



Oak Leaves

Oak Hill Cemetery Association

1705 Mt. Vernon Rd. S. E. • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52403



Oak Hill Cemetery is non-profit lot owner association dedicated to preserving the heritage of Linn County, Iowa.

1912 – April 15th to May 5th Day to Day Events – 1912

*From a short biography of
Berthe Leroy: Titanic Survivor
by Olivier Mendez & Michel Leroy*

In April 1912, the Douglasses were on a trip in Europe; they wanted to buy new pieces of furniture for their Lake Minnetonka house. Before leaving for America, they visited American friends in Paris.

As Mr. Douglas wanted to celebrate his 53rd birthday at home, in America, the couple had decided not to stay too long in Paris. The first liner sailing from France was the Titanic.

The sinking of the Titanic set off a series of events and news items reported locally that culminated with the May 5, 1912 funeral service at the Douglas Family Mausoleum.

Remember, there was no 24/7 news or text and instant messages in 1912.

*These accounts were posted to the
Oak Hill Facebook page
as a day by day account.*

The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette April 16, 1912

Col. B. H. O'Meara, of Douglas & Co., went to Chicago last night in the endeavor to get into more direct touch with the White Star Steamship Company, owners of the ill-fated Titanic. Much concern was felt over the fate of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Douglas, both formerly of Cedar Rapids, and it was feared that both had perished.

Col. O'Meara wired Mr. George B. Douglas early this morning that



the steamship company officials had informed him that Mrs. Douglas was among the passengers rescued. This noon Mr. Geo. B. Douglas received a message from Col. O'Meara stating that all but a very few of the first cabin passengers were on the Carpathia, and that the list of rescued included "R. D." Douglas. As there is no R. D. Douglas on the published passenger list, it is concluded that "R. D." should read "W. D." It is reasonably certain that Mr. Douglas was among those rescued.

The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette April 17, 1912

"Up to 1 o'clock today no definite news had been received in Cedar Rapids concerning the fate of Mr. Walter D. Douglas . . . the wireless telegraph companies having great trouble in effecting communication with the Carpathia . . . It appears that a considerable number of the first and

second cabin passengers, especially the men, must have perished, but it is still hoped that Mr. Douglas was among the ones rescued. Mrs. Douglas is on the Carpathia, but whether Mr. Douglas went down with the boat, as did many others of the male passengers, remains to be determined."

George and Irene left Cedar Rapids the afternoon of April 16th, spent the night in Chicago, and arrived in New York Thursday, the 18th, at 9:00 a.m. The Carpathia was scheduled to land that evening.

The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette April 19, 1912

All doubt as to the fate of Mr. Walter D. Douglas was dispelled last night at 11 o'clock, when **Mr. William H. Dutton received a message from Mrs. Goodell, sister of Mrs. Douglas.** The message said that Mrs. Douglas and her maid had disembarked and were with their relatives in New York City, but that Mr. Douglas had perished with the sinking of the ship. The message said the terrible details of Mr. Douglas' loss could not be told last night, but that another, message would follow today.



William Dutton was a brother of
Mahala Dutton Douglas

A message to **Mr. Clair Bloomhall, office manager of the Douglas & Co. Starch plant**, was received about midnight from Mr. George B. Douglas, who with his wife went to New York to meet Mrs. Walter Douglas. The message conveyed the same information as the telegram to Mr. Dutton.



April 20 Senate Testimony New York, April 19 — Special to The Republican:

Senators Smith and Newlands of the investigating committee heard today of the amazing and circumstantial tale of the wreck of the Titanic which **Mrs. Walter D. Douglas** of Minneapolis, who lost her husband in the disaster, was ready to tell them. They spent a portion of the recess with her and at their request she will be an early witness before the committee.

Excerpts from her testimony:

"I was in the first boat to reach the Carpathia from the Titanic," she said, "and the third woman to get aboard of her."

"I left the Titanic, not from the lower deck on the starboard side to which she listed, and from which the second cabin passengers and most of the boats were put off, but from the upper deck, Deck A, I think they called it."

"The boat in which I was taken off was in charge of the fourth officer and

it happened that he was the officer in charge of the lights and signals. He showed much sense, because he put into that boat such a lot of candles and lights, which eventually were the means of hastening our rescue and that of the others. If we had not had those lights I firmly believe that the loss of life would have been much greater."

"There were no boat crews in any of the boats that I saw. The women rowed. Mrs. Appleton rowed ours. We pulled away eighteen or twenty yards and stood by awhile. I could not see much because when I tried to look the officer told me to lie down and trim the boat. Afterwards I helped with the tiller."

"In a short space of time you cannot imagine how quickly, the Titanic sank. Then the officer in our boat commenced to burn the signal lights. He put a lantern at the end of a pole and told me to hold it. I lay on my back and held it up against the back of another woman. The men on the Carpathia said they saw the signal lights on our boat ten miles away and those in the other boats who pulled in every direction saw them too, and it served to draw them together."

April 21, 1912
Cedar Rapids Sunday Republican

It was reported in this edition that Mahala Douglas spent several hours in Chicago en route from New York to her home in Minneapolis. In her statement she said "Everyone knew we were near icebergs because it had gotten so cold."

"On Sunday, before the night of the wreck," said Mrs. Douglas, "Mrs. Ryerson told me Mr. Ismay had said, 'I just have had wireless word that we are in the icebergs.' Mrs. Ryerson said, 'Of course, you are going to slow down?'"

"Oh, no," Mr. Ismay replied, "we are going to put on two more boilers and get out of it."

"The day before the wreck I saw one of the ship's crew letting down a bucket to dip up ocean water and take the temperature. I saw that the pail never touched the water and that he pulled

it up empty. "He then took the pail to the water pipe on deck and filled it with the ship's water. Then he took the temperature of the water in the pail."

April 22 The Cedar Rapids Gazette
By Verne Marshall
(Interview Obtained Especially for The Gazette.)

Minneapolis, Minn., April 22—Mrs. Mahala Dutton Douglas, bereaved wife of Walter D. Douglas, of Minneapolis, and formerly of Cedar Rapids, who went to his death on the Titanic one week ago, ended a journey unparalleled in the history of travel on land and sea today when she arrived in Minneapolis and was taken to her palatial summer home, Walton, at Lake Minnetonka.

She was accompanied from New York by a son of her husband **George C. Douglas, George B. Douglas and Mrs. Douglas of Cedar Rapids, brother and sister-in-law of Walter Douglas. Mrs. G. A. Goodell, her sister, and R. D. Stewart, of Chicago, a nephew. Edward B. Douglas**, another son arrives home tomorrow. From Chicago the party consisted of Mrs. Douglas and her maid, George C. Douglas and Mrs. Goodell.

April 23, 1912 The Evening Gazette:
Special to THE CEDAR RAPIDS
EVENING GAZETTE.

Minneapolis, Minn., April 23—When informed by the Tribune that the body of his father, **Walter D. Douglas**, had been found and was being brought to New York City, **George C. Douglas** stated that he and his brother, **Edward B. Douglas**, probably will leave at once for the coast.

No Word Early Today.

Early today he had received no messages telling of the recovery of the body.

Mr. Douglas at once got into communication with New York in an effort to get direct news from the scene of the Titanic disaster. Mrs. Mahala Douglas, wife of Walter Douglas, gradually is recovering from the effects

of the ordeal through which she passed and she will be able to testify this week before the investigation committee at Washington if she is called on.

In the Waterloo Evening Courier
April 24, 1912:

W. D. Douglas of Minneapolis, who was drowned at the wrecking of the Titanic and whose body has been recovered, was a cousin of John W. Ives of this city and of B. E. Ives, agent of the Illinois Central at Iowa Falls. Mr. Douglas visited his cousin, B. E. Ives, a few years ago when that gentleman was agent here of the Rock Island.

April 25 The Cedar Rapids Gazette

George B. Douglas, who returned from Minneapolis, last night, states that the date of the funeral cannot be determined upon as yet, as it is not known when the remains will reach the home. George C. Douglas, son of the deceased, left New York for Halifax Tuesday, and it is expected he will reach New York with the body some time Friday.

The Cedar Rapids Daily Republican
Thursday April 25:

**Relatives of the late Walter D. Douglas
on way to Halifax to claim body**

Messrs. *George C. Douglas and Edward Camp*, both of Minneapolis, will go to Halifax to meet the cable ship Mackay-Bennett, bearing the identified bodies of the Titanic disaster, due to arrive Saturday. Messrs. Douglas and Camp left Chicago Wednesday afternoon and will go by way of Boston.



As recorded by the crew of the **Mackay Bennett**:

No. 62 - MALE - Estimated age, 55 - Hair grey

Clothing - Evening dress, with "W.D.D." on shirt.

Effects - Gold watch; chain; gold cigarette case "W.D.D."; five gold studs; wedding ring on finger engraved "May 19th '84"; pocket letter case with \$551.00 and one pound; 5 note cards."

First Class

Name - Walter D. Douglas, Minneapolis

The Cedar Rapids Daily Republican
Friday April 26:

It is now expected that the funeral service for the late Walter D. Douglas will be held in Oak Hill cemetery next Wednesday. The exact time cannot be given, as it is not known just when the body will leave the Atlantic coast.

Mr. George B. Douglas arrived home from Minneapolis Thursday morning and is planning the funeral arrangements. Mrs. Walter D. Douglas greatly desires that the body of her husband be taken to Waldon, their home at Deephaven, on Lake Minnetonka, and that the funeral service be held there. It is likely that this will be done. A special train will then bring the funeral party to this city for the final service at the family vault in Oak Hill Cemetery.

The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette
Tuesday April 30, 1912

Cedar Rapids relatives of the late Walter D. Douglas have received no word from Halifax regarding the docking of the boat carrying the

remains of the Titanic victims that have been recovered. *W. H. Dutton of this city reached Halifax yesterday, where he joined George C. Douglas, son of the deceased, and his uncle, Edward Camp, both of Minneapolis, who have been at Halifax for several days.* Mr. and Mrs. George B. Douglas of this city and other relatives are expecting a message from Halifax some time this afternoon, and it is thought that Messrs. Douglas, Camp and Dutton will start at once for Minneapolis with the remains.



Wednesday May 1

The Gazette and The Republican

A telegram was received by George B. Douglas yesterday from his nephew, George Camp Douglas, stating that the body of his father, Walter D. Douglas, who was on the Titanic when it sank, had been fully identified, and that the remains were in a good state of preservation.

Messrs. Douglas, Camp and Dutton expected to leave Halifax early this morning, and will arrive at Minneapolis with the remains Saturday morning.

Funeral services will be held Saturday at the Douglas home at Deephaven, near Minneapolis. On Sunday morning the body, accompanied by relatives and friends from Minneapolis, will be brought to Cedar Rapids over the Rock Island on a special train, arriving here late Sunday afternoon.

The remains will be taken direct to Oak Hill cemetery, where the burial services will be held and the body placed in the Douglas family vault.



Rev. Dr. E. R. Burkhalter, who has been the family pastor in Cedar Rapids for nearly forty years, will make a special trip from New York, where he is spending his vacation, to conduct the burial services. It is the desire of the family and also of Dr. Burkhalter that he shall speak the last words for Mr. Douglas. The services both at the

home in Minneapolis and at Oak Hill Cemetery here will naturally be of an impressive character, not only because of the respect that is held by everyone for the late Mr. Douglas, but also for the tragic manner in which he went to his death.

At the time Janette Stevenson Murray and Fredrick Gray Murray published The Story of Cedar Rapids in 1950, they described Reverend Burkhalter as the scholarly pastor of the First Church from 1876 to 1915 who arrived as a young man. "By his long and dedicated service to many and varied religious and cultural activities, he won the title, Bishop of Cedar Rapids" and the loyal friendship of every minister in town including the Reverend Father Gunn of the Roman Catholic Church, his long-time honored contemporary." When the Coe Collegiate Institute was founded in 1875, Rev. Burkhalter took his place on the board of trustees in 1876 and remained there until his death. Many Coe College traditions are associated with Dr. Burkhalter.

Verne Marshall, who won a Pulitzer Prize for The Gazette and attained national renown as a writer and editor in the 1920s and 1930's. He returned to Cedar Rapids in January 1914 when his father purchased an interest in the Gazette. Two years later with World War 1 dragging on he enlisted as an ambulance driver in the American Field Service, which was attached to the French army and saw service in Verdun. When the U. S. entered the war in 1917, he enlisted in the ambulance unit of the Iowa National Guard but transferred to the 126th machine gun battalion of the 34th division. On orders of the war department he left camp Cody NM and traveled from coast to coast describing his experiences in France and urging Americans to do their utmost to bring a speedy victory for the allies.



Others in the Cedar Rapids and Oak Hill Community had an interest in the news of the Titanic as witnessed by the following:

**MRS. TAYLOR A NIECE
OF COL. E. L. SWEM**

**Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Conybears Also
Had Very Dear Friends on
Board the Boat.**

Col. E. L. Swem was greatly interested in the story in last evening's Gazette relative to the rescue of Rev. and Mrs. Earl Taylor, who were on the ill fated ship Titanic. Mrs. Taylor is a niece of Col. Swem and has visited here frequently. Her father, Eli G. Swem, formerly was a Methodist minister at Belle Plaine and various other Iowa cities.

Rev. Dr. and Mrs. S. E. Conybears had some very dear friends on board the Titanic who were fortunate in being saved, it is believed. They are Rev. and Mrs. Albert F. Caldwell, who were with Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Conybears in the foreign mission work at Siam. The Caldwells, with their one child, were returning from Siam where they had been for three years. Their home is at Biggsville, Ill.

