

# The Ship Titanic

It Was Sad When That Great Ship Went Down

Author unknown ~ about 1915

*C* *C7* *F*  
Oh, they built the ship Titanic, and they built it good and true.

*C* *G7*  
Built it so, the water wouldn't come through.

*C* *C7* *F*  
They put that ship to sea, never saw another shore.

*C* *G7* *C*  
It was sad when the great ship went down.

## CHORUS

*C* *F*  
It was sad . . . *it was sad.*

*F* *C*  
It was sad . . . *it was sad.*

*C* *G7*  
It was sad when the great ship went down . . . *to the bottom of the ocean.*

*C* *C7* *F*  
Husbands and wives, little children lost their lives.

*F* *C* *G7* *C*  
It was sad when the great ship went down.

*C* *C7* *F*  
They were not far from shore, 'bout a thousand miles or more,

*C* *G7*  
The rich refused to 'sociate with the poor.

*C* *C7* *F*  
They put the poor below, where they were the first to go.

*C* *G7* *C*  
It was sad when the great ship went down.

## CHORUS

*C* *C7* *F*  
Oh, the heroes saved the weak, as the ship began to leak.

*C* *G7*  
And the band on deck played on.

*C* *C7* *F*  
With, "Near'r my God to Thee", they were swept into the sea.

*C* *G7* *C*  
It was sad when the great ship went down.

## CHORUS

# History

"The Titanic" (also known as "It Was Sad When That Great Ship Went Down" and "Titanic (Husbands and Wives)") is a folk song and children's song best known for being sung in the United States at girl and boy scout summer camps. The song tells the tale of the sinking of the RMS Titanic on April 15, 1912 it struck an iceberg. The first folk songs about the *Titanic* disaster appeared within weeks of it's sinking. Recordings of various songs about the disaster date to as early as 1913.

Regional and generational variants appear as folk songs age. This is very true of "The Titanic".



RMS Titanic  
from the Titanic & Nautical Resource Center

According to Newman I. White's 1928 book *American Negro Folk-Songs*, "The Titanic" has been traced back to 1915 or 1916 in Hackleburg, Alabama. Other versions from around 1920 are documented in the Frank C. Brown Collection at Duke University in North Carolina. Early recordings include Ernest Stoneman's "The Titanic" (Okeh 40288)

in September 1924 and William and Versey Smith's "When That Great Ship Went Down" in August 1927.

According to Jeff Place, in his notes for the *Anthology of American Folk Music*: "African-American musicians, in particular, found it noteworthy and ironic that company policies had kept Blacks from the doomed ship; the sinking was also attributed by some to divine retribution for hubris."

[www.scoutsongs.com/lyrics/](http://www.scoutsongs.com/lyrics/), Wikipedia and Poem of the Week at [www.potw.org/](http://www.potw.org/)