



**Who:** John Jacob Astor IV

**When:** July 13, 1864- April 13, 1912

**Residence:** Rhinebeck

### **Brief Biography**

John Astor was born on July 13, 1864 to William Backhouse Astor, Jr. and Caroline Webster Schermerhorn. His grandfather, John Jacob Astor was a major player in the fur trade. As a result, John Jacob Astor grew up with an affluent lifestyle. After finishing school and traveling through Europe for a few years, John came home to New York and began managing the family real estate in New York City. He eventually married Ava Lowle Willing.

When it came to the real estate business, John was just like his grandfather. He would buy land in the city when it was very cheap and would hold on to it. As people moved to the city and the need for land grew, John would sell the land for a large sum of money. Subcontractors would build terrible buildings but the need for housing was so great that the conditions did not matter; people would be willing to live just about anywhere. John ignored these conditions and instead focused on the business aspects. He built many buildings and hotels (the St. Regis and Knickerbocker to name a few), but is most well-known for the Astoria part of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. He was also a member of the board for various companies.

In addition to the business world, John tried his hand at literature, mechanical inventions, and politics. He also served in the army. Astor would later divorce and then marry Madeline Talmadge Force. Astor died on the Titanic on a return trip from Europe.

### **Major Achievements**

Astor is known for his business savvy skills. He maintained his grandfather's place in real estate business and also built famous buildings and hotels. This includes Schermerhorn

building, the Putnam building, the Apthorpe apartments, and the Exchange Court. He also built the St. Regis, Knickerbocker hotel, and the Astoria part of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Furthermore he was a part of several company boards for companies such as the Morton Trust Company, Western Union Telegraph Company, Niagara Falls Power Company, and the New York Life Insurance Company.

### **For More information**

For more information visit these websites:

<http://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/titanic-victim/john-jacob-astor.html>

<http://www.biography.com/people/john-jacob-astor-9191170>

You can also read his book entitled *A Journey in Other Worlds: A Romance of the Future*.

### **Resource**

American National Biography Online