



NMMNHS Special VAN MARCH, 2013

**TITANIC EXHIBITION COMING TO NMMNHS**

On April 15, 1912, the world's largest ship sank 963 miles northeast of New York City after colliding with an iceberg. Most people, young and old, know of this ship—*Titanic*, the Ship of Dreams, the ship that came to a tragic end.

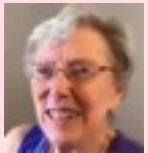
However, from this tragedy emerged heartfelt stories of the passengers that were on the ship that fateful morning when the Titanic sank. Details of the ship's demise became worldwide news and still, to this day, the history of *Titanic* lives on.

Now, visitors to the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science will have the opportunity to learn of the compelling human stories of those passengers on board through viewing ***Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition***, featuring authentic artifacts recovered from the wreck site of the world's most famous sunken ocean liner. Visitors can experience accurate recreations of the ship's interior and can even experience the true nature of an iceberg.

On March 23, ***Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition*** will make its New Mexico debut. The blockbuster exhibition, from Premier Exhibitions out of Atlanta, GA, has been seen by more than 25 million people worldwide. It will be on exhibit at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science through October 27, 2013.

*On April 15, 1912, the world's largest ship sank 963 miles northeast of New York City after colliding with an iceberg.*

Mary Alice Root, Ornithologist & long time NMMNHS Supporter  
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**WANTED: Titanic Volunteers!**

By the time the Titanic exhibition opens March 23<sup>rd</sup>, the whole region will know about it. What most people don't realize is the NMMNH Volunteer Program is running it!

Yes, we have been asked to produce 105 volunteers a week as Titanic "Archive Specialists." We'll need more shifts for special events. This is over and above what our volunteers already contribute.

I do think the public understands how wonderful this exhibition is for the Museum—it puts us on the regional map like previous important exhibitions have done, and probably even more so. There is something about the Titanic and her tragic story that fascinates many, many people. Some new volunteers have come on board because of this lifelong interest and fascination.

The NMMNH Education Program has created a new class of volunteers just for Titanic. They will not be Association members and will not get the same benefits. They will get Museum (not



Titanic) admission and a discount in the Store and Café, only. Over time, some of them may stay with us; more than likely most will not. This special category will allow me to go out in the community and recruit broadly. I welcome any suggestions and any contact info you can send my way: Radio and History Clubs, Nautical devotees, service organizations, etc.

Right now we need to get the ship afloat. For this reason we ask all our NMMNH volunteers to take at least one shift a week, same day/shift every week, over and above what you regularly do. We don't want this "big splash" to take resources from other important things the Museum is doing, and many shifts are already short staffed. I plan to address some of those imbalances, but for now, it is "all hands on deck" to greet, welcome, inform an enthusiastic wave of visitors.

(Just so everyone knows, I will be out April 2<sup>nd</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup> leading a National Hispanic Cultural Center group tour to colonial cities in México. This was planned well in advance. I'm looking for a 1<sup>st</sup> Mate to help coordinate shifts in my absence and communicate with me by e-mail).

*Doug Simon*

*Shared Resources Volunteer Coordinator*

## HISTORY OF THE RMS TITANIC

Construction of *Titanic* started in March 1909. Harland & Wolff's Belfast shipyards had to be redesigned to accommodate the immense project, while White Star's pier in New York had to be lengthened to enable the ship to dock.

The "launch" of the completed steel hull in May, 1911, was a heavily publicized spectacle. She was then taken for "fitting out" which involved the construction of the Ship's many facilities and systems, her elaborate woodwork and fine decor.

The maiden voyage lured the "very best people": British nobility, American industrialists, the cream of New York and Philadelphia society. It also attracted many poor emigrants, hoping to start a new life in America or Canada.

The journey began at Southampton on Wednesday April 10, 1912, at noon. By sundown, *Titanic* had stopped in Cherbourg, France, to pick up additional passengers. That evening she sailed for Queenstown, Ireland, and at 1:30 PM on Thursday, April 11, she headed out into the Atlantic.

The winter of 1912 had been unusually mild, and unprecedented amounts of ice had broken loose from the arctic regions. *Titanic* was equipped with Marconi's new wireless telegraph system and her two Marconi operators kept the wireless room running 24 hours a day. On Sunday, April 14, the fifth day at sea, *Titanic* received five different ice-warnings, but the captain was not overly concerned. The Ship steamed ahead at 22 knots and the line's Managing Director J. Bruce Ismay relished the idea of arriving in New York a day ahead of schedule.



On the night of April 14, wireless operator Jack Phillips was busy sending chatty passengers' messages to Cape Race,

Newfoundland, where they could be relayed inland to friends and relatives. He received a sixth ice-warning that night and put that message under a paperweight at his elbow. It never reached Captain Edward J. Smith or the officer on the bridge.

By all accounts, the night was uncommonly clear and dark, moonless but faintly glowing with an incredible sky full of stars. The sea was, likewise, unusually calm and flat; "like glass" said many survivors. The lack of waves made it even more difficult to spot icebergs since there was no telltale white water breaking at the edges of the bergs.

At 11:40, Frederick Fleet, the lookout in the crow's nest, spotted an iceberg dead ahead. First Officer William Murdoch ordered the Ship turned hard to port. The Ship turned slightly, but it was much too large, moving much too fast, and the iceberg was much too close: 37 seconds later, the greatest maritime disaster in history began. During that night of heroism, terror, and tragedy, 705 lives were saved, 1502 lives were lost, and many legends were born.

## BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW...

- Titanic was as long as four city blocks or about 22 school buses.
- There were only two bathtubs for more than 700 third-class passengers.
- The characters of Jack and Rose from the 1997 movie about Titanic were not real passengers.
- Titanic's fourth funnel was fake. The designers thought it made the Ship look grander, but it was only a vent for the engine room and kitchen.
- It cost 25 cents to use the swimming pool, which was filled with sea water.
- Only 37 seconds passed between the lookout's warning about the iceberg ahead and the moment of impact.
- The wreck is under 2 1/2 miles of water.
- Titanic sank in two hours and forty minutes.
- Even if all of Titanic's 20 lifeboats had been filled to capacity, there would only have been room for 1,178 people. Over a thousand of the passengers were doomed.
- Total survival rate was only 32%.

## TITANIC ARTIFACTS

*The Titanic Artifacts* were retrieved by a company called RMS Titanic, Inc. during a series of expeditions to the debris field surrounding Titanic's wreck site. To date, the company has recovered over 5,500 objects from the wreck site, ranging from delicate porcelain dishes to a 17-ton section of the hull. None were taken off what is left of the actual Ship.

The bottom of the deep ocean is a hostile environment. Over time, man-made objects will be consumed by bacteria, abraded by sediments, and corroded by salt and acids. Even the Ship itself is slowly being destroyed by iron-eating microorganisms and will one day collapse on the ocean floor. Artifacts that are not recovered from the wreck site will eventually be lost.

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The goal of RMS Titanic, Inc. is to arrest artifact deterioration and conserve the objects so that they can be exhibited wearing the face of the trauma they have experienced. Theirs is not a goal of restoration.



The conservation treatment begins once the artifact is exposed to the air, undergoing an immediate stabilization process. Once removed from the water, the artifact is cleaned with a soft brush and placed in a foam-lined tub of water. It then goes to the conservation laboratory where contaminating surface salts are leached out.

Metal objects are placed in a desalination bath and undergo the first steps of electrolysis, a process that removes negative ions and salt



from the artifact. Electrolysis is used to remove salts from paper, leather, and wood as well. These materials also receive treatments of chemical agents and fungicides to remove rust and fungus.

Once artifacts made of wood and leather begin to dry, they are injected with a water-soluble wax which fills artifact capillaries previously occupied by water and debris. Artifacts made of paper are freeze-dried to remove all the water and then treated to protect against mold. At this point, conservation for Exhibition is complete.

## Remembering Mary Alice Root

The Museum lost a long-time supporter when Mary Alice Root passed away at the end of January of 2013. Her passion and hard work brought *Diatryma* back to New Mexico! Once she retired as Administrator of the University of New Mexico Biology Department, Mary Alice spent much time focused on her life-long interest in birds often channeling her efforts through the Museum. She became an Adjunct Naturalist Curator for the Museum, entering bird record data accumulated over decades on paper into a computer database for research analysis.

Traveling to almost every continent, eagerly birding wherever she went, Mary Alice co-lead trips for the Museum to Costa Rica with Dave Hafner, our long time Bioscience Curator. And, together,

Mary Alice and I (along with John Arnold, Helen Haskell and Amy Grochowski and others) led many trips to Bosque del Apache for the Museum.

She would present a lecture on a weeknight about what birds we might see there, and we would take a couple of dozen folks to the Refuge the following Saturday. She knew so much, like the time she told us about the shrike she had seen in Africa that was a different color than our Loggerhead Shrike, but had the exact same behavior—catching grasshoppers or small lizards and sticking them on the spine of a bush or barbed wire to “cure” for a few days before eating—half a world away a shrike will do the same shrike-thing. Mary Alice had the depth of knowledge to make things interesting.



She was always learning throughout her life--taking classes every semester--and generously sharing her knowledge with others. Mary Alice extended her avian interest by undertaking the study of fossil birds, reading every paper written, to become our local expert and, in turn, giving talks to groups near and far about fossil birds. This curiosity directly benefitted the Museum when she learned about *Diatryma*, a huge, flightless bird that was first named from New Mexican fossil specimens. As the Museum was the place to see and learn about fossils in New Mexico, she became an advocate for showing off this huge bird here.

So, Mary Alice tracked down the only known maker of mounted skeletons of *Diatryma*, in New York. He looked at his old molds and told her they would survive about one more cast. So she placed the order and went about

finding the money to pay for it. She gave talks to every group who would have her, to all of her friends and acquaintances, and raised the money. The *Diatryma* became the centerpiece of the Evolving Grasslands hall.

As her health failed, she moved to Minnesota to be closer to family. I usually travel to Minnesota each year to see my own family and have been fortunate to see her there. This past year, I got an urgent question about the status of *Diatryma*. She had heard it was not on display and wanted answers. I talked with Curator Gary Morgan and sent along the update. When I visited her last August, she had copies of all her *Diatryma* information waiting for me to bring back to Gary—to complete the Registrar’s files on the acquisition. Today, the

room has just been re-done, the *Diatryma* is again featured in the re-named hall, *Rise of the Recent: Cenozoic New Mexico*, along with images and information in the new interactive table.

*"I had a lot of wonderful support and help, and I couldn't be more pleased to have the people of NM know the whole story of Diatryma,"*

Mary Alice Root

**She has been an inspiration to me, to keep learning, teaching, and contributing to our community.**

--Tish Morris




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## The VAN

The VAN is published bimonthly. There are six regular issues each year: *February-March, April-May, June-July, August-September, October-November and December-January* and an occasional *Special Issue*. The deadline for submitting articles or photographs for the next regular issue is always the fifteenth of the month prior. The deadline for the *June-July* issue, for example, will be May 15, 2012.

Please send items for the VAN to Louise Harris, VAN Editor, <[louise@goingourway.net](mailto:louise@goingourway.net)>, with a copy to Chris Sanchez DCA <[chris.sanchez@state.nm.us](mailto:chris.sanchez@state.nm.us)>

The VAN mission is to inform, engage, and enhance the experience of NMMNHS Volunteers, by acting as a vehicle of *continuing education*, keeping volunteers informed about the Museum, and relaying news of volunteers and their activities.

***We welcome your articles pertaining to the museum. We may edit for clarity and space limitations.***

*Submission Request: Please leave only one space between sentences. Thanks!*

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