

THE CONVICT SHIP "SUCCESS"

For almost a generation of time there was exhibited in Australian, British & American waters a ship whose story is unique in the annals of shipping. This is the Merchantman "Success" whose almost 100-year history saw her as an East India Merchantman, Australian Emigrant Ship, Convict Hulk and Showboat. Her story has often been told but without overmuch regard for the truth. This exhibit tells her story.

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Rare or scarce items are identified by an anchor symbol.



Front and reverse of original Flyer from the English Tour of the Convict Ship "Success" (1896)

Bibliography –

- The History of the British Convict Ship "Success" – Published on board the Convict Ship "Success"
 Mariner May- June 1971 p.518-523
 True Australian Sea Stories by J. Millar 1978 p.64-70
 National Library of Australia – Gateways No. 74 April 2005 ISSN 1443-0568 – Success "Prison Ship"
<http://themacabreobserver.blogspot.com/2014/03/the-convict-ship-success.html>

"Success" under sail

RIGHT

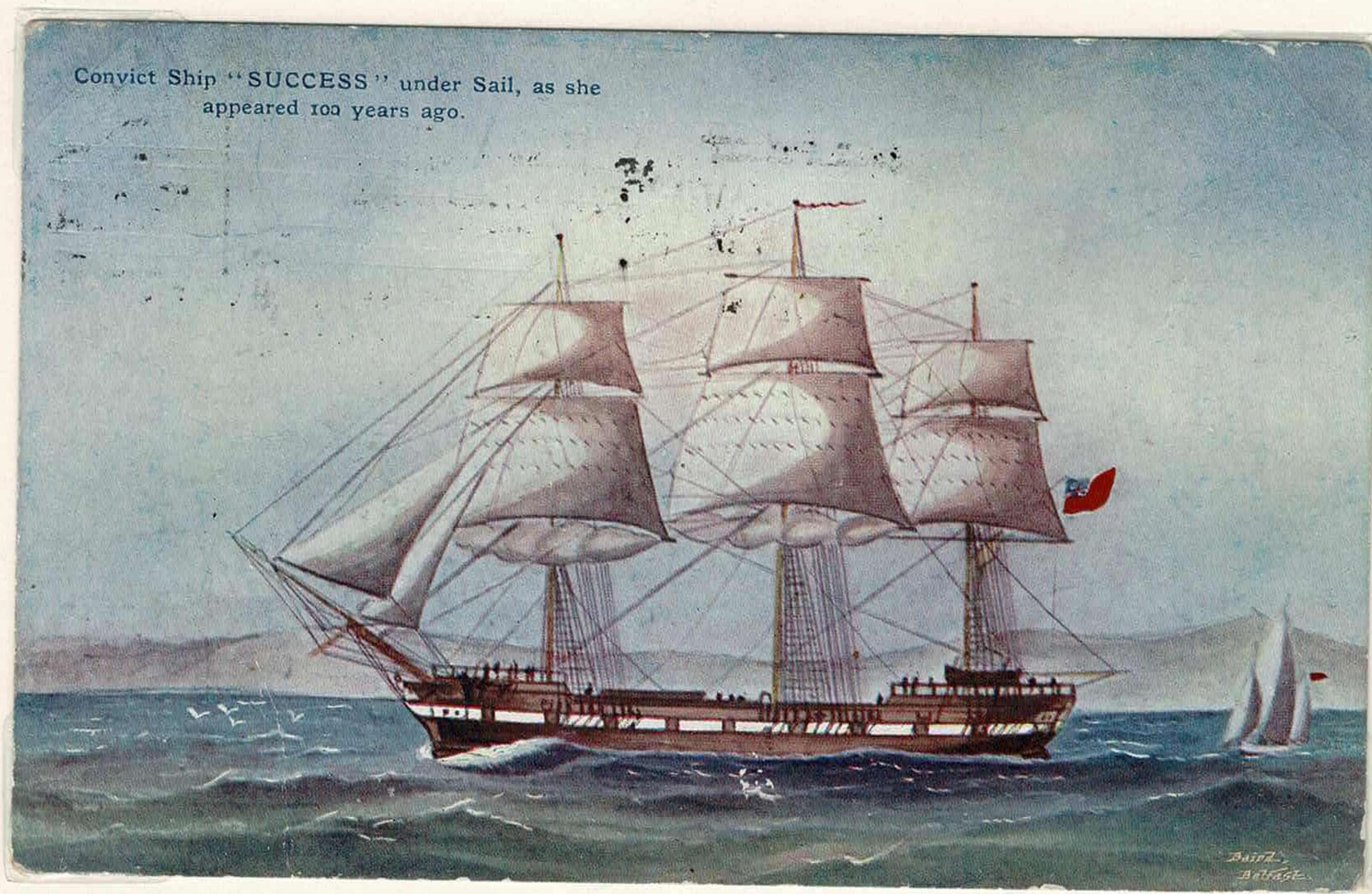
This is the old "Success" nigh in its hundredth year which made history in the Old World and the New, first as an East India Merchantman for a few years, then an Australian Emigrant Ship, Convict Hulk in Port Philip Bay, Victoria and finally Showboat on three continents.

Chromolithographic divided back with incorrect launch date. Should be 1840.

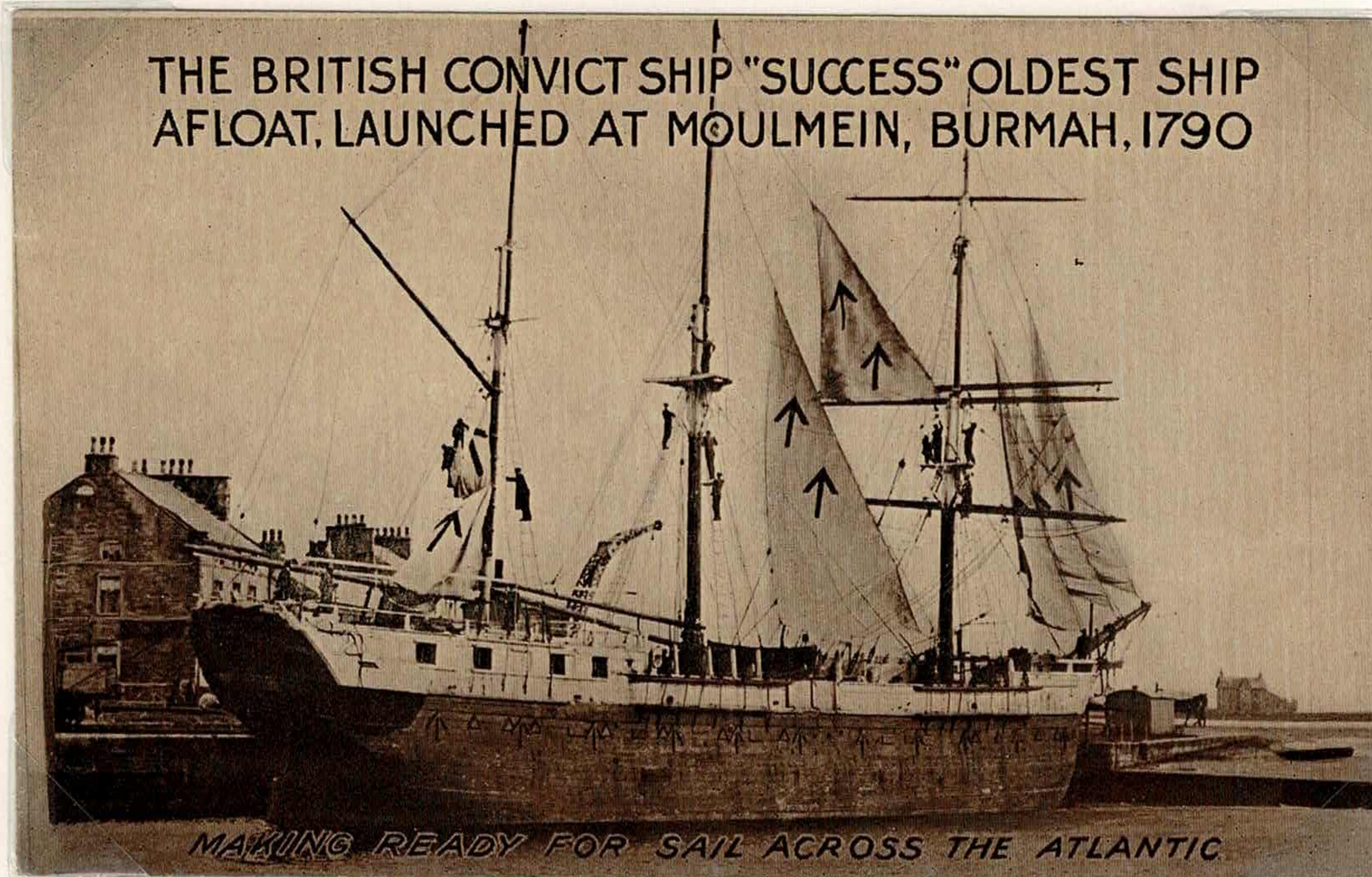
BELOW

Its story has been often told but without much regard for the truth. Fact has time and again gone down before fiction. Around no ship has there been so many impossible and fantastic tales and legends as flourish and thrive about this relic of a sea-age which has passed.

Coloured photolithographic divided back.



"Success" in England



It must also be understood that for about forty years as shown by this display, the Merchantman "Success" was a showboat, owned by a succession of showmen whose whole sole object in respect of her was to use her as a source of income.

Sepia photolithographic captioned "Making ready for sail across the Atlantic" (Wrong launch date)



It was little blame to them then, that they watered and kept alive the legends that surrounded her, and exploited to the full the bell, the scars, the carvings, which (added to her Nelsonic appearance) carried such conviction to the hearts of the tourists.

Real photographic (RPPC). "Success" was visited by Royalty whilst on show in England

"Success" in England



LEFT

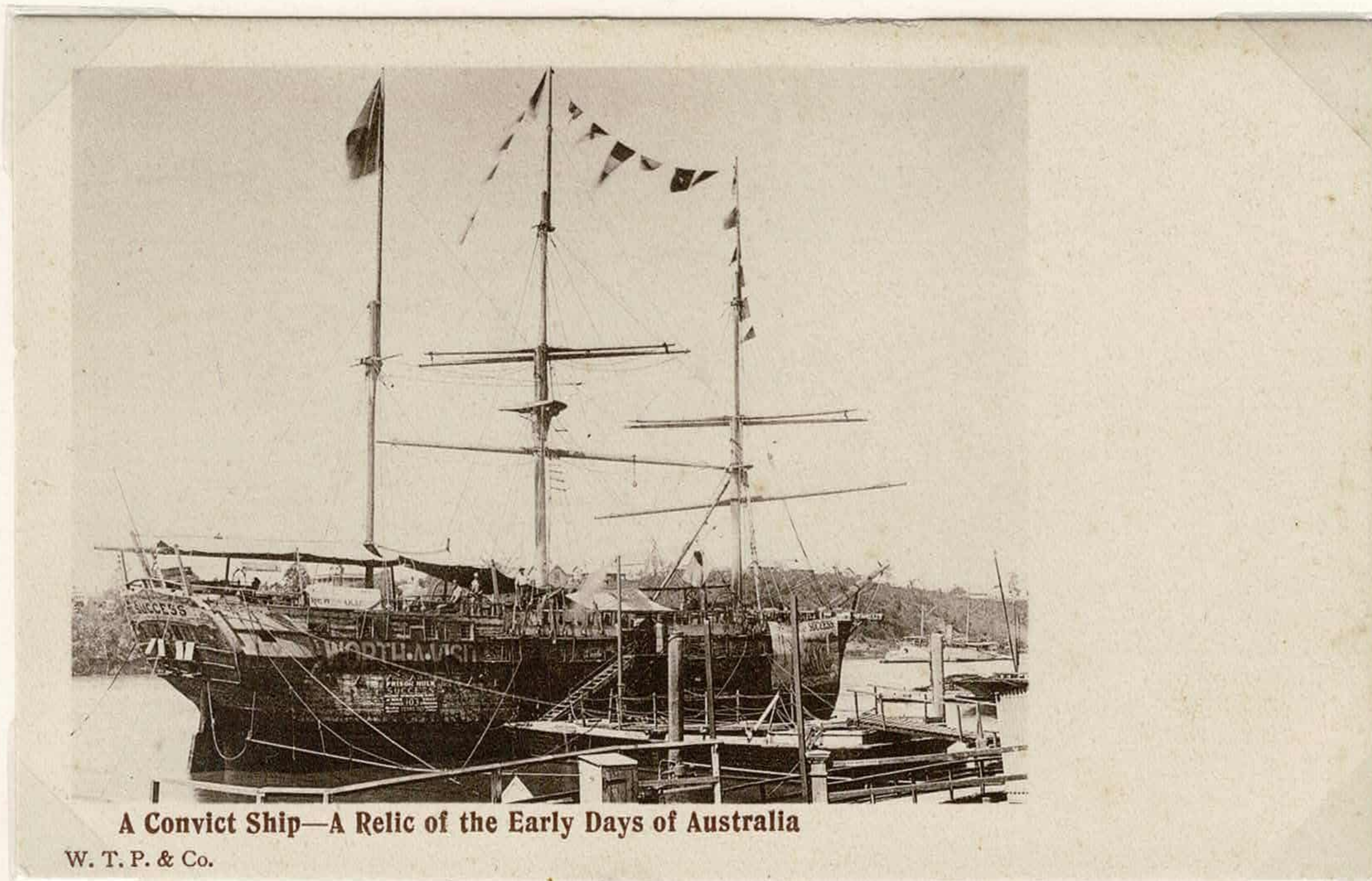
This exhibit tells some of the legends. The "Success", so it is claimed, was built at Moulmein as long ago as 1790 as can be seen on numerous postcards in this exhibit. However, no ship named "Success" was built at Moulmein in the year 1790.

Real photographic postcard with erroneous caption attributing "Success" to being a convict ship taking prisoners to Australia

BELOW

The exhibit records both the truth and the legends regarding this remarkable vessel. History shows in truth "a ship nigh its hundredth year" sunk at least four times, refloated, repaired and able to carry on about her business.

Collotype card by W. T. P. & Co. Undivided back taken while moored in Sydney Harbour

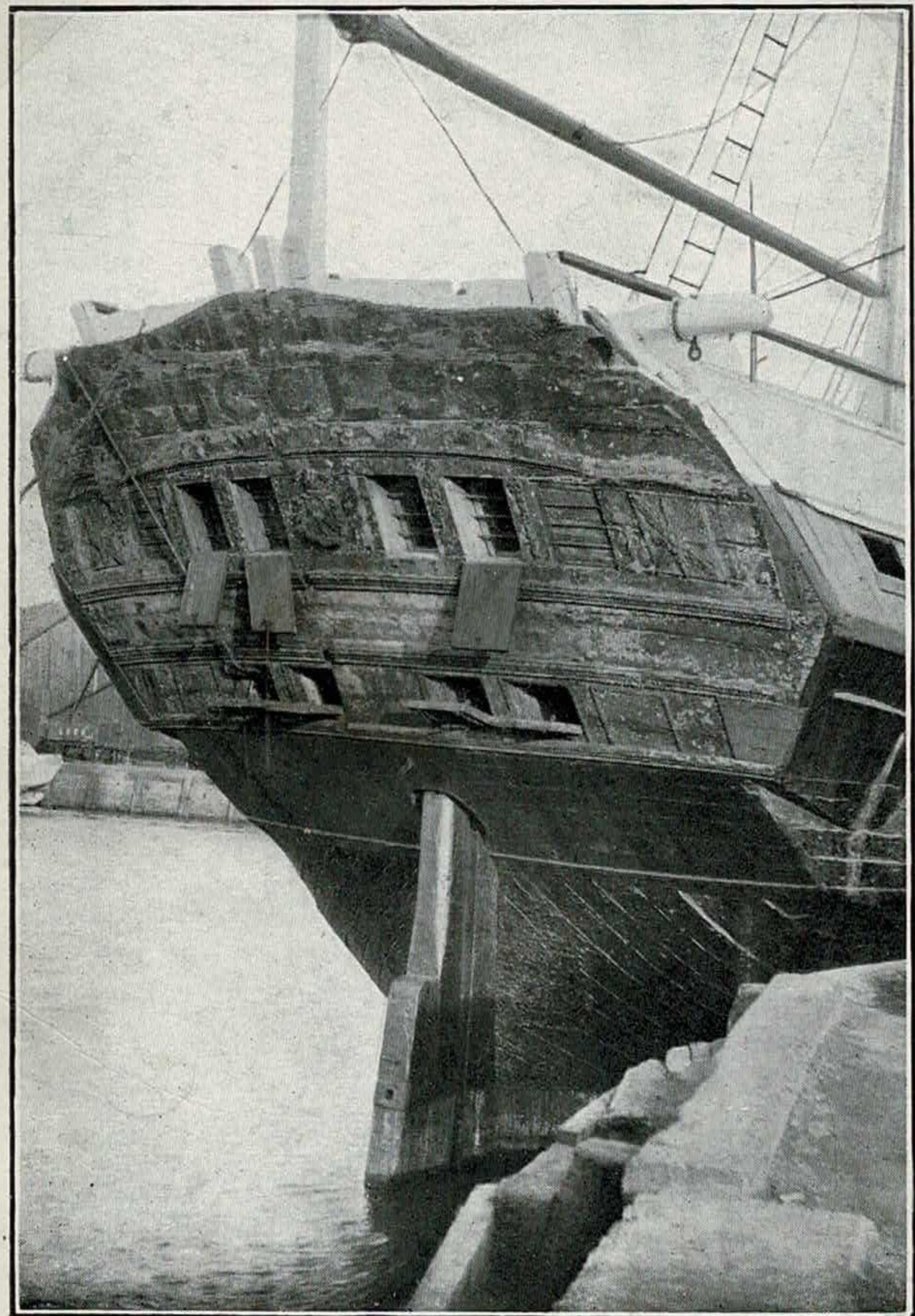


"Success" in England



The first record found of the "Success" is a notice in the "Moulmein Chronicle" of August 12, 1840. It read "Vessels lying in the Moulmein River, "Success" 600 R. Gordon. Calcutta. Fitting out". A later issue states that the "Success" sailed for Calcutta on September 2, 1840.

Real photographic postcard by Willaims, Ware & Curnuck Ltd. With caption "Best Sight Here – All Should See Her".and on her bow is a signage - "The World's Most Remarkable Vessel"



Its first entry in the General Register of Shipping, Tower Hill, London reads "Success" 28/1840 Calcutta 621 tons Built at Natmoo 1839/40. Keel laid. Launched 13/7/1840. Master Robert Gordon, Owners William Martin and 3 others.

Half tone block divided back postcard. Rear of the vessel with name "Success" carved into the stern.

"Success" in England

The "Success" does not appear in Lloyds Register until 1843 (with her first three years of operation being as an East India Merchantman). The main particulars read "Carr, Master. 621 tons. Built Moulmein 1840. Owners Mangles. From London to Swan River".

Photolithographic postcard divided back. Australian Convict Ship – The only one left. Note Union Jack flag flying and people boarding the "Convict Ship"

Prior's Stoke Newsagency Series, Devonport.



AUSTRALIAN CONVICT SHIP *Bayley, Photo.*
(The only one left.)
A WONDERFUL INTERIOR.

AUSTRALIAN CONVICT SHIP (THE ONLY ONE LEFT).

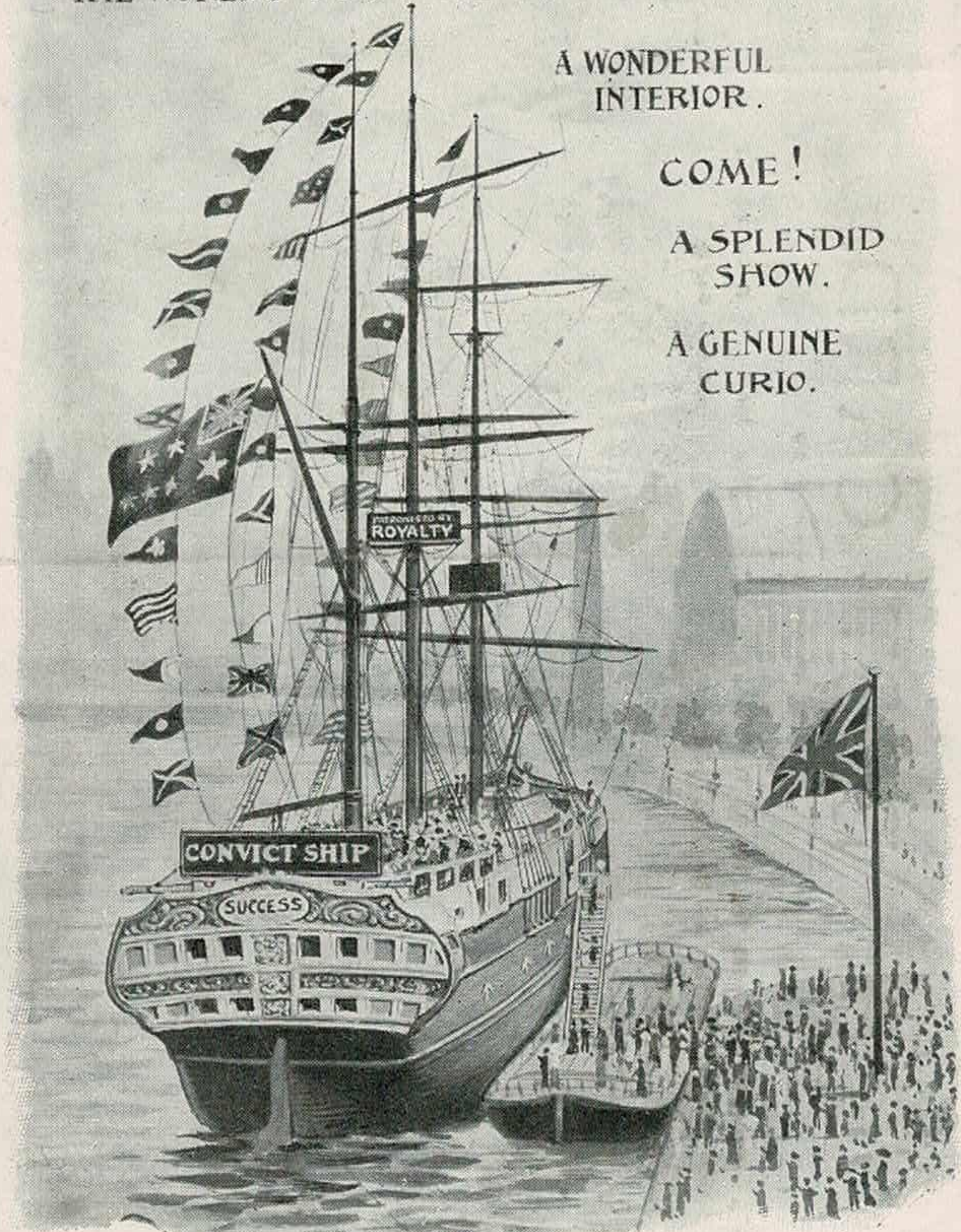
THE WORLD'S MOST REMARKABLE VESSEL!

A WONDERFUL
INTERIOR.

COME!

A SPLENDID
SHOW.

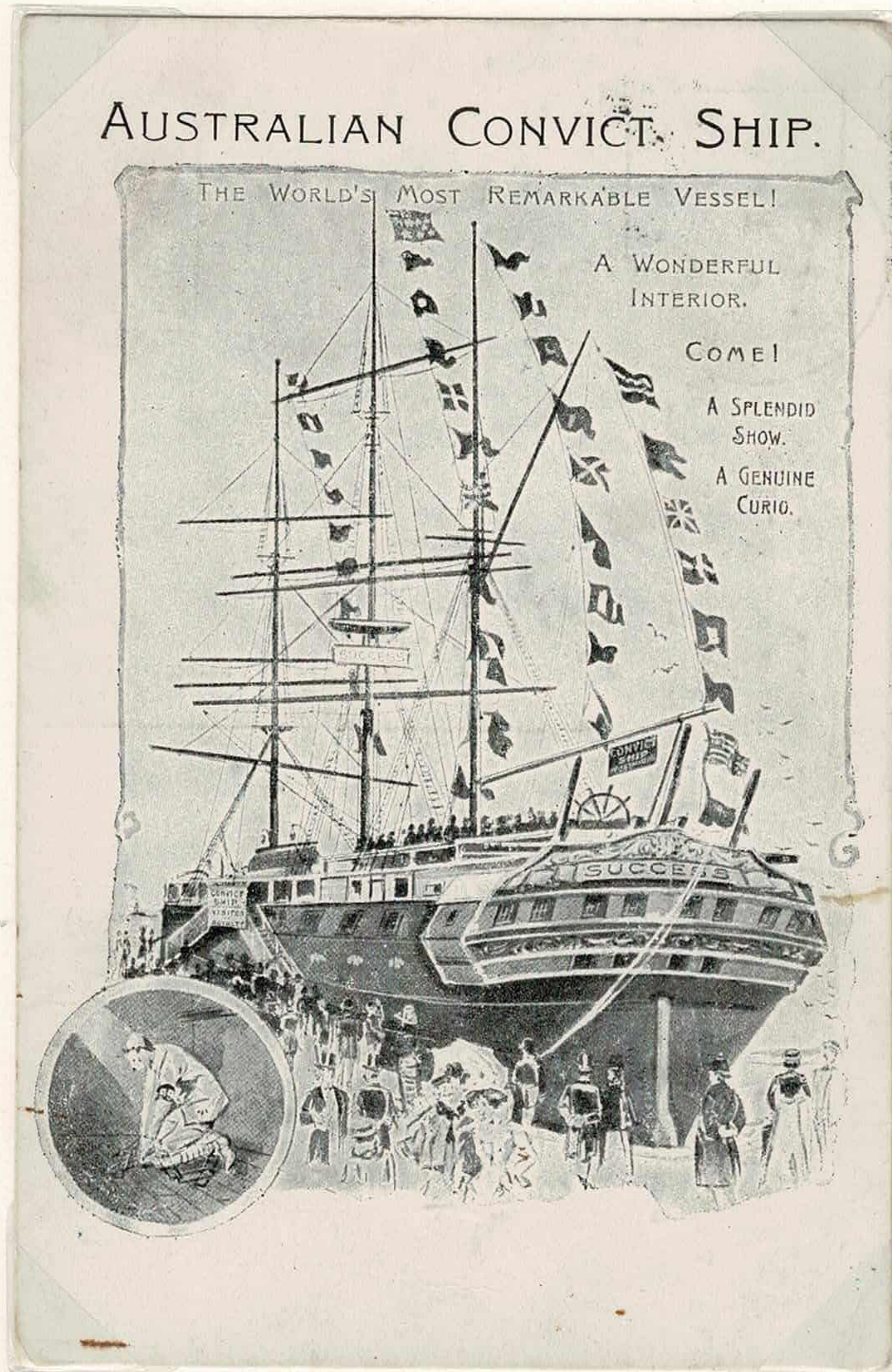
A GENUINE
CURIO.



Her departure date is not given but she took emigrants to Western Australia and her arrival is chronicled in the "Perth Gazette" of March 22, 1843 – "from London the Success, Carr, Master, 30 married couples, 12 single men, 7 single women, 55 children, total 134".

Photolithographic postcard divided back. Prior's Stoke Newsagency Series, Devonport

"Success" in Australia

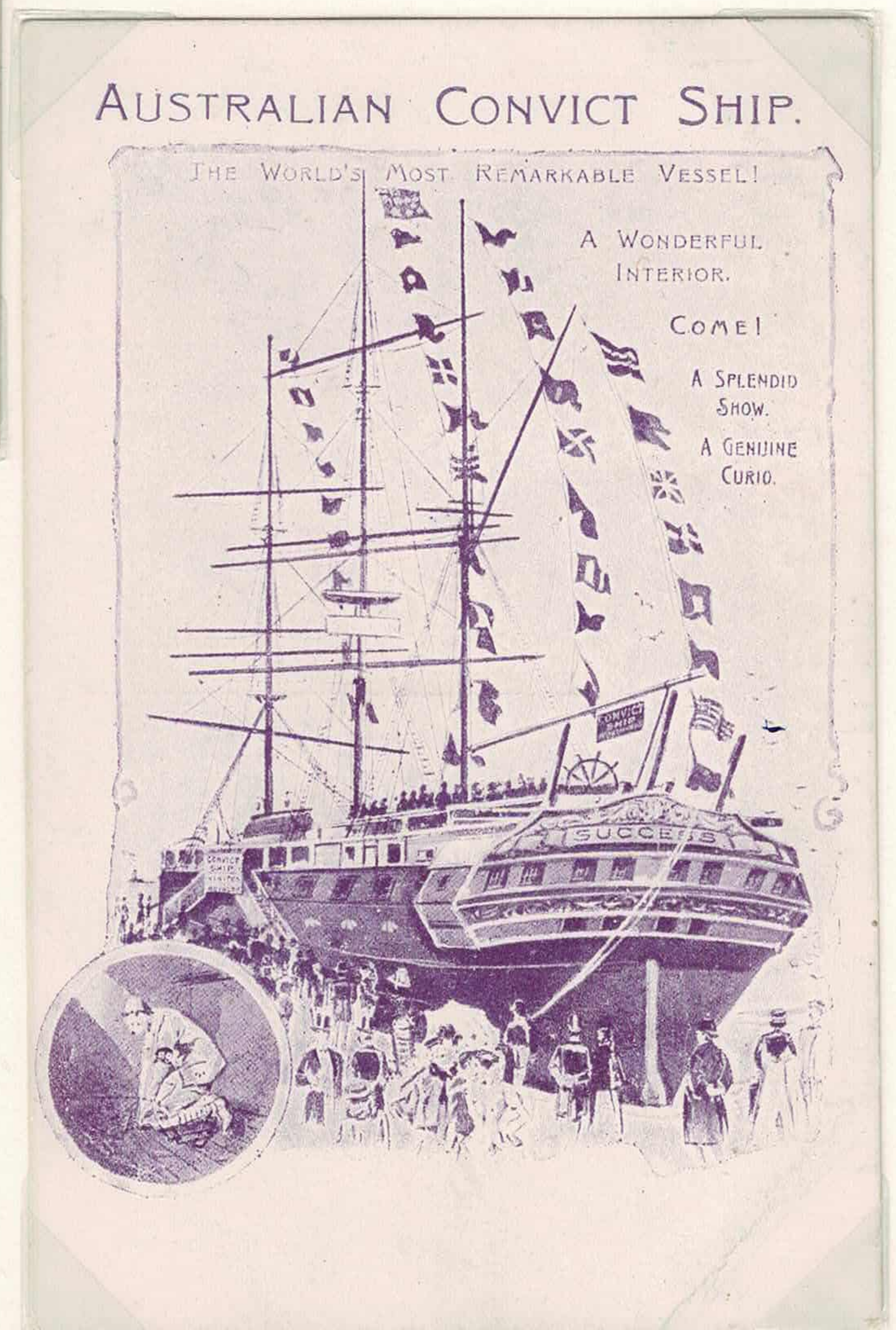


When her crew departed for the goldfields of Victoria, she was sold at Port Philip to the Victorian Government 24 March 1853, who converted her into a prison ship of remarkable strength. This is in truth, the only part in her history where she housed prisoners/convicts.

*Photographic postcard divided back.
"The World's Most Remarkable Vessel".*

As a prison-hulk, the story of "Success" is one full of horrors. Two of its decks were transformed into cells to house 120 prisoners, cells which in most cases were nothing else but iron cages, suitable only for wild animals, leg-irons and other instruments of torture.

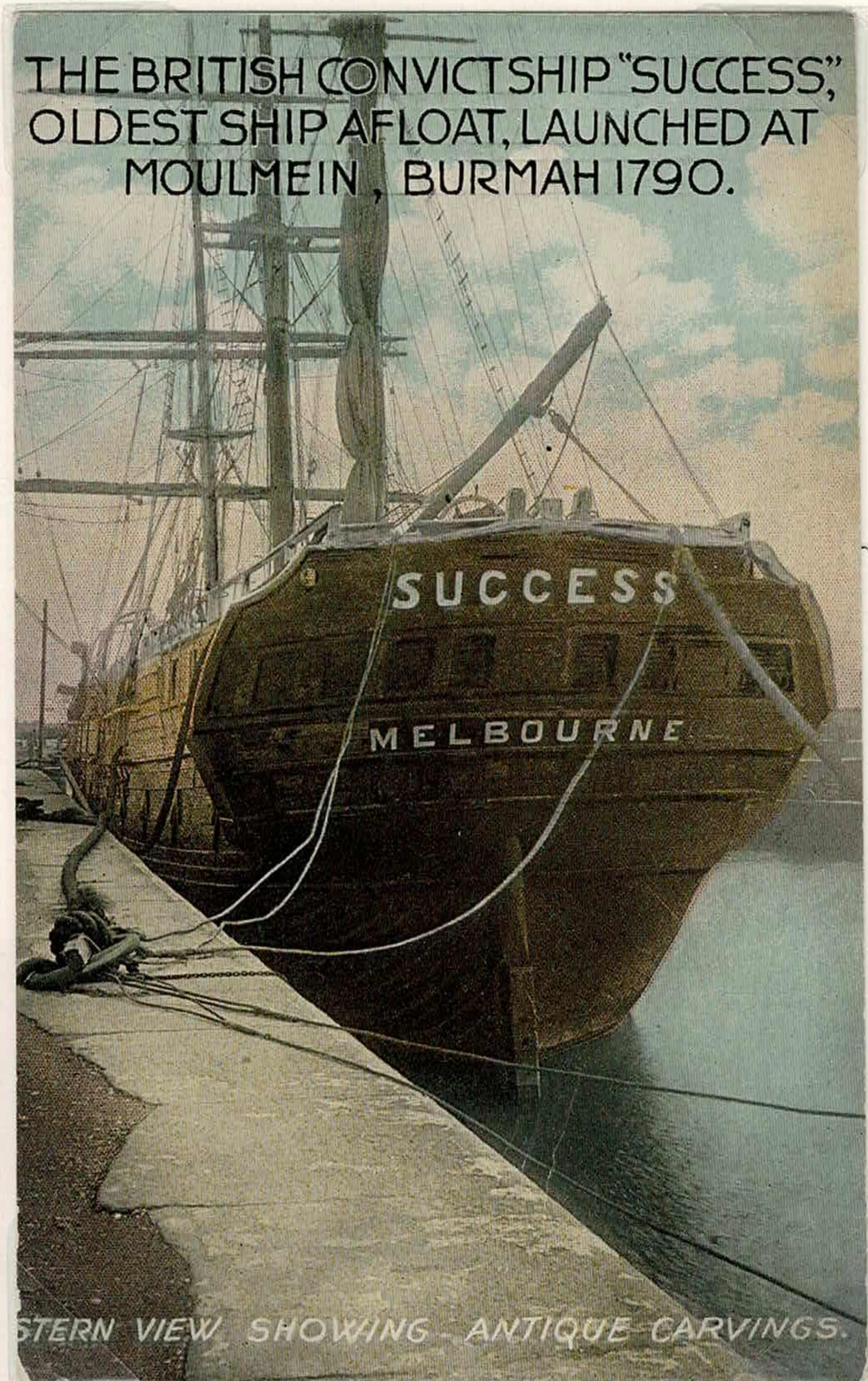
*Photolithographic postcard divided back.
Captioned "A Wonderful Interior / Come! / A Splendid Show / A Genuine Curio.."*



"Success" in Australia

Writers have left many accounts of these terrible prison-hulks. They housed some of the world's worst scoundrels. But it's worth remembering that most of them initially had only been guilty of petty offences which nowadays would be met by an admonition or a small fine.

Chromolithographic postcard divided back. This time the "Success" is captioned as The British Convict Ship despite sporting the word "Melbourne" on her stern.



THE BRITISH CONVICT SHIP "SUCCESS"
OLDEST SHIP AFLOAT, LAUNCHED AT
MOULMEIN, BURMAH 1790.



Brutal warders tyrannised over the prisoners, most of whom were rivetted by their chains to the walls of the cells. Armed guards ashore kept the "Success" under observation day and night ready to shoot down the first head that showed above the bulwarks.

*Chromolithographic postcard divided back.
A Dry Dock view of the "Success"*

Australian Convict Ship Exhibition

THE BRITISH CONVICT SHIP "SUCCESS",
OLDEST SHIP AFLOAT, LAUNCHED AT
MOULMEIN, BURMAH 1790.



THE COMPULSORY BATH
VICTIMS SCRUBBED WITH SALT WATER.

LEFT

Prisoners who refused to personal hygiene orders were placed three or four at a time in a compulsory back or "coffin" where sea water was pumped in, a practice invariably performed each morning as there were always some who needed to be washed by force.

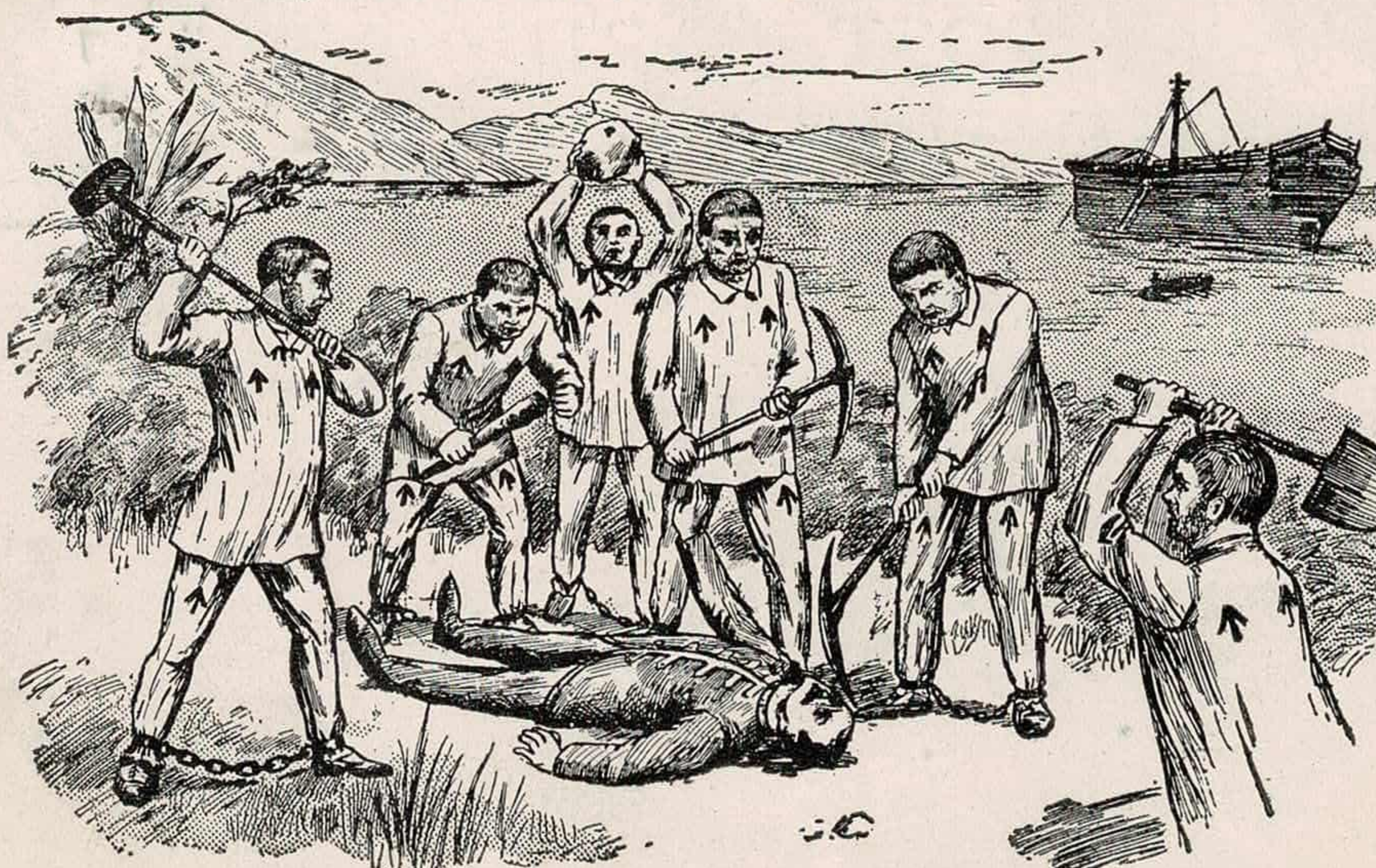
Chromolithographic postcard divided back with caption "The compulsory bath, victims scrubbed with salt water".

BELOW

A riot by the prisoners on the afternoon of 26 March 1857 saw them murder Captain John Price, Inspector-General of Penal Establishments in Victoria. He was battered to death with picks and shovels. Seven men were executed for the crime during April 1857.

Half tone block undivided back. The murder of Captain John Price in Port Philip Bay.

SEEN IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONVICT SHIP EXHIBITION.
CELLS, WAX FIGURES, &C. "BEST SIGHT HERE."



Give this for me when I come home please.

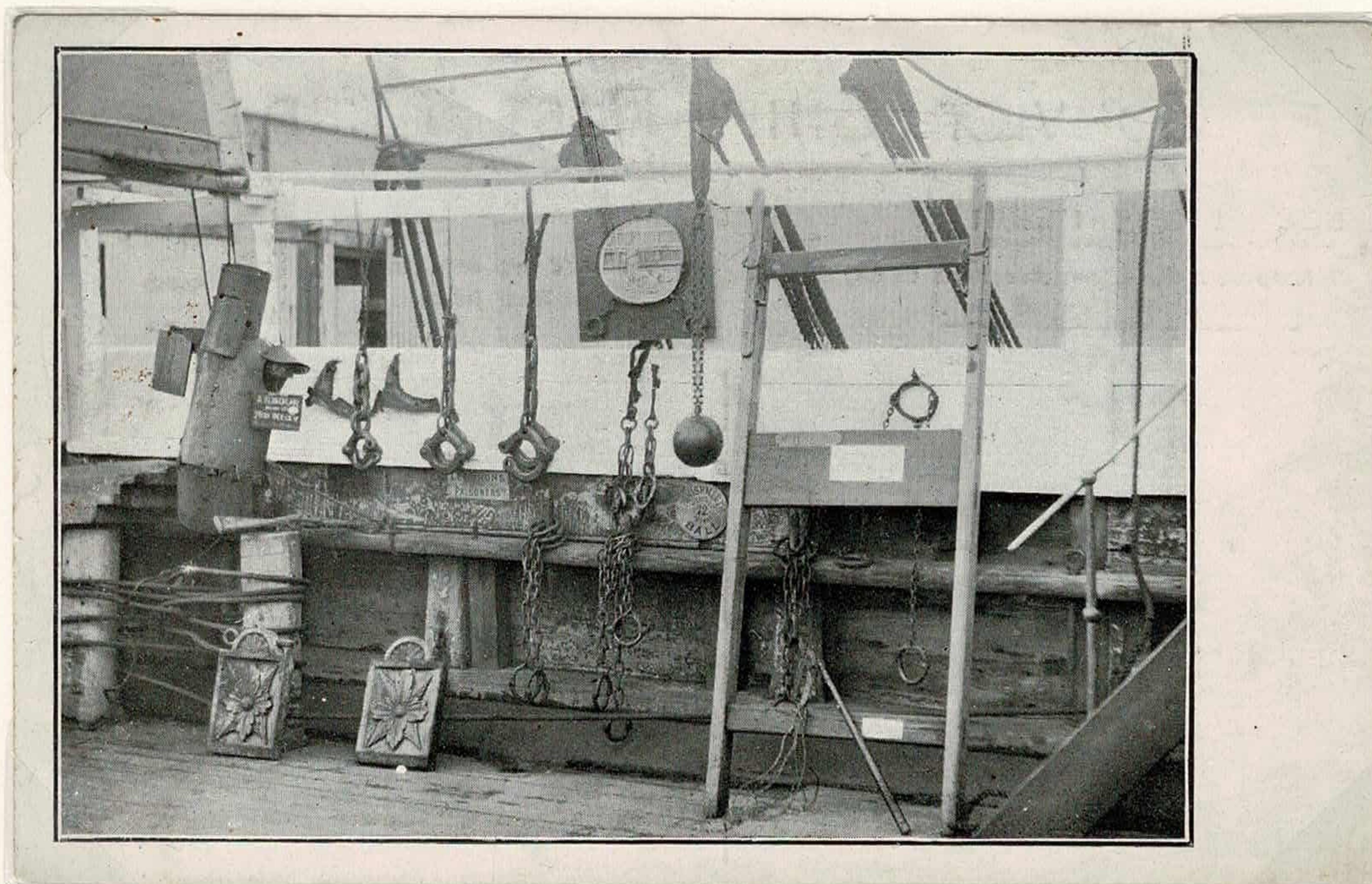


Above Deck Exhibits



Prisoners were flung back into the ship and pandemonium reigned. Further bloodshed was only averted by the timely arrival of a warship in the harbour which at once trained its guns on the "Success" and threatened to blow her out of the water at the first sign of trouble.

Real photographic postcard. Note sign re posting your postcard down the passage.



It goes without saying that many attempts were made to escape from this living inferno but in fact no prisoner ever managed to cut through the solid teak walls of the "Success" or to scale its well-guarded bulwarks. One can only imagine what prison life must have been like.

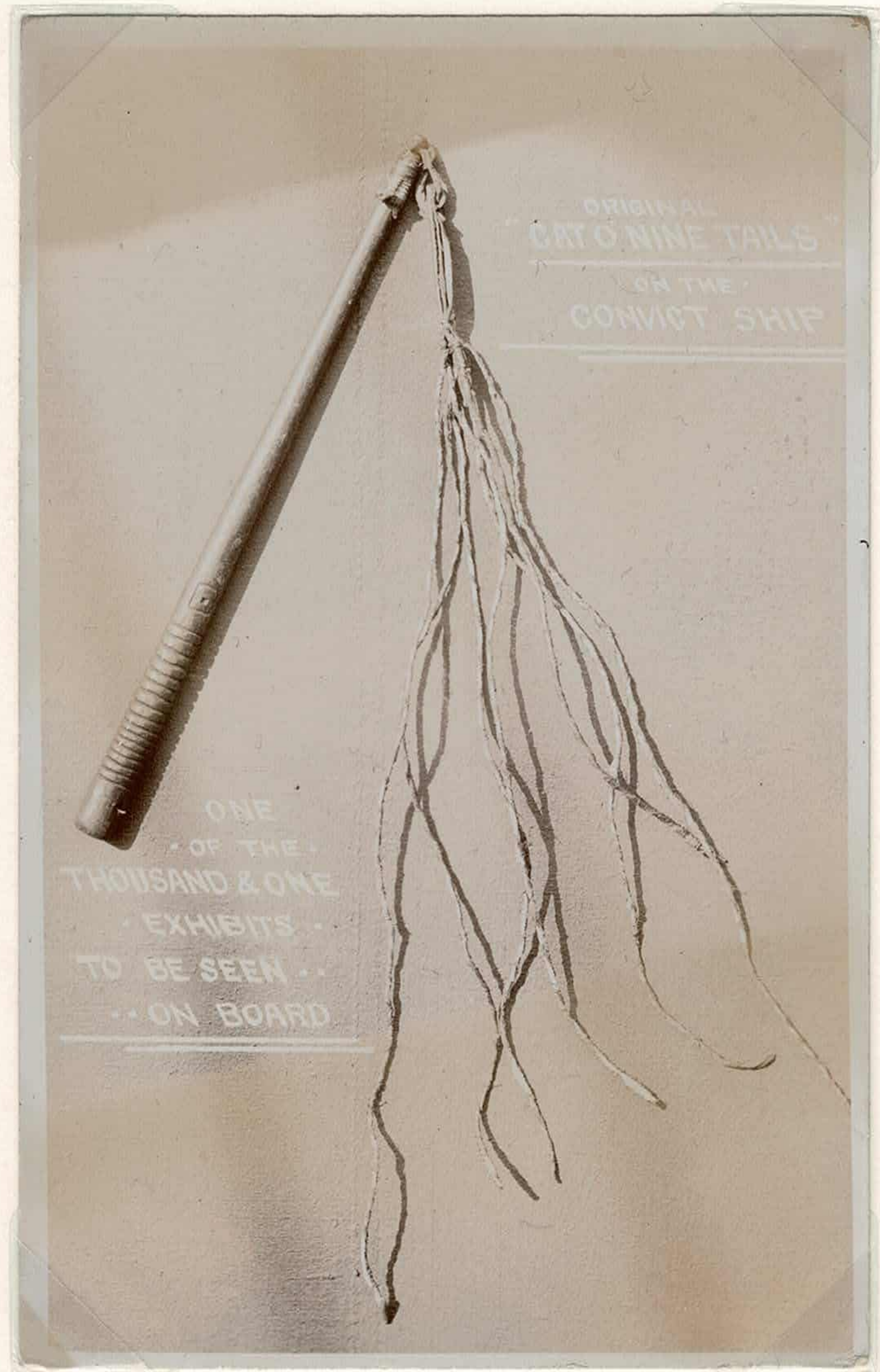
Photolithographic postcard divided back showing various forms of torture inflicted on the prisoners

Above Deck Exhibits

RIGHT

She was in a very dirty condition and Phillips had her taken up the Saltwater River as far as Footscray for cleaning. Phillips had her refitted for the exhibition of wax figures, prominent among which were members of the Ned Kelly Gang and one of Captain John Price.

Real photographic postcard divided back showing an original "Cat 'o Nine Tails" aboard "Success" used to whip the prisoners.



BELOW

In 1892 the "Success" was in Sydney Harbour. The Sydney Morning Herald of 20 June 1892 reported that after lying at Circular Quay for many weeks on exhibition, the "Success" was moved to moorings at Kerosene Bay.

Chromolithographic postcard divided back showing a prisoner being whipped with the Cat o' Nine Tails on board "Success"



Below Deck Exhibits



LEFT

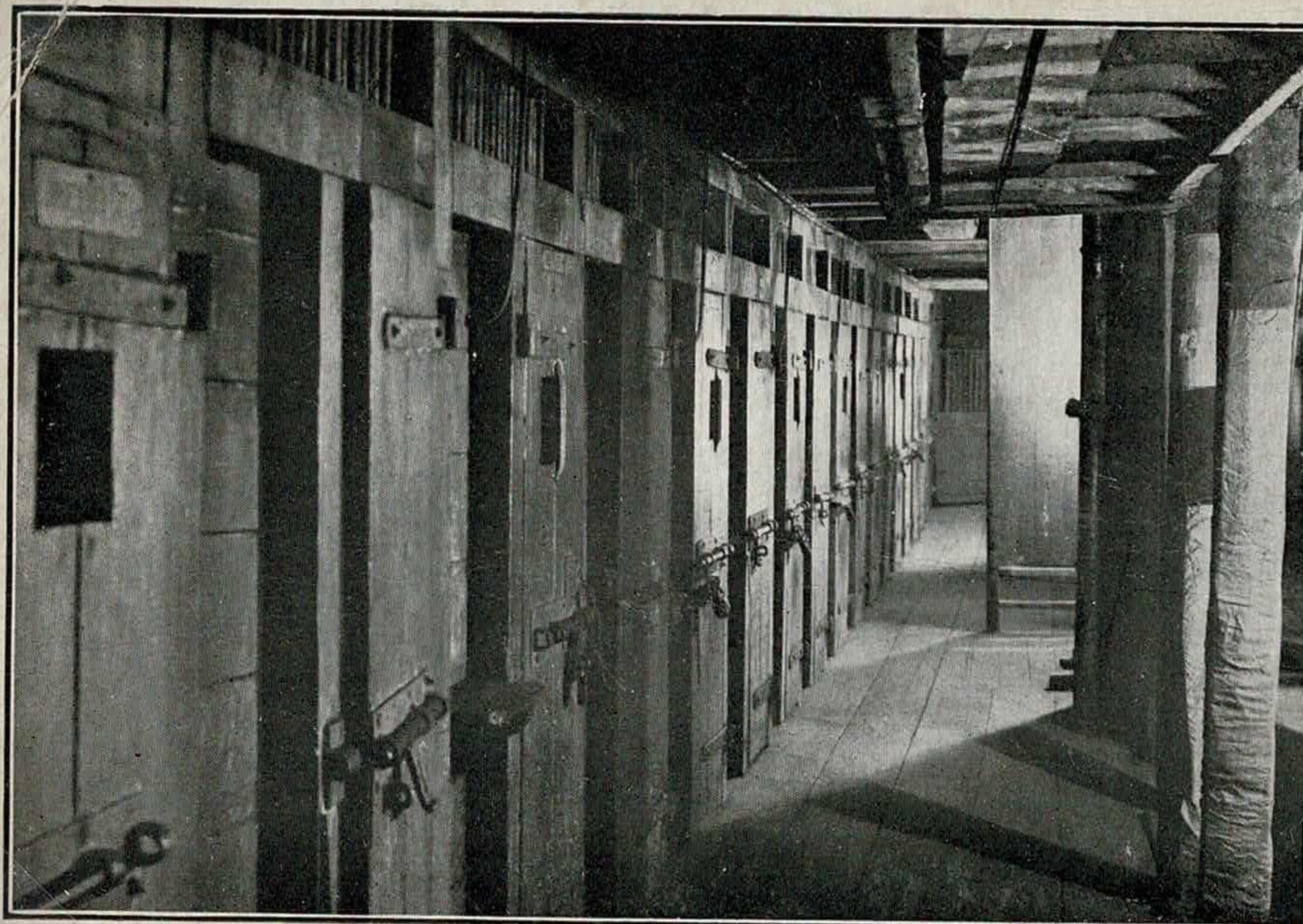
There, she was boarded by a party of people, descendants of transportees who resented the garish exhibition of family skeletons. They sunk her to rid from the public mind every memory of convict days. She was again raised and visited Queensland, Tasmania & South Australia.

Real photographic card divided back showing cells on the lower deck when "Success" was used as a prison-hulk.

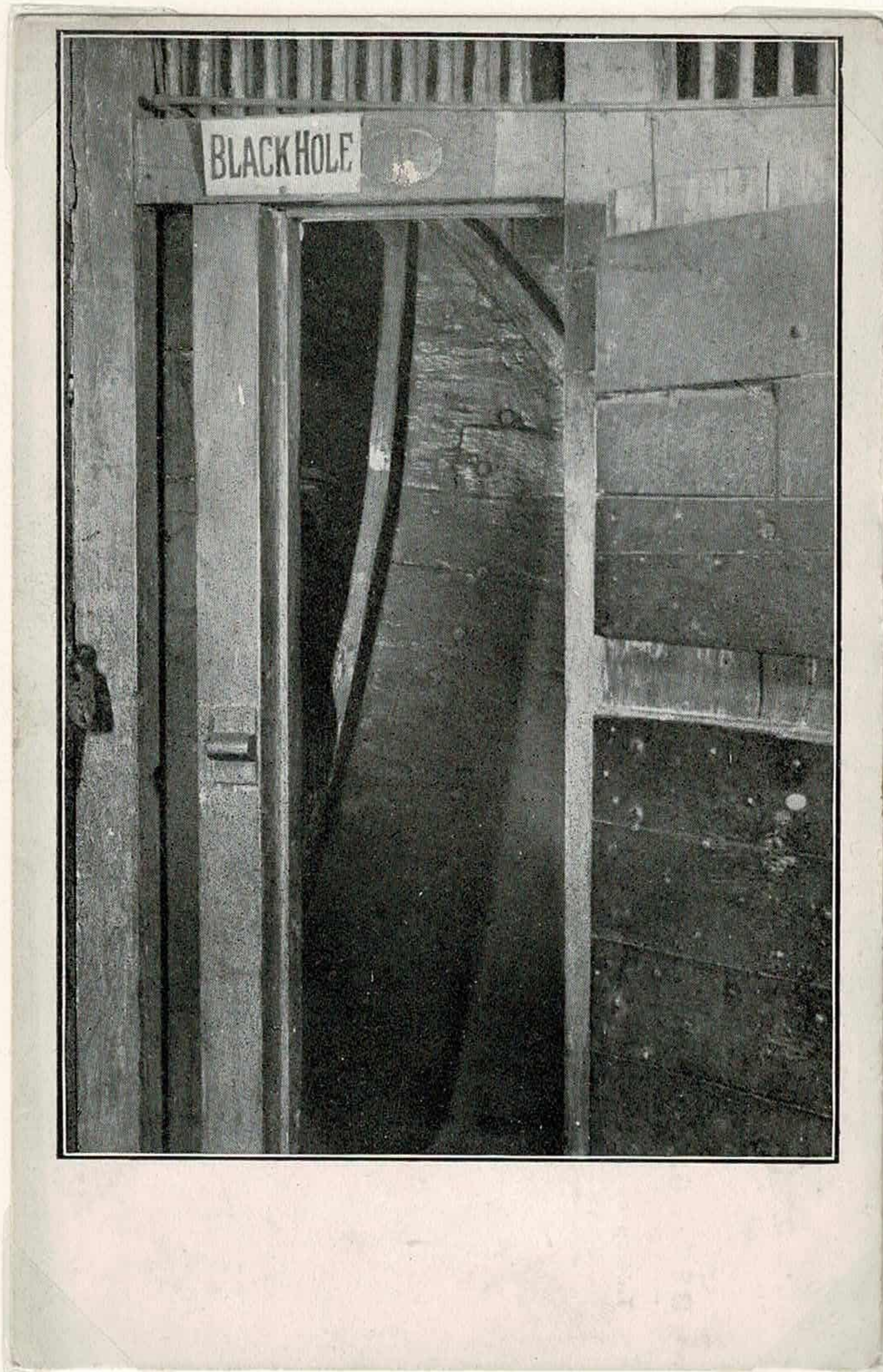
BELOW

In 1894 numerous references can be found in the Adelaide papers of that year to the ship being on exhibition there. On March 25, 1895 she sailed from Semaphore under the command of Captain Allen and after a most eventful 166 day voyage reached Dungeness.

Photolithographic card divided back. One of the postcards that was sold on board..



Below Deck Exhibits

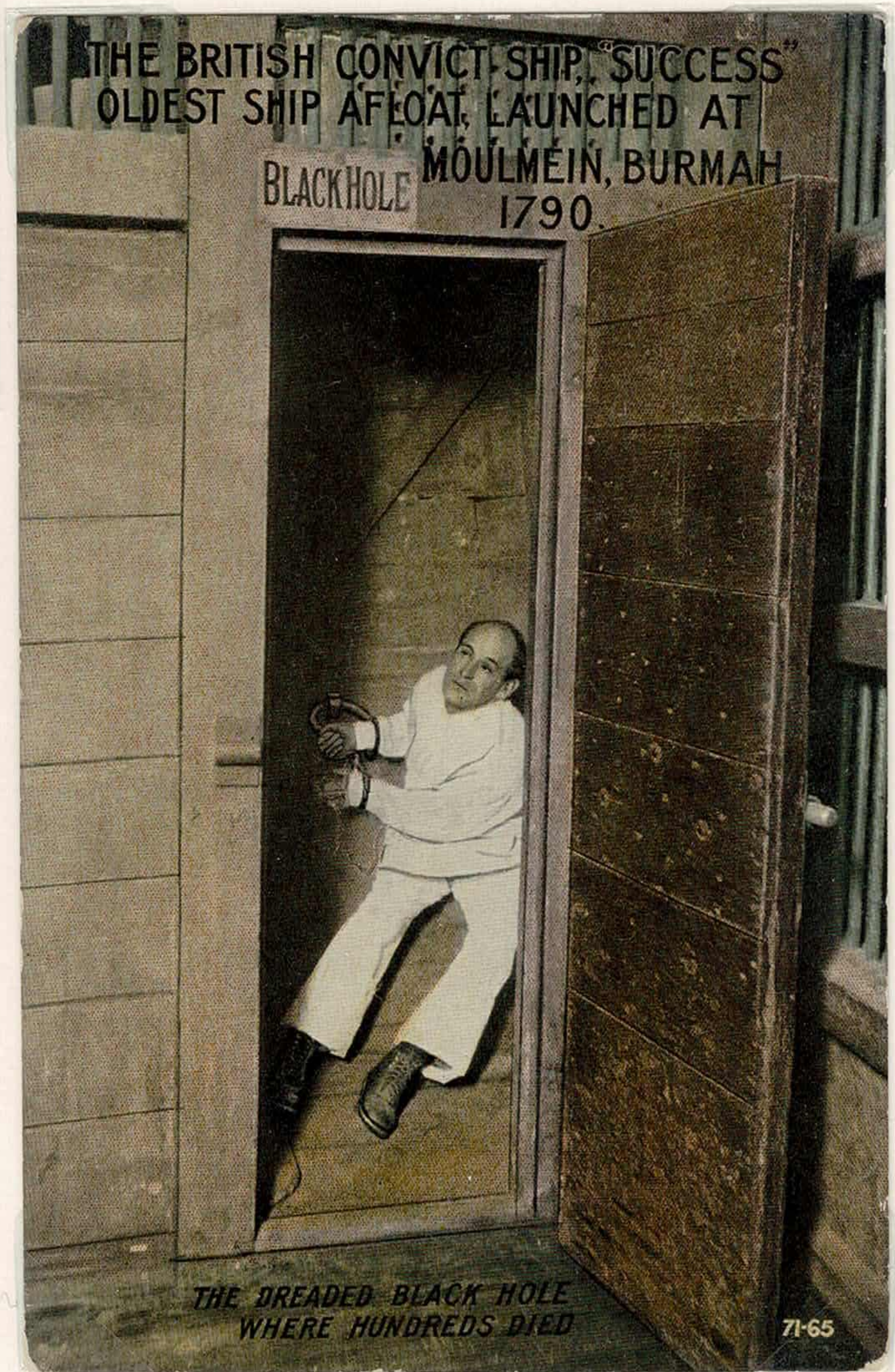


Without delay she was placed on exhibition in the Thames and then to other ports in the United Kingdom. The front page shows an original flyer from the English Tour. The reverse of the flyer makes reference to her sinking in Sydney Harbour.

Photolithographic postcard divided back showing a cell called "Black Hole". Another of the series of postcards sold on board "Success".

In 1912 she sailed the Atlantic to continue her career as "The only Genuine Convict Ship and Relic of the Days of Transportation". This trip was nerve-racking taking 3 months and 8 days. The Cunard Liner "Franconia" is said to have passed the "Success" five times!

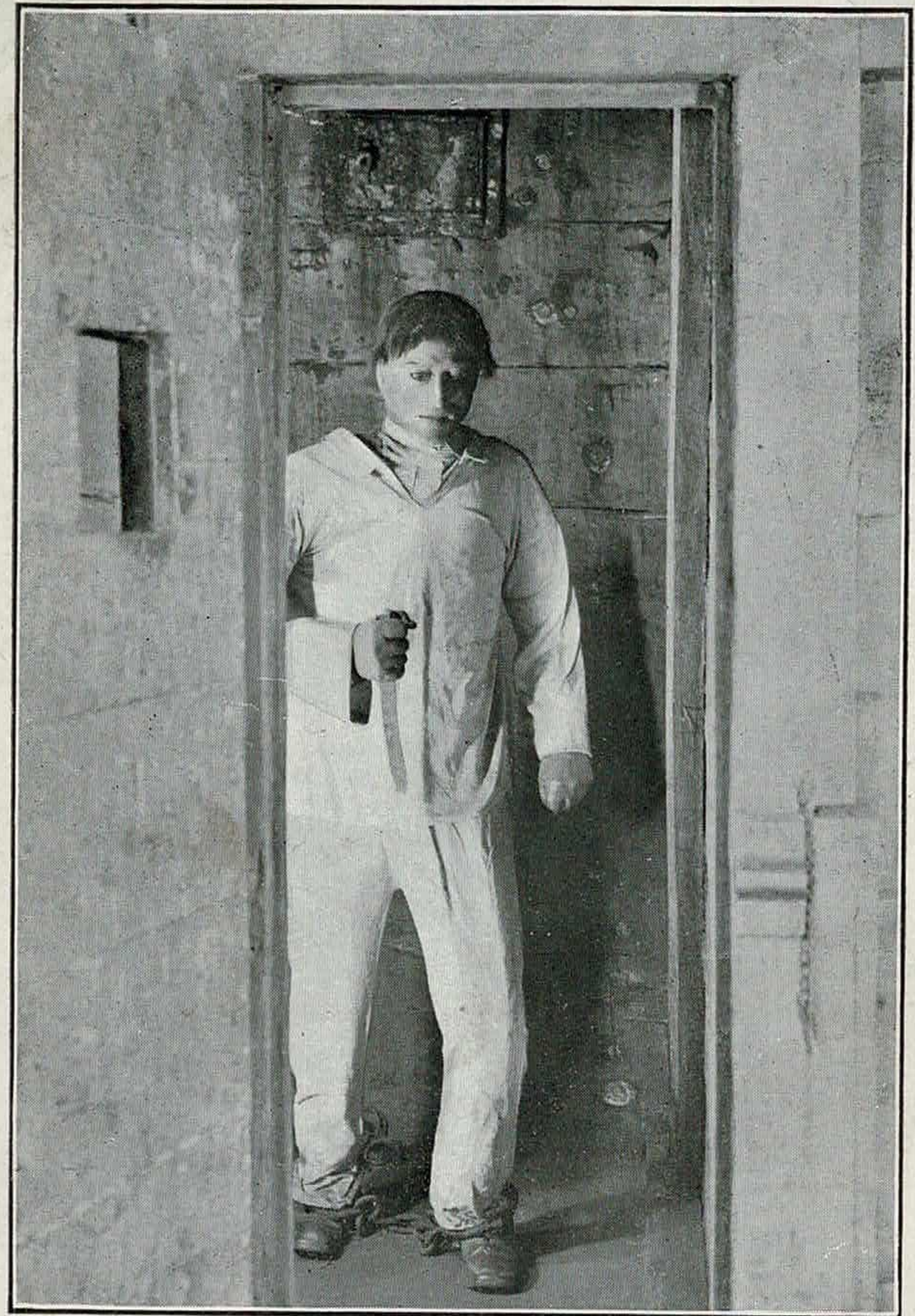
Coloured photolithographic divided back. Showing the dreaded "Black Hole" where hundreds died.



Below Deck Exhibits

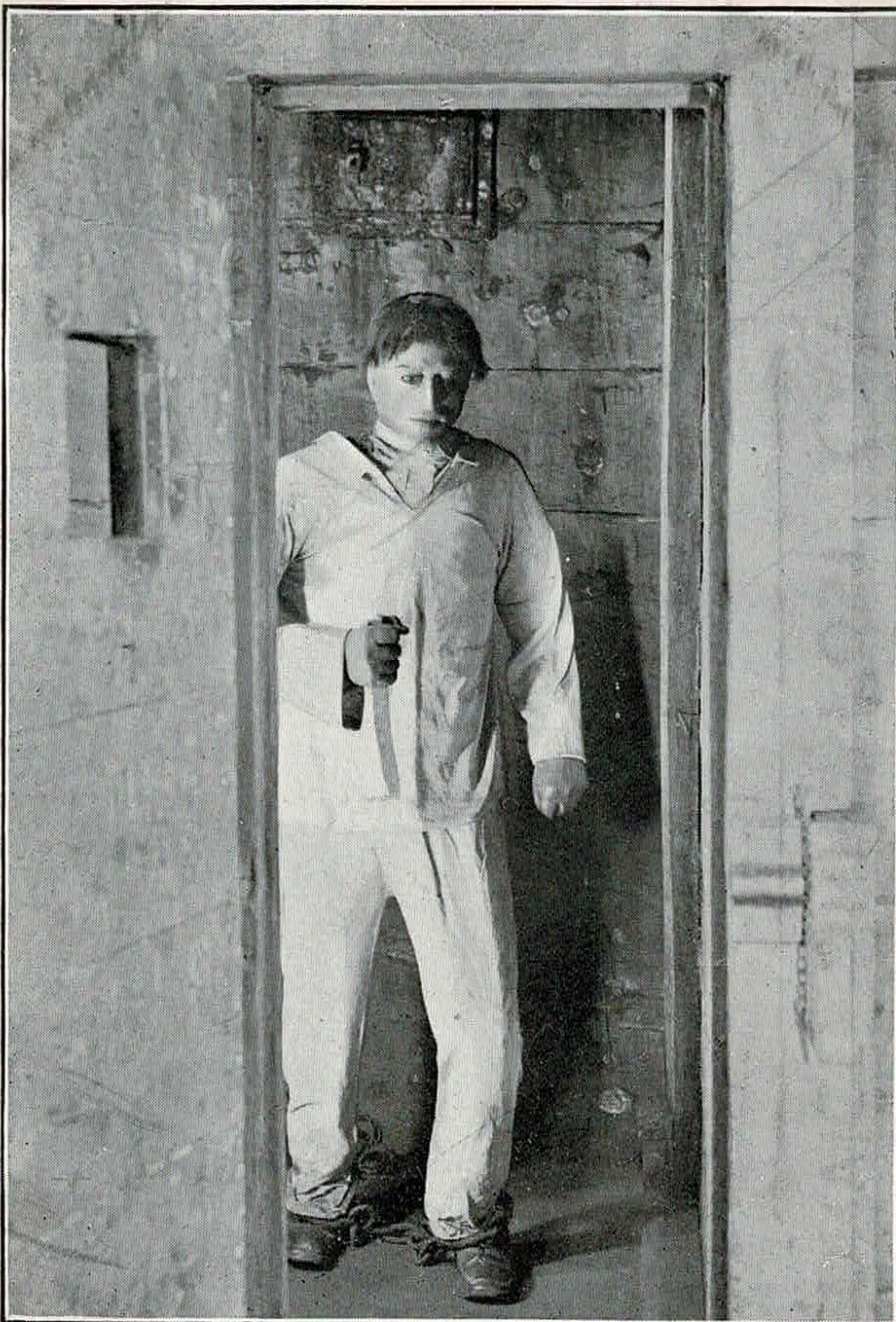
Her second sinking occurred at Carrollton on the Ohio River, Kentucky when floating ice tore a jagged hole in her side and she sank head first in fifty feet of water. There she had to remain until the following spring.

Photolithographic postcard divided back. Daniel Donovan was a highway robber sentenced to 16 years some of which he served on the "Success"



**DANIEL DONOVAN,
In Lower Deck Cell on Convict Ship.**

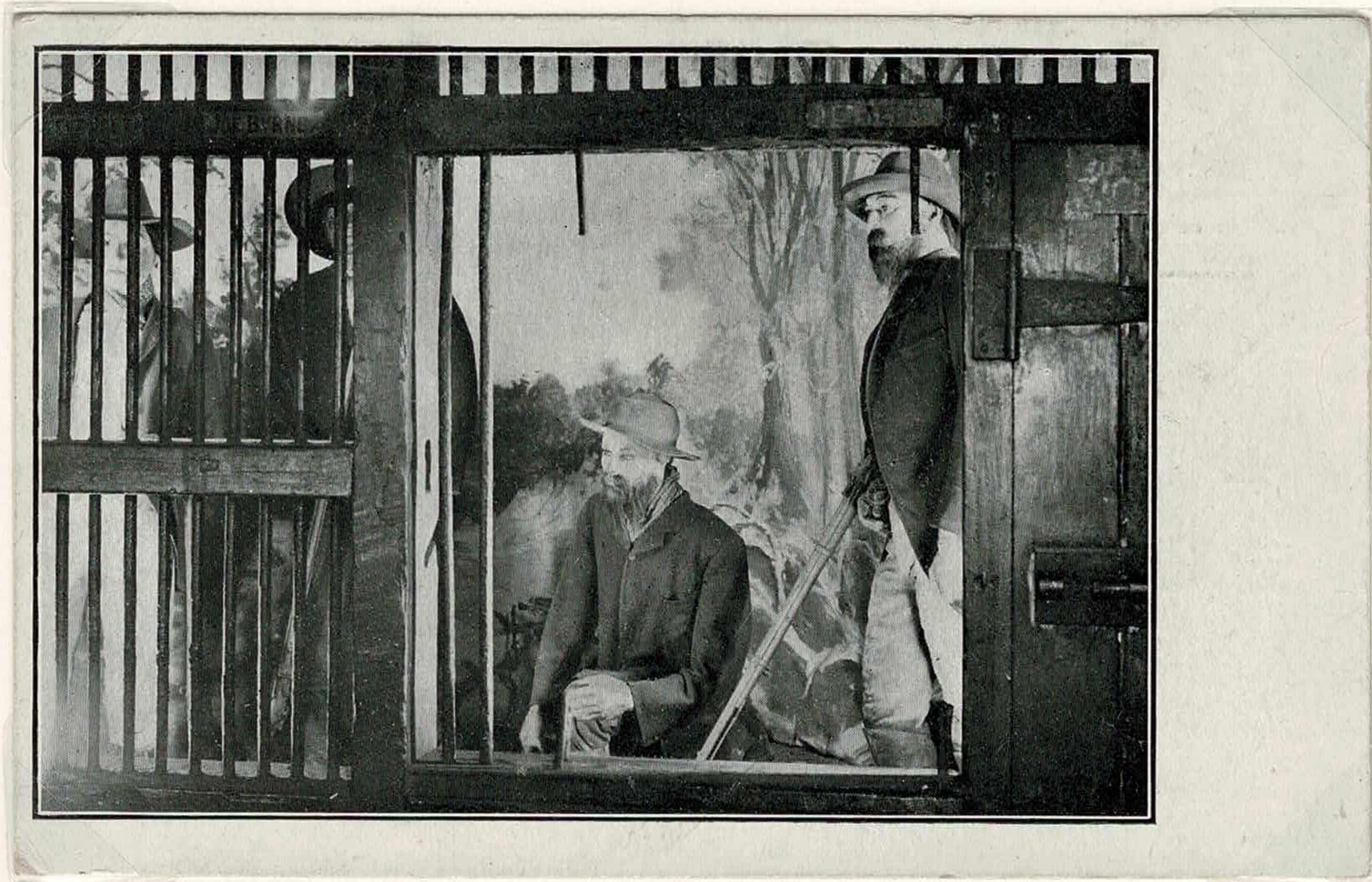
Served 16 years an innocent man.



The story of the world's most remarkable vessel concludes with one of the "legends". They are not all of American origin as many people wish to think. However, the "Halifax Chronicle" of October 1928 gives us a very good example of an incorrect account.

Photolithographic postcard divided back. Donovan became a free man but like many others his health had suffered and he died soon after release.

Below Deck Exhibits



It tells of the appalling mortality rate on the "Success" on her maiden voyage in 1812. Of 939 males sent out by the ships Success, Scarborough & Neptune, 251 died on board and 50 more died after landing, with another 450 sick. The story is false in every detail.

Photolithographic divided back showing the Kelly Gang as wax statues. Another on-board postcard.



The "Success" was not built until 1840 and was never a convict transport. It was "Surprise" that accompanied the other vessels arriving in Sydney in 1792. In truth, "Success" was visited by over 21,000,000 people on 3 continents which has to go down as a success.

Real photographic divided back postcard by Willams, Ware & Curnuck Ltd. showing below deck cells