

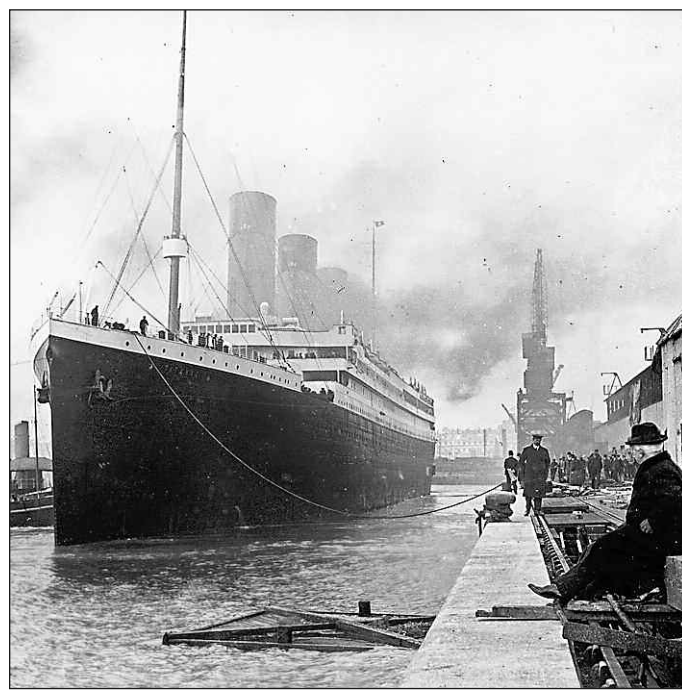


PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

Visitors to the new Titanic exhibit at the Henry Ford Museum can re-create the famous scene from the 1997 James Cameron movie and have their pictures taken for a small fee.



A re-creation of a typical third-class cabin on the luxury liner Titanic is part of the new exhibit about the famous ship at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn.



Titanic at Southampton docks, prior to departure on April 10, 1912. This week actually marks 100 years since the sinking of the famous ocean liner. Old Tiger Stadium opened that week, too.

## Ford Museum Visitors to See Latest Titanic Artifacts

by Gerald Scott  
News Dept.

Believe it or not, it was 100 years ago this week that the famous ocean liner Titanic sank in the North Atlantic.

The Titanic famously hit the iceberg on the evening of April 14, 1912, and then sank a few hours later in the early morning of April 15.

This is all notable because the Henry Ford Museum is hosting a new exhibit entitled: "Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition," and so far attendance is going gangbusters as they say. On its 100th anniversary, the Titanic is hotter than ever.

In fact, on a recent Tuesday afternoon, the entire museum parking lot parallel to Oakwood Avenue in Dearborn, and running all the way back to the Automotive Hall of Fame, was completely full with what museum officials said were customers visiting the Titanic exhibit.

Tom Varitek, senior manager of program operations for The Henry Ford, said that between the 3-D version of James Cameron's 1997 epic film, "Titanic," and the exhibit itself, well, the Museum has become the heart of All Things Titanic in Michigan.

"This is an additional ticket, so what we're doing is a ton of walk-up business and not a lot of advanced sales. We encourage people to buy tickets in advance because we sold out over the weekend. Every 15 minutes, 100 people travel through (the exhibit)," the Mu-

seum's Varitek said.

Varitek further cited a variety of reasons for the Titanic phenomenon to continue on and on. Note that "Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition" is not the same one that toured through the Detroit Science Center a few years ago.

"There's 300 artifacts, 250 of which never have been seen in this area," Varitek said. "There are many aspects of this exhibit that are completely different, including some amazing re-creations like our Grand Staircase."

The overall exhibit is 10,000 square feet in size and visitors will walk through extensive room re-creations and will be able to get their pictures taken at the "bow" of the ship (as captured in the famous scene from the James Cameron movie) and in front of the fabulous full-scale replica of the Grand Staircase.

Moving through this newly redesigned and expanded exhibition, visitors will be taken back in time to 1912 and "travel" through the short but exalted life of the Titanic - from the ship's construction in Belfast, to its on-board passengers, to its ill-fated voyage, to the amazing artifact rescue efforts that involve divers returning to the sunken ship in recent years.

Note that Varitek says that all of the artifacts in the exhibit were taken from the debris field surrounding the sunken ship - as far as anyone knows, the sunken ship itself has never been "plun-

dered" because most salvagers treat it as the hallowed resting place that it is.

Still, what's on display can help summon memories and images of what it might've been like in 1912.

"The exhibit essentially takes you through a chronological history of the ship," Varitek said.

"Couple things I like to point out to people - there's a (valise), business card, some tickets and paper artifacts that survived on the ocean floor for over 70 years. I'm a museum guy so that just fascinates me because things rot in your attic (much less the ocean floor).

"How did these things last on the ocean floor? The secret lies in the suitcase. Everybody's packing up, hoping that a big, large rescue ship would come along and they'd hop on board.

"They had to leave their bags (to climb into a lifeboat). The leather, during the tanning process, tan is added to keep the micro-organisms from decaying the leather. Well, it kept the micro-organisms from going inside the bag as well.

"So even two-and-a-half miles down on the ocean floor, which is where all of the artifacts in this exhibit were recovered from, there are micro-organisms that would love to eat that stuff up but the leather actually kept it out. So that's kind of cool."

Between small artifacts and large re-creations, the Titanic traveler's exhibit tries to make the distant memories come to life in context.

Even though thousands of ships and many ocean liners, tall ships and freighters have all sunk over the years, it's the Titanic that continues to hold the public's attention



PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

Tom Varitek, senior manager of program operations at The Henry Ford, is an expert on Titanic history and lore.

and interest.

Varitek said that some of the latter-day interest in the Titanic is due, in part, to the strong push the legend received thanks to the aforementioned James Cameron film "Titanic," now showing in 3-D at the IMAX Theatre as part of overall Henry Ford complex.

Oscars aside, many have said that it was the personalized story of movie characters Jack (Leo DiCaprio) and Rose (Kate Winslet) that helped people to grasp and understand the larger story of the sinking of the Titanic.

This artifact exhibit seems to come close to doing the same thing, by putting passenger and crew faces to artifacts found on the ocean floor.

One hundred years later now, the story of the fate of this ship, its crew and its passengers still touches and fascinates people all over the world - including Dearborn.

"Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition" runs from now through Sept. 30. See The Henry Ford's Web site for time and ticket details.

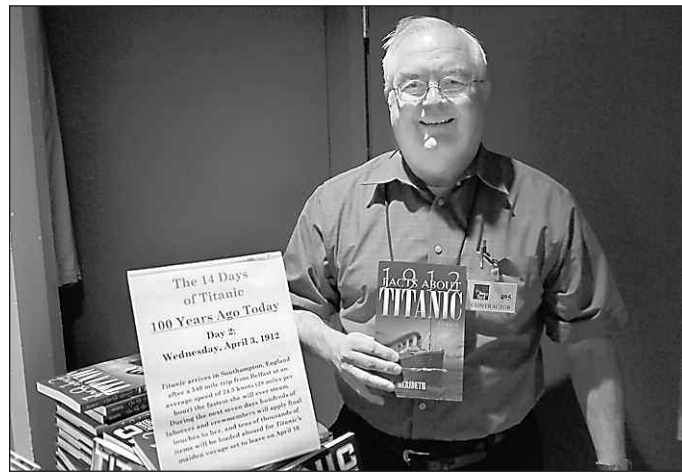


PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

Maritime historian Lee Meredith was autographing his book at the Titanic exhibit at the Henry Ford Museum last week. Meredith met a Titanic survivor in his 5th grade class and became a Titanic expert as an adult as a result of that childhood experience.

## J.R.'s Lube Helps 'Donate Life'

J.R.'s Lube Shop of Sterling Heights announces their participation in the national Save Money and Help Save a Life Campaign.

The Automotive Oil Change Assn. (AOCA) and Donate Life America have teamed up to raise money in order to reach Donate Life's goal of registering more than 20 million Americans as committed organ, eye and tissue donors by the end of 2012.

During the month of April, which is National Donate Life Month & National Car Care Month, customers can participate in the fundraising campaign by donating \$3 and in return, receive a savings book worth over \$100 in preventive maintenance services at J.R.'s Lube and participating AOCA stores.

All proceeds of the sale of these books will benefit Donate Life America.

"We are a member of AOCA and are proud to be a part of this program. I invite everyone in Sterling Heights to join us in raising money for Donate Life America. If we work together, we can make great

strides and help this worthy cause," said Bill and Brad Rice, owners of J.R.'s Lube.

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AOCA members try to keep the "organs" of their customers' vehicles in proper working condition by providing preventative maintenance.

According to the Car Care Council, seven out of ten vehicles fail at least one part of their annual vehicle inspection. The goals of this campaign are to save lives and to save vehicles.

"We are excited to team up with AOCA and their members. With the help of AOCA, we hope to reach our goal of registering more than 20 million donors by the end of 2012 to help save lives," said David Fleming, CEO of Donate Life America.

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