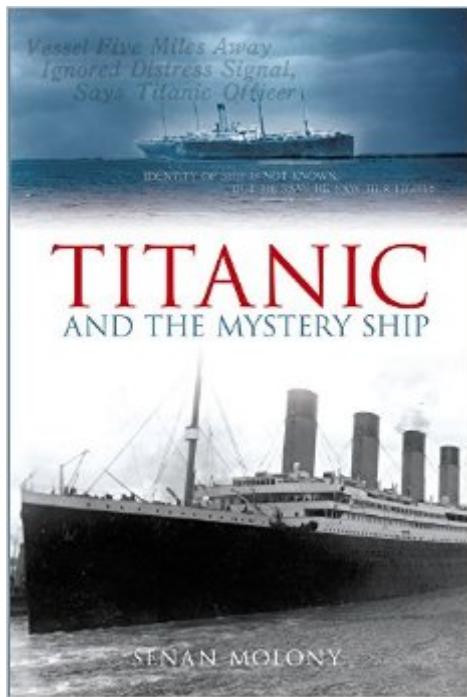


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Titanic And The Mystery Ship



Synopsis

Perhaps the most enduring legend of Titanic is the mystery ship, the fabled vessel seen in the distance that could have saved all her passengers from freezing or drowning. But what was the mystery ship, and was she the Californian, a cargo/passenger ship that, according to her captain, was stuck in ice over the horizon? At the enquiry into the sinking, Captain Lord of the Californian was castigated and blamed for the loss of life on Titanic, but for 90 years there has been proof that his ship could not have been the mystery ship. In this book, Senan Moloney looks at the evidence and makes a compelling case for Lord's innocence.

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Customer Reviews

One of the never-ending mysteries/controversies involving the sinking of the Titanic is what role was played by the steamer Californian. Were she and the Titanic close enough to see one another (and, if so, did the Californian's inactivity doom many Titanic passengers and crew who otherwise could have been rescued?). Defenders of the Californian's captain, Stanley Lord (no relation to Walter Lord, author of the famous "A Night to Remember" about the Titanic sinking), insist that Lord was unfairly made a scapegoat for the tragedy and contend that the Californian was too far distant from the accident to see what happened or to have then taken effective action to help. Molony argues strongly in Lord's favor, laying out in great detail the evidence that the ships were too far apart to see one another. The book's strongest point is the presentation of chunks of primary evidence/testimony in support of Molony's argument. The weakest point is the strident, even

sarcastic tone adopted by Molony, which can lead any reader to doubt the author's objectivity and to rightly question how fair and balanced the presentation of evidence really is.

In my review for Titanic International Society's journal "Voyage," I called Irish journalist Senan Molony's 2003 book, "A Ship Accused," "an exceptional, clear and complete vindication" of Californian's Captain Stanley Lord, "an essential addition to any Titanic library, and a first-rate forensic examination of one of Titanic's most enduring controversies." Now, Molony's "Titanic and the Mystery Ship," essentially a reprise of "A Ship Accused," is available and better than the original. In the 94 years since Titanic's loss, no other issue provokes such protracted debate as the identity of the vessel so tantalizingly close to the dying Titanic, and that of the vessel being carefully observed aboard Californian. The complexity of the discussion, involving timing, sightings, rockets, movements, headings, navigational positions, Morse lamp signals, even the nature of the vessel(s) in view, has intensified the debate, often adding passion at the expense of facts. Molony's forte is in isolating each strand of the supposed case against the Californian and dispassionately examining the evidence. Logical fallacies, factual contradictions, witnesses' inconsistencies -- one by one, each pillar supporting the case against Californian is examined and effectively dismissed. As I wrote in 2003, "One finds oneself wishing that Molony, and not the ineffectual C. Robertson Dunlop, had represented Californian's officers and captain at the Mersey inquiry." Once Molony has made his case -- and a powerful one it is -- he adds, as an appendix, a thoughtful appraisal of several candidates for the mystery ship, while not committing to any favorite.

What an amazing investigation into the well known, "mystery ship" piece of the sinking of the Titanic. How easy it is for people to develop a prejudice that continues to color events. I kept thinking of doctrinal fallacies which become a part of many churches and Christian history as I read the growing whimsies of Lord Mersey (ironic that the last name of his nemesis was truly "Lord") and others who, with greater and lesser awareness, condemn a just man. Author Molony does a masterful job of plying us with facts and only occasionally tells of the bias or intention that may underlie them. In a similar vein, Molony is long on evidence and short on opinion. At the same time he very subtly kept my emotions alive, pro or con, for the many characters that move in and out of the story. Especially that is true of my exasperation for the judges and my compassion for the victims--with apologies to the author who is not as blatant as I am about sorting out the "goodies" and "baddies." I think I've never read about a man being on trial without being on trial. Captain Lord of the Californian--historically besmirched as the Titanic's "mystery ship"--is judged, condemned,

and socially hung with nary a word that his own trial is filling the gaps of the anguish and fury surrounding this monstrous tragedy. It is scapegoating at its finest. Sadly, Lord was a very honest and decent man. More sadly, these qualities may well have been his downfall. It's happened before. Happily, good men keep on going: during the next 50 years of his life Lord kept his cool without loosing sight of what he had to say about the events in the North Atlantic on that chilling night in April, 1912. Now this book lends credibility to Lord's version of the story.

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