

# Dangerous Transatlantic Travel: The Immigration of Fanny and Rudolph

Millions of immigrants traveled from Europe to the United States between 1880 and 1920. They came on ocean vessels powered by steam engines.

The shift from wind-powered to steam-powered ships cut traveling time down from three months to two weeks. But despite the shortened travel time, for most immigrants an ocean voyage involved extreme hardship.

Ships originally designed to carry transatlantic cargo were adapted to carrying human cargo. Other than a wealthy few who could travel in first class accommodations, the overwhelming majority of immigrants crossed the ocean in third class "steerage."

Hundreds of steerage passengers were packed in like cattle. They were provided minimal food and had no privacy. Use of toilets was limited. On many ships, even drinking water was grudgingly provided. Because of overcrowding and lack of sanitary accommodations, fear of catching communicable diseases was well founded.

Despite these deplorable conditions, hundreds of thousands of Europeans made the voyage to America each year. In 1882, for example, nearly 800,000 people arrived from various European nations. Fanny Hope was one of them.

Fanny left Gretna Green, Scotland, in 1882 at the age of 25. She boarded a ship named "State of Florida" which departed from the port of Glasgow, stopped at the port of Larne, Ireland, and arrived at the port of New York on May 11, 1882.

On May 23, 1882, Fanny married John Paterson in Chatham, Ontario. Over the course of the next nine years, Fanny gave birth to four daughters: Agnes, Belle, Mabel, and Margaret. Years later, Margaret married Roy Coleman and gave birth to Jean, Betty, and Murray.

Despite the ordeal of her voyage, Fanny was fortunate to have reached her destination without incident. Other voyages of the State of Florida had serious accidents.

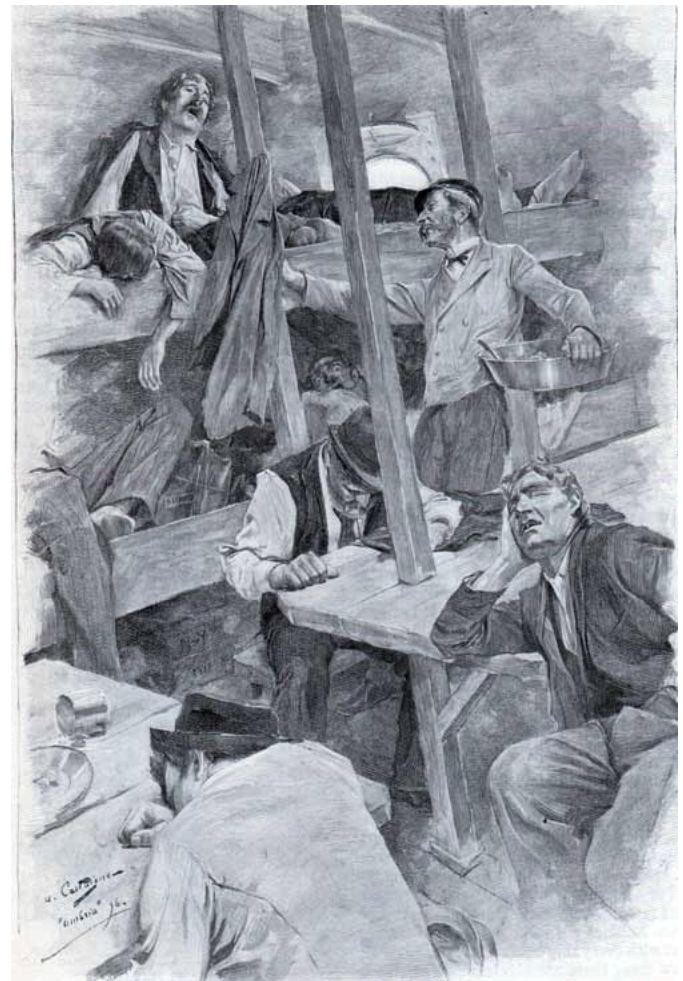
In 1883, the ship collided with another vessel about 12 miles from the shores of New York, leaving steerage passengers shocked and in a state of panic. The following year, an explosion occurred on the State of Florida and the ship sank off the coast of Ireland. Some 130 passengers and crew lost their lives.

If Fanny had died in transit from Scotland to America, she obviously would not have married and would not have had children. Her Coleman and Basler great grandchildren would not be here today. So her good fortune turns out to be our good fortune.

Rudolph Lukaschewski is another immigrant ancestor who experienced the hardships associated with a transatlantic voyage. Rudolph immigrated to the United States in 1887, a few years after Annie Janzen came to America. Both settled in Detroit.

Rudolph and Annie would later marry in 1891. They had several children, including Catherine Julia Lukaschewski. Catherine married Frank Steil and they had one child, Kathleen, who later married Murray Coleman.

Rudolph left his home town of Oliva, Poland, and traveled to Bremen, Germany, where he boarded the S/S Donau. Being of working class origins, Rudolph was undoubtedly one of the hundreds of steerage passengers. They would be segregated into areas for men traveling alone, women traveling alone, and families traveling together.



A few years before Rudolph made his voyage, the Donau had experienced a major fire at sea which put its passengers and cargo in great peril. In 1895, the ship stopped passenger service. It was eventually abandoned by its owners and burnt out in the Atlantic.