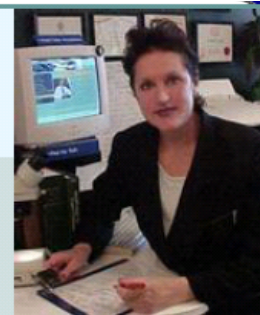


Titanic Memorabilia - Genuine or Fake?

[email](#)

by Jacqueline A. Joseph, Board certified forensic handwriting examiner



You can discover hidden treasures using forensic science.

An area of my expertise is that of examining apparently vintage documents to determine their authenticity. The results of my forensic examinations may help my clients discover hidden wealth in the resale value of their historic artifacts. As a board certified expert, I use forensic methods to answer the question: "Is it real or fake!?" Sometimes, to the disappointment of the collector, the evidence proves that their treasured item is a fake.

A couple of years ago, the Oregon Historical Society asked me to help with an inquiry from a man who is a long time personal collector of ocean liner memorabilia. He had an item related to the Titanic disaster of July 1912. Titanic collectors are a world-wide close knit group of this ever-popular subject.

His collector's item was a medium sized travel agent's wall calendar advertising the White Star Line, the parent company of the Titanic (see photo). He purchased the item in an online auction believing it to be a one-of-a-kind treasure. It pictured the Titanic along with a January - December calendar for the year 1912. The Titanic sank on July 15, 1912 giving this calendar historical significance in many ways. It was typical of an advertising piece given away by travel agents of the day. But, was it genuine???



This collector called me in a quandary because, after acquiring it, he asked a local printer to examine it for genuineness and the printer reported that the artifact was, indeed, authentic. While at first the collector was quite excited about this news, he still wanted more authoritative evidence, but eventually heard otherwise.

For his second opinion, he flew across the country with the piece for a visual inspection by known authority Timothy J. Trower of The Titanic Museum in Branson, Missouri. He is a member of the Titanic Historical Society, and is involved with a private email group devoted to uncovering Titanic fraud.

Mr. Trower's first look was with the unaided naked eye and then with his 15x loupe. Mr. Trower expressed the opinion that the piece was merely a high quality laser color photocopy. It was a fake! This

was based on evidence of toner scatter and dot patterns over the surface of the piece.

The collector returned home to Portland even more confused because of the two conflicting opinions. He asked me to forensically

examine the calendar to answer his question: is it genuine or fake?

My forensic examination included studying the piece with normal ambient lighting and supplemental magnification. Using an ultraviolet light on the calendar, I observed a white fluorescence which indicated that the paper contained optical brighteners. These were not yet in use in the early 1900's but came on the scene in the 1950's. Other evidence indicated the toner dots from laser printing. I found no evidence to suggest the image was created with letterpress or lithography, both of which would have been available in the early 1900's. Additionally, evidence showed that the image had been physically altered with *induced* abrasion in an attempt to give the impression of natural wear and tear. However, this was inconsistent with normal wear and tear. I collaborated with Joseph Barabe, Senior Research Microscopist and Director of Scientific Imaging at McCrone Associates in Illinois.

While it was unfortunate that I could not give my client better news, he is an experienced collector and he took it well, knowing he had done all he could to definitively answer the authenticity question.

To inquire about your memorabilia, please [email me](#). Find out: "Is it genuine or fake."