

# Titanic's Officers' Quarters Skylights

by Bob Read, D.M.D.

## Introduction

Recently a controversy has arisen about the two skylights atop Titanic's officer's quarters deckhouse. The skylights in question are the skylight over the officers' lavatory and the skylight over the Marconi room. The essence of the controversy is whether the opening sashes on the skylights have two panes per side or three. The purpose of this article is to examine the best available evidence and offer a conclusive answer to the question. An additional part of this analysis is to discuss the hierarchy of evidence.

## The Case for a Three Paned Skylight Sash

The case for three paned sashes on the skylights over the officers' lavatory and the Marconi room on *Titanic* involves both direct and indirect evidence. The direct evidence will be discussed first. Within the last couple of years, a Titanic document was discovered which is a Board of Trade Surveyor's Report about light and ventilation supplied to various *Titanic* rooms and quarters. The document segment that applies to the officers' quarters skylights is shown in Figure 1.

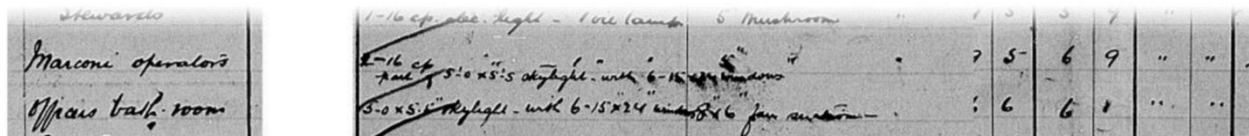


Figure 1

### Entry from *Titanic Surveyors Report about officers' quarters skylights*

This document segment records the dimensions of the officers' quarters lavatory skylight and the Marconi room skylight as both being 5 ft. x 5.5 ft. The skylights are described as having 6 panes (3 per sash) with dimensions of the individual glass panes as 15 in. x 24 in.

The second item of evidence for three paned skylights over the officers' quarters rooms mentioned is a G/A plan segment from R.M.S. *Britannic*. This plan is shown in Figure 2. The reason that this evidence is deemed as indirect is that it is for R.M.S. *Britannic* and not *Titanic*.

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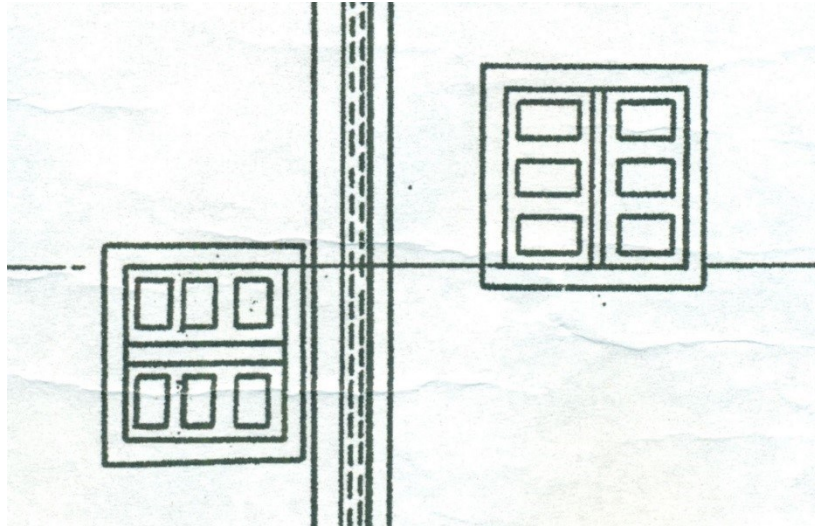


Figure 2

General Arrangement plan segment of R.M.S. Britannic

### The Case for a Two Paned Skylight Sash

The evidence for two paned officers' quarters skylight sashes consists of direct photo evidence. The direct photo evidence is provided by a Titanic fitting out photo which is seen in Figure 3.

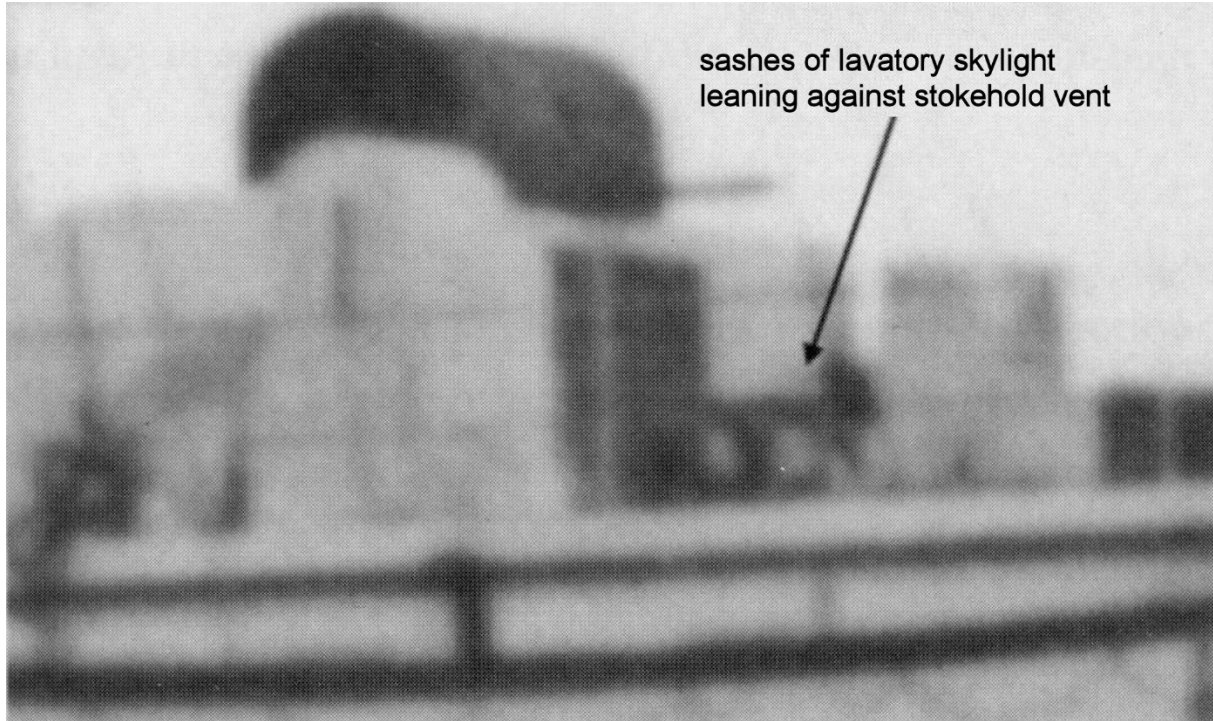


Figure 3

Photo of a two paned skylight sash prior to installation on *Titanic*

Some explanation of this photo is required. This photo was taken during Titanic's fitting out procedure and the skylight has not been assembled at this point. One clue that this is the case is that the angle of the skylight panes is not consistent with the orientation of the sash if the skylight had been assembled. What we are in fact seeing is one or two of the skylight sashes for the officers' lavatory leaning against the stokehold vent aft of the first funnel. In the photo we can clearly see light reflecting off of only two panes. To show a precedent that the skylights were not fully assembled before being put in place on the roof, we have Olympic fitting out evidence which is shown in Figure 4. In this photo we see both the body of the skylight and also a sash leaning against the weather cover of the dome over the first class staircase.

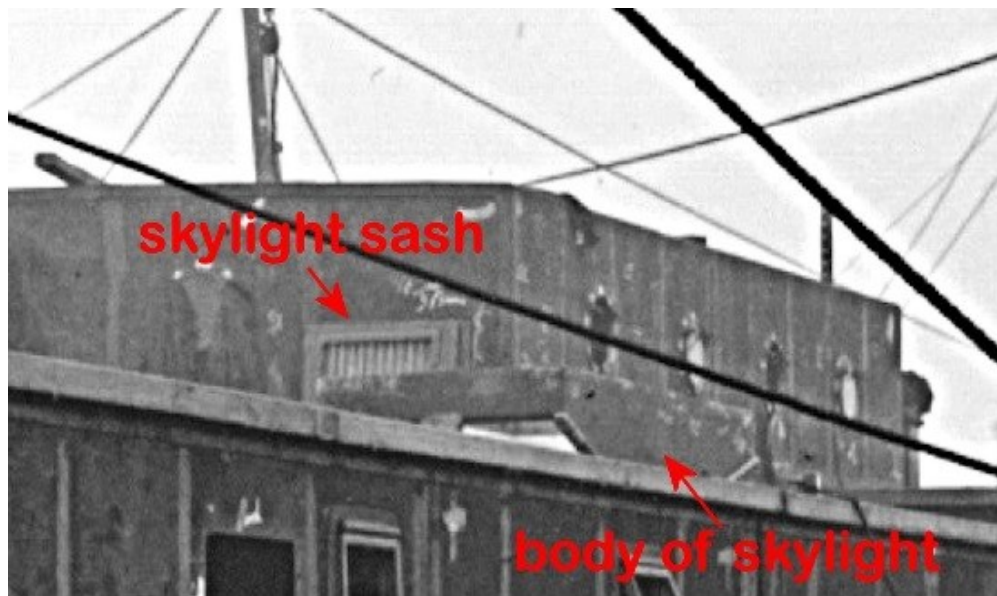


Figure 4

Photo showing a skylight prior to assembly on Olympic

Figure 5 is a plan view drawing of the officers' quarters skylights as I believe the evidence demonstrates.

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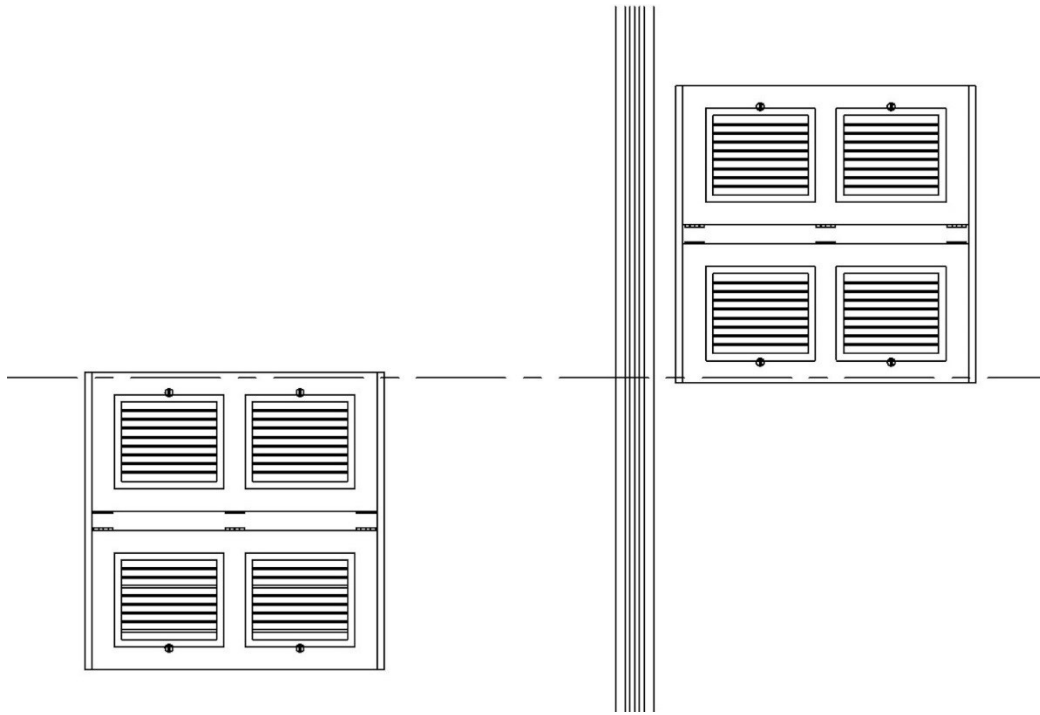


Figure 5

Drawing of proposed *Titanic officers' quarters skylight configuration*

Figure 6 is a photo showing a two-paned skylight which would be very similar to the one found aboard Titanic

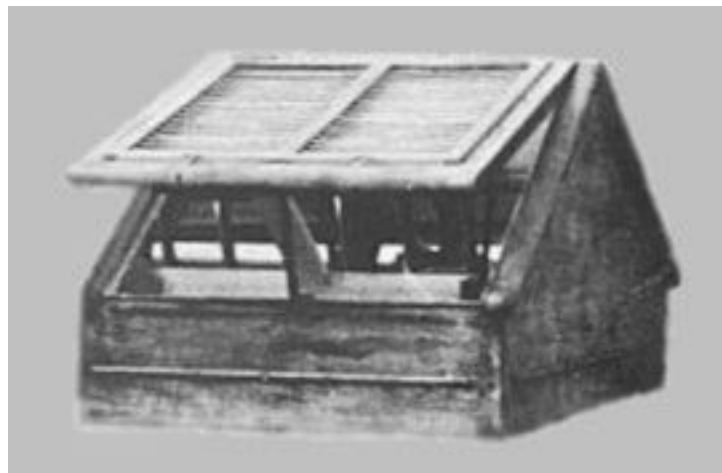


Figure 6

Typical 2-paned skylight as found on R.M.S. *Republic*

## Orientation

There seems to also be some confusion about the orientation of *Titanic's* officers' quarters skylights. The officers' lavatory skylight can be seen in the *Titanic* wreck photo in Figure 7. It can be clearly seen that the ridge of the skylight was oriented fore and aft.



Figure 7

### Officers' lavatory skylight on *Titanic* wreck

There are no remains of the Marconi room skylight on *Titanic's* wreck. In order to discover the orientation of this skylight, we must look at photos of *Titanic* to determine the orientation. In Figure 8 we see a comparison between *Titanic* and *Olympic* (1911). The *Olympic* photo is very clear in showing that the ridge of the skylight ran in a port and starboard direction because we can see how the sashes slope from the peak of the ridge. In the *Titanic* photo we do not see this peak but rather a straight ridge which indicates that the Marconi skylight ridge on *Titanic* was oriented in a fore and aft direction like the officers' lavatory skylight.

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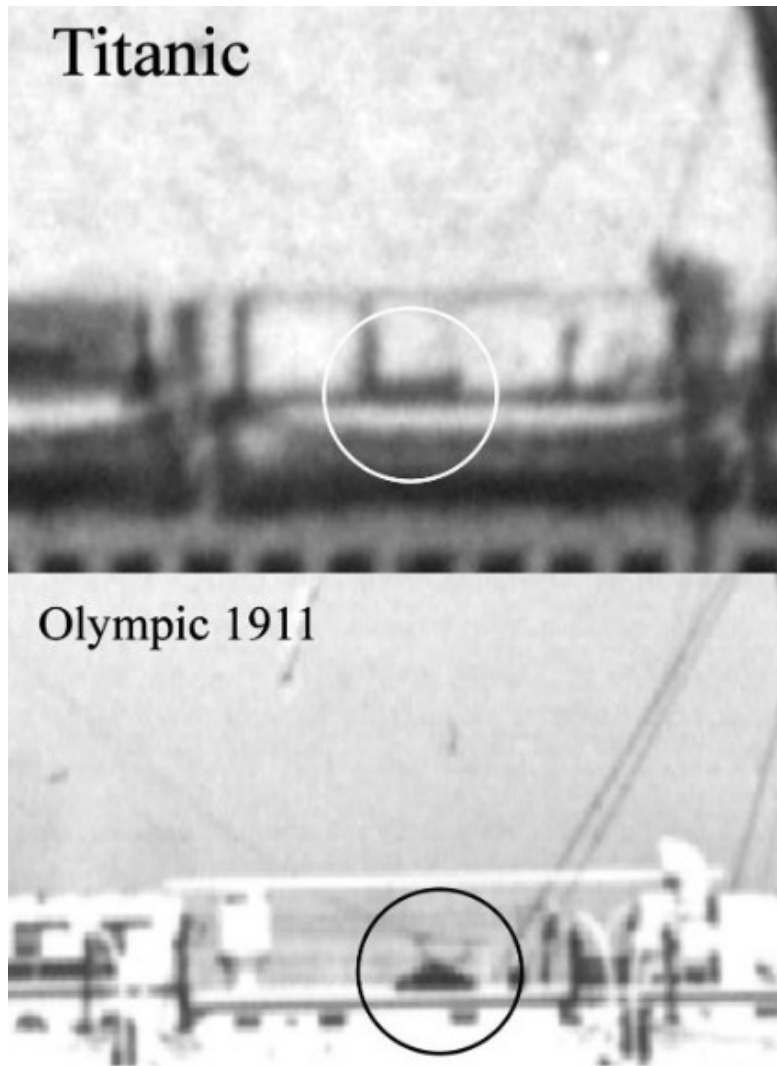


Figure 8

Orientation of *Titanic* and *Olympic's* Marconi room skylights

### Analysis

At first it would seem that there is more evidence for 3 paned skylights over the officers' quarters. However, we must rank the evidence according to its value. The lowest ranked piece of evidence of the three which have been discussed is the Britannic plan segment. This is because it is indirect evidence. The next highest ranked piece of evidence which has been discussed is the entry in the Surveyor's Report of *Titanic*. This is considered direct evidence pertaining to *Titanic*. The highest ranked piece of evidence is the photo of one of the skylight sashes of *Titanic* during fitting out. There are numerous reasons why the Surveyor's Report entry might not reflect the actual configuration of *Titanic* "as built". The Surveyor's Report may have indicated items which were planned but which were later modified. For purposes of the

Report, the number of panes in each sash of the skylights was not important. The size of the skylights and that they were actually to be installed was the point of the Report.

As an example of how things which are shown on plans and in documents are not necessarily what was actually installed, let's look at the *Britannic* evidence which was presented. Like the *Titanic* document, it clearly portrays 3 paned sashes for the skylights on *Britannic*. However, when we examine photo evidence for *Britannic* which ranks higher, we see a different situation. In Figure 9 we see a fitting out photo of *Britannic* with the area of interest outlined.



Figure 9

*Britannic* fitting out photo with area of interest outlined

Figure 10 is an enlargement of the outlined area of Figure 9. In it you can see a skylight sash before installation showing 2 panes which directly contradicts the *Britannic* G/A plan. This is a clear illustration why photo evidence outranks direct but documentary evidence.

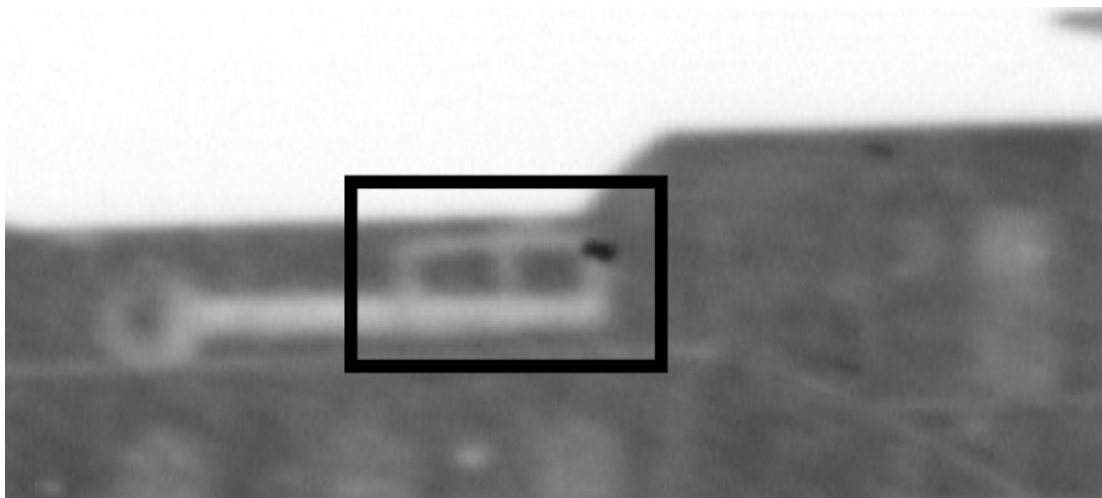


Figure 10

Enlargement of *Britannic* fitting out photo showing 2-paned skylight sash

## Conclusion

When analyzing evidence regarding the configurations of the officers' quarters skylights we are constrained to accept the evidence which has the highest ranking of reliability. In the case of the *Titanic* officers' quarters skylights, the evidence which has the highest ranking of reliability is the fitting out photo shown in Figure 3. It clearly shows a skylight sash with two panes. This directly contradicts the documentary evidence in the Surveyor's Report but the evidence with the highest ranking of reliability must be accepted over lower ranking evidence. Therefore, at this time we must conclude that the officers' quarters skylights must have sashes with two panes.