The notable people planning to sail on the Titanic included a world-famous novelist, a radio pioneer and America's biggest tycoons.

The sinking of the Titanic claimed some 1,500 lives, among them a gallery of early 20th-century A-list celebrities. Captains of industry John Jacob Astor IV and Benjamin Guggenheim both went down with the ship, as did Macy's co-owner Isidor Straus and his wife, Ida, who refused to leave his side. The popular American mystery writer Jacques Futrelle, the American painter and sculptor Francis Millet, and Maj. Archibald Butt, friend and aide to then-President William Howard Taft, were lost as well.

But for all the boldface names among the Titanic's victims, many more might have been aboard, but for the vagaries of fate. Among them were:

THEODORE DREISER The novelist, then 40, considered returning from his first European holiday aboard the Titanic; an English publisher talked him out of the plan, persuading the writer that taking another ship would be less expensive.

Dreiser was at sea aboard the liner Kroonland when he heard the news. He recalled his reaction the following year in his memoir, A Traveler at Forty. "To think of a ship as immense as the Titanic, new and bright, sinking in endless fathoms of water. And the two thousand passengers routed like rats from their berths only to float helplessly in miles of water, praying and crying!"

GUGLIELMO MARCONI The Italian inventor, wireless telegraphy pioneer and winner of the 1909 Nobel Prize in Physics was offered free passage on Titanic but had taken the Lusitania three days earlier. As his daughter Degna later explained, he had paperwork to do and preferred the public stenographer aboard that vessel.

Although Marconi was later grilled by a Senate committee over allegations that his company's wireless operators had withheld news from the public in order to sell information to the New York Times, he emerged from the disaster as one of its heroes, his invention credited with saving more than 700 lives.

Three years later, Marconi would narrowly escape another famous maritime disaster. He was on board the Lusitania in April 1915 on the voyage immediately before it was sunk by a German U-boat in May.

MILTON SNAVELY HERSHEY The man behind the Hershey's confection empire had spent the winter in France and planned to sail home on the Titanic. The requirements of business back home apparently intervened; he and his wife caught a ship that sailed earlier.

J. PIERPONT MORGAN. The legendary 74-year-old financier, nicknamed the Napoleon of Wall Street, had helped to create General Electric and U.S. Steel.

Among his business interests was the International Mercantile Marine, the shipping conglomerate that controlled Britain's White Star Line, owner of the Titanic. Morgan attended the ship's launching in 1911 and had a suite on board with his own private promenade deck. He was reportedly booked on the maiden voyage but remained in Europe. Morgan was at the French resort of Aix when he got the news.

"Monetary losses amount to nothing in life," he told a visiting New York Times reporter after he learned of the sinking. "It is the loss of life that counts. It is that frightful death."

HENRY CLAY FRICK The Pittsburgh steel baron canceled passage on the Titanic when his wife sprained her ankle and had to be hospitalized in Italy.

ALFRED GWYNNE VANDERBILT The 34-year-old heir to the Vanderbilt shipping and railroad fortune, returning from European travel, reportedly had planned to board the Titanic; early newspaper accounts listed him as missing. He would become one of the most high-profile casualties of the Lusitania sinking three years later.