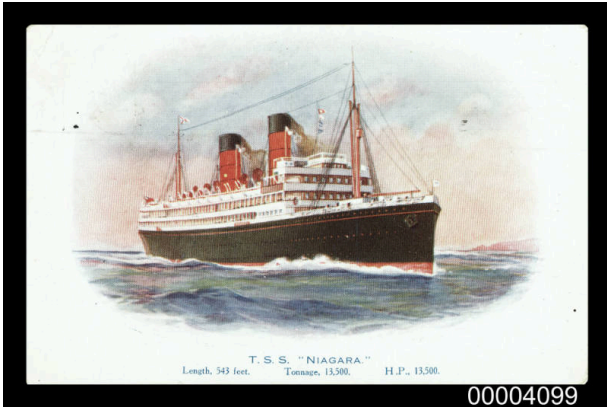


Basic Detail Report



00004099

Title

TSS NIAGARA

Date

1915

Primary Maker

Union Steamship Company of New Zealand Limited

Medium

Ink on paper

Dimensions

Overall: 90 x 140 mm

Name

Postcard

History

RMS NIAGARA was an ocean liner launched on 17 August 1912 and used for transporting passengers and mail on the trans- Pacific trade route. It was built by John Brown & Company, Clydebank and owned by the Union Steam Ship Company and had accommodation for 590 passengers - 250 first class, 200 cabin class and 140 in third class. The liner became well known for its reliability and quality of facilities for its passengers, even featuring a new ventilation system, a precursor to modern air conditioning. It was hailed by the company as their 'perfect ship'. On the morning of 19 June 1940, just out of Auckland on its way to Suva, the NIAGARA struck a mine and sunk. It is recorded that the passengers and crew were evacuated within 30 minutes and there was no loss of life, but the cargo on board went down with the ship. This included a secret load of nearly 300 boxes of gold on its way to the United States, payment by Britain for munitions. The mine had been one of many laid by the Germans in an attempt to disrupt shipping through the Pacific and block access to Auckland. It took more than six months for salvage operations to get under way. Once the NIAGARA was located at an estimated depth of 438 feet, the effort of recovering the gold got under way. Tough environmental conditions, the depth of the wreck, equipment limitations and the threat of further mines, saw nine months pass before the first gold was brought to the surface. Over two months the small salvage team managed to recoup most of the gold, an effort which saw members of the team dive an estimated 300 times wearing a diving bell.