

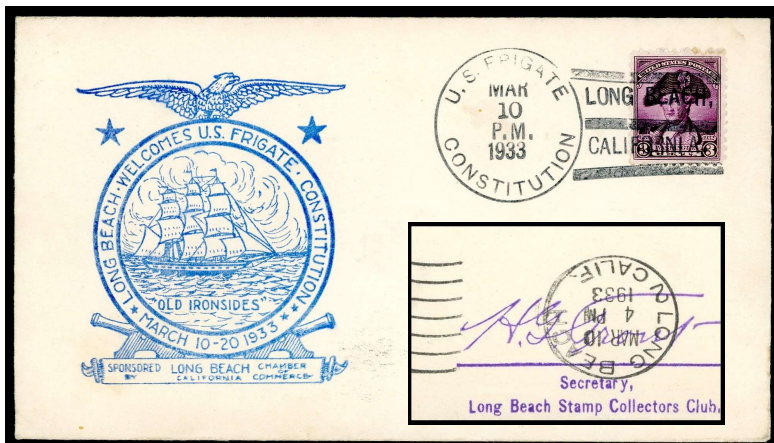
Old Ironsides Encounters the Long Beach Earthquake

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The Long Beach, CA, earthquake of March 10, 1933 (5:54 pm PST), had a Richter magnitude of 6.4, killed 120 people, and caused about \$1 billion damage in current dollars. The USS Constitution, “Old Ironsides,” had arrived at the port of Long Beach that day. Philatelic covers prepared onboard were caught up in the chaos of the earthquake.

Old Ironsides, the world's oldest ship still afloat, was first launched in 1797 to fight the Barbary pirates, but is most noted for actions during the War of 1812. She was retired from active service in 1881 and designated a museum ship in 1907. From July 1931 to May 1934, she visited 90 ports on both coasts..

Right: Sesquicentennial cover with Scott #951 (1947), scale = 60%. *Insets:* left - embossed envelope, Scott U549 (1965); right - War of 1812 bicentennial, Scott 4703 (2012); scale =100%.



Old Ironsides postmarked covers from the ports it visited.

Left: Ship cancellation/postmark, port of Long Beach, Mar 10 p.m. 1933; cachet image - Old Ironsides; cachet text - Long Beach welcomes U.S. Frigate Constitution March 10-20 1933. Stamp – George Washington. Scott 708 (1932). Scale = 60%.

Inset: transit marking on back of cover, applied by the separating post office in Long Beach. Scale =75%.



Postcard package of photos showing earthquake damage sent from Long Beach on March 27. Stamp – George Washington. Scott 721 (1932). Scale = 60%.

Inset: One of the postcards; “U.S. Post office carries on in the street.” Scale = 55%.



Clipping from *Weekly Philatelic Gossip*, 4/29/33: 2,500 postmarked covers were delivered from Old Ironsides to the Long Beach post office on March 10. The sorting room of the Long Beach post office collapsed during the quake; Two clerks who handled the backstamping died.