SEIZE $150,000 DRUG HIDDEN IN ASH PAIL

Custom Officers Find Cocaine Concealed on Board Steamship From Italy.

FOREIGN CREW SUSPECTED

Members of Narcotic Ring Believed to Have Shipped as Seamen to Smuggle Supply.

Ten customs officers under Inspector A. O. Hokensen yesterday seized cocaine having an estimated retail value of $150,000 on board the Princess Matoika which arrived here yesterday from Naples, Italy, by way of Boston. In addition to the drugs the customs raiders uncovered valuable silks and jewelry, which evidently were to have been smuggled in.

Although the Princess Matoika flies the American flag the crew, because of the marine strike, was composed on this trip of many nationalities. Inspector Hokensen expressed the belief that members of a narcotic ring with headquarters in this city had shipped aboard the Princess Matoika as seamen with the idea of getting the contraband ashore.

Inspector Hokensen's men came across a water bucket under a pile of ashes near one of the vessel's funnels. In this carefully concealed cache the customs agents found what they said was the largest amount of drugs illegally brought into this port in several months. The cocaine was covered over with a layer of ashes to avert suspicion.

Inspector Hokensen was unable to determine the ownership of the articles seized. Members of the mixed crew who were closely questioned disavowed ownership. The bucket had been there throughout the voyage, they maintained, and no one had taken the trouble to see what it contained.

"I believe that the drugs we seized was part of a large supply which had been taken off the Princess Matoika when it stopped at Boston," Inspector Hokensen said. "We have been keeping a close watch to shut off the drug supply coming here from abroad, but today's incident shows the extent the drug rings will go to get the stuff ashore. The large profits in marketing drugs leads those engaged in this nefarious business to endure any hardships—such as working as ordinary seamen—to get drugs to this city."

Inspector Hokensen added that much of the drugs smuggled into this country came from Italy.

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