

Were Rivets to Blame For *Titanic* Sinking?



For decades, scientists have wondered why the mighty ship *Titanic* sank. The huge passenger ship hit an iceberg on its first trip and sank April 15, 1912. Before its only voyage, people said the *Titanic* was so solid it was “unsinkable.”

Now some scientists say the ship was not as solid as once thought. They think some of the rivets that held the 46,000-ton ship together were not strong enough. Rivets look like smooth screws. They are the “glue” that holds together sheets of metal that make up the body of the ship.

Some rivets used in the front, or *bow*, of the *Titanic* were made from iron that was not the best quality. Those rivets might break more easily, the scientists said. They think the rivets snapped when the ship hit the iceberg, which allowed water to rush into the ship. The *Titanic* sank in fewer than three hours, and 1,517 people died. If the rivets had been stronger, the ship might have stayed afloat longer and more people might have been rescued, the scientists said.

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decade passenger
voyage skilled rivets
quality rescued solid

Scientists also say that some workers hired to work on the *Titanic* were not as skilled as they should have been. They say the company had problems finding enough highly skilled riveters to do the job right.

The company that built the *Titanic* is still in business today. Company officials disagree with the scientists. The officials say there was nothing wrong with the rivets. As proof, they point to the fact that the *Olympic* -- one of the *Titanic*'s sister ships -- did not experience problems in its 24 years of sailing.

MORE FACTS ABOUT THE *TITANIC*

- The company that built the *Titanic* was building two other huge ships at the same time, the *Olympic* and the *Britannic*. Each of the three ships needed 3 million rivets.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

People have been interested in the sinking of the *Titanic* for almost 100 years. Why do you think people find the event so interesting?