

Way We Were
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Maritime Disaster Touches Park City
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As introduction to this article I would like to acknowledge three people who provided the impetus - Gary Kimball, Mahala Ruddell and Erik Larson, the author of *Dead Wake*.

One hundred years ago on May 7, 1915, Park City was tragically touched by events a world away. Europe was engulfed in war. Germany had declared the waters around England a war zone. Any ship entering those waters could and would be subject to attack without warning: unrestricted warfare.

While war raged in Europe, a Mr. John Edward Inman was planning a trip to see his parents, who were still living at home in England. Just two years prior, in 1913, Inman, in his mid-20s, had immigrated to the United States from England in pursuit of the "American Dream." He stepped ashore in New York City and eventually settled in Park City.

He secured work at the Silver King Mine, establishing himself as a capable miner. He joined the Knights of the Maccabees, one of the largest social and fraternal organizations in the country, with over 300,000 members nationwide. Like many fraternal orders, the Knights of the Maccabees, in exchange for dues, provided financial support to a miner's family in case of accident or death. Inman named his father as sole beneficiary of the \$1,000 life insurance policy he held through the organization. By 1915, he was successful enough in Park City that he could afford to take a leave of absence and finance a journey home to surprise his parents.

The trip home was a multi-step process that required some planning. Inman first traveled by train to New York City, and then booked a ticket via ocean liner to England. And not just any ocean liner; Inman planned to travel on the *Lusitania*.

The *Lusitania*, owned by the famed Cunard Line, was spacious, luxurious and fast. She held the prestigious "Blue Riband" designating her as the record holder for the fastest trans-Atlantic crossing. She was capable of 25 knots, or 29 miles per hour.

On May 1, 1915, the *Lusitania* set sail for Liverpool, with Inman and nearly 2,000 others aboard. It was to be her 203rd Atlantic crossing and as fate would have it, it would be her last. Little did Inman know he would never see his parents or Park City again. How could he, though? As the fastest ship on the sea and fully built to military specifications, everyone believed she could outrun any submarine.

But on the beautiful afternoon of May 7th, just ten miles off the coast of Ireland, German submarine U-20 successfully fired one torpedo with dead aim. The results were devastating. The great liner sank in less than twenty minutes. Over half of its passengers and crew perished, 1193 total. Of those who died, 600 were never found - and J.E. Inman was one of them. Thus did one

of Park City's residents find himself an unwilling participant in one of the greatest maritime disasters of all time.



Image ID: 2002.26.206

Credit: Park City Historical Society and Museum, Kendall Webb Collection

Caption: J.E. "Jack" Inman stands second from the left with five fellow Englishmen, most of them also members of the Knights of the Maccabees. Because Inman's body was never recovered, the fraternal organization was reluctant to pay out his life insurance policy. By the end of 1915, however, a settlement had been reached and Inman's family in England had received the money.