

# SHIPS OF OUR ANCESTORS



Michael J. Anuta



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## Preface

**W**hat greater thrill can people experience than to see pictures of the actual ships on which their forebears walked the decks or spent sleepless nights in terror of the ocean, sick at heart about leaving their homes and anxious about the future! Such pictures are a unique reminder of the heroic period of mass migration and the special role of the steamship.

Unfortunately, *Ships of Our Ancestors* is late. It should have been published while the immigrants were still living so the first generation could have learned at first hand more about their cultural heritage and how their forebears met the challenges that brought them across the Atlantic.

Books on ships are numerous; however, no one before has endeavored to assemble pictures of immigrant ships and publish them in a book comprised solely of pictures. The research for the collection covered a period of several years. Photos of some ships are missing or were not available to me when I assembled the collection, but I suspect this album of nearly 900 ships will not disappoint those readers who might be curious about the ships of their ancestors.

*Michael J. Anuta*



## *Preface to the Reprint Edition*

**S**hips of Our Ancestors is not a genealogical sourcebook but a compilation of photographs of the steamships that were employed in transporting immigrants to this country in the heyday of mass migration. It was on board the very ships pictured here that immigrants travelled in "steerage," crossing the Atlantic in conditions of extreme discomfort and peril. These were the propeller-driven, steel-hulled leviathans of legend, owned and operated by such famous shipping lines as North German Lloyd, White Star, Cunard, Guion, Red Star, Inman, and Hamburg-American, and in their groaning steerage compartments they transported an ocean of humanity to an uncertain future in America. These were the ships at the very center of the European exodus, the workhorses of mass migration. Without these ships the great Atlantic migration that got underway after the Civil War would never have happened.

How fascinating to see these ships in photographs! How intriguing to think that from the crowded decks of these awesome vessels countless thousands of families embarked on their American odyssey! Equally, it is amazing that photos of so many of these old ships exist, and it is to Michael Anuta that we owe thanks for doggedly tracking them down and ultimately assembling them in this pictorial narrative. A complete photographic archive in itself, photos of nearly 900 ships are arranged here in alphabetical order, and each ship is further identified by date, shipping line, and source. The ships themselves were broken up and sold for salvage long ago, or were wrecked or lost at sea, and the passengers by now have also gone to their rest, but the haunting images of the ships remain.

The genealogist may seek confirmation of an ancestor's migration in documents and passenger lists, but these photographs provide evidence of a different sort; they are a visual testimony of the great passenger ships that grew old in service and then passed from the scene without a trace. They are proof of a bygone time and our connection to it.

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