


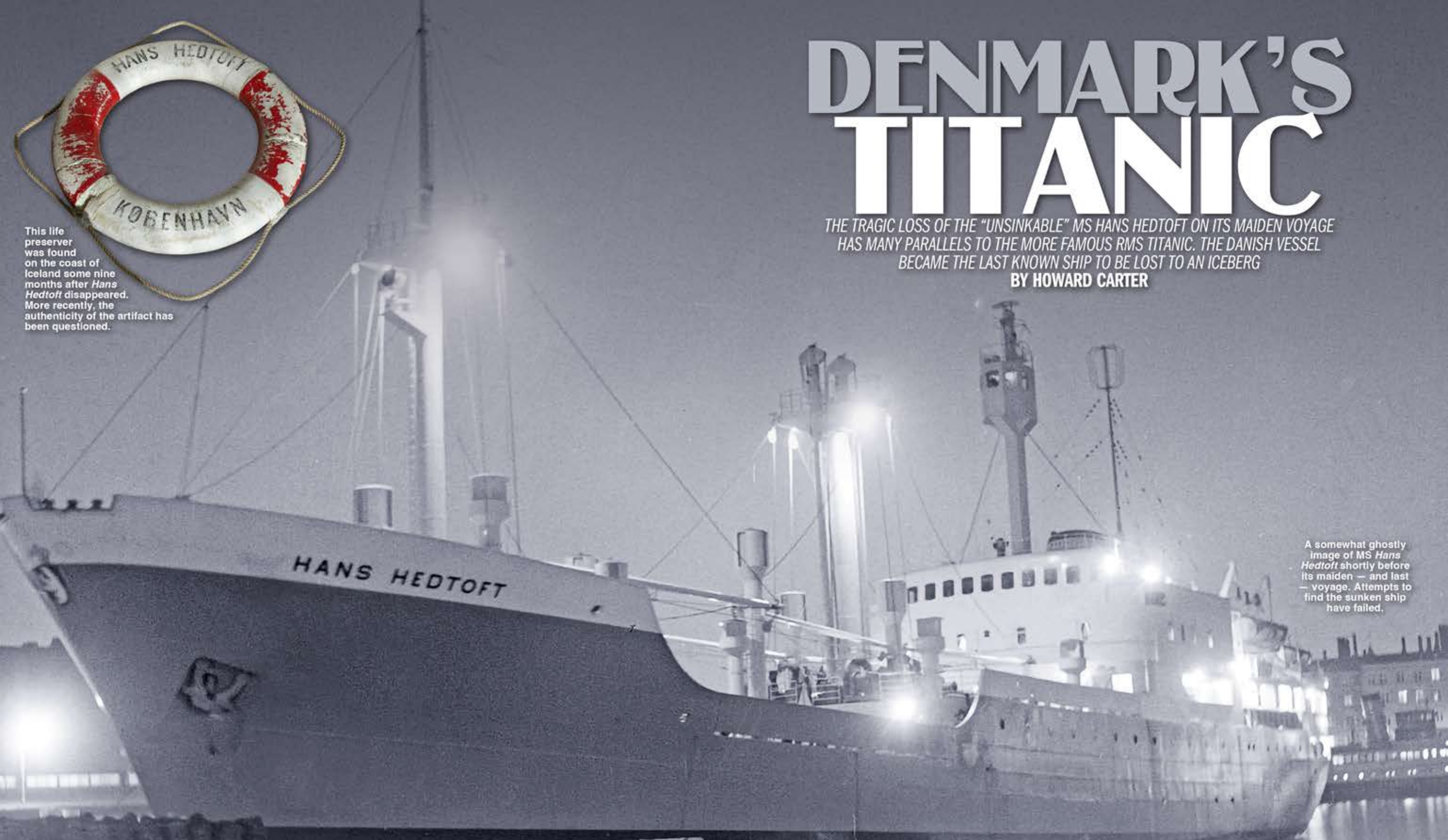
DENMARK'S TITANIC

THE TRAGIC LOSS OF THE "UNSINKABLE" MS HANS HEDTOFT ON ITS MAIDEN VOYAGE HAS MANY PARALLELS TO THE MORE FAMOUS RMS TITANIC. THE DANISH VESSEL BECAME THE LAST KNOWN SHIP TO BE LOST TO AN ICEBERG

BY HOWARD CARTER



This life preserver was found on the coast of Iceland some nine months after *Hans Hedtoft* disappeared. More recently, the authenticity of the artifact has been questioned.



A somewhat ghostly image of MS *Hans Hedtoft* shortly before its maiden — and last — voyage. Attempts to find the sunken ship have failed.

Even though it was freezing cold with a strong wind blowing, a large crowd had assembled on the docks in Copenhagen Harbor to cheer the departure of MS *Hans Hedtoft* on its maiden voyage. The date was 7 January 1959 and the Danish citizens had a right to be proud as they viewed

the gleaming vessel with its length of 271 feet 2 inches, beam of 46 feet 6 inches, and a depth of 21 feet 1 inch, *Hans Hedtoft* weighed in at 2875 gross tons and while not the most attractive of sea-going vessels, she was utilitarian and tough.

She had been built in Denmark by

Frederikshavn Vaerft in the northern part of the country. Owned by the Royal Greenland Trading Company, the ship was launched on 13 August 1958 and completed on 17 December of that year. Designed to provide year-round service between Denmark and Greenland, she was built for that

hostile environment. Her riveted hull had a double bottom with seven watertight compartments and an armored bow and stern. Built to carry 60 passengers and 40 crew, she was an ideal vessel with which to visit Greenland's many small ports and open those areas to vitally needed year-

round economic trade.

As the vessel neared completion, an unusual order came in from the Danish Ministry of Defense. Even though it was a civilian ship, the Ministry of Defense mandated that the vessel be armed! Accordingly, three 40mm anti-aircraft guns were shipped to the builder but

placing these weapons were certainly not part of the original plans and the builder had to go over the blueprints and then reinforce the areas on which the weapons would be mounted.

The weapons had been provided by the MoD at no charge and while they were being mounted an unusual