# Wooden Plank Sheathing of *Titanic's* Poop Deck

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## Introduction

In a previous article, Wooden Plank Sheathing of Titanic's Forecastle Deck, the layout of wooden plank sheathing on Titanic's forecastle deck was examined. This article will continue the same format in examining the wooden plank sheathing on *Titanic's* poop deck. Some introductory material from the first article will be repeated so that this article can be freestanding. There will be fewer photo examples included because the quality of poop deck photos is not as good as those of the forecastle deck and they do not show the planking details clearly. Planking conventions which were established in the first article are used to apply to the poop deck. Teak planking will be shown in blue.

## Basic Terminology

On steel ships like *Titanic* the decks were steel. They were not visible in most case because they were "sheathed" with wooden planks. This sheathing gave an even surface which was safer to walk on, provided insulation, and protected the steel deck below it from deterioration. In discussing *Titanic's* poop deck, we have two species of wood which were used for the sheathing. Around the perimeter of the deck and around certain deck structures, teak planking was used. Teak was used because it was the most resistant to rot and therefore was used in applications where it could practically be a lifetime installation with no need for removal of equipment to replace it. The majority of the surface of *Titanic's* poop deck was sheathed in pitch pine planking. Pitch pine was more resistant to rot than the yellow pine used on other decks but was not as durable as the teak. It had the advantage of being less expensive.

The term for the rows of planking is a "strake". A strake could be made up of a single plank or of several planks. Where several planks met within a strake is known as a "butt". In examining photos of *Titanic's* poop deck, it appears that full length planks were used. The only place where butts are found is where the pitch pine met the teak planking. Planking of teak around the perimeter of the deck and around certain deck structures was known as "margin planking". Figure 1 shows some of the terms discussed above which are labeled. In the drawing, only the teak planks are colored.

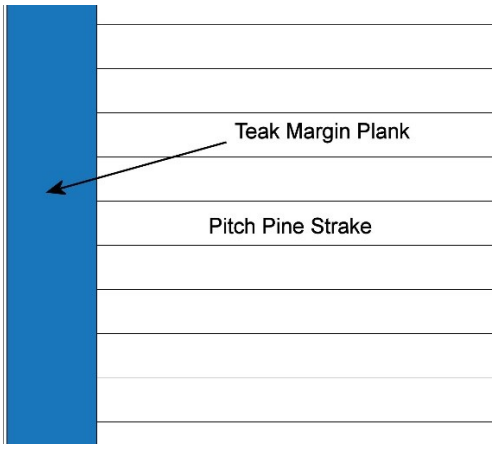


Figure 1

Plank sheathing types

The next term which will be used in this article is “nibbing”. When strakes of the pitch pine planking meet margin planks at certain angles, the ends of the pitch pine planks needed to be “nibbed”. This means that their ends are cut so that the plank does not taper to a fine featheredge point. This is done because such finely tapered planks would have a long area on their ends where the plank was not able to be fastened to the deck by bolts. This would cause fracture of the plank ends. Generally, if the tapered part of a plank end is greater than the width of the plank, it needs to be nibbed. To nib the plank, half the width of the plank is measured unto the margin plank. From this point the plank is cut at an angle where it meets the margin plank at its full width. The margin plank is cut to match the nibbed plank.

Figure 2 shows planks meeting a margin plank at an angle. The angle is such that if the planks were cut to the angle of the margin plank there would be a long featheredge on the plank end. If the length of this bevel Y is measured, it can be seen that it is greater than the width X of the plank. This means that the plank must be nibbed.

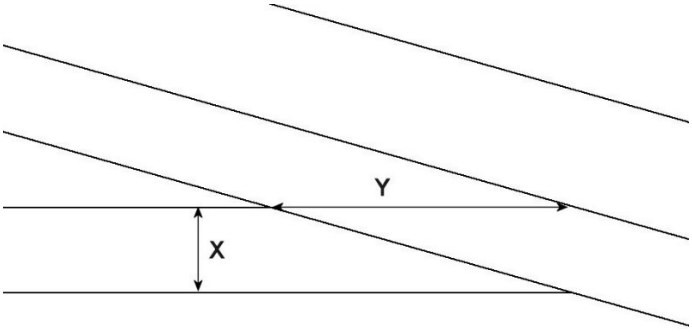


Figure 2

Nibbing measurements

Figure 3 shows how the plank is nibbed. Where the bottom edge meets the margin plank, a distance one half the width of the plank is measured perpendicular to the plank. From the end of this line, another line is drawn to the point on the plank where the top edge meets the margin plank at the full width. The plank is now cut to these nibbing lines. The plank is then set against the margin plank and it is cut to match so the nibbed plank fits into it. On this figure you can see that the length of the bevel of the plank is greater than the width of the plank X so nibbing is needed. On the outboard edges of *Titanic's* poop deck there was a margin plank and inboard of it was a "nibbing strake" also of teak into which the planks were nibbed.

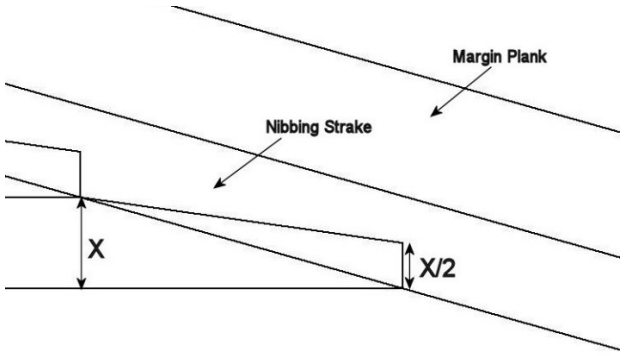


Figure 3

Marking a plank for nibbing

Figure 4 shows the finished nibbing strake inboard of the margin plank.

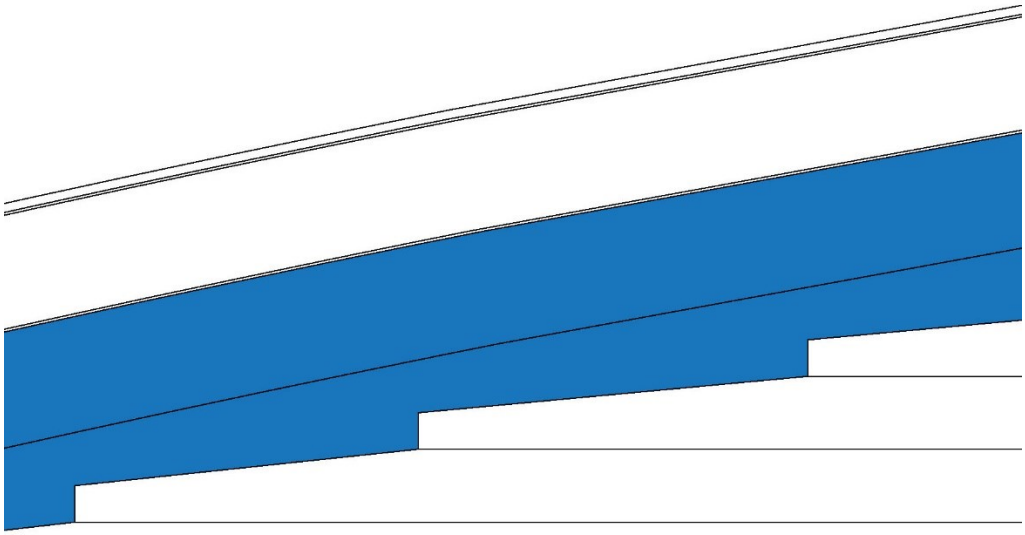

Figure 4

Planks nibbed into a "nibbing strake"

Figure 5 shows an overall view of *Titanic's* poop deck sheathing. A number of individual numbered areas within the red rectangles will be individually discussed.

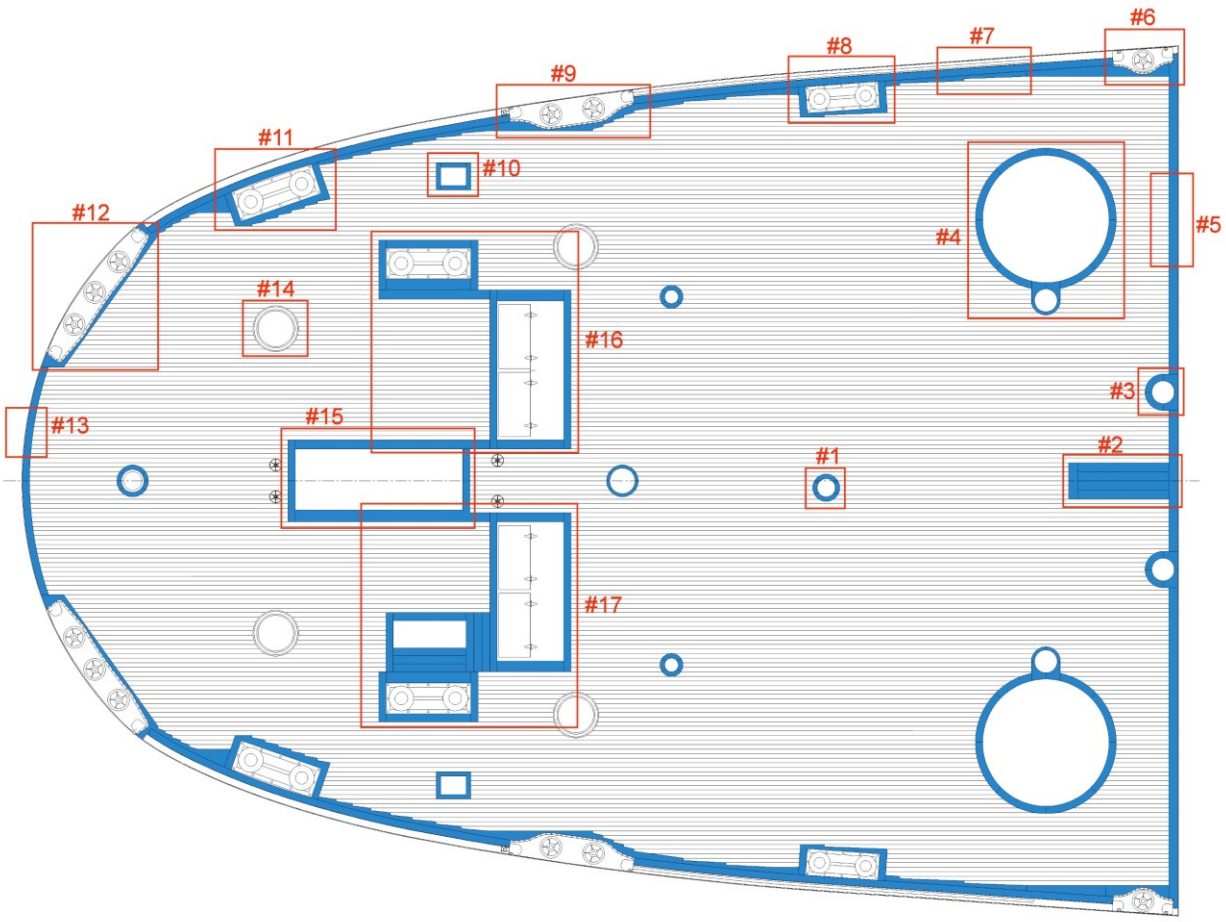


Figure 5

Areas of plank sheathing detail

## Area #1

Figure 6 shows the planking around one of the cowl vents on *Titanic's* poop deck. Around the base of the vent are four radial margin planks surrounding the base of the vent. The reason this particular cowl vent was chosen was to point out a unique aspect of this cowl vent that unlike the larger cowl vent aft of it, this cowl vent was not positioned on the fore and aft midline. It is positioned slightly to starboard. In Figure 7 this is illustrated. Planking seams allow us to determine the positions of these vents. The starboard edge of the base of the aft cowl vent is further inboard than the forward cowl vent even though the aft cowl vent has a larger diameter. This means that the forward cowl vent is not positioned on the centerline like the aft cowl vent.

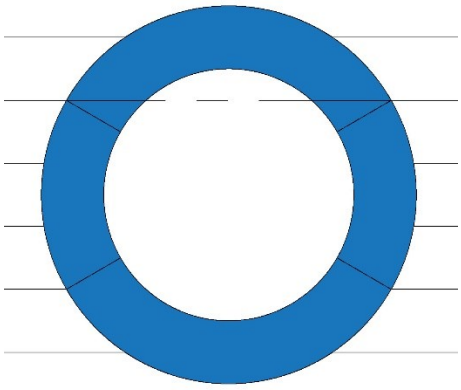

Figure 6

Area #1

Figure 7

Offset of cowl vent to starboard of midline

## Area #2

Figure 8 illustrates the planking around the electric cargo winch on the forward poop deck. The weight of the winch is borne by broad teaks planks underneath it.

Figure 8

Teak planks under electric winch in area #2

## Area #3

Figure 9 illustrates the planking around one of the cowl vents near the forward edge of the poop deck. The base of the vent is surrounded by margin planking which is joined with the margin planking at the forward edge of the poop deck.

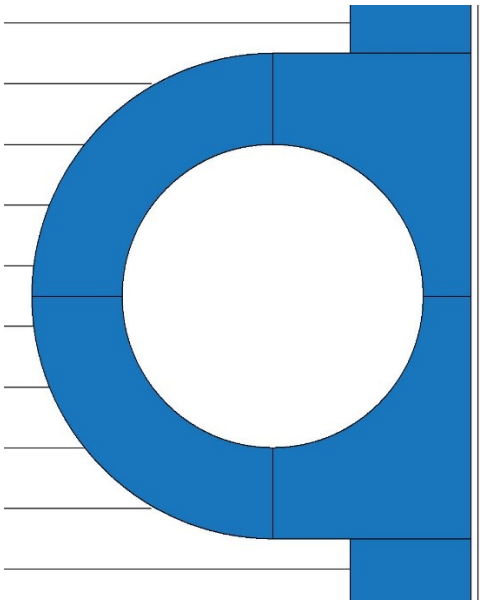

Figure 9

Area #3

**Area #4**

Figure 10 shows the planking around the electric crane and the cowl ventilator inboard of it. Multiple teak planks were necessary around the crane base because the teak could not be supplied in very wide planks from which margin planks of greater radius could be cut. The cowl ventilator is close enough to the crane base that the margin planks of both are joined.

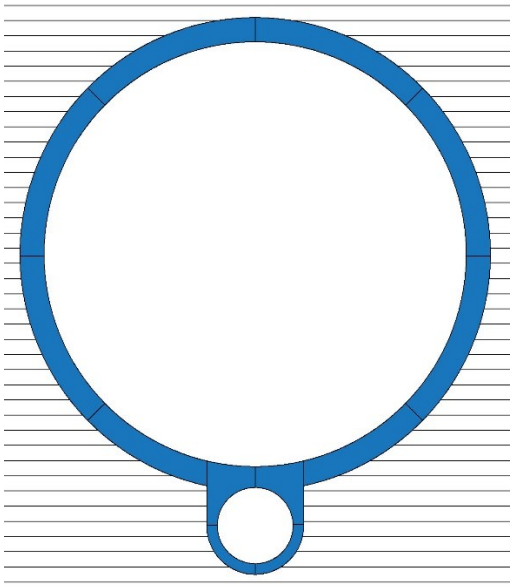

Figure 10

Area #4

## Area #5

Figure 11 shows the margin plank at the forward perimeter of the poop deck.

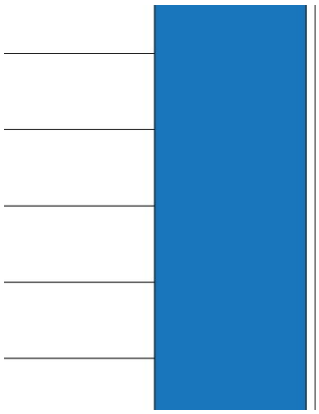

Figure 11

Area #5

**Area #6**

Figure 12 shows the planking around the single roller fairlead. The fairlead's outboard half extends over the waterway at the outboard edge of the deck.

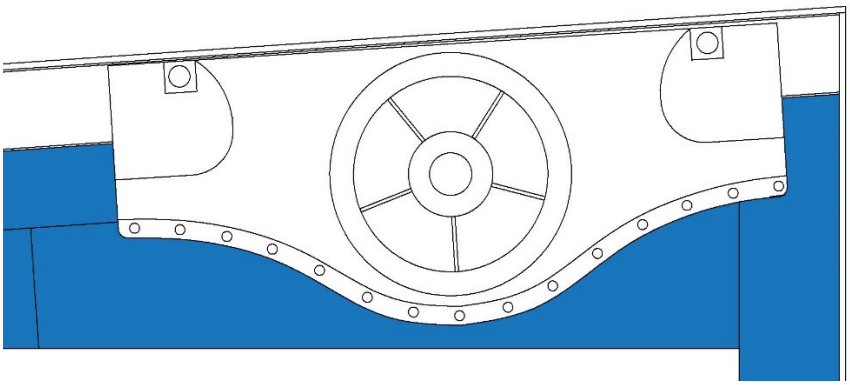

Figure 12

Area #6

**Area #7**

Figure 13 shows the nibbing of the pitch planks into the teak nibbing strake inboard of the teak margin plank.

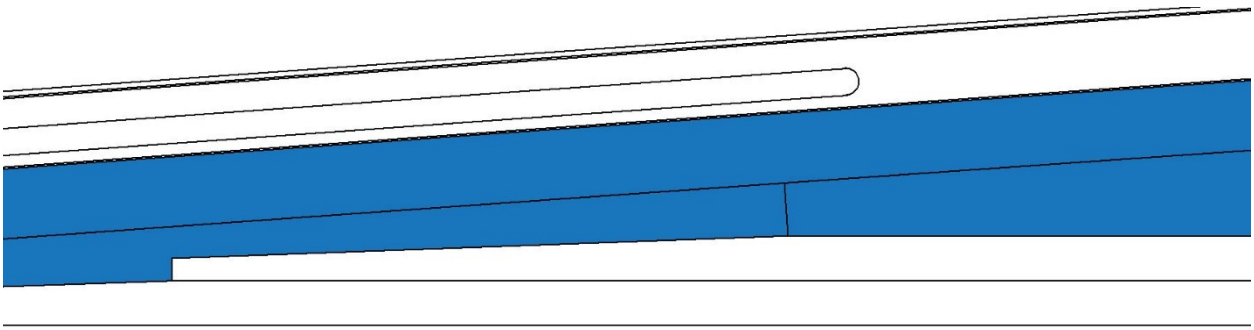

Figure 13

Area #7

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**Area #8**

Figure 14 shows the teak margin planking around the forward bollard and the nibbing of the pitch pine planks into it.

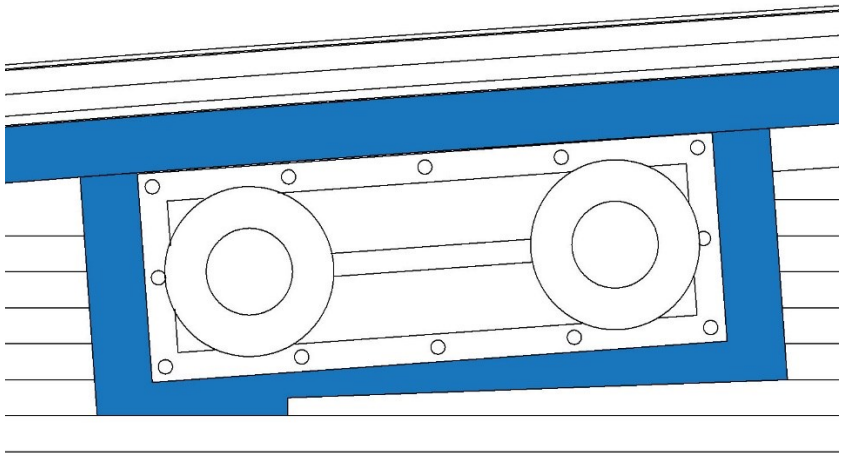

Figure 14

Area #8

**Area #9**

Figure 15 shows the planking around the double roller fairlead.

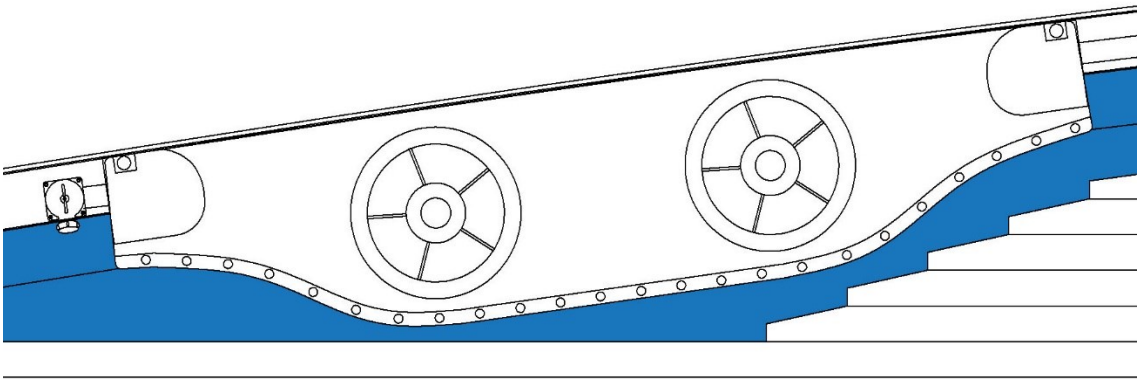

Figure 15

Area #9

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**Area #10**

Figure 16 shows the margin planning which surrounds the rectangular ventilator whose upper end terminates under the docking bridge.

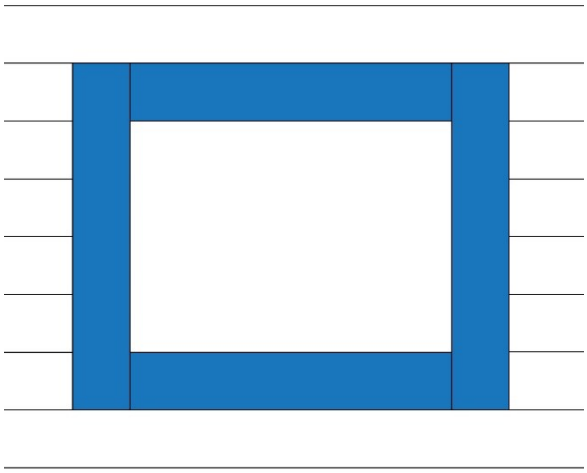

Figure 16

Area #10

**Area #11**

Figure 17 shows the teak margin planking around the aft bollard and the nibbing of the pitch pine planks around it.

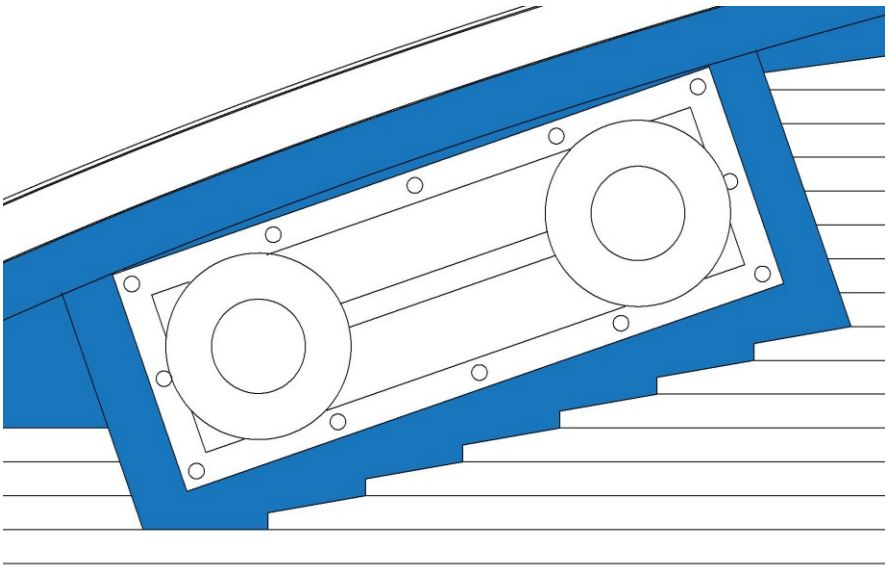

Figure 17

Area #11

**Area #12**

Figure 18 shows the planking around the treble fairlead.

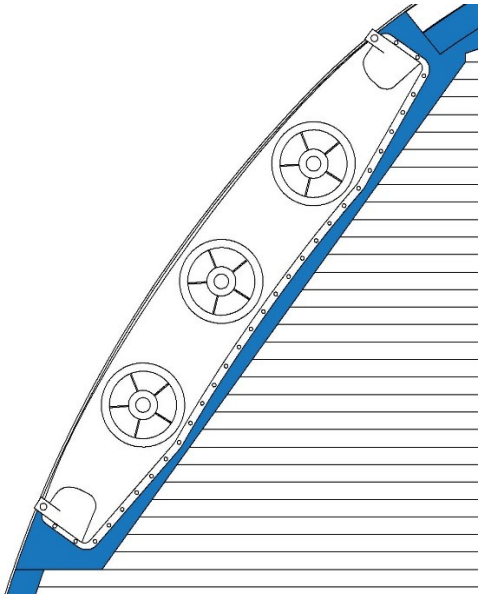

Figure 18

Area #12

**Area #13**

Figure 19 shows the planking at the aft end of the poop deck.

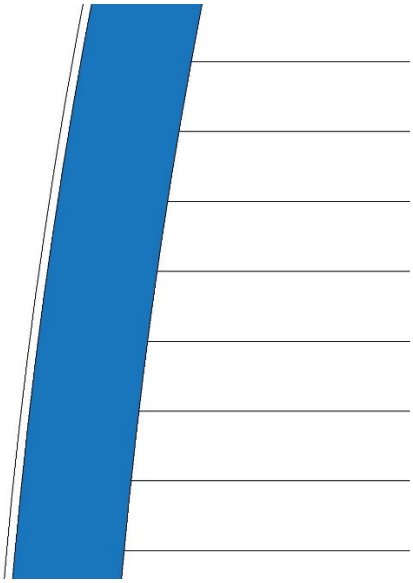

Figure 19

Area #13

**Area #14**

Figure 20 shows the planking around one of the capstans. There are no teak margin planks around the capstan bases.

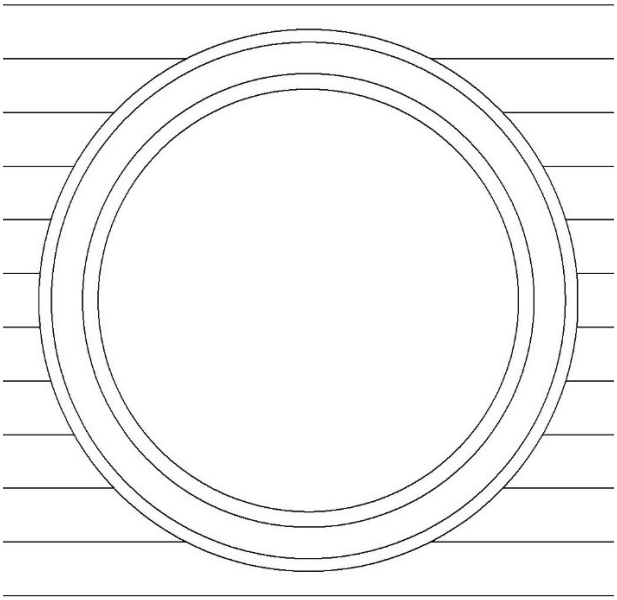

Figure 20

Area #14

**Area #15**

Figure 20 shows the planking around the steel access panel to the steering gear below the poop deck.

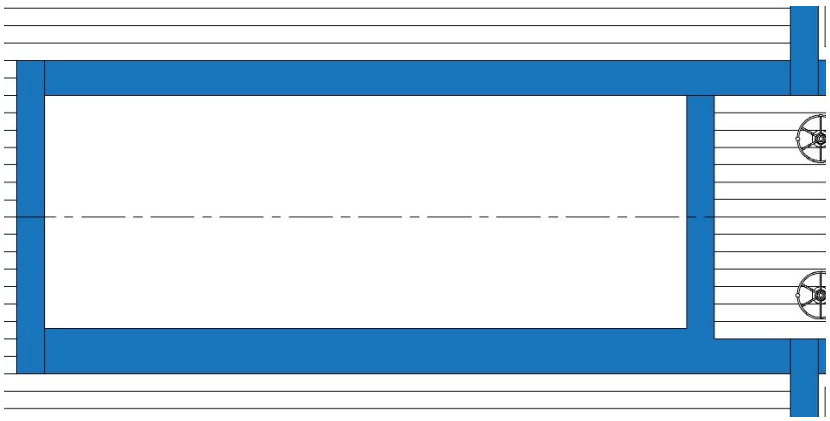

Figure 21

Area #15

**Area #16**

Figure 22 shows the planking around the inboard bollard and the port skylight over the steering engine below the poop deck.  Because of their proximity to each other, the teak margin planking is connected to avoid short pie planks.

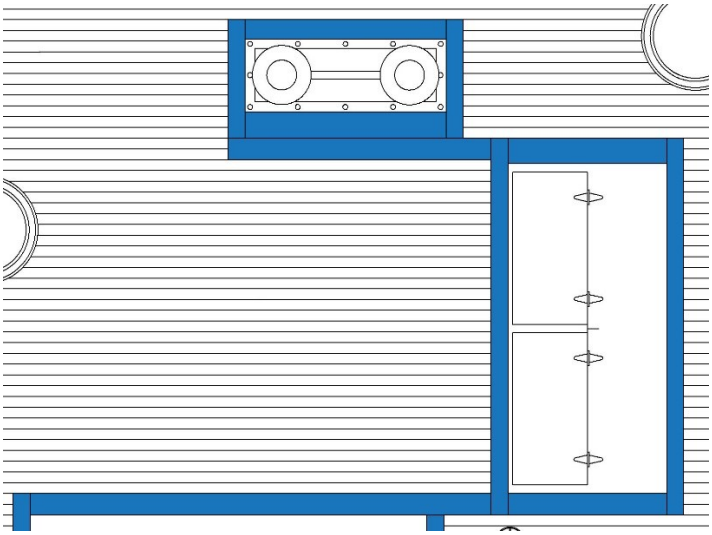

Figure 22

Area #16

**Area #17**

Figure 23 shows the planking around the stairway to C deck and the starboard skylight over the steering engine.  To avoid short pine planks, the teak margin planks are connected.

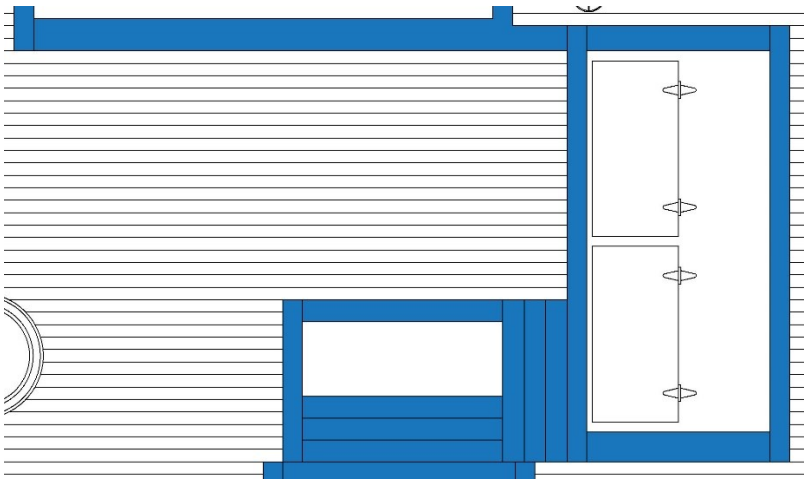

Figure 23

Area #17

# Conclusion

The layout of deck sheathing planks on *Titanic's* poop deck is complex like that of the forecastle deck due to the number of pieces of deck equipment and the necessity of providing a surface which would be resistant to rot due the constant wetting of this deck. Representative areas of the deck were examined in detail to show the layout of teak margin planking and pitch pine planking. Photos were used where possible to confirm the layout but where photos were not available, planking rules used in other areas were applied. This article will provide guidance to the modeler and general information to the historian.