

Titanic's Emergency Cutter Fall Boxes

by Bob Read, D.M.D.

Introduction

The purpose of this short article is to describe the existence of and form of the boxes for the fall ends of *Titanic's* emergency cutters. Plans, photos, and drawings will be used to describe them.

The Plans

On *Titanic's* sisters *Olympic* and *Britannic* we have seen the existence of "fall boxes" in their later incarnations. By fall boxes I am referring to the boxes which were used to hold the bulk of the ropes used to lower the lifeboats. Because there were multiple sheaves in the blocks of the davits, the amount of rope necessary to lower a lifeboat could be several hundred feet. This rope had to be coiled neatly so that it wouldn't foul when lowering the lifeboats. On *Titanic* and early *Olympic*, the fall ends for the 14 main lifeboats were kept stowed in the lifeboats under the boat cover. The two emergency cutters did not use covers since they were always to be "at the ready" so that they could be lowered at a moment's notice if there were a man overboard. Recently a note was found on the *Titanic* Rigging Plan which indicated that fall boxes for the emergency cutters were to be supplied. Figure 1 shows the note from *Titanic's* Rigging Plan.

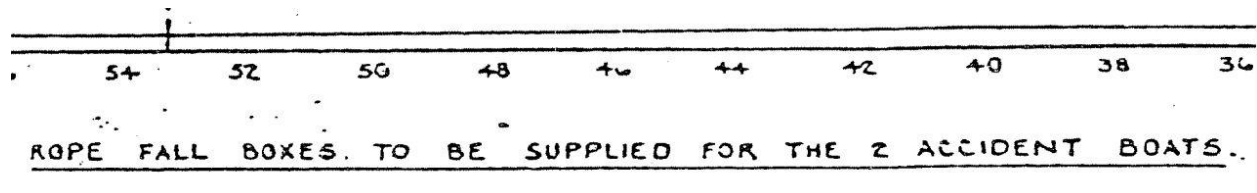


Figure 1

The Photos

Before the discovery of the note on *Titanic's* Rigging Plan, it was unknown how the fall ends for the emergency cutters were stowed. There were two precedents from earlier ships built at Harland and Wolff. Figure 2 shows the *SS Minnehaha* (1900) with her emergency cutter falls coiled on deck.



Figure 2

A later Harland and Wolff ship which was a closer contemporary of Titanic was SS *Megantic* (1909). Inboard of her emergency cutter we see the fall ends leading to octagonal fall boxes on deck in Figure 3.

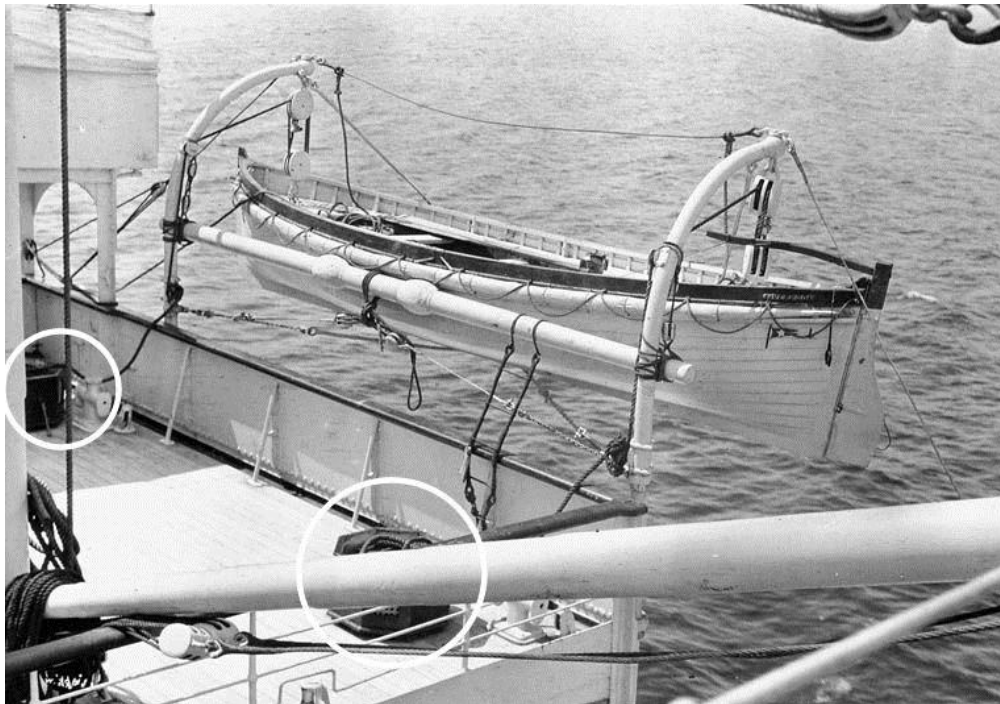


Figure 3

The Drawings

Since we have no photos of the fall boxes aboard *Titanic* or early *Olympic*, I believe that it is reasonable to believe that they were similar, if not identical, to those found on *SS Megantic* which was a close contemporary of *Titanic*. There was an additional consideration to the placement of these boxes on *Titanic* which was not a consideration on the other ships. *Titanic* and early *Olympic* had their Kelvin sounding machines placed between the aft end of the emergency cutters and the davit. The fall boxes could not obstruct the path of the sounding wire as it traveled outboard. Therefore at least the aft fall box would have to be positioned forward of this path. Figure 4 is a drawing of *Titanic's* starboard emergency cutter area with the fall boxes placed in a theorized position where they would not interfere with sounding operations.

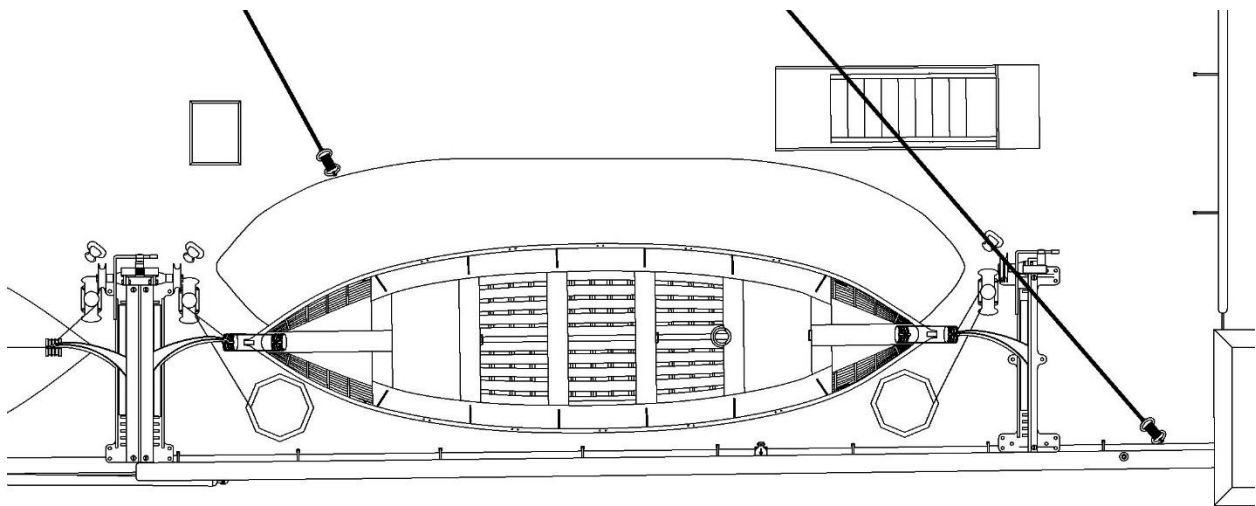


Figure 4

Conclusion

From *Titanic's* Rigging Plan it has been discovered that she utilized fall boxes for the fall ends of the emergency cutters. Based on evidence from *SS Megantic*, a close contemporary, the form and placement of *Titanic's* fall boxes has been theorized. There are no known photos showing the form or placement of *Titanic's* or early *Olympic's* emergency cutter fall boxes.