

Iron Ladders to *Titanic's* Poop Deck: A New Discovery

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Introduction

Iron ladders under the removable stairs in *Titanic's* forward well deck are clearly visible in numerous photos. This had long ago led researchers to ask whether there were similar iron ladders under the removable stairs on *Titanic's* aft well deck. There are very few photos of sufficient quality which show the area under the removable stairs. Part of the problem has been that the area under the stairs had a dark background which made identifying a black iron ladder nearly impossible. After combing through my photo archives, I have been able to finally find photos which demonstrate iron ladders from the aft well deck on *Olympic* to the poop deck. This is an area that can be easily extrapolated to be identical on *Titanic* because the areas on early *Olympic* and *Titanic* are essentially identical. This article will demonstrate the iron ladders to the aft well deck and will evaluate the areas under the removable stairs from the aft well deck's forward aspect to B deck.

Iron Ladders to the Poop Deck

An iron ladder from *Olympic's* aft well deck to her poop deck was discovered from the photo in Figure 1.

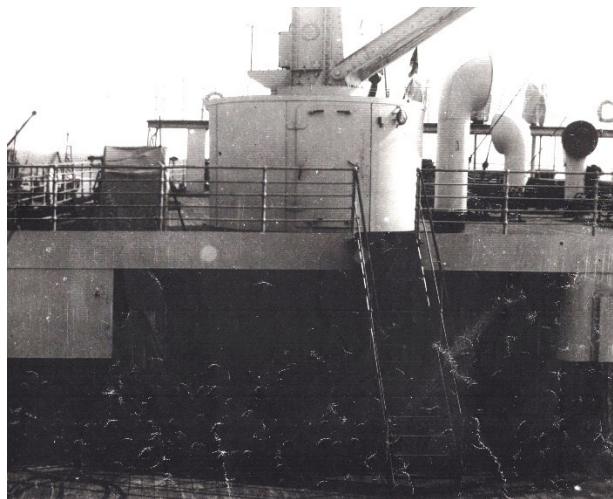


Figure 1

Photo in which iron ladder discovery was first made

It is easy to see that the photo in Figure 1 is not of sufficient quality to identify the iron ladder under the stairs. Therefore, digital enhancement was performed in a photo editor to reveal details in the darkness under the removable stairs. Figure 2 shows a cropped, digitally enhanced version of this photo which clearly shows the presence of an iron ladder next to the stanchion which was recently found and was discussed in a separate article.



Figure 2

Iron ladder under removable stairs in enhanced photo

After finding the iron ladder in this photo I consulted with fellow Titanic researcher, Ralph Currell, to verify the discovery. Ralph searched his photo archives and found an additional photo taken during *Olympic's* fitting-out. In the photo in Figure 3 taken during fitting-out, a temporary wooden ladder is being used for access to the poop deck. You can see aft of the ladder between the rungs, evidence of an iron ladder which has already been installed.



Figure 3

Iron ladder aft of temporary wooden ladder

In Figures 2 & 3 we can see that the iron ladder is fixed to the deck at the bottom and to the forward plating forming the aft bulkhead of the aft well deck area at the top of the ladder. It can't be determined whether there is any attachment to the stanchion outboard of the ladders. A similar set-up is found at the aft part of A deck where there are two iron ladders next to stanchions up to the aft end of the boat deck. Figure 4 shows this similar set-up at the port aft part of A deck where an iron ladder can be seen next to a stanchion up to the boat deck.

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Figure 4

Iron ladder next to stanchion on Titanic's aft A deck

Figure 5 illustrates the aft well deck with removable stairs installed and with them removed showing the iron ladder up to the poop deck.

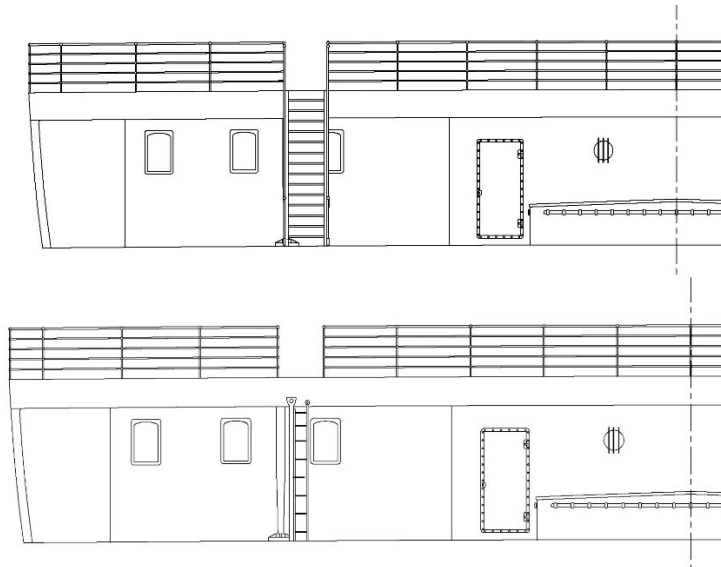


Figure 5

Removable stairs in place and removed showing iron ladder

Forward Removable Stairs

At this point it would be logical to ask if there were similar iron ladders under the removable stairs in the forward aspect of the aft well deck up to B deck. Figure 6 shows a photo of the starboard removable stairs in the aft well deck up to B deck. In this photo a red line has been drawn showing the center of the stairs. Two lines flanking the center red line have been drawn which show the width of an iron ladder. It can be seen in this photo that we would be able to see a ladder from this angle.



Figure 6

Red lines showing where forward iron ladder would be expected



Figure 7

Original photo showing no evidence of an iron ladder to B deck

Why Are There No Forward Iron Ladders to B Deck?

There are several answers to this question but the simplest is that the iron ladders under the forward removable stairs in *Titanic's* aft well deck to B deck were not needed because they would have been redundant. In this particular location, access from the aft well deck to B deck is easily achieved by other means. In Figure 8 one can see a simple route by climbing the iron ladder on the forward side of the cargo crane to the top of the base. From there it is a simple matter to proceed to the inboard side of the top of the crane base and step up to the outboard side of the railing and climb over it to B deck.

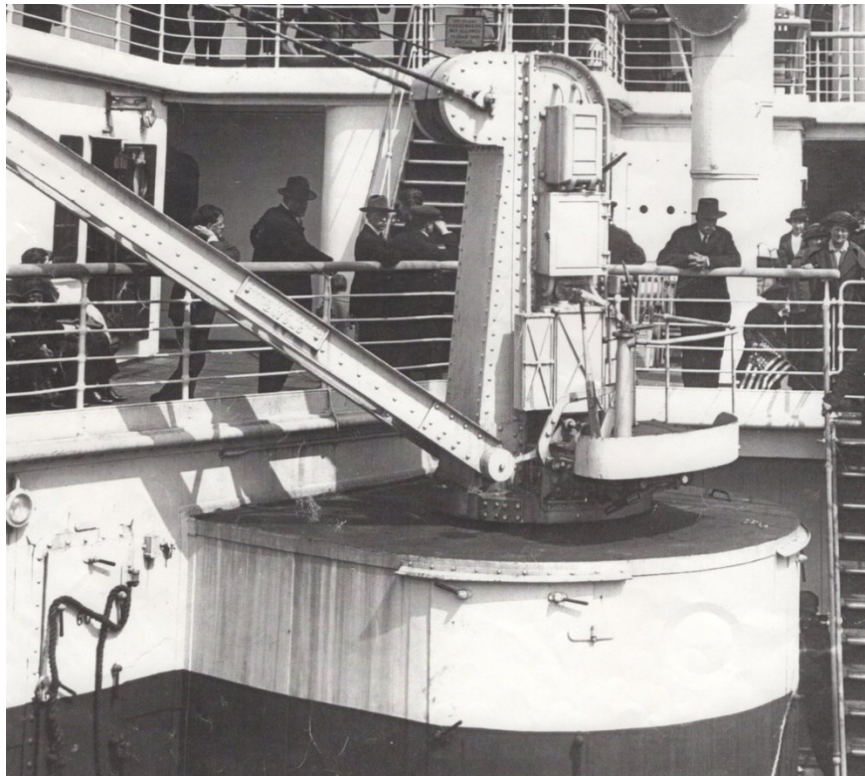


Figure 8

Route from inboard of top of crane base up to B deck

An iron ladder could have been installed under the removable stairs here but it would have required the installation of a stanchion up to B deck similar to the aft iron ladder installations.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated the new discovery of iron ladders under the removable stairs from *Titanic's* aft well deck to her poop deck. The consideration of stairs from the forward aspect of the aft well deck up to B deck demonstrated that there were no iron ladders under them.