

GENERAL INFORMATION CONCERNING THE EMIGRANT VOYAGE TO ZION

There was a confusion of tongues aboard the John J. Boyd as it sailed from London on December 12, 1855. Fredrick Jensen was a painter; Soren Nielsen, a shoemaker; Soren Jensen, a fisherman; 56 year old Johan Stenstrom, a tailor; 53 year old Christian Laursen, a blacksmith; 54 year old Ole Nilsson Ahlstrom, a carpenter; Jon Peter Ahlstrom, a 20 year old carpenter; John Alien, a 29 year old miner, Michael Boise Peitro Lagaird and Peitro Stelle were farmers; Giovannit Roshen, 48, a carpenter; and Petro Chatelian, a 26 year old miller. The names on the passenger list were indicative of the reason for the babble of languages that assailed the ears of the captain as the square-rigger moved away from a Liverpool pier.

There were 509 Mormon converts from various parts of Europe. There were 437 Scandinavians, Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, Icelanders-- who had gathered in Copenhagen before coming to Liverpool under the direction of Elder Knud Petersen, a homeward-bound missionary. Also aboard were 30 Italians who looked to Elder Charles B. Savage, a recently released missionary from the Swiss-Italian Mission, for guidance. Britain was represented among the crowd by 42 Englishmen, Irishmen, and Scotchmen.

A fair wind carried the ship smoothly for the first three days. The brethren established rules for governing the heterogeneous crowd, which ordinarily would have been expected to relieve boredoms with drinking and fighting while confined aboard the ship, however, these were not ordinary emigrants. They did not drink. They were bound together in a spirit of brotherhood that submerged the differences of customary language. Every morning at the call of a trumpet, which no one could misunderstand, they prayed together. Separate meetings were held for the various language groups, but all heard and believed in the same doctrine.

After three days a storm began and it continued without let up until the ship anchored off Sandy Hoo, New York, two months later. Freezing wind and snow stung the faces and hands of the sailors as they battled to keep the ship intact and underway. Sleepless and nerve wracked, the Captain ordered the devout passengers to stop their singing. The mate grumbled that any ship with preachers aboard was sure a bad passage.

About half way across the Atlantic Ocean, the Boyd sighted the clipper ship Louis Napoleon, floundering through the storm, her masts and rigging torn away. The crew was taken aboard the Boyd, providing welcome help for the exhausted sailors. Although the passengers stopped singing, they continued to pray and the ship reached New York harbor without losing a sail.

The Emigrants traveled by train to Chicago where they divided into smaller groups. Some went on to Florence, Nebraska; and joined the Utah bound wagon trains in the spring. Christen Christensen came from Utah to preside over those who were staying behind. He helped them find housing and work as servants. Branches were organized and everything possible was done to care for the temporal and spiritual needs of the emigrants until they were ready to move west.