



BOOK RELEASE

History

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SS Atlantic: The White Star Line's First Disaster at Sea **Greg Cochkanoff and Bob Chaulk**

Built forty-two years before the RMS *Titanic*, the *Atlantic* had successfully completed eighteen crossings before it ran aground off the coast of Nova Scotia on April 1, 1873, killing 562 of the 952 onboard. It was the deadliest marine disaster of the 19th century, yet, until now, the full story has never been told.

Manufactured by the same company that built the *Titanic*, the *Atlantic* was the second ship of its kind launched by the White Star Line. From the beginning of the White Star Line itself, with its dynamic leader Thomas Ismay to the shipyards where the *Atlantic* was created, this history of the ship and its Atlantic Ocean crossings gives remarkably detailed accounts of the crew and the passengers on the final fateful voyage. The heart-wrenching events of the tragic day of the sinking are laid out in minute detail, as well as the aftermath for the survivors, the rescuers, the salvagers, and the scavengers, who recovered both cargo and the dead — for a price.

Richly illustrated throughout with archival pictures, maps, engravings, and photographs, this book is the only comprehensive account of the great ship and its final fate. The appendices include the findings of the Halifax inquiry into the wreck and a full list of the passengers. The book concludes by revisiting the wreck site, which has grown into a popular destination for scuba divers.

The White Star Line continued for many years after the sinking of the *Atlantic* as one of the premier shipping lines in the world. After the disaster in 1873, the company took the *Atlantic* off of its list of ships and tried to forget that it ever existed. At the time of the sinking, the public perception of shipwrecks was that they were just part of the risk that the passenger took in order to travel by sea, but by the time the *Titanic* sank in 1912, the public was outraged, and the company never fully recovered from the aftermath.

SS Atlantic: The White Star Line's First Disaster at Sea is a stunning historical record of a maritime tragedy and the ship that today is a decaying husk resting off of the shores of Nova Scotia.

GREG COCHKANOFF More than twenty-five years of research, punctuated by hundreds of dives at her final resting place, gave Greg a unique knowledge, understanding, and even an affection for the ship and the people who shared her final voyage. Writing an authoritative book about the ship was a lifelong dream. Born in Ames, Iowa, Greg graduated from Acadia University. The owner and president of Atlantic Catch Data Limited, he spent his weekends searching for and investigating shipwrecks off Nova Scotia, especially around Halifax. He was an enthusiastic

— more —

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author of numerous reports about underwater sites of historical significance. Some of the results of his efforts are on display at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax. Recognized as an authority on Nova Scotia's underwater heritage, Greg was regularly consulted by filmmakers, writers, heritage groups, and researchers and was in demand as a speaker. He died unexpectedly in 2008.

BOB CHAULK has a unique perspective on Canadian history, gained from more than twenty years of scuba diving off Canada's historic east coast and many hours diving the wreck of the *SS Atlantic*. Born in Stanhope, Newfoundland, he graduated from Memorial University and Carleton University with degrees in English Literature and Journalism. He has written on subjects ranging from nineteenth-century English comic strips to the Panama Railway to the origins of toothpaste — all derived from research into items recovered from the ocean. He is the author of *Time in a Bottle: Historic Halifax Harbour From the Bottom Up*, a book about the role Halifax Harbour has played in Canadian and world affairs — all told from an underwater perspective. His new book *The Chain Locker* (Creative Book Publishers, St. John's, Fall 2009) is a novel loosely based on the experiences of a young stowaway on the sealing ship *SS Viking* that burned while caught in the ice off Newfoundland in 1931. Bob Chaulk lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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