August H. Weikman, born in Philadelphia in 1860, was the Titanic’s first class barber. Although he was born in Philadelphia and had a home with his wife Mary in Palmyra New Jersey, his address on signing on for the Titanic was at Ivy Bank, Dyer Road, Shirley. He is also listed at this address in the 1911 census. Ivy Bank was a large house on the corner of Dyer Road and Shirley Road, occupied by a Mrs Daysh, her sister and nephew, and four boarders, one of whom was Augustus and another, William Thomas Hughes, who was Assistant Chief 2nd Steward on the Titanic.

Both Hughes, who was 34 years old, and Weikman, who was aged 51, had served on the Olympic before joining the Titanic. As chief barber, Augustus received only a shilling a week in wages and relied heavily on tips.

There were two barber shops on the Titanic. The first class salon, in which Augustus worked, was situated near the first class entrance foyer. It was fitted with two adjustable chairs, two wash basins, mirrors, and a waiting area. The barber shop also sold a range of toiletries, writing paper and pens and other useful implements. Most of the souvenirs items were also sold from display cases in the barber shops.

Augustus was sleeping in his barber’s salon when the ship struck the iceberg. He noticed only a slight shudder. He later went onto the boat deck to help load and launch the lifeboats, noting that there appeared to be a shortage of women. His testimony to the United States enquiry caused a certain amount of interest, as he appeared to exonerate Bruce Ismay, Managing Director of the White Star Line. Ismay was accused of cowardice after escaping in one of the lifeboats while women and children drowned. According to Augustus, however, Ismay helped load women and children into the boats, and only took a place when ordered to do so by one of the officers.

Having helped launch the last lifeboat, Augustus was either washed off the ship by a great wave generated as the ship sank, or blown off the ship by one of the explosions. He managed to stay afloat on some jettisoned deck chairs for two hours before being rescued in collapsible lifeboat ‘A’, which had been swept overboard as the liner sank and had became seriously flooded. The survivors were transferred to lifeboat 14 the next morning. Augustus seems to have been injured, although it is not clear whether from the explosion or from straining his back while launching the lifeboats, and had to be winched aboard the Carpathia.

Augustus, who had worked for White Star for 34, years claimed to have made over 700 trips across the Atlantic in that time. After his narrow escape on the Titanic, he declared that he would never go to sea again. However, he joined the Lusitania as head barber in August 1912. He died in 1924 and was buried at Morgan Cemetery, New Jersey.