



SAN DIEGO SHIP MODELERS GUILD

Lifeboat No. 6, SS *TITANIC* (1912)

Alex Roel / completed December 2019

Kit:	Artisania Latina #19016	Length:	10 ³ / ₄ " (31' 3")
Scale:	11/32"=1' 1:35	Height:	9" (26' 2")

Build No. 2

Lifeboat No. 6, SS *TITANIC* (1912)

I began work on this build during volunteer sessions at the SDSMG booth at the San Diego County Fair. I hoped to draw on the experience of the other booth volunteers to advise and walk me through lapstrake (clinker) planking.

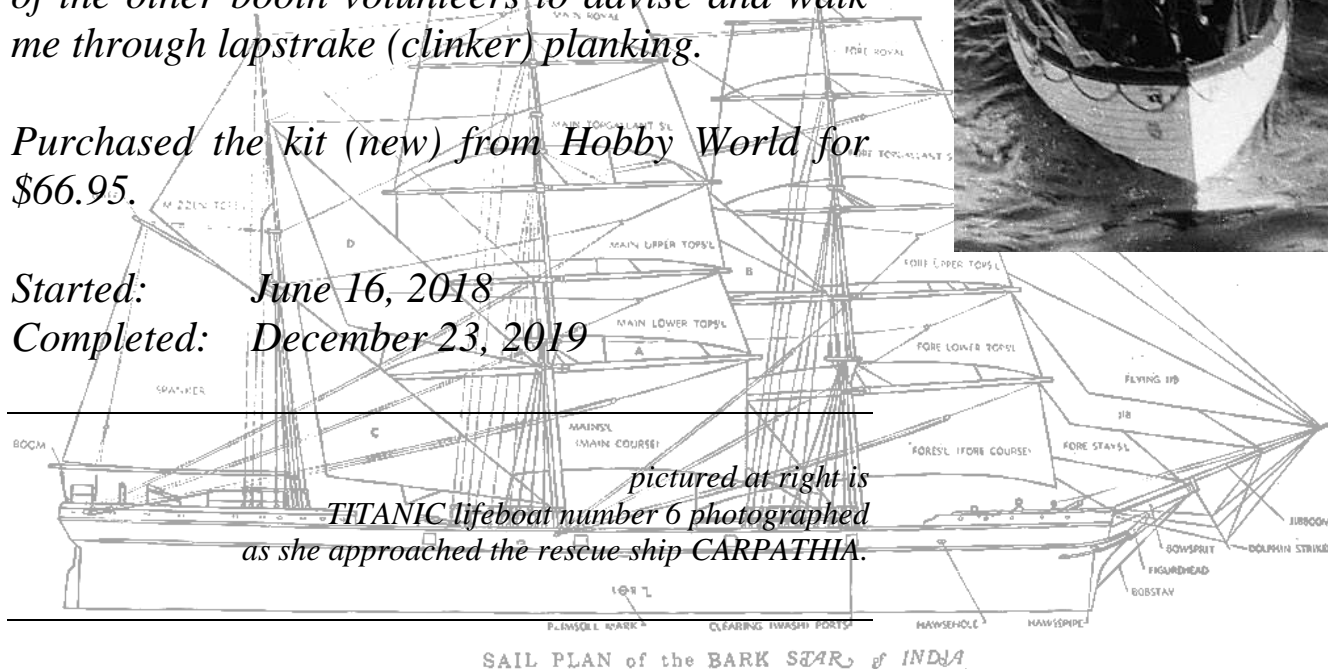
Purchased the kit (new) from Hobby World for \$66.95.

Started: June 16, 2018

Completed: December 23, 2019



*pictured at right is
TITANIC lifeboat number 6 photographed
as she approached the rescue ship CARPATHIA.*





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Background



*Just before midnight on April 14, 1912
the TITANIC hit an iceberg on her maiden voyage.*

The TITANIC carried 20 lifeboats capable of holding (only) 1,178 people, despite the fact that there were approximately 2,208 on board the liner: 1,514 crew and passengers lost their life. There were three types of lifeboats: 14 clinker-built wooden lifeboats (this build), 4 collapsible lifeboats made of kapok, cork, and canvas, and 2 wooden cutters (serving as lifeboats.)



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The clinker-built lifeboats were 30 feet long, with a beam of 9 feet and depth of 4 feet. Each could accommodate 65 passengers. The rudder was made of elm and each boat had exterior "grab lines" for swimmers to hold on to.

The lifeboat was equipped with a mast, a sail, 10 oars, 2 boat-hooks, a sea anchor, a 150' tow-rope, 2 bailers, a compass, a lantern, 2 ten-gallon water tanks, and watertight metal tanks for provisions.



TITANIC lifeboats at the White Star Line berth in New York where they were deposited by the *Carpathia*.



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Build Notes

⚓ **Fair day one (June 16 2018):** The kit provided laser-cut pieces for the frames, keel and other hull pieces; I removed and sanded these. Using a small steel square and squared wooden jigs I glued the frames to the keel; while this made sure the joints were 90-degree angles at the keel, the ends of the frames did not necessarily stay parallel to each other.

⚓ **Fair day two (June 23 2018):** Added the strengthening pieces per instructions and then sanded all the joinery flat and smooth. Next I created a platform jig in which to fit the ends of the frames when the build is placed on it upside-down. This jig ensures that the frame ends are exactly parallel to each other preparatory to fairing and planking.



⚓ **Faired the frames from bow to stern.**

⚓ **Glued the false keel to the keel.**

SAIL PLAN of the BARK SEAR of INDIA

⚓ **Fair day three (June 29 2018):** Found that I had not set the false keel true to the keel; removed and reglued it to the keel. Made an elevation (sheer) plan of the frames; twelve strakes at 7mm width (overlapping 2mm) amidships per side. Divided all remaining frames on the plan to twelve parts thus deriving the rough strake shape required.

⚓ **Fair day four (July 1 2018):** Cut and sanded the strakes to the rough



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shape and beveled 2mm upper edge to allow for the overlapping strake. Having only checked the frame fairing by eye, Mike Lonneckers suggested rechecking using a straight piece of stock; this readily revealed that the innermost two frames were low towards the keel, both port and starboard. Added stock to these frames to amend the difference and refaired them.



Setting aside this build until next year's Fair.



Fair day one (June 8 2019): *Following the instructions I added the bow stem and sternpost to the false keel. Added the garboard strakes to the frame after having soaked them and formed them on the frame to dry. In the meantime, I noticed that the four life buoys supplied are cast pot metal and look fairly unconvincing. I chose to remove the cast ropes that surround each buoy and plan to replace them with real line. I sanded down the castings of the buoys following this to smooth all seams and trimming I had done.*



Added second pair of strakes (port and starboard) and set aside to dry.

SAIL PLAN of the BARK SEAR of INDIA



Researching build logs of the TITANIC life boat on the Nautical Research Guild's website I came across information that put a halt to my build. It appears that the kit's sheer plan of the shape of the stern and bow is less than accurate, being identical rounded curves. The NRG build's research shows a much more angular stern post and a much sharper bow curve. I removed all four of the strakes from the frame as well as the false keel, sternpost and bow stem. I then cut down the stern and bow per the NRG dimensions. The new



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shapes of the bow and stern required additional fairing of the frames leading to each.

⚓ *Early on I had considered leaving off the false keel, sternpost and bow stem prior to planking, thinking it would ease the process, especially in the bow and stern. During my research of the bow/stern shapes I found another NRG build that actually recommended leaving these pieces off prior to straking. I will now add these pieces back after planking is complete.*

⚓ **Fair day two (June 15 2019):** *Having finished fairing the new bow and stern shapes, I (again) added the port and starboard garboard strakes. Later in the day I was able to add a second pair of strakes, leaving a 5mm freeboard at the inner two frames, 4.5mm freeboard at the next outer pair of frames, and 4.0mm at the outer pair of frames. The NRG builds previously noted also mentioned that the kit-supplied wood for the stakes was rather thick (1.5mm) for the purpose: after each pair of strakes was been glued and set, I applied another sanding to both smooth and thin them somewhat before adding the next pair of strakes. Between affixing strakes (bending, forming, clamping, drying, gluing, clamping, sanding) I had plenty of time to return to the life buoys. Using a Dremel I drilled holes along the four cardinal points (N,S,E,W) of each buoy to accept rigging line for a more realistic appearance. I threaded the line through a buoy to see how it looked prior to painting.*






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 **Fair day three (June 22 2019):** With planking now a continuous and repetitive “background” process, I filled in the intervening time by turning to other matters. The directions specify four oars; the actual lifeboats had oarlocks for ten so I decided to make all ten. Unfortunately, the Sapele wood supplied in the kit fell short of the amount needed and that particular stock was also intended for use as various other spars and gaffs. Ignoring this, I cut the wood doweling supplied for oar stock but found there was only enough for nine oars. I made nine and “assume” that one got lost in the tumult of that fateful night. On the blade end of the oar shaft I used a fine flat file to wear a 1mm x 4mm slot in order to accept an oar blade. I then sanded this slotted end to a somewhat fine point and made oar blades for each oar.



Up to four strakes aside now:



 While at the Model Shop aboard the *BERKELEY*, Jon Sanford located some wooden belaying pins of a suitable scale to act as the “handle” ends for my nine oars. I cut off the haft of a belaying pin and sanded that cut and the “handle” end of an oar flat. I considered strengthening the join with a pin but



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decided to try simply gluing the flat butt ends together; this was sufficient.



 *Cut the mast to size from supplied Sapele and sanded a taper to the top of the mast. Looked at historical photos for some clues on rigging the mast: it appears that there were two shrouds or stays (one each side) along with a single block to raise and lower the sail.*

 ***Fair day four (June 29 2019):** Continued to add clinker strakes, port and starboard. Fashioned a mast yard from Sapele to go with the mast. Built new bow stem and sternpost pieces.*

 *I was planning to work on this only as my “Fair” build each year, but have decided to go ahead and complete it.*



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⚓ *Thinned, stained, and painted two bailers and added a wire handle to each (using only two of four provided; TITANIC lifeboat specs called for two per boat.)*

⚓ *Finished painting and rigging life savers (using only two of four provided; TITANIC lifeboat specs called for two per boat.)*

⚓ *Scratch-built a first-aid box with lid and hinges.*



⚓ *Removed lifeboat from the jig as it was no longer possible to clamp strakes for forming or gluing while still attached to jig; two strakes aside remain.*

⚓ *Created a simple base of Philippine Mahogany and used kit-supplied stanchions that will slot to the lifeboat's false keel.*



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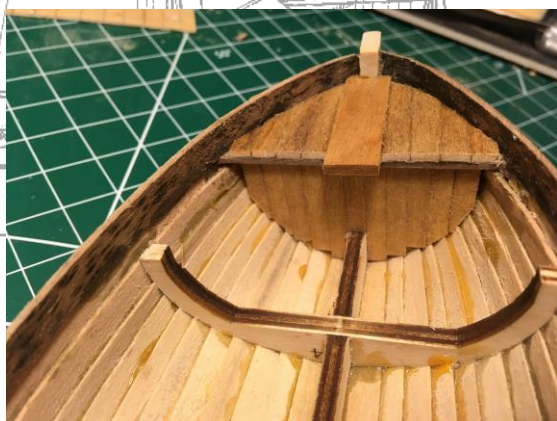
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⚓ Added final two strakes to frame: carvel (butt-jointed) style per instructions. Subsequent research of historical photos shows clinker planking right up to the cap rail: I decided to leave "as is" in this case as fender pieces will mostly mask this error on my part.



⚓ Paneled the bow and stern areas with stained planking. Replaced bow and stern Sapele decks with scratch-built planking based upon historical photographs. The supplied Sapele parts were die-cut with the grain at 90 degrees to the run of the board, rendering them unusable.



⚓ Finally reglued reshaped false keel, sternpost and bow stem (third time's a charm); added inboard companion pieces to the sternpost and bow stem.



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⚓ *Laid down first layer of main decking using Basswood planks painted flat black. This work will be essentially invisible on the completed model but forms a solid basis for the “finish” decking.*

⚓ *Revisited sweeps (oars) after noting from a photograph the simplified handle treatment: removed “belaying pin” solution (discussed previously) and modified all nine oars to match photos (second time’s a charm.)*



⚓ *Discarded kit-supplied interior side drawer panel pieces: historical photos show that they did not appear to have individually handled cupboard doors as shown on the kit plan; rather, vertical planking with cupboard access via finger holes. Made new interior side drawer panels to match historical photos and based on the positions of the six bench thwarts.*



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⚓ *Added thickness (depth) to mast seat so that it can be glued to the subdeck instead of to the main deck as indicated in the instructions. The mast seat rises proud from the deck as it would have, but now has extra depth down to the subdeck for properly seating the mast.*

⚓ *Laid down the main deck using stained Basswood stock for transverse and lengthwise pieces, making allowance for deeper mast seat.*



⚓ *Made bow and stern ring plates (for davit tackle) using supplied Mahogany and brass (see above, right.)*

⚓ *Installed foot rest brackets and created foot rest bars (see above, right.)*

⚓ *Made four more thwarts; second thwart (from the bow) was made with a mast collar built in so that mast is secured to the thwart and the mast seat below. Fourth thwart required a handle which was made from blackened brass. Fifth thwart was amended with two parallel blocks per historical*



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photos; unsure of their purpose.



Installed port and starboard benches and the four thwarts.



Installed fore and aft cupboard doors with brass handles.



Installed thwart braces: four per interior thwarts, two per bow and stern thwarts.



Installed interior frame stanchions, port and starboard.



Made two sets of so-called "bow curves"; the kit places these both on the interior bow. I came across additional TITANIC lifeboat research in which the use and positioning of these unidentified "bow curves" was discussed. Photos show that they were actually affixed to the interior starboard bow and the interior port stern. The research posited several uses of the "bow curves" but came to no firm conclusion.



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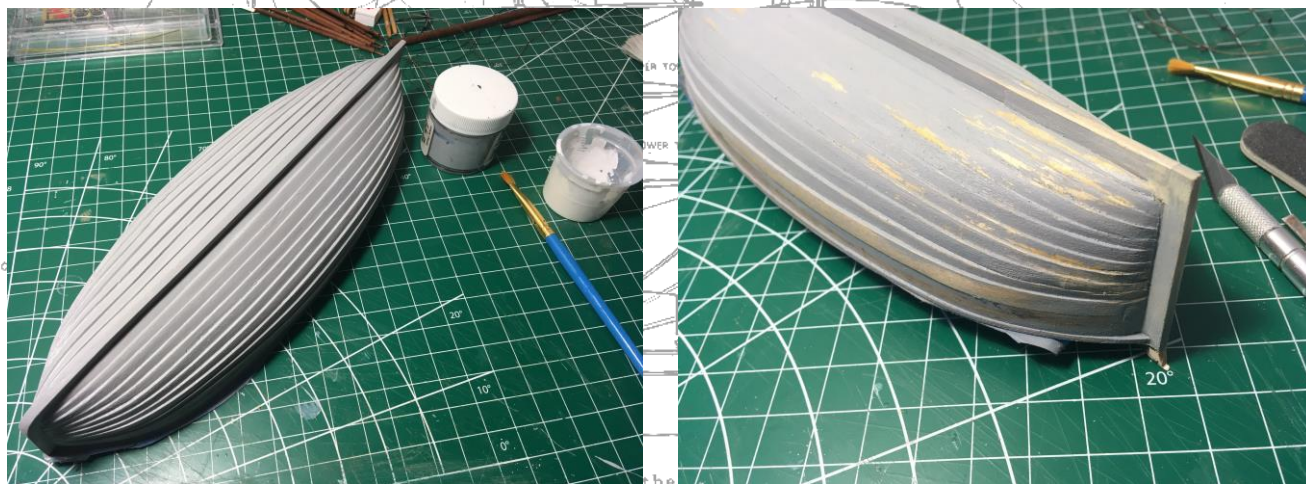
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⚓ *Discarded the cap rail bow and stern pieces supplied in the kit and fashioned new ones from the unused Sapele port and starboard benches; there was plenty of Sapele to make the port and starboard cap rails (gunwales) as well.*



⚓ *Primed hull with diluted gray paint to highlight flaws. Amended hull with patching compound; re-sanded; re-primed.*



⚓ *Gave the hull several coats of white paint and the gunwale and cap rail several coats of black paint with light spot sanding between coats. The painting on this build benefited somewhat from experience gained on my first build: I thinned the paint quite a bit, sanding and using a tack cloth regularly between applying coats.*



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⚓ *Made and installed five pair of oar lock sockets, drilling two thole holes each.*

⚓ *Installed port and starboard stern cleats based upon historical photo showing them on interior edge of port and starboard cap rail above the rearmost thwart.*

⚓ *The hardest part of the build turned out to be affixing the stained rubbing fenders port and starboard to the hull. Despite soaking the wood for hours and bending to shape the ends of each failed to adhere tightly to the bow and stern. Also, finding ways to clamp the fenders for gluing was incredibly challenging: the glue failed to hold even after clamping for hours on initial attempts. This step has been extremely frustrating as my repeated clamping/gluing attempts has marred the hulls' paint finish and handling during this process has damaged and dented other parts of the build. I finally came up with a usable clamping solution and I let the glue set for over 12 hours both bow and stern. Had to re-sand, re-prime, and re-paint the hull both above and below the fender lines.*



⚓ *Drilled holes for and glued pintles and gudgeons to rudder and stern post.*

⚓ *Drilled holes for and glued eyebolts for outboard survivors' ropes. After using mini-clamps to weigh down survivors' ropes to simulate natural sag, applied diluted white glue solution to rope.*



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⚓ *I chose to represent the TITANIC insignia per historical photographs, not kit recommendation. I only applied insignia to the port side (display side) since I cannibalized the photo-etched brass set supplied by the kit. I used one of the (now extra) "capacity" insignias to get two photo-etched numeral (6) sixes for bow and stern (not supplied in kit.)*

⚓ *Found a photo of a TITANIC lifeboat under sail using a lug rig. Researched and lug rigged the mast and yard with a single block. Attached two shrouds aside to mast; these were reportedly threaded through empty thole holes abeam and aft of the mast and tied off.*

⚓ *Routed out depressions in base for one oar and one life buoy to simulate them "floating" on the surface of the Mahogany display base.*

⚓ *Created a plaque using Basswood planks to display name and scale of build. Tried dry transfer lettering for plaque information, but found it quite difficult to align letters with precision; printed information on plain paper and used rubber cement to affix to Basswood planking, brushed with dull coat.*

⚓ *After much internal debate I decided to forego a sail representation.*

⚓ *Having decided to display the build in a state of "recent use" (representing how the lifeboat might have looked shortly after the survivors were evacuated aboard the CARPATHIA) I draped the bitter ends of lines here and there, lowered the yard down the mast, placed oars, boat gaffs, life buoys, et cetera, jumbled about the interior, left "as is" in a disorderly fashion.*

⚓ *Ordered and received a custom plexiglass case from PlexiDisplays (recommended by Don Dressel and Dave Yotter.) Rounded off the mahogany*




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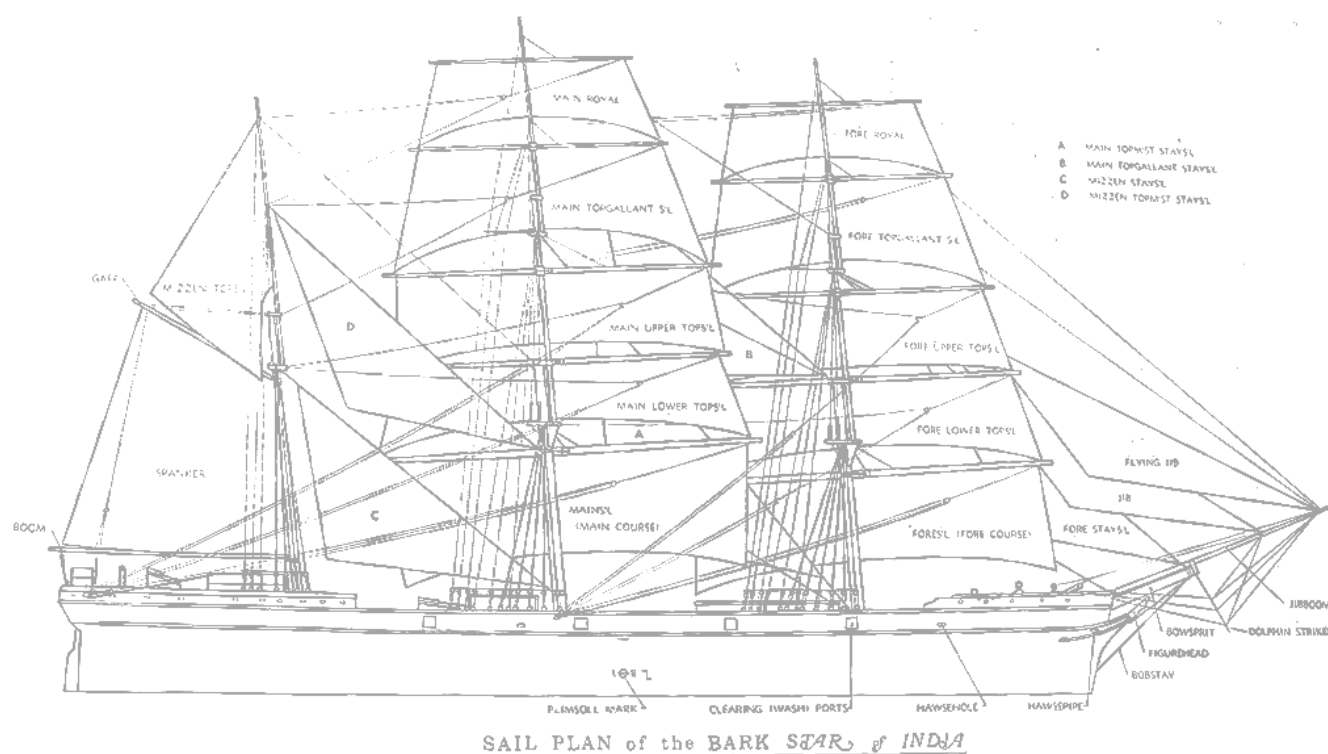
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base corners and the case slipped right over it for a perfect fit. Considering affixing case to base with four small brass screws, one aside.

 *Decided to use three screws, one each fore, starboard, and aft. This leaves the remaining port (display) side sans screw.*





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Completed Build (*December 23, 2019*)





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Scale: 11/32"=1' 1:35 **Height:** 9" (26' 2")

Materials Used

Model

-
- Plywood (keel, frames)*
- Basswood (rudder, planking, decking, thwarts, oar blades, gaffs)*
- Sapele (fender, mast, yard, tiller, oar shafts)*
- Mahogany (ring plates, cap rail)*
- Brass (eyebolts, boat emblems, rings, handles)*
- Pot metal (life buoys, anchor)*
- Fine cotton/poly tan thread (running rigging, loose line)*
- Medium cotton black thread (standing rigging)*
- Heavy cotton brown twine (survivor's ropes, anchor line)*
- Titebond II glue*
- Elmer's Rubber Cement*
- Minwax "Golden Oak" stain (210B)*
- Minwax "Red Mahogany" stain (225)*
- ModelExpo "Hull/Spar Black" paint (MS4830)*
- ModelExpo "White" paint (MS4831)*
- ModelExpo "Deck Medium Gray" paint (MS4826)*
- Tamiya "Red" paint (X-7)*
- Testors "Flat Black" paint (1149TT)*
- Testors "Flat White" paint (1168TT)*
- Testors "Dull Coat" spray paint (1260)*

Display Case

-  *Philippine Mahogany (base)*
-  *Basswood (pedestals, plaque)*
-  *Plexiglass (cover)*
-  *Brass (screws)*



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Kit Notes

⚓ *The first thing to note is that while the kit does have an instruction booklet, it does not come with plans. There is no half-breadth, sheer or body plan to refer to: all deductions were made from the booklet or historical photographs.*

⚓ *There are a number of historical discrepancies (see below.)*

⚓ *The most glaring discrepancy is the shape of the bow and stern: the kit shows the bow and stern shapes as identical to one another, and as a very generous curve. Historical photographs show a very straight sternpost at a nearly 90° angle to the keel, and a very tight bow curve. See kit part #1.*

⚓ *The clinker strakes are shown in the kit's instructions as stopping with the top two strakes: these are shown butt-jointed in carvel fashion. Historical photos show clinker straking all the way up to the cap rail. See kit parts #11, #12.*

⚓ *The parts supplied for the bow and stern decks are die-cut 90° counter to the grain of the wood. See kit part #14. These were discarded.*

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⚓ *The next major discrepancy concerns the cabinets or cupboards underneath the port and starboard benches. The kit details individual cupboard doors with handles, the whole structure unpaneled. Historical photos show a vertically paneled cupboard under the benches, without handles or doors but with finger-holes. See kit parts #18, #19, #20.*

⚓ *The kit identifies "bow curves" placed on the port and starboard interior*



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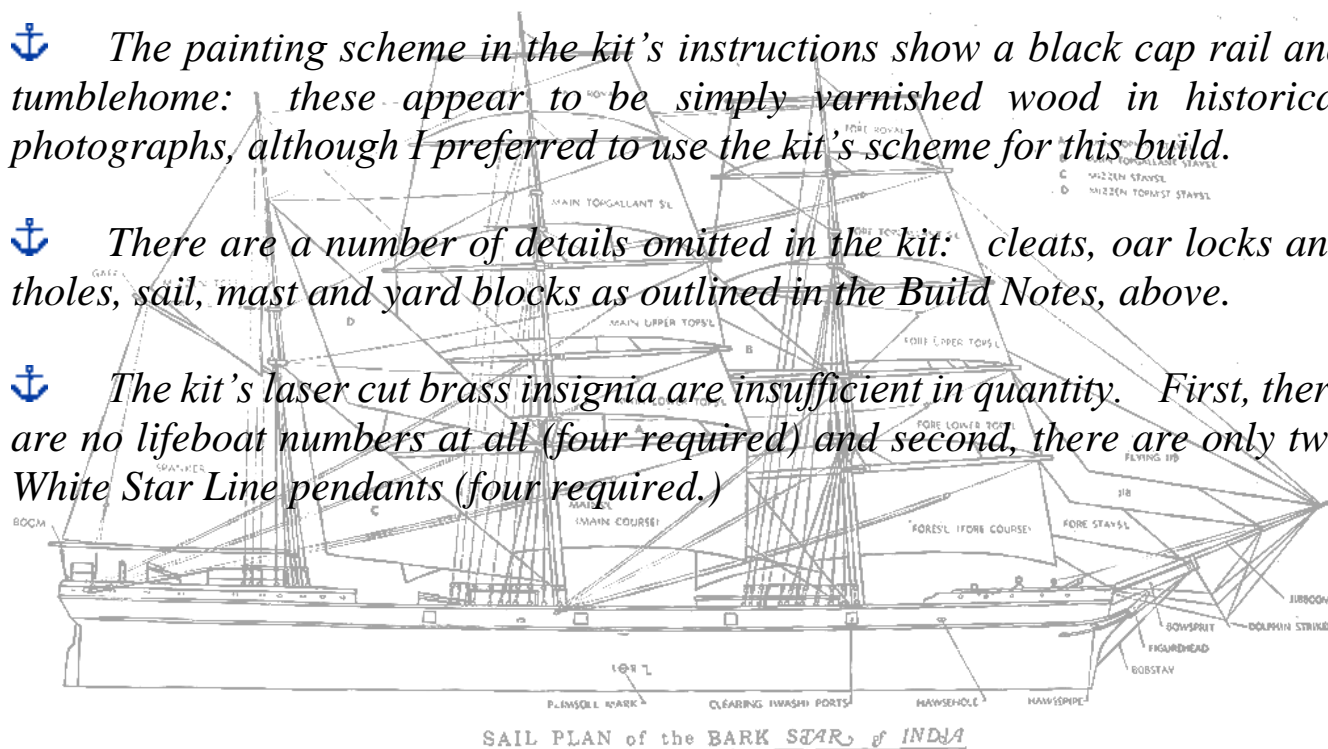
bow. The booklet photo shows these bow curves but they are so small in the photo that it is impossible to tell what exactly is depicted. See kit part #53 and discussion of same in Build Notes.

⚓ The kit details and provides rubbing rails or fenders for the build; these do not appear on the historical photographs, although I did choose to use them.

⚓ The painting scheme in the kit's instructions show a black cap rail and tumblehome: these appear to be simply varnished wood in historical photographs, although I preferred to use the kit's scheme for this build.

⚓ There are a number of details omitted in the kit: cleats, oar locks and tholes, sail, mast and yard blocks as outlined in the Build Notes, above.

⚓ The kit's laser cut brass insignia are insufficient in quantity. First, there are no lifeboat numbers at all (four required) and second, there are only two White Star Line pendants (four required.)






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Lessons Learned

 *Do your research. I had to remove the false keel, sternpost, bow stem and four clinker strakes in order to “start over” after discovering the kit’s keel was in error. This could have been avoided with a little research.*

 *Think outside the box. I wanted the handle ends of the oars to be a little bit decorative but still somewhat plain: the image of a belaying pin came to mind and I subsequently acquired wooden belaying pins of the proper scale to use as oar handles (even though I later abandoned this due to historical accuracy.)*

 *Creative clamping. Working solely with Titebond II (in this case) has not been as onerous (as far as setting time) as I had thought. After my first build in which I used CA freely due to the fast setting time, I was concerned about the aging of CA versus white glue and decided not to use it in this build. One thing I have been learning is the art of “creative clamping”.*

 *Short cuts aren’t always short cuts. I’m learning that there are two kinds of short cuts employed during a build: the carefully considered short cut and the “I want to move on” short cut. So far, I’ve found that the latter most often fails as a solution to a given problem and results in having to redo the (less than satisfactory) work produced.*

 *Historical accuracy versus aesthetics. Thus far with my two builds I lean primarily towards building with some effort at being historically accurate. However, I find that I’m willing to forego strict accuracy when my sense of aesthetics leads (for me) to a more pleasing solution.*




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Regrets and Delights


 *Delight: Received much-appreciated input from Don Dressel (among others) to choose a kit other than this one for my first build. Facing the frustrations of solving clinker planking on a first build may well have led to a very short modeling career.*

 *Regret: Failing to fully consider each step of the build. Here on my second build I find I am still apt to move ahead with a construction step before fully researching / understanding the parts in question. The upside of this that I get experience rebuilding parts (in some cases three or four times until I get it right.)*

 *Delight: I am finding great satisfaction in learning to scratch-build parts for which the kit-supplied part is inferior or simply wrong.*

 *Delight: I find the curved-tip syringes that Tom Hairston donated to Guild Members to be really useful. I can apply glue precisely to the area needed and can easily control the amount to apply. I also have companion "water" and an "isopropyl alcohol" syringes handy.*

 *Delight: Another tool that I'm finding extremely useful is the fine-toothed saw that came as part of a miter box set I bought. I use this saw on the majority of my straight cuts of a certain length now; rarely using the miter box itself.*

 *Regret: I almost achieved my goal of not using any CA glue on this build. At the near end of the project, however, I did use a single drop to attach a brass ring to the anchor.*



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Lifeboat No. 6, *SS TITANIC* (1912)

Alex Roel / completed December 2019

Kit:	Artisania Latina #19016	Length:	10 ³ / ₄ " (31' 3")
Scale:	11/32"=1' 1:35	Height:	9" (26' 2")

Plaque

