

The Voyage to the Great Salt Lake City

At the beginning of the journal are some very faint writings which as far as can be ascertained states follows:

" •• ie to the Bill and an things needed to get tonight. Tell message to go to the Lime Street Station if not then follow us to Waping Station if not then to the bursars that work for the ship as quick as possible."

However, the pleasure of "Grandfather" Benjamin's journal Commences as he and his family leave their cottage for the last time on January 19th 1853, and arrive at the mouth of the might Mississippi on March 9th 1853. Of course, as we know, not all of his family went with him. His daughter, Martha Clark, who was unmarried at that time, remained in Cambridge, where in 1865 she was married to her husband, William Howard. Also left behind was Benjamin's son, Charles Jonas Clark, who only a week before, on January 12th 1853 had married Elizabeth Tolliday. They in turn were to emigrate, with their infant daughter, leaving Southampton, on October 17th 1854, on the vessel "British Empire" to arrive in Geelong, Victoria, Australia on January 15th 1855.

We can only speculate, from our own experiences, what high emotions and tearful farewells there must have been at the times of these family partings. Did Benjamin's highest hopes include the desire that the son and daughter, he had left behind, would eventually follow him and the rest of the family to the Great Salt Lake City? Perhaps they did not wish to convert to the "new faith" or felt that the call of the place that they called home, well perhaps in Martha's case, was far more overwhelming. Was there correspondence between each of the far flung families, or is it only now being brought into being by those of us who have descended from these intrepid early pioneers?

Regretfully, and with some degree of sadness it is doubtful that we shall ever know the answer to these questions unless, of course, by some miracle of divine intervention other memoirs of this illustrious kith and kin surface into the light of ancestral day.

But be all of this as it may. now begins the story of Benjamin's eventful journey towards the expectations of a new life in the *Great Salt Lake City*.

"Left the Cottage on Victoria Road, Chesterton near Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, England, January 19th 1853 at 6 o'clock in the morning. Got to the eastern County Railway Station by 7 o'clock. Got the luggage in a carriage. Started at 8 o'clock from the station, the morning wet and dull but cleared off.

Turned off at Ely toward Peterborouah. Got fresh tickets to Liverpool; on our way to Liverpool passing many stations, stopped at some of the stations to wait for other Train to come up. Got to Liver pool about 11 o'clock at night. Met Brother Long who was the Elder that presided over the Cambridgeshire conference; he conducted us to our different places to lodge; we had tea and coffee, after a short time being tired went to bed slept till morning.

Thursday 20 - had Breakfast, went about the town see the docks, helped Brother Long mark out the berths; night come on slept at the same place as the night before.

Friday 21- had breakfast went on board the ship Golconda came back hired a cart to take the luggage; took the said on board went back to fetch the family on board and slept on board that night. Some on boxes and some on other things just as they could. So the night passed away morning *come* on.

Saturday 22 - talk about leaving the Docks; had biscuit, Oatmeal & Rice Sugar & Tea served out; went into the town and bought some things necessary for the voyage and food and returned.

The day was spent in moving our luggage - hanging up our tin pots kettle boilers and other utensils; it began to make a pretty appearance; a little before an empty ship but soon showed more the appearance of a tin shop or a brokers shop for though the ceiling were hung."

I was very lucky to be able to obtain an imaged copy of Benjamin Thomas Clark's journal in which he recorded his observations and the occurrences which befell himself and his family from the time that they left city of Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, England on January 19th, 1853 until his last entry, which he records as being on, March 9th 1853.

Benjamin and his family travelled over country, by train, to the port of Liverpool where they became pan of a company 321 Saints, including a number of returning missionaries, to voyage to America on the British ship "Golconda". The name, it is believed, is derived from a ruined city of south-central India west of Hyderabad; Golconda was once known for the diamonds found nearby and cut in that city. In Benjamin's journal, however, the seamen considered this to be the name of a mine in Peru. Used as a noun the word "golconda" can be used to mean "a source of great wealth."

This vessel, was a ship of 1124 tons, its dimensions were 171 feet by 33 feet by 22 feet, and at the time of the migration in 1853. it was a relatively new vessel having been built in 1852 at St John, New Brunswick, Canada, and later registered in Liverpool.

The "Golconda"; commanded by Captain George Kerr, transported a total of 785 Mormons in two companies across the Atlantic; the second of these voyages began on February 4th. 1854, but the voyage, which was joined by Benjamin and his family, began on January 23rd, 1853 and was presided over by Elder Jacob Gates, to whom Benjamin makes various reference in his writings. Numerous incidents transpired during this sea crossing, many of which were recorded by Benjamin himself. A brief storm, or squall, wrecked the vessel's topmasts, two emigrants died, two couples were married, four babies were born and a Swedish sailor was baptized.

According to the newspaper "Millennia! Star", the "conduct of Captain Kerr gave great satisfaction to all the company, and before parting a vote of thanks, with three cheers, was tendered him."

After a period of six weeks on the ocean the Golconda" arrived at the mouth if the Mississippi River. However, here they had to down anchor and wait for a further twelve long days before a steam tug could be dispatched to tow the "Golconda", with its ensemble of crew and Saints, to New Orleans. The ship finally anchored at the port of New Orleans on 26 March, having endured a passage of sixty-two days

Hence we can now turn to Benjamin's written record of his life and events board the "Golconda" as he, personally, saw them as they were. If must be remembered that Benjamin and his family came from an inland city, Cambridge. Although surrounded by rivers, that meandered their way towards the "Wash" and eventually into the North Sea some 50 odd miles away, it is doubtful that the Clark's family

experience of the sea would not have extended beyond, perhaps, the occasional excursion to the North Norfolk coast. Even this tends to fade into shade of the unlikely, inasmuch that such a journey would have been extremely expensive for such a large family. A fifty mile journey by train (railroad), itself very much in its infancy at that time, and thence to be followed by stagecoach (expensive, and could only carry between 6 and 8 people) or similar carrier for a further almost 20 miles over dusty ill maintained roads to the nearest "watering hole", resort, of Hunstanton, in the county Norfolk. All of which would have afforded an all too brief time to be spent at the seashore, only for the same journey to be taken all over again. No, I think we could take it as read that it is most unlikely that the Clark family had much experience of the sea or the wider oceans. The river of their native Cambridge would have been their nearest experience to such an expanse of water - the "punt's", flat bottomed river craft, of Cambridge are well renowned and it is most feasible that Benjamin, at least, would have enjoyed brief sojourn "messing about in boats".

I have tried to keep the text as close as possible to the way that Benjamin has expressed himself, but certain words have been changed such as "there" for "their" (or the other way round) and "gorn" (a good old Cambridgeshire expression for "gone." I hope you will enjoy the read, and indeed, it is a fuller account than is to be found in the DUP extraction.