginian, Birma and the eventual rescue ship, Carpathia.
* As lifeboats aboard Titanic were being lowered into the icy waters, a mystery ship, long believed to be SS Californian, could be seen in the distance by passengers, but did not sail closer to Titanic to offer assistance.
* Titanic sank at approximately 2:20 a.m. on April 15, 1912, claiming the lives of 1,500 passengers. With the Californian stopped in the ice before any SOS messages were sent from the Titanic, the ship didn’t see the sinking liner’s calls for help until dawn, hours after they’d been sent. The Californian then immediately headed toward the drowned ship, encountering both the Mount Temple and the Carpathia, which brought 700 survivors back to New York City.
* A mere four days after the tragedy, the United States launched an inquiry into the Titanic disaster, quickly concluding that, based on the testimony of 80 witnesses, Californian was the only ship the Titanic crew and passengers could have seen. However, multiple details, including log tampering and damning testimony from two passengers, suggest the Mount Temple was the mystery ship.
* Both the U.S. and British inquiries determined that the Californian and Capt. Lord could have “pushed through the ice to open the water without any serious risk” and done more to save the passengers on the Titanic. Lord and Californian crewmembers faced years of criticism for their role in the tragedy; however, no formal charges were ever brought against them.
* Decades later, on September 1, 1985, the wreck of Titanic was found at its true final resting place. A 1992 Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) report stated, “Californian was between 17 and 20 miles from Titanic at the time of the collision,” matching the navigation calculation from Lord’s testimony, and finally vindicating him and Californian.

**Series Overview**

**Secrets of the Dead** is a perennial favorite among PBS viewers. Now in its 18th season, the series uses the latest scientific discoveries to challenge prevailing ideas and share fresh perspectives on historical events. **Secrets of the Dead** has earned 10 CINE Golden Eagle Awards and six Emmy nominations, among numerous other awards. The series is available for streaming simultaneously on all station-branded PBS platforms, including PBS.org and the PBS Video app, which is available on iOS, Android, Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV and Chromecast. PBS station members can view episodes via Passport (contact your local PBS station for details). ***Secrets of the Dead*** is a production of THIRTEEN PRODUCTIONS LLC for WNET.

**Websites:** <http://www.pbs.org/secrets>, <http://www.facebook.com/SecretsoftheDead>, [@secretspbs](http://twitter.com/secretspbs), <https://www.youtube.com/secretsofthedead>, #SecretsDeadPBS

**Production Credits**

***Secrets of the Dead: Abandoning the Titanic*** is a production of TH Entertainment, LLC, in association with THIRTEEN Productions LLC for WNET. Directed by Gregory Hall. Written by Sean Molony, Gregory Hall and Steven J. Shearsby. Barbara Hall and Bretton Hunchak are executive producers for TH Entertainment. Narrated by Jay O. Sanders. For ***Secrets of the Dead***: Stephanie Carter is executive producer. Stephen Segaller is executive in charge.

**Underwriters**

Funding for ***Secrets of the Dead*** is provided in part by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and by public television viewers.

**About WNET**

WNET is America’s flagship PBS station: parent company of New York’s [THIRTEEN](http://thirteen.org/) and [WLIW21](http://wliw.org/) and operator of [NJTV](http://www.njtvonline.org/), the statewide public media network in New Jersey. Through its new [ALL ARTS](http://allarts.org) multi-platform initiative, its broadcast channels, three cable services (THIRTEEN PBSKids, Create and World) and online streaming sites, WNET brings quality arts, education and public affairs programming to more than five million viewers each month. WNET produces and presents a wide range of acclaimed PBS series, including ***Nature***, ***Great Performances***, ***American Masters***, ***PBS NewsHour Weekend***, and the nightly interview program ***Amanpour and Company***. In addition, WNET produces numerous documentaries, children’s programs, and local news and cultural offerings, as well as multi-platform initiatives addressing poverty and climate. Through THIRTEEN Passport and WLIW Passport, station members can stream new and archival THIRTEEN, WLIW and PBS programming anytime, anywhere.

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