

Touched by Triumph, Tainted by Tragedy

withdrew the *Empress of Canada* — the last of the series — from North Atlantic service. Air charters and rising costs had done what eight decades of marine competition couldn't

On Thursday, 28 May 1914, Capt. Kendall slowly eased the giant *Empress of Ireland* from her berth at Quebec City. Bound for

Liverpool, she was beginning her 96th routine Atlantic crossing since joining the Canadian Pacific fleet some eight-years earlier. The voyage was

destined to be far from routine.

She stopped at Rimouski that evening to pick up Europe-bound mail, and then proceeded slowly toward the open sea through patches of heavy fog. At 1:30 am on the 29th, she came abreast of Father Point and the crew on the bridge watched the river pilot head for shore.

Within an hour, in bad visibility, she collided with the *Storstad* and the steel — sheathed bow of the Norwegian Collier cleanly sliced through the liner's hull. The two crippled vessels slowly separated, and with water pouring through the gaping hole in the *Ireland's* side, Capt. Kendall ordered full engines ahead in an effort to beach the ship and save the sleeping passengers.

The history of Canadian Pacific's Empress fleet — ocean liners that had more than their share of tragedy

BY F.J. WOODLEY

Twenty-four gleaming white-hulled ocean queens bore the *Empress* name. Two dozen majestic liners that routed all marine competition in all corners of the globe. An era ended on 23 November 1971, when the Canadian Pacific Steamship Line

On 28 May 1914, the *Empress of Ireland* would depart Quebec City for Liverpool. It was her 96th Atlantic crossing, but it would quickly end in disaster. The full story of the sinking of the *Empress of Ireland* may be found in *Sea Classics* May 2017.



The *Empress of Ireland* would sink in less than 15-minutes after striking the *Storstad*.

He didn't make it. The *Empress of Ireland* sank in 14-minutes!

The vessel's lighting system failed almost immediately upon impact and 1400 terrified, half-asleep passengers began a frantic fight for life... a desperate scramble through the pitch-black ship to the upper decks. Many never made it out of the lower cabins.

Those who did find the icy waters offered little hope

for salvation. Many clawed their way out of the depths of the stricken giant, only to perish in the cold St. Lawrence, clinging to bits of wreckage.

The *Storstad* launched lifeboats and gathered up as many of the *Ireland's* passengers as could be located in the darkness and took them — living and dead alike — back to Rimouski. Government boats then transported them to Quebec City. Canadians awoke that morning to the grim news and before the day ended there were few parts of the country unaffected by the tragedy.

The death toll mounted as additional bodies were plucked from the river. Grieving relatives arrived in

