

**HELEN CHURCHILL
HUNGERFORD
CANDEE
1858-1949**



**AMAZING
TALENT
AND
VISION**

Journalist, author, travel writer, geographer, and interior designer, Helen Candee explored the exotic Far East, marched for suffrage, supported Oklahoma statehood, and survived Titanic's sinking.

Helen Churchill Hungerford was born in October 1858 in New York City. She was educated in private schools in Connecticut and traveled extensively abroad. In 1880, she married Edward Candee, a prosperous Norwalk, CT businessman. Unfortunately, the marriage was horrific as he severely abused his wife and two children, finally abandoning them. She supported herself as a writer for several years.

In the 1890s, Oklahoma Territory was the place to get a "quick" divorce. Helen moved to Guthrie to establish the required 90-day residency. She lived in the home of F. B. Lillie, the first registered territorial pharmacist, until she obtained a divorce in 1896, after a lengthy separation.

She lived in Guthrie for several years where her stories about the region catapulted her to national prominence as a journalist. She was a strong feminist, as evidenced by her best-selling first book "How Women May Earn a Living" (1900), based on her life as a single mother. Her second book "An Oklahoma Romance" (1901) was a novel promoting the possibilities of settlement in Oklahoma Territory.

Candee and her children moved to Washington DC in 1904, where she entertained a wide range of friends from suffrage supporter William Jennings Bryan to ultra-conservative First Lady Helen Taft. She also became one of the first professional interior decorators, commissioned to remodel the White House's West Wing in 1909.

While in Europe in 1912, she received a telegram that son Harry was seriously injured in a car wreck. She booked passage on the first boat – the RMS Titanic. On the voyage, she attracted dapper admirer New York architect Edward Kent. On the Grand Staircase after the iceberg struck, Candee entrusted Kent with precious items – a gold flask with the Churchill crest, and ivory cameo of her mother.

While boarding Lifeboat Six, Helen fell and fractured her ankle. She was still able to row the boat with fellow suffragette Molly Brown. In New York, Kent's sister returned her heirlooms after his body was recovered. She wrote a detailed article on the disaster for Collier's Weekly called "Sealed Orders", one of the first in-depth eyewitness accounts published in a major magazine.

While recuperating, Candee released her biggest-selling book "The Tapestry Book" (1912). In March 1913, Candee joined six equestriennes as they led 10,000 suffragettes down Pennsylvania Avenue in one of the largest demonstrations of its kind.

Using her international contacts, Candee worked as a nurse during World War I for the Italian Red Cross. One of the patients she nursed back to health was ambulance driver Ernest Hemingway. When she traveled to Japan, China, Indonesia and Cambodia in the 1920s, her adventures became two celebrated books, "Angkor the Magnificent" (1924) and "New Journeys in Old Asia" (1927). This success led to a prosperous career as a lecturer on the Far East.

In 1925, Candee became one of nine founding members of the Society of Woman Geographers. At age 80, she was still traveling and writing for National Geographic Magazine. Helen would eventually retire to her York Harbor, Maine cottage, where she died in August 1949 at age 90.

Of all her accomplishments, Candee is best remembered for a visit to the Titanic's bow on the evening before it sank, captured in a 2003 James Cameron documentary about exploring the wreckage. It is believed to have inspired the famous "sunset" love scene between Jack and Rose in the 1997 film.