

Olympic-Titanic Ship Marking Connection

By Tom Fortunato

stampmf@frontiernet.net

I am indebted to David van Dalen of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, for doing research into the ship markings found on White Star Line covers. Here is what he found and concluded.



The cover above was provided to David from another collector for comparison to other ship markings, and in particular, the TITANIC ship marking found on 14 covers to the Winter Company sent from France to the Washington, DC company in March of 1912. The Paris, Rochechouart cancels on the cover are very weak but appear to be dated October 15 or 16, 1912, with a back stamp arrival date in Chicago on October 21.

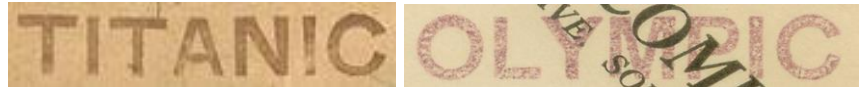


According to <http://www.whitestarhistory.com/olympic>:

"Nearly 6 months after the Titanic disaster, and having been temporarily withdrawn from service, Olympic arrived back at Harland and Wolff, Belfast on 10th October 1912 to be modified following lessons learned from the Titanic disaster. Modifications included making her watertight bulkheads higher, having considerably more lifeboats fitted and a double skin added. As well as these modifications, the opportunity was also taken to add features present on Titanic that were missing from Olympic, such as the Café Parisian. Olympic returned to service on 2nd April 1913."

Van Dalen speculates that the fact that this cover bears the mark of a ship it could not have sailed on is exactly the same thing that happened to Titanic covers seven months earlier: Ship marks were applied by (postal?) workers not aware of subsequent sailing date revisions.

But more coincidental is the similarity of both the Olympic and Titanic ship markings themselves.



He used the Spink “TITANIC” cover (seen above and found here: <http://www.titaniccovers.com/index.html>) and matched it to the Olympic cover, using the 25 centime Sower stamp as the common denominator to adjust the two image sizes digitally to the nearest millimeter of actual size.

The resulting comparison of the two ship handstamps was remarkable and a perfect match, proving the two handstamps were not only of the same font style but also shared an exact font size. These were definitely made at the same time by the same unknown manufacturer.



Olympic and Titanic ship markings on covers are extremely difficult to locate. Further examples are certainly yet to come to light and the author would appreciate the opportunity to view scans of any.