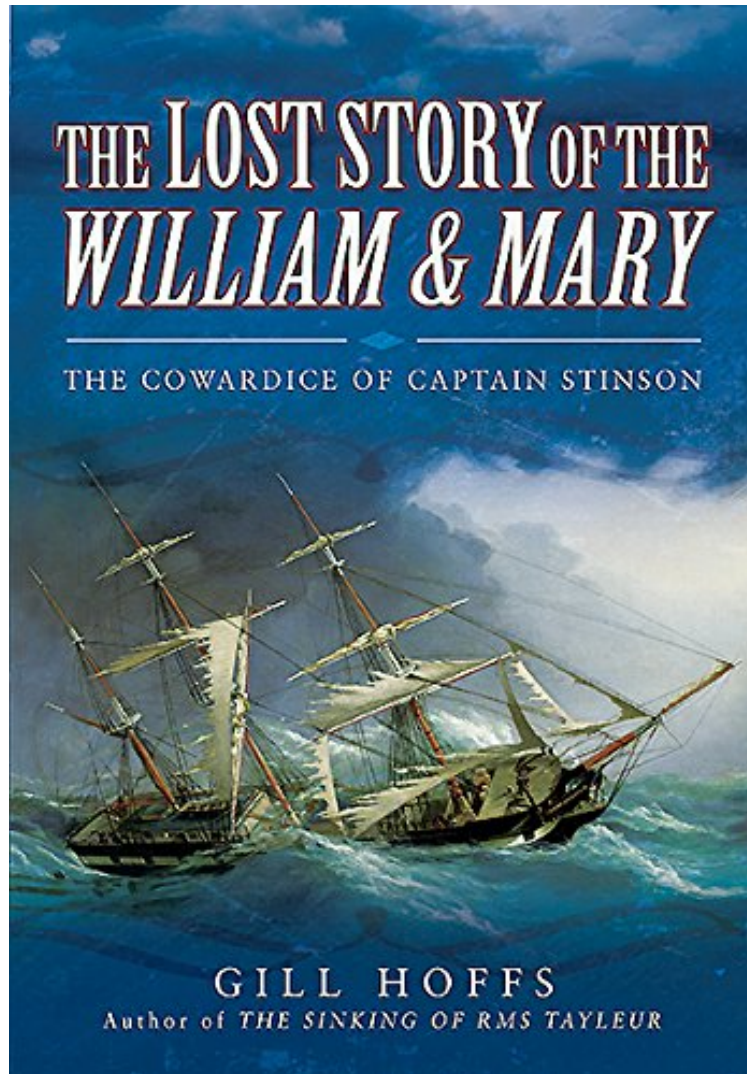


(Download) The Lost Story of the William and Mary: The Cowardice of Captain Stinson

## The Lost Story of the William and Mary: The Cowardice of Captain Stinson

Gill Hoffs

audiobook / \*ebooks / Download PDF / ePub / DOC



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#178295 in Books Pen and Sword 2016-11-22 2016-12-06 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.40 x .90 x 6.20l, .0 #File Name: 1473858240176 pages Pen and Sword | File size: 27.Mb

**Gill Hoffs : The Lost Story of the William and Mary: The Cowardice of Captain Stinson** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Lost Story of the William and Mary: The Cowardice of Captain Stinson:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Gill Hoffs is a hero. Important, moving writing. By Kari Nguyen The dedication of The Lost Story of the William and Mary: The Cowardice of Captain Stinson reads, in part, "For all those, then and now, who risk their all in search of a better or longer life, and all those who risk their all to help them." This statement rooted me to the page, both for its nod to a timeless struggle as well as for its recognition of a collective

humanity. It acknowledges need ("better or longer life") and places it in context ("then and now" - still, always). It highlights the critical piece that helpers are required, and the danger on both sides of that relationship. And, still, there is a note of controversy. A caution sign. This will not be easy. There will be risk. One would like to hope that these risks are natural ones, and if they are not natural ones at least they will be accidental. One would like to hope that no person would knowingly impede someone in a serious time of need, trying to provide for themselves and their families. And yet history repeats. The Lost Story of the William and Mary is a tale of cowards and heroes and imperiled lives. It is a story of profits and people. Gill Hoffs takes us back to 1853 and the port at Liverpool where we learn about the passengers at the center of the story, a group of men, women, and children who risked everything they had for an immigrant's chance at a new life, and who were cruelly treated despite, and in many ways because of, their vulnerability. Their lives were considered irrelevant to many, so much so that a proper investigation into their plight was never pursued. The truth has never been closely examined, until now. This is important and moving. At the center of the controversy is Captain Stinson, son-in-law of one of the ship's owners, and commander of the crew of the William and Mary. Hoffs appears driven by a historian's curiosity, wanting to get every detail right, as far as she can, because she knows this matters. Through her writing, Hoffs shows a deep reverence for victimized individuals, as well as to their familial lines and descendants (if they were lucky enough to have them). It is this respect for story and all of its players that makes a Gill Hoffs book of nonfiction (see also: *The Sinking of RMS Tayleur: The Lost Story of the 'Victorian Titanic'*) a satisfying read. Hoffs dutifully sets the scene, and a horrifying scene it was for so many living in Europe leading up to and including the early 1850s. Famine, poverty, illness. Crime. Hopelessness. The landscape of suffering here is tangible and clearly evoked. As with much of the book, Hoffs employs first-person accounts to show us what sections of London, at this time, smelled like ("[T]he air has literally the smell of a graveyard..." is one example) and what could be heard in Irish fields ("...mothers half naked, shivering in the snow and sleet, uttering exclamations of despair whilst their children were screaming with hunger..."). As unbearable as these passages can be to visualize, they are crucial in placing these would-be emigrants into proper context. The pull of America, a sea's journey away, was the promise of escape. Hoffs rightfully points out that information was withheld from emigrants pertaining to slavery and the treatment of Native Americans, evils that may or may not have swayed desperate travelers. Throughout the book, Hoffs makes good use of these fantastic, first-person descriptions, including of the voyage and wreck and of similar voyages of the time, and relies heavily on these written accounts, including from two young men named Roorda and Haagsma, who traveled as part of a Frisian party from the Netherlands. These men were among the over 200 people on board the William and Mary; the group included passengers of Irish, Scottish, English, German, and Dutch descent who were sailing from Liverpool to New Orleans in March, 1853. It was an uncomfortable journey for passengers from the outset, as many of them were very ill with seasickness, and some even developed typhoid fever from unsanitary food and drink. The actions and negligence of the captain and crew just made things worse. Haagsma tells us, "Once a week provisions were distributed and in such a way that a half of the ordered portions stuck to the fingers of those doing the distributing which was all loot for the captain and mates." And Roorda writes, later, "At the end of April we experienced - alas! - a fearsome exercise in punishment on board" to describe a beating of the ship's cook, as ordered by the captain himself, for possibly interfering with provisions on the passengers' behalf. When the William and Mary made it to the Bahamas in the first days of May, passengers were desperate, hopeful, and anxious for food and solid land; fourteen people had already died along the way. Sadly, those passengers remaining on board would come to realize that they were in dangerous waters, as the ship had sailed quickly into the shallow and rocky waterways near the islands, thanks to strong winds and questionable decision-making by Captain Stinson. The ship was soon overtaken by a storm and damaged on rocks before resting for good, causing terror as water began to fill the ship. A man named Bekius described "how the children clung to their parents and how parents clutched their children - in short; we stood by helplessly and overwhelmed with sorrow." Hoffs weaves together written narratives and harrowing details to show the deteriorating conditions and confusion onboard, and points out what a captain could and should have done in such circumstances. Ultimately, and most significantly, the captain (and most of the crew) abandoned ship in one of the precious few lifeboats and left those traveling under his guidance behind, presuming they would sink with his ship; one member of the crew even used a hatchet to chop at passengers attempting to gain access to one of the boats, and several people drowned in this immediate chaos. From here, Hoffs chronicles the aftermath, following not only the 175 people aboard the shipwreck and their subsequent lucky rescue by the heroic crew of a wrecking schooner who brought them to safety as best they could, but also of the 36 people who made it off the shipwreck in the smaller boats and fled the scene, including Captain Stinson, who arrived finally in New York and, as Hoffs writes, "reported the William and Mary as lost before his eyes..." which of course was not true. Newspapers on both sides of the ocean began reporting on the story, and there was a general outcry as to his behavior, including in *The New York Times* in May of that year. The captain quietly disappeared around this time, raising more suspicion and blame, and later in May and on into June the papers began reporting that most of those passengers presumed dead had been rescued and had made it to America after all! Hoffs makes it clear that more rigorous standards for oversight and accountability would have gone a long way in preventing a disaster like this one from happening in the first place. (For example, "...the officer who provided Captain Stinson with a certificate of

clearance enabling him to leave port without facing a fine or prosecution didn't check the ship thoroughly, including the provisions - and the lifeboats.") More importantly, Hoffs raises the point that passengers in these times were considered secondary to the more profitable cargo a ship would be carrying from one port to another. In some instances, a shipping company stood to gain more by losing the humans on board as well as the ship, if it was to be lost, because they would have to compensate survivors. (The gall!) A Commissioner of Emigration for New York stated several years later that emigrants were "handled with less care, as they did not break, nor, if injured, require to be paid for" unlike the goods a ship carried. This idea of value and cost is a central theme, and begs the questions: What do we lose? What do we gain? And who decides? How wonderful - and emotionally wrenching - it is to be able to follow along with this tale, and all of its ups and downs, with Gill Hoffs at the helm. By piecing together passenger accounts, newspaper articles, and contemporary information, Hoffs is able to tell the story, years later. The reproductions of photographs, cartoons, and illustrations Hoffs includes in the book are delightful additions and help to solidify these historical images. It is maddening to think that an official investigation never took place, that coverage of the event eventually died out, and that all the suffering that took place was allowed to stand, unanswered. There is some consolation here, I believe, in *The Lost Story of the William and Mary*, including the great descriptions of heroism displayed by Captain Sands and the crew of the wrecking schooner Oracle. (Captain Sands would go on to receive a medal for his actions in rescuing the passengers shipwrecked on the William and Mary.) *The Lost Story of the William and Mary* is a specific and well-researched glimpse of tragedy that becomes a case study of humanity and the roles of good, evil, and ineptitude. Not insignificant are the ways in which this book speaks to the global realities of our present-day, twenty-first century. Vast numbers of people around the globe continue to suffer, for an array of torturous reasons, and will seek safety and escape where it is offered. Who will help? Who will stand in their way? Gill Hoffs is a hero for exposing lost truths. May we learn from them. May we continue to lift up the stories of those less fortunate, especially of people with no appreciable means to be heard.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Captain Robert Sands was my great grandfather. He and his crew saved the life ...By Marlene Wilson  
Captain Robert Sands was my great grandfather. He and his crew saved the life of the 172 passengers that were left to die. The author has exposed the truth about the cowardice captain. Very well written .0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A very boring book. Way too much info  
By Linda TA  
very boring book. Way too much info. on emigrants and way too little about the voyage. If you are interested in books about ships and the sea don't waste your money on this book. There is no real story here just an endless series of quotes by people on the ship and others. I read two thirds of it and finally put it down. I wish I hadn't bought it. Her other book *The Sinking of the RMS Tayleur* was better than this one and worth reading.

The emigrant ship *William and Mary* departed from Liverpool with 208 British, Irish, and Dutch emigrants in early 1853. Captained by young American Timothy Stinson, the vessel was sailing for New Orleans when the ship wrecked in the Bahamas in mysterious circumstances. Instead of grounding the ship on a nearby shore or building rafts for the passengers, Stinson and the majority of his crew sneaked away in lifeboats – murdering at least two of the emigrants with a hatchet as they did so – and reported the ship sunk with all on board lost. But the passengers kept the ship afloat and two days later were rescued by heroic wreckers as the ship went down. Now, over 160 years on, the tale of the two murdered in Bahamian waters and the hundreds who escaped thanks to kindly wreckers can finally be told. Stinson is no longer getting away with murder.

More than 160 years later, this incredible story has resurfaced as Gill Hoffs dons her detective hat to uncover the truth of the emigrants' terrifying experience and the captain and crew's cowardice and lies, which went unpunished. Using a variety of sources such as contemporary newspaper reports, letters and diaries, plus information from descendants, she has pieced together a remarkable tale of its time and ours. (Family Tree, January 2017)

About the Author  
Gill Hoffs grew up on the Scottish coast before gaining a BSc in Psychology from the University of Glasgow. She worked with children with a variety of needs before she had her son in 2007. Gill's short nonfiction, *Black Fish*, won the 2011 Spilling Ink Nonfiction Prize, and her work is widely available online and in print, including "Wild: a collection" (Pure Slush, 2012) and "The Sinking of RMS Tayleur: The Lost Story of the 'Victorian Titanic'" (Pen Sword, 2014). See her website: [gillhoffs.wordpress.com](http://gillhoffs.wordpress.com) for details or contact her on twitter – @gillhoffs – or at [gillhoffs@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:gillhoffs@hotmail.co.uk).