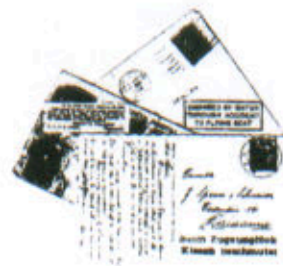


# La Catastrophe

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## 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SINKING OF THE "TITANIC" – APRIL 1912



See pages 3 - 20

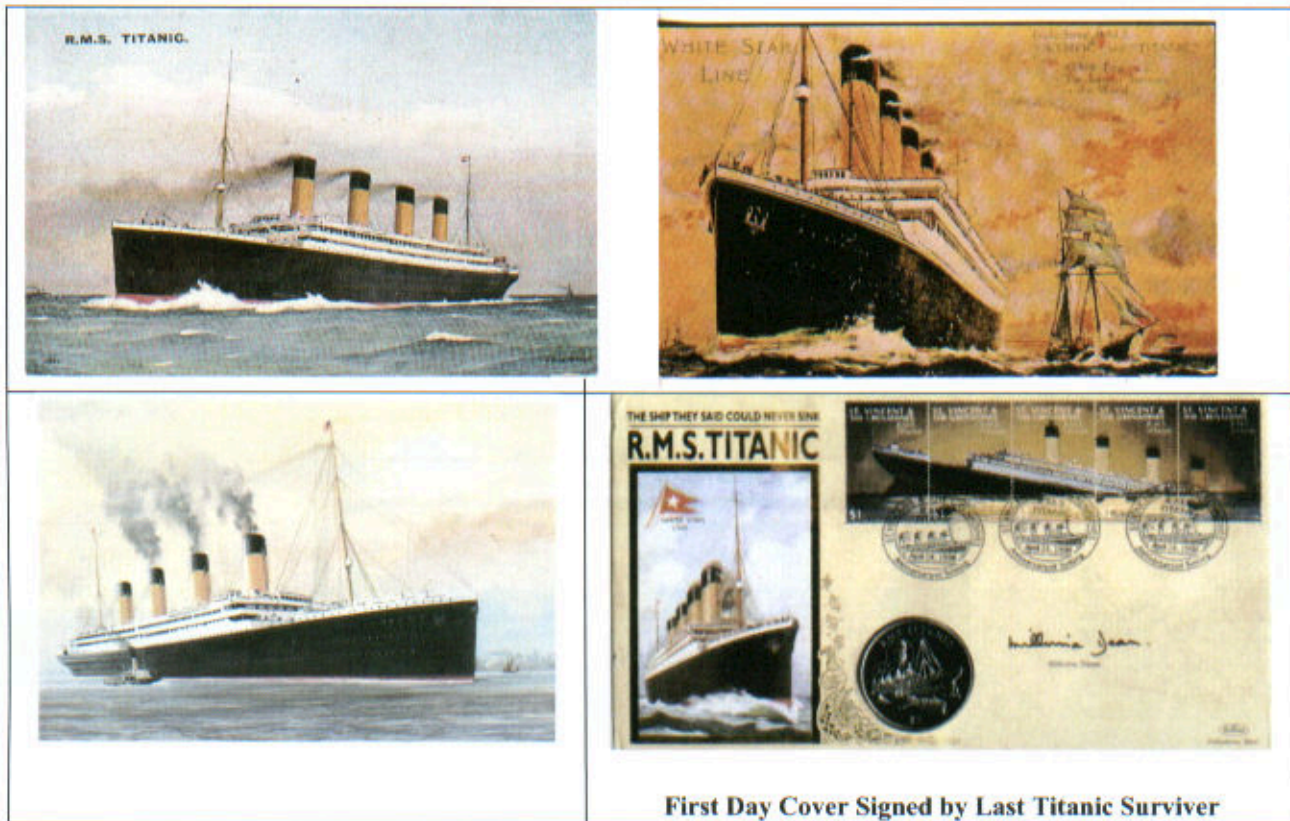


O.S. Woody's letter of appointment as a mail clerk aboard the Titanic was found in his pocket when his body was recovered two days after the disaster.

It was in a Matthew Bennett Auction in November 1998 and sold for US\$35,750 including buyer's commission.

The current owner of this letter is unknown

## TITANIC POSTCARDS & OTHER ITEMS (continued)



First Day Cover Signed by Last Titanic Survivor

Many more Titanic postcards can be seen at: [http://www.simplonpc.co.uk/WSL\\_Titanic.html](http://www.simplonpc.co.uk/WSL_Titanic.html)

### TITANIC COVERS THAT "MISSED THE BOAT"—AN UPDATE by Tom Fortunato

Readers of "La Catastrophe" may recall a two part article that appeared in the June and September 2008 issues dealing with a census of 8 covers bearing "TITANIC" markings. Well, a few more covers have come to light and a little bit more information is available about them.

Presented here is an updated spreadsheet detailing the now 13 known covers posted between March 7-13, 1912 apparently destined for the Titanic on its original sailing date of March 20. Due to the inability of the shipbuilders, Harland and Wolff of Belfast, to finish the ship on time, the maiden voyage of the White Star's unsinkable ship was postponed to April 10 when it eventually sailed into history.

Interestingly, all covers were mailed to one company, The M. A. Winters Company of Washington, DC, which at the time was a patent medicine firm. In my earlier article I mentioned the company's connection to the Dictaphone Company, which has proven unsubstantiated. A fascinating history of the firm and its historical building was just posted online and can be found at <http://www.mawinter.com/a-rich-history/>.

The very fact that the only covers known until recently with a "TITANIC" mark were mailed from the same country (France), sent to the same firm, and bear a mark of apparently the same type font and size has called their authenticity into question by some.

I was correctly taken to task about my supposition in my earlier article that the six digit blue numbers

## TITANIC COVERS THAT "MISSED THE BOAT"—AN UPDATE (continued)

found on these covers may have been French registration marks. D. Jennings Bramly, a specialist in the French Sower issue used on these envelopes, explained that the correct postage for a registered letter from France to the US would have been 50 centimes, not 25 centimes as seen on these covers. I am convinced, as he was, that these were internal W.A. Winter registration marks applied to each envelope as they arrived to identify and perhaps catalog them. Bramly also surmised that the "TITANIC" marking could not have originated from the French Post, nor does he believe it was applied by the White Star Line itself, which had an agency in Cherbourg, the Titanic's port of call in France.

In fact, an article in the February 2011 edition of the French publication "Timbres Magazine" titled "The Rare Documents of Titanic" on page 28 depicted my own cover and used Bramly's points above, roughly translated saying, "Beware of Fakes: A number of letters supposed to have missed the Titanic exist. Mailed from France to a single recipient in Washington, they have a vertical mark, 'TITANIC.' France [post offices] never made such marks. Moreover, these letters were posted at 25 centimes, while the rate was 50 centimes."

These are certainly valid points. But since that time a total of 13 rather than 8 covers have now been documented, pictured here, and what I label as cover Number 1 raises even more questions. While it, too, was sent to the M. A. Winter Company, it was mailed from Spain and bears a totally different style "TITANIC" marking in red rather than purple.

The fact that this envelope appears to be a commercial cover from a saddle maker certainly adds to its interest. The stamp used in the lower right corner was a 25 centimos Alfonso XIII definitive, which may have paid the proper international surface rate postage if the stamp held true to the UPU member nation convention of the time to print such stamps in blue for easy identification by postal officials. Note that the single-franked French covers bear a 25 centime blue Sower definitive. The cover, too, has a six digit number in light blue like the rest, adding credence that this was a Winter marking, like the company's self-evident purple receiving mark.

Bramly is convinced that the prior 8 French "TITANIC" covers were faked, but as he further wrote, was unsure on which side of the Atlantic the fraud originated. Does the new Spanish cover give added credence to a true Titanic connection, or add to the ruse?

These envelopes surely were held at the firm for at least a month or so from the time of their arrival until the fate of the Titanic was known to the World. If faked, would unscrupulous workers have purloined them shortly after the accident, collected only those postmarked over a certain period of time, used at least two different Titanic handstamps on them, and in two different ink colors, purple and red, if not various shades as well? Could these covers indeed have been marked "TITANIC" somewhere en route to the U.S., laid in company archives for weeks or decades, only later to have been saved by an observant worker noting the Titanic marks?

We will probably never know for sure when or how the Winter envelope hoard left the company and got into the hands of the public. But to me, hope is that further evidence will come to light one way or another to put an end to the speculation.

By the way, the newest cover in this survey, Cover #13, was first reported in early January 2012 by the owners in Canada who saw the prior articles online. It will be a featured item in the March 29 Spink New York Collector Series Sale. No report yet as to its estimated value.

I encourage anyone with further thoughts on these covers or with new finds to contact me at [stampmf@frontiernet.net](mailto:stampmf@frontiernet.net). The answers are out there... somewhere!





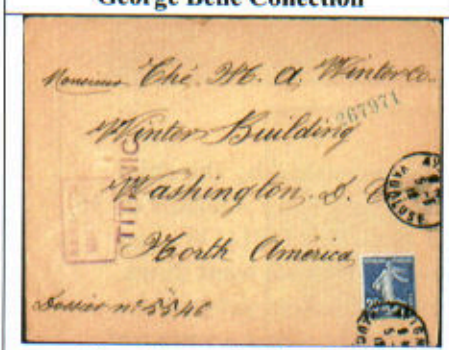
George Behe Collection



Tom Fortunato Collection



Mystery Box



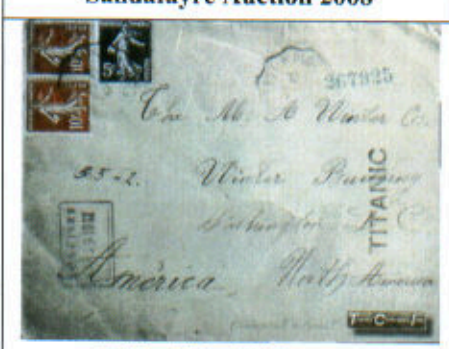
Sandafayre Auction 2008



Baum



Eric 1



Little Titanic Museum



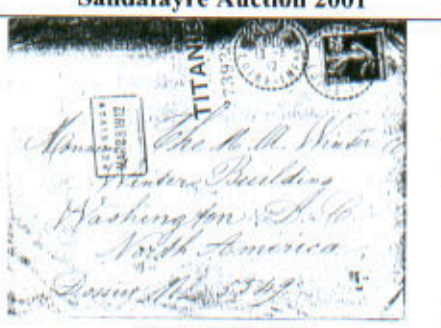
Sandafayre Auction 2001



Eric 2



Titanic Museum



William Simon



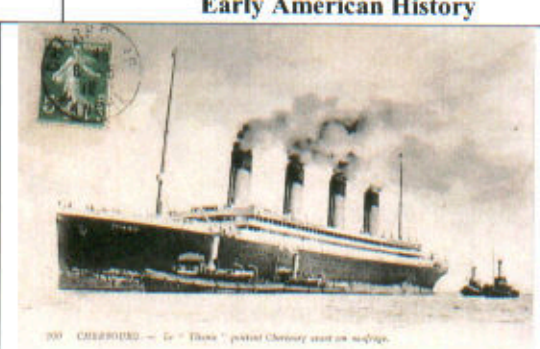
Early American History



Foster front



Foster back



Titanic Postcard