

FIRE AND ICE - HINDENBURG AND TITANIC

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TITANIC WAS THE WORLD'S largest floating post office of its day, and HINDENBURG still holds the record as the world's largest flying post office. But what count records and superlatives? Both, TITANIC and HINDENBURG are today also synonyms for disasters and tragedies. The one sunk 100 years ago, the other burst into flames 75 years ago. And left of both are a few collectibles and mail pieces.

The Smithsonian National Postal Museum in Washington DC opened an innovative new exhibit which brings together the two marvels of transportation. Documents, artifacts, newly discovered photographs and of course salvaged mail bring the stories to life in new ways. The exhibit is organized into themes that compare and contrast the large, fast, glamorous ships: 20th-century icons, technological advancements, life onboard, mail ships and disaster.

Survivor stories portray the human tragedy associated with each disaster.

The exhibit was curated by Cheryl Ganz and Daniel Piazza with M.T. Sheahan, all experts in their collecting field. They are also advanced curators and known to go new ways in telling a story and presenting facts, history and collectibles. The exhibit is mixed with social elements of crew members and passengers.

The result is indeed innovative. It is a fascinating, thrilling, educational and finally also a philatelic exhibit. With a clear and easy to follow story line and well researched and presented objects and stories, the exhibit is amazing and fun for all kind of visitors; for those who never heard the term 'crash cover' up to advanced experts dealing daily with that stuff. The remarkable exhibit is a future-oriented demonstration that collectibles are way more than stamps and covers in an album. The exhibit opened on March 22 and it was heard that the Smithsonian never had that many attendees at an opening. A well edited booklet will accompany the exhibit and for all those who can not make it to Washington before January 2014, a virtual edition of the exhibit is available on the museum's website www.postalmuseum.si.edu/fireandice/