

# Awnings Aboard *Titanic*

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## Introduction

Awnings have been used for centuries to provide shade aboard ships. Provisions were made for the use of awnings aboard *Titanic*. No detailed explanation has ever surfaced which explains the rigging of these awnings. Clues from structures found aboard *Titanic* will be used in this article to try to reconstruct how and where awnings were used. This article will use some *Olympic* evidence but only to explain *Titanic's* awnings.

## Awning Locations

Provisions for awnings aboard *Titanic* were made in these locations:

1. Roof of the officers' quarters and the forward first class entrance deckhouse.
2. Aft end of "A" deck.
3. Unscreened area of the "A" deck and "B" promenades.

Each awning location will be discussed separately.

## Roof of Officers' Quarters and First Class Entrance

The first area to be examined is primarily the roof of the officers' quarters. However, recent analysis may change what we think about the areas which could be covered by awnings. Before analyzing the roof of the officers' quarters, I will discuss what I believe points to awning coverage over roof of the forward first class entrance.

While analyzing awning coverage on the roof of the officers' quarters, I began looking at the weather cover over the dome of the forward first class staircase. From *Olympic* photos, we can see jackstays on the sides and the forward aspect of the cover. These can be seen in Figure 1.

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Figure 1

*Titanic* also had these jackstays on her forward cover which can be seen although less clearly in Figure 2.

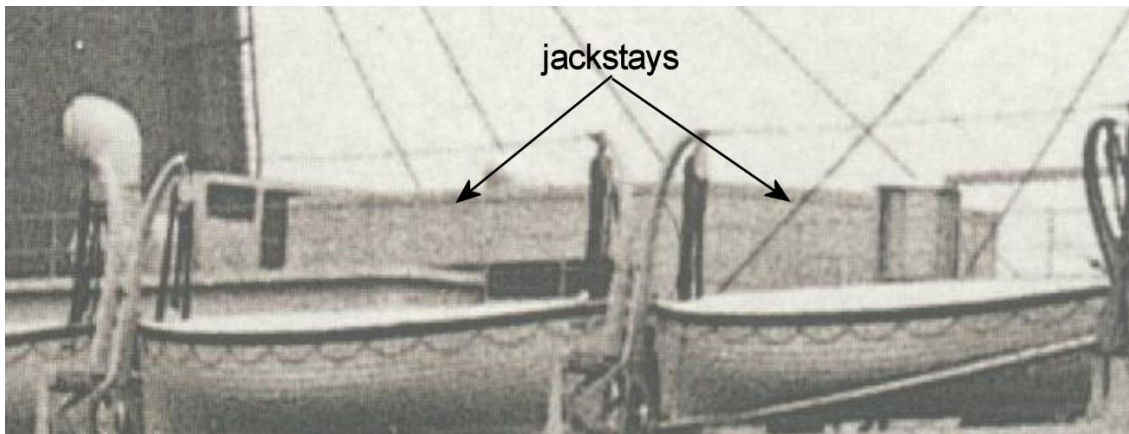


Figure 2

It has always been assumed that these jackstays were for rigging canvas over the dome weather cover. If that is true then we should see the same jackstays on the weather cover over the dome of the aft first class staircase. The problem is that there aren't any jackstays on the aft cover as can be seen clearly in the *Olympic* photo shown in Figure 3.

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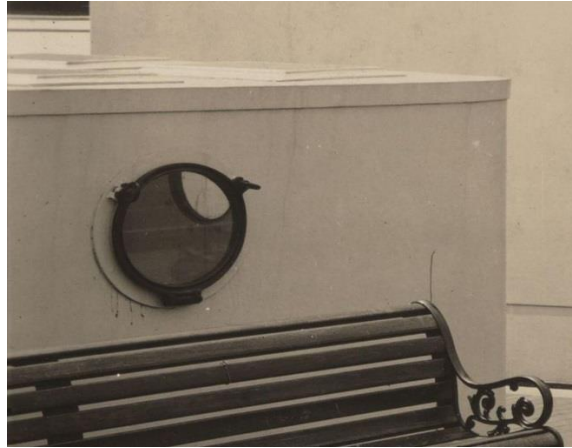


Figure 3

Figure 4 shows that there are no jackstays on *Titanic's* aft cover but not as clearly.

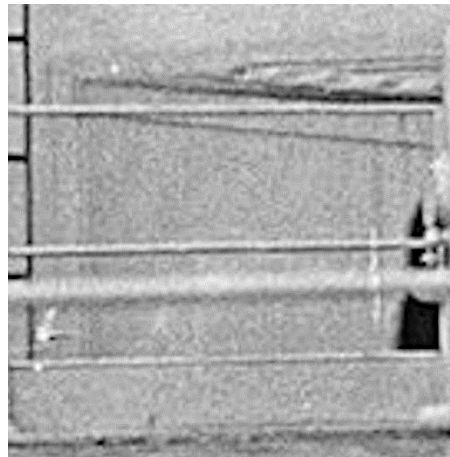


Figure 4

The absence of any jackstays on the aft weather cover over the aft first class staircase would effectively nullify the theory that the jackstays on the forward cover were for fitting canvas over the cover.

I believe the jackstays on the sides of the forward cover were the inboard attachment points for an awning over the forward part of the roof of the forward first class entrance. The exact method of rigging this awning is not known because like other awnings we have no photos of it rigged. Figure 5 shows a possible method where 6 ft. 6 in. stanchions are attached to the outboard railing of the roof with a wire jackstay connecting them. Other methods of rigging this area could be used but we can at least identify the attachment points for an awning in this area.

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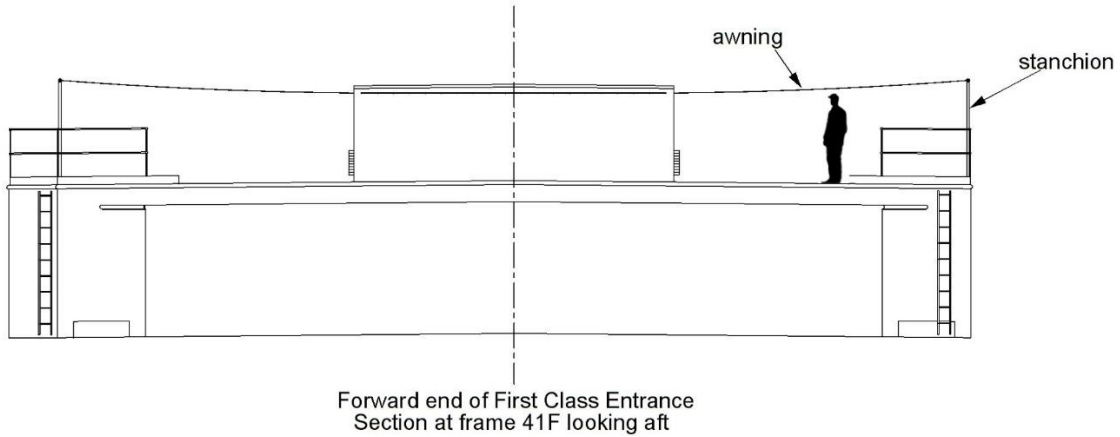


Figure 5

Figure 6 shows a plan view of the proposed awning coverage over the first class entrance in yellow.

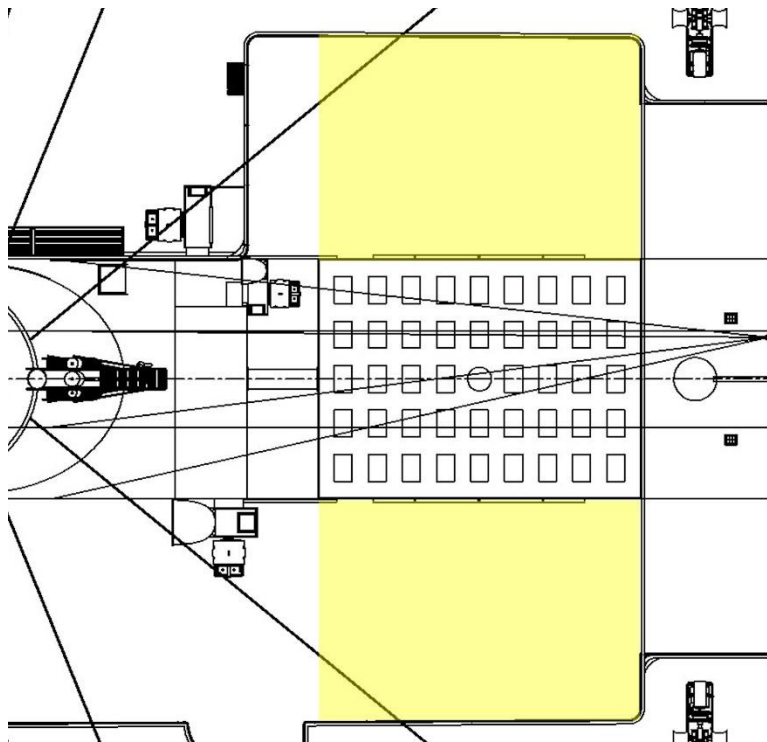


Figure 6

The only jackstays on the forward cover which haven't been accounted for are those on the forward face of the cover. These will be discussed in relation to the awnings on the roof of the officers' quarters.

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There are no known photos of awnings rigged aboard *Titanic* on the roof of the officers' quarters. There was however equipment which pointed to their anticipated use. From the aft end of the roof over the wheelhouse to the aft end of the base of the first funnel there were awning stanchions rigged at intervals with wire jackstays rigged through the eyes at the top of them. These stanchions can be seen aboard *Titanic* in Figure 7.

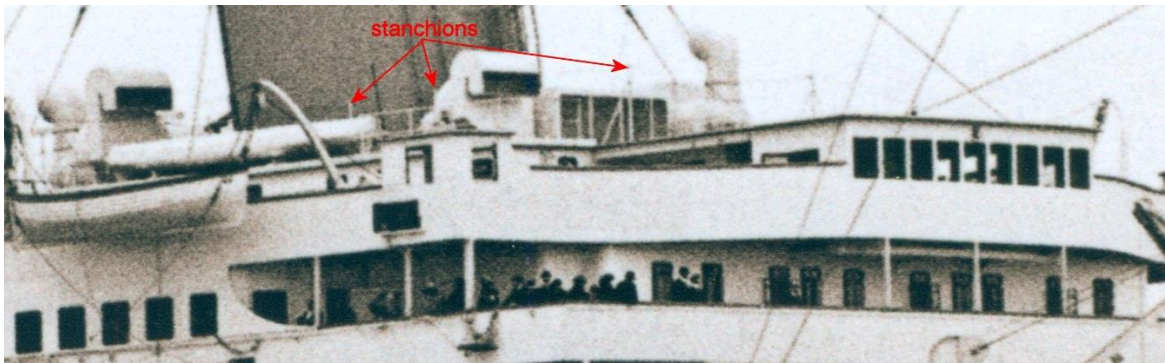


Figure 7

The second place where equipment was rigged for an awning was a ridge pole mounted between the top of the stokehold vent aft of the first funnel and the top of the Gibbs extractor ventilator aft of this. This ridge pole can be seen in Figure 8

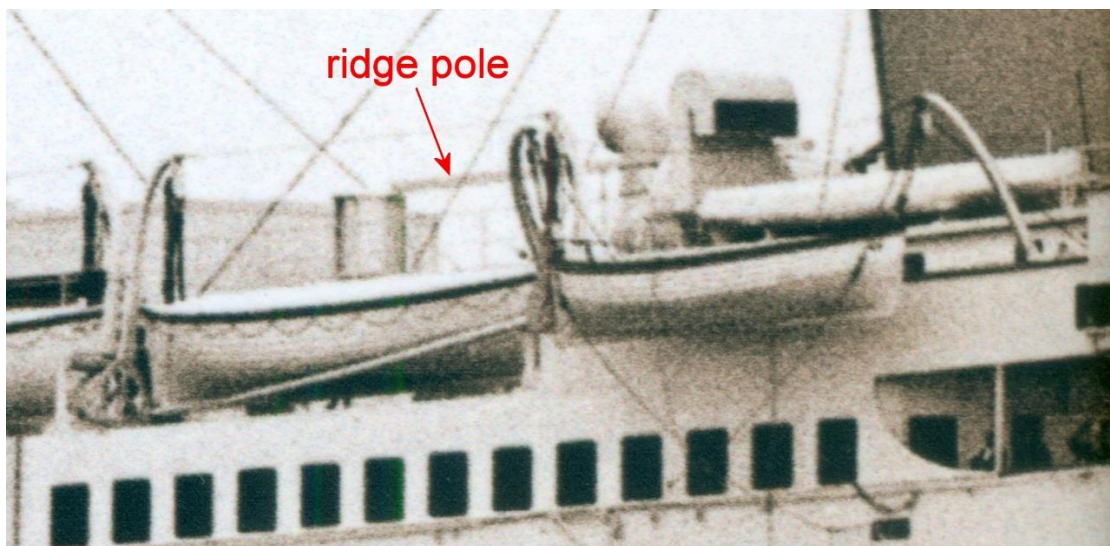


Figure 8

These pieces of equipment represent the inboard attachment points for awnings. The question that has perplexed researchers is what were the outboard attachment points for awnings in these locations?

Recently a fitting out photo of *Olympic* surfaced which helps to explain *Titanic's* awning rigging. On the *Olympic* fitting out photo shown in Figure 9 we can see that an awning stanchion is mounted to the forwardmost davit frame on the port side.

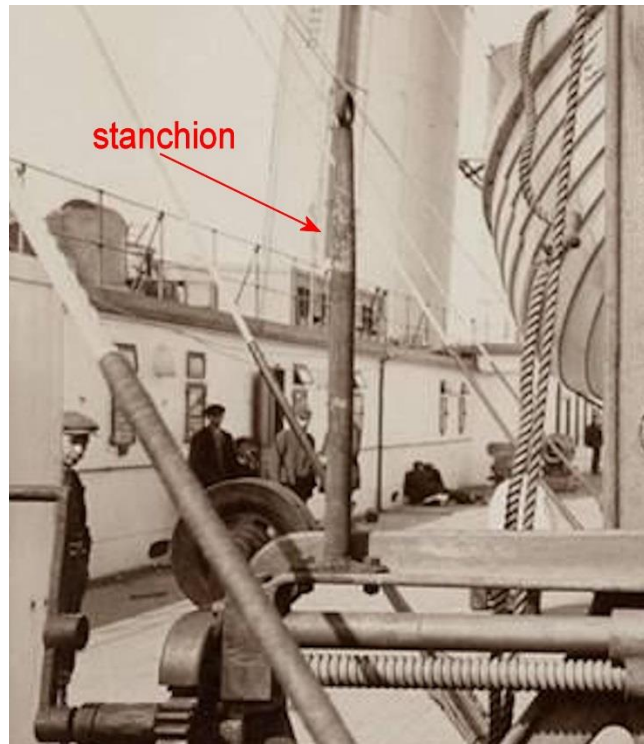


Figure 9

In Figure 10, which is a maiden voyage photo of *Olympic*, we can see these awning stanchions mounted to the first four davit frames.

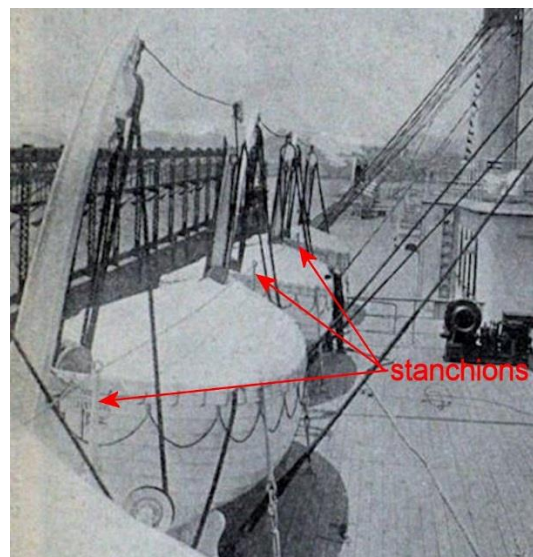


Figure 10

What this tells us is that on maiden voyage *Olympic* that they planned to provide for awning coverage of the officers' promenades outside the officers' quarters deckhouse.

Examination of photos reveals that fairly early on (at least by 1912) the davit mounted awning stanchions had been eliminated. Although we don't have good photos of the davits outside the officers' quarters on *Titanic*, it is reasonable to assume that davit mounted stanchions were not installed aboard *Titanic*.

The documented elimination of davit mounted stanchions on *Olympic* and the lack of any evidence of them on *Titanic* means that the awning coverage over the promenade areas port and starboard outside the officers' quarters was eliminated. However, neither the awning stanchions flanking the first funnel nor the awning ridge pole aft of the first funnel were eliminated on either *Olympic* or *Titanic*. What this indicates is that awning coverage for the officers was going to be on the roof of the officers' quarters.

We have one photo showing an awning deployed on the roof of the officers' quarters on *Olympic*. This photo can be seen in Figure 11.

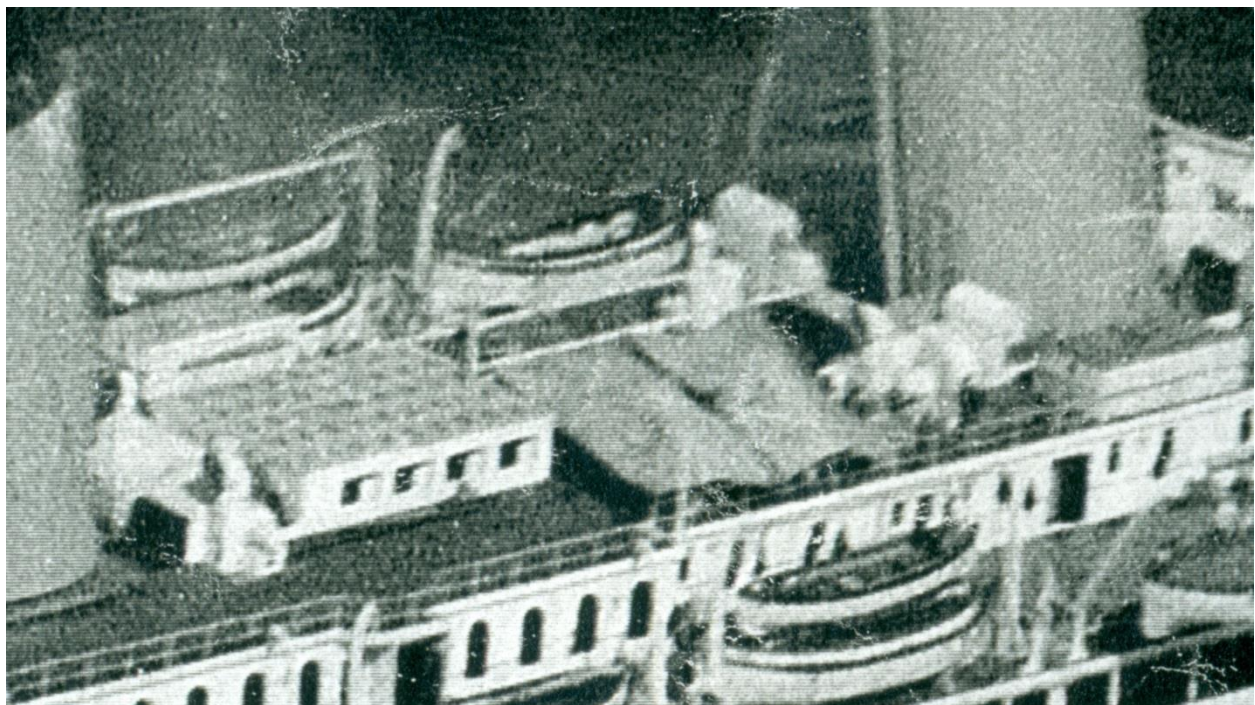


Figure 11

In the photo, awnings are attached to the ridge pole on the inboard side. On the outboard side, it can be seen that the awning is attached above the level of the railing atop the deckhouse. This indicates that stanchions were attached to the railing. I estimate that the height of the stanchions to be roughly 6 ft. 6 in.

This is where the jackstays on the forward bulkhead of the weather cover of the dome over the forward first class staircase enter the picture. I believe that they served as aft attachment points for the awning over the officers' quarters aft of the first funnel. Figure 12 shows the awning coverage in this area because they have previously been ruled out as relating to the weather cover

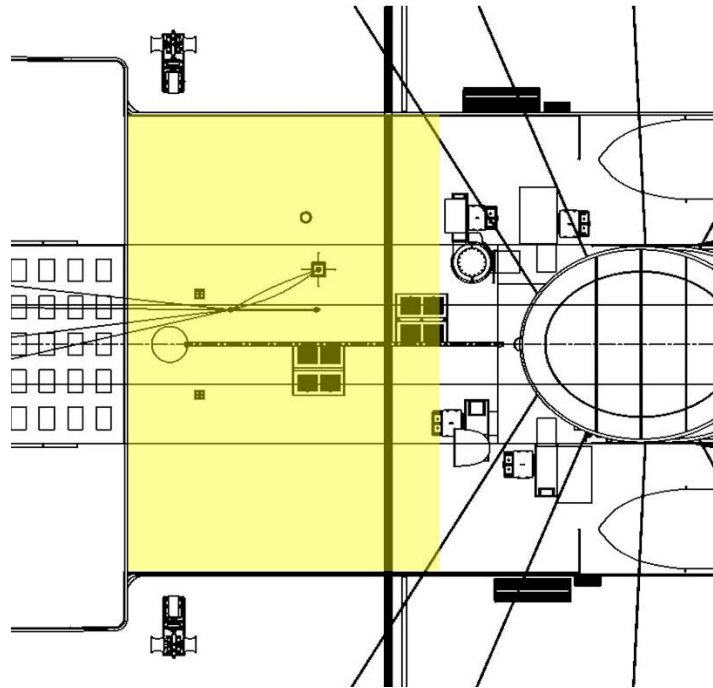


Figure 12

The question arises about the awning stanchions on *Titanic* which flank the first funnel. Two Engelhardt collapsible lifeboats were stowed (p & s) on the roof of the officers' quarters flanking the first funnel. The ventilators along with these boats occupied essentially all available roof space outboard of the first funnel. This didn't leave much space but an awning could have extended across the entirety of the forward part of the deckhouse. Whether they intended to use this space for awning coverage is speculative. Figure 13 shows this area forward of the first funnel which theoretically could have had awning coverage. *Titanic* never had any awnings rigged in these areas in any photos.

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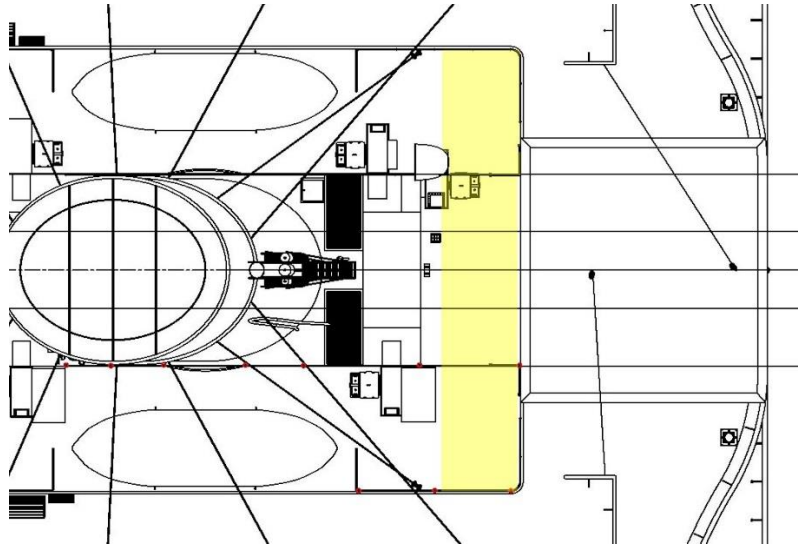


Figure 13

### Aft "A" Deck Awning

On the aft end of "A" deck there was provision for an awning in the form of a ridge pole between the aft end of the boat deck and the mainmast. This ridge pole can be seen in Figure 14.

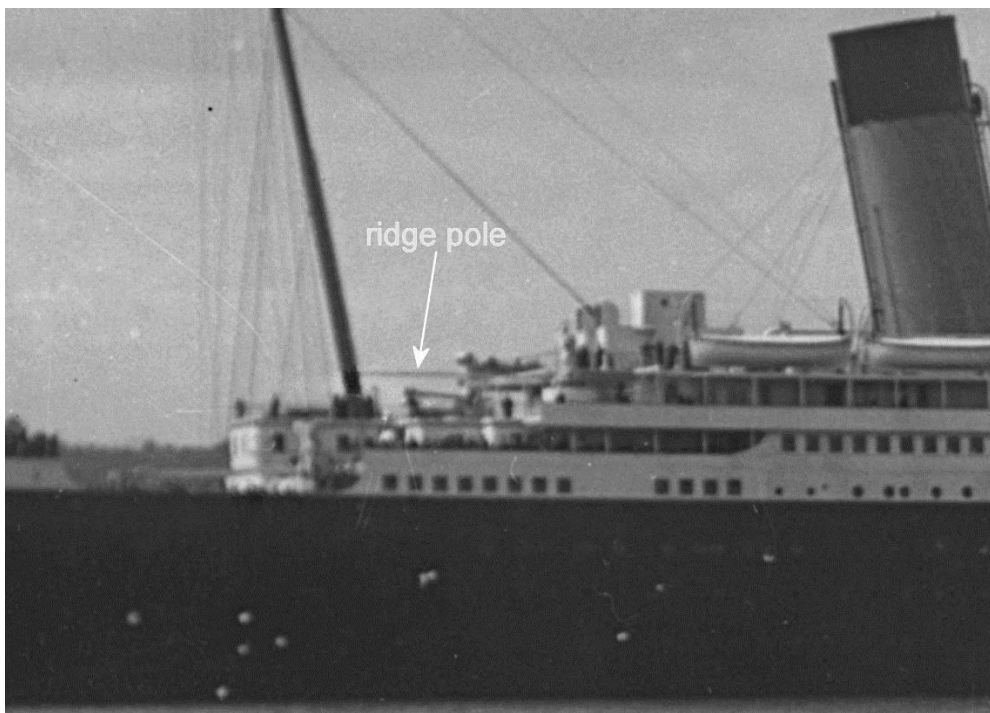


Figure 14

While we can't be completely sure that it represents the same awning coverage intended for *Titanic*, there are photos which show the awning coverage in this area on HMHS *Britannic*. One of the photos is shown in figure 15.



Figure 15

The photos show complete awning coverage of the aft end of A deck forward to the overhanging boat deck. This coverage is shown in yellow in Figure 16. There are no photos of *Titanic* with this awning rigged.

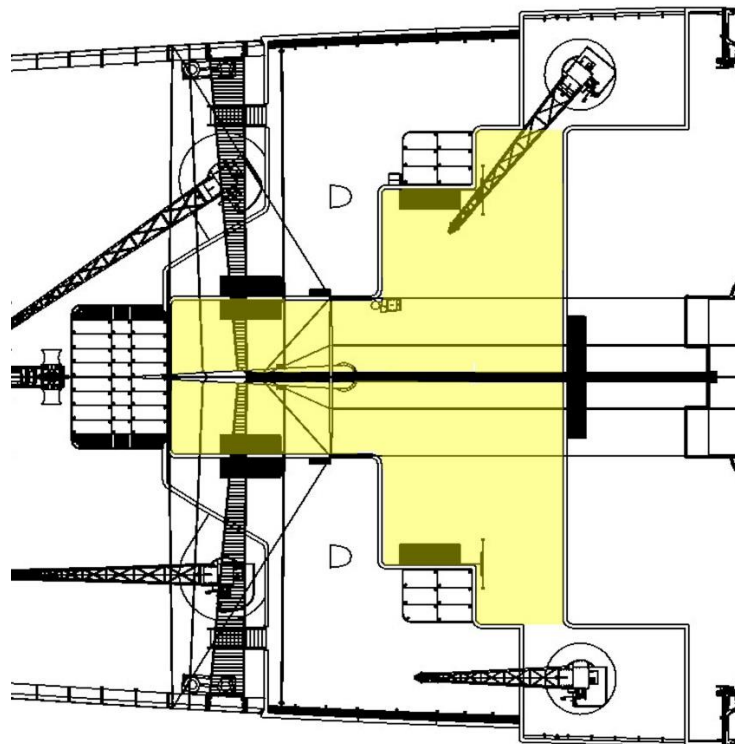


Figure 16

## The Unscreened Areas of the “A” Deck and “B” Deck Promenades

The third major areas of awning coverage aboard *Titanic* are the unscreened areas of the “A” deck and “B” deck promenades. Taking the “A” deck promenade first, provision for awning coverage was in three locations (p & S). First, below the caprail of the outboard side of the bulwark were jackstays. Very clear photos of these on *Titanic* are nearly impossible to find so first an example of these jackstays on *Olympic* are shown in Figure 17.



Figure 17

The next photo is of *Titanic* with the same jackstays indicated in Figure 18.

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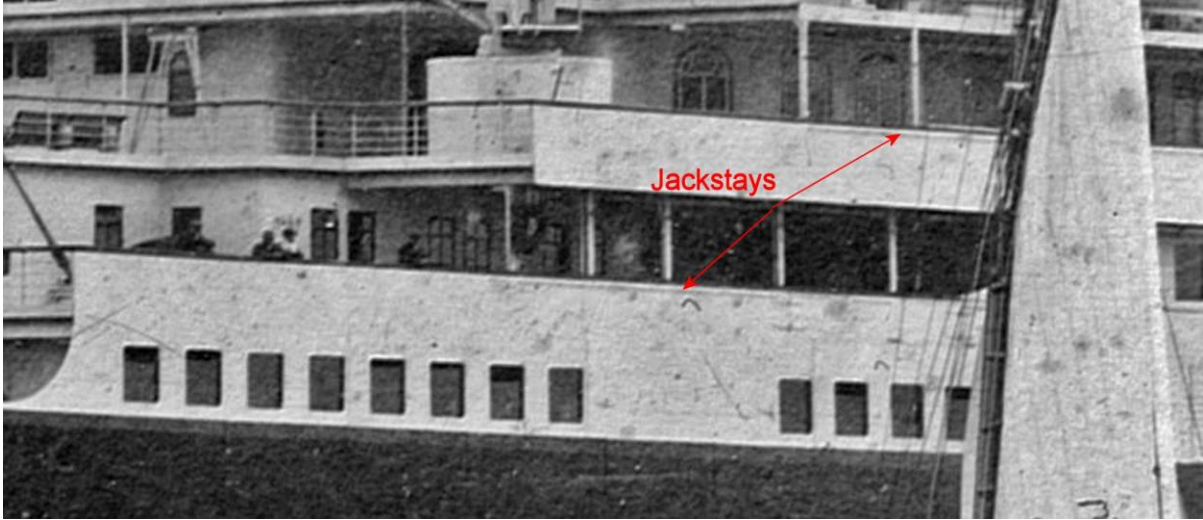


Figure 18

The next pieces of equipment provided for awning coverage on "A" deck are the jackstay wires which were rigged through eyes on the outboard "A" deck stanchions. These can be seen in Figure 19.



Figure 19

The third point of attachment for awnings on “A” deck is on the underside of the boat deck where it meets the “A” deck promenade stanchions. These attachment points are not readily apparent in photos but it is clear that they are there.

These “A” deck promenade awnings could be attached in two separate positions. The upper attachment point is under the boat deck where it meets the promenade stanchions. The lower attachment point could be in two positions. The first would be to the jackstay wire shown in Figure 19. The second would be complete coverage by attachment to the jackstays outboard below the bulwark caprail. In Figure 20 we see the only photo of *Titanic* with an awning rigged. This is the starboard forward unscreened area of “A” deck. The awning is attached to the underside of the boat deck where it meets the promenade stanchions and to the jackstay wire at its lower edge.

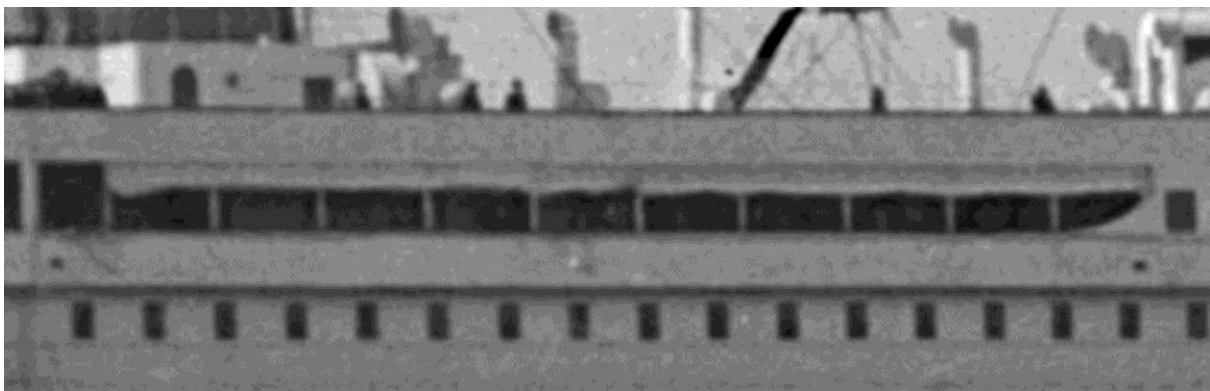


Figure 20

The second promenade area which has provision for awning coverage is the aft unscreened area of the promenade of “B” deck. Figure 18 shows the jackstays below the caprail on the outboard side of the bulwark. There is no visible wire jackstay like on “A” deck but it may not be permanently rigged because of the presence of two gangway panels in this area.

### Another Possible Area of Awning Coverage

A fourth area of possible awning coverage has not been resolved. This area encompasses the forward promenades of “A” deck and “B” deck. Under the caprail on the outboard side of the bulwarks on both forward promenades are jackstays on *Titanic*. These are identical to the type of jackstays shown on the “A” and “B” deck promenades shown in Figure 18. After considering the possible rigging configurations for these areas, I am not convinced that these jackstays were for awnings. I believe because of the forward facing promenades that awning stanchions may have been rigged to bulwark stays on the inboard side of the bulwarks. A jackstay wire could be rigged through these stanchions. I believe it may be more likely that canvas dodgers could have been rigged there to cut down on wind and/or spray. This theory may either be confirmed or will need to be revised based on future discoveries.

## Conclusion

This article has presented evidence for three major areas of awning coverage aboard *Titanic*. The forward "A" and "B" deck promenades was discussed as a possibility for awning coverage but convincing evidence is not available at this time. The major new interpretation in this analysis was the function of the jackstays on the weather cover over the dome over the forward first class staircase. A case was made for why these jackstays did not pertain to the weather cover. There are many other areas involving the use of canvas for boat covers, hatch covers, etc. that may be discussed in a future article but which were deemed to be beyond the scope of this particular article.