



# Here & Now

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An update for Florida Baptist Historical Society Board of Directors and Friends

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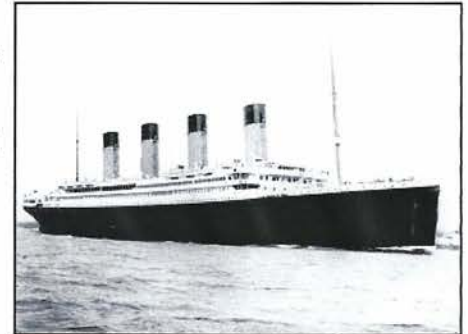


Penny Baumgardner  
Secretary

Dear Board Members and Friends of the Florida Baptist Historical Society,

Few events have ever stirred the national psyche like the sinking of the *Titanic* on April 15, 1912, as the ship sailed from Southampton, England, to New York City.

In 1909, the White Star Line commissioned Belfast shipbuilders Harland and Wolff to build three luxury liners: *Titanic*, *Olympic*, and *Britannic*. As many as 12,000 Belfast workers were employed with these projects. It is well known that *Titanic* was the largest and most beautiful vessel in the world and it is generally known that only 711 passengers of the 2,224 survived the terrible shipwreck. Books, movies, articles, lawsuits and "what-ifs" have recorded the deaths of 1,513 passengers and the heartache that followed.



*RMS Titanic*

What is not generally known is that there was a Florida Baptist pastor among the deceased. Jacksonville pastor Robert James Bateman (1859-1912) was one of the casualties. The 51 year old Baptist minister was the founding pastor of Central City Mission in LaVilla, and according to the *Florida Times-Union*, he was a ray of "human sunshine" for the needy and down trodden in Jacksonville. He married Emily Jane Hall of London and they had seven children.



Robert James Bateman

Bateman was accompanied on the Atlantic trip by his sister-in-law, Ada Ball. She was a native of Bromley, Kent, and boarded the *Titanic* with Bateman for their trip back to America. Her husband had died and she emigrated to Jacksonville to be near her sister, Emily and her husband.

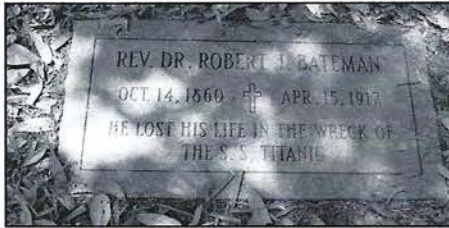
The trip to England was made so that Bateman could study Christian social work in England and he and Mrs. Ball also visited relatives. Upon their return trip to America they traveled second class and Bateman had ticket number 1,166 and conducted the only known religious service aboard the *Titanic* once it got under way.

Bateman is mentioned in the book *A Night to Remember*. He led passengers in prayers aboard ship and his sister-in-law recalled that "Nearer My God to Thee" was his favorite hymn and the same one that was played by the band as the ship was sinking. Some of the famous people aboard the *Titanic* included John Jacob Astor, IV, Benjamin Guggenheim and Isidor Straus.

Mrs. Ball later recalled that she believed she was the last person to leave the ship in a lifeboat and Bateman forced her into the boat. Bateman was born in England and ordained at 21. He had served as pastor in Wales, Ireland, Knoxville and Baltimore before coming to Jacksonville. He was survived by his wife and six children. He had worked as a stone contractor and received very little pay as a Baptist preacher. He had no official grave marker until March 2, 2000, when a grandson saw to it that an identifying tombstone was placed at his grave.

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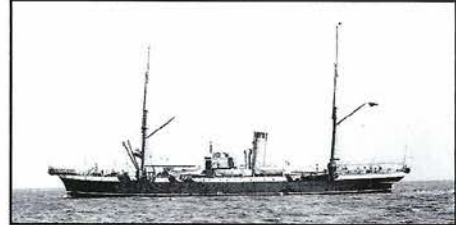
The *Titanic* event was well recorded and an actor portrayed Bateman in the 1997 movie *Titanic*. He tossed his necktie to his sister-in-law in the lifeboat and said, "Goodbye, God bless you." Mrs. Ball believed it was Bateman who instructed the eight piece ship orchestra to play "Nearer My God to Thee" as the boat sank.

Bateman's body was one of the 333 that was recovered and his recovery was by the *Mackay-Bennett*, a cable-laying vessel. His funeral was May 12, 1912 and was one of the largest attended funerals in Jacksonville and eleven ministers were involved in the service. Bateman was buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Jacksonville.

He was remembered as a bi-vocational preacher, pastor, evangelist and friend of the poor.

Honoring those who honor Christ,

Jerry M. Windsor  
Secretary-Treasurer  
Matthew 6:33



*Mackay-Bennett*