

Diary of an Emigrant

By George Davey Transcribed by John M. Schoenknecht

11 April 1850 - George said goodbye to his family and friends, journeyed to Padstow to sail for the USA via Canada, on the Barque Belle. The voyage from Cornwall to North America took six to eight weeks and was usually undertaken between March and October when weather was fairly stable. His mother must have been devastated.

The Belle was a small barque, built in 1840, 283 net tons. The Captain was J. Bisson in 1850. It sailed with passengers from Padstow, Cornwall, England to Quebec, Canada and returned again with timber. To cross the Atlantic Ocean in a wooden-hulled sailing ship from the Old World to the eastern coast of the North American continent was a perilous adventure undertaken by our ancestors from the 1600s to the 1800s. The intrepid masters and crews of these ships risked all over and over again to deliver their cargoes to the distant shores. Immigrants were considered cargo, but not as lucrative as the timber that the barque Belle regularly carried from Quebec, Canada on the voyage back to Padstow, Cornwall in the 1850s.

Also on the trip were friends and acquaintances from his religious group:

BIDDICK: Mary, Hannah, Mary, Matthew, Peterzell and Richard

BRENTON: Grace & Jane

BROKENSHERE: Elizabeth & Henry

CHAPMAN: William

DAVEY: George

TREBILCOCK: Mary & William

GILBERT: William

HOWE/ROWE: Elizabeth

IVEY: Catherine, Elizabeth, Mary & Stephen

JEWELL: James

KELLOW/PELLOW: Jane

LANGDON: John & Mary

ROWE: Anne & Thomas

RUNDELL: Richard

TREWYN: Ann & William

WILLIAMS: Charles, John & Mary

Others aboard the Belle: [From research into the family histories, the following people have been determined to be on board the Belle. They did not attend the Temperance Meetings.]

BIDDICK: Hannah & Emma, d/o Matthew jr. and Petra Nellie

WILLIAMS: Richard Biddock, s/o John and Mary Biddick Williams, born 15 January 1850 Cornwall. Died on 6 November 1890 Platteville, Wisconsin.

WILLIAMS: Kezia, d/o John and Mary Biddick Williams.

TREWYN: Thomas, William & Mary Ann, c/o Ann and William Trewyn.

BISSON: Captain (mentioned in Richard Rundell's diary)

After arriving in Quebec, the small party of Rundells, Biddicks and Williams made their way to Platteville Wisconsin.

Elizabeth Brokenshire (widow) was listed in the US 1860 census in the township of Lenden, Iowa County, Wisconsin. William H Brokenshire was married and living in Lackawanna County Pennsylvania on the 1870 US census.

There was a William Gilbert listed in the 1850 US Census of Sullivan Township Jefferson County. His obituary stated that he immigrated to the area in 1850. Also, the Gilbert's and Trewyn have intermarried.

The Ivey family may have made their home in Lafayette County Wisconsin (1860 US census)
John and Mary Langdon were found in the 1860 US census in Crawford County Wisconsin.

William and Ann Trewyn died rather soon after arriving in the Palmyra area. They were buried in the Zion Cemetery. Their three young adult children accompanied them on the baroque Belle crossing.

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(One of the items received by Libbie Nolan and handed over to me when I became editor of Landmark, was a handwritten diary. The opening page stated: This is probably the diary of Geo Davey who later married Ann Morris Smith in America (Jabez' mother) very interesting account of a long sail to America. Added to the text was a note ..settled near Dousman in Bethesda Church. The punctuation in the diary has been edited to ease reading. The spelling in the diary has been transcribed almost exactly as written. I have added notes to help interpret some of the words, but the document is very readable as is.

Voyage from Padstow Cornwall to Quebec April 11th to May 29th 1850

April 11th, 1850- Left Padstow harbor about half past 3 o'clock in the afternoon on board the barque Belle, wind favorable, felt myself growing sick, retired to bed, at even very Sick, passed the night amidst a mixture of sensations. Some of the passengers very sick, others light and trembling.

12th- Got on deck in morning, could see no land. Winds favorable, myself and many passengers very sick.

13th- Wind favorable, a good breeze, could not write- myself and many passengers very sick- some part of the day very squally, carried app. Jibboom and flying jib boom (To shift a fore-and-aft sail from one side of a vessel to the other while sailing before the wind so as to sail on the opposite tack, --ed) which was soon again repaired, Sailing from 7 to 8 knots (knots) per hour—

14th- Lords Day: a gloomy day indeed.

15th- Very sick-do not feel very comfortable.

16th- Morning past, a very stormy night, very little sleep. Sea running very high, myself almost helpless, but greatly revived by afternoon. Many thanks due to my fellow passengers in the evening able to write!

17th- A Beautiful Day Sea very calm:

The God that rules on high

That all the earth surveys

That rides upon the stormy sky

And calms the roaring seas

Early in the afternoon passed and hailed the Jenny Jones of Swansea. Captain requested to be reported all well.

18th- A Moderate breeze, myself rather weak and sickly.

19th- A good breeze, rather squally, myself very sick, scarcely out of bed for the day.

20th- Passed a very rough night, sea running very high, myself somewhat better. A cold air.

21st- Lord's day, a good sailing breeze, myself bettering. Brother W.Trebilcock preached in afternoon.

22nd- A Fine day, "good breeze".

23rd- A very fine day, wind not very favorable, myself getting better, attended a prayer meeting in the evening for the first time.

24th- Wind favourable, a fine day, passengers generally getting better.

25th- Fine weather, air rather cold. Early in morning, we saw just ahead apparently a ship much shattered by a storm, dismasted and lost a great part of her rigging. There also appeared another ship full rigged just along side. As we sailed up between them, we found the well rigged one to be the Canton of Glasgow, (A barque is sailing ship with from three to five masts, all of them square-rigged except the after mast, which is fore-and-aft rigged---ed) who came by the fore mentioned some hours before and boarded her. Our captain soon hove too, launched the jolly boat (a jolly boat was a small utilitarian skiff used to run errands, mostly from a docked ship to shore---ed) and boarded her also. Found her to be a barque, the Seraphim of Newry, which had been deserted by crew and passengers. No human was found on board, but a dead female about middle age. Found on board a great variety of utensils, passengers, goods. Very shortly barque Emma of Beaurimas sailed up and also boarded her. Soon, another large barque, John Bell of New Ross, with many Emigrants on board came up and also boarded her. When every captain appeared diligent to procure for himself---Our jolly boat soon returned with a part of the wreck and left us again, taking with them an extra man or two, and after some considerable time returned again, having brought on board a variety of ropes, sails, clothes, boxes, books a small cannon and other articles. About six in the evening we again hove too and made our onward course.

26th- Weather very cold. Was much amused this morning with the sight of two hump back whales that followed our ship for a great while. The captain & passengers fired at them several times but did not appear either to hurt or frighten (sic) them.

27th- Morning wet, wind fair.

28th- Lord's Day – fine sailing, wind rather colder than usual. Saw a large barque pass in the forenoon under English colours, Sister Langdon preached to us in afternoon, - after which being on deck saw several large fish in small distance from the Ship. Attended prayer meeting in evening a precious season.

29th- A very fine day, weather very calm, evening very mild. Sea very still, myself much better. A prayer meeting not soon to be forgotten.

30th- A good breeze-fair sailing-not a ship to be seen for the day. A calm evening. Almost every passenger on deck amusing themselves in various recreations.

May 1st- A good breeze, no ship in sight, our Vessel making North, nothing to amuse us but a few birds flying around us.

2nd- Fine weather, sailing from 4 to 5 knots per hour, saw two or three small whales in the afternoon, very calm in the evening. Sea as still as a pond.

May 3rd- Suffered a little last night from pain in teeth, jaws, and my old complaint, did not sleep until towards morning. Felt my mind drawn out on good things, believe that the Lord has something for me to do, even on board this ship. Spent a considerable part of the noon in writing. Teetotal Voyage. In evening had a good prayer meeting.

May 4th- Aroused this morning between the hours of one and two with the crashing of ice against the sides of the ship. Everyone aboard appeared concerned, some much alarmed. The captain had ordered every sailor on duty where they appeared very anxiously engaged in furling sails & (etc). The thrilling voice of the captain and the trampling of sailors on the deck added to the shrieks of the females made it indeed a very solemn time. But Bless

the Lord for his supporting grace in time of need. We shifted on our clothes, lit up the ship, and hastened on deck as soon as possible and found ourselves to be just entered a very extensive field of ice. Felt nothing like distrustful fear; felt assured that infinite goodness & wisdom was connected with it. We shortly returned below, exhorted those around us to prepare for the worst, and gave ourselves to the Lord in Prayer, felt refreshed and comforted. Soon hastened on deck again – the shades of night had passed away, welcome morning breaking forth, and as the day increased the more we could see of our situation. It was indeed the most splendid and yet affecting sight I ever saw. Such a mighty space of water, a great part of which entirely covered with flakes of ice, some of them immensely large, in a great variety of forms, such as ruins of cities or houses as we sometimes see in pictures. Bridges with one or more arches, castles, steeples, carved ornaments &(etc). Some of them much resembled the rocks on Roughtor hurled on the other in great romantic form. Early in the forenoon a small seal appeared near the ship at which the captain fired and killed and was soon hauled on board. As soon as possible, our ship was hauled about to make the best of our way back, but could not clear. The former part of the day the passengers appeared generally cheerful, being encouraged by captain & sailors. Early in the afternoon thought it probable we should escape the ice in less than one hour, but soon found this impossible, which rather daunted our spirits, although we could see a place of safety and very near it, and yet the great bulk of Ice prevented our escape. On looking about, it appeared as if we could walk for miles on Ice or jump from one flake to another, it was not what is termed the Ice berg as I do not remember seeing one as high as the bulwarks of the Ship. The day rather misty, a little cold downfall. Towards evening, felt my mind composed, hope returning, could enter into the language & spirit of the poet:

“Our souls are in his might hand, and he shall keep them still”

Left the deck for prayer meeting a little before six o'clock, at which time our situation never appeared more difficult. Our little barque quite bound up with ice. Every attempt to get through appeared in vain. Sorrow and sadness depicted in every countenance. Commenced our prayer meeting. A most gracious influence rested on us, believers were comforted and enabled to rejoice in God. Every one was interested and concerned. Several appeared in great distress and cried to God for mercy. One could rejoice. During our meeting we heard much trampling with the sailors on deck as if they were often changing the tackling, also heard many gratings of ice against the sides of the ship. Felt anxious to know what it was doing; did not go on deck until meeting was over, when to my great surprise, found we were altogether clear of the ice. I was informed that during our meeting, the sun had made his appearance through the cloud, the mist had been dispersed hither and thither, the wind had changed its point, the ice had separated on either hand, and within a few minutes our ship had cleared her way and escaped all danger, and in less than one hour there was not a single foot of ice to be seen. We were all constrained to say “What hath God wrought?” Heart felt gratitude now prevails throughout the ship, ascribing all the praise unto Him who has said in his word “call upon Me in this day of trouble and I will deliver thee”.

5th- Sunday; In morning had a prayer meeting about half past 7 o'clock, Forenoon made in sight of the Ice and sailed a long some distance from it, say the nearest from 2 to 3 miles, leaving it again about four in the afternoon. We had Service in afternoon about the usual time. Felt I had much liberty in speaking to poor sinners from St. Matthew 17th Chapter 26 verse. Prayer meeting again in the evening, many appeared much affected throughout the ship. Conversed with one who appeared in great distress, found he had been a backslider. We endeavored to encourage him and retired to rest.

6th- Not very well today, a bad head ache, a little soreness in throat, the weather very fine with cold air. Sea very smooth with a little swell, a beautiful gloss reflecting as it were a sea of glass, our ship becalmed, a little breeze very desirable.

Blow ye breezes fair and gently
Waft us our destiny
Best of Beings mat it please thee
We are looking unto thee.

In evening, after prayer meeting, conversed again with the backsliding penitent. He could then say from his heart, "come all ye that fear the Lord and I will tell you what he has done for my soul". Said he felt assured that he had an interest in the blood of Christ. His sins that were many were all forgiven, not a single doubt remained, could say "come life, come death, all is well!"

7th- Bodily health much better. Spirits more cheerful, was enabled to attend to cooking, Marketing for weather very fine, a little breeze. Ship making a point or two out of course, had a fine prayer meeting in evening, proposed a class meeting next evening.

8th- Fine weather with a little mist, - ship making but little head way, saw a great number of birds of different species. In evening held our first class meeting when 18 attended. Brother W. Treyn took the lead, had a good meeting.

9th- Very fine weather today with keen air, just as we get home sometimes in the month of February. Assisted in cooking, airing bedding etc. Saw 2 or 3 small whales in course of the day!

10th- Very cold with a little breeze for most (former? Most? -ed) part of the day, afternoon about four o'clock, made in sight of a very large field of Ice just ahead. Sailing under a strong breeze. Soon made a tack about and returned again in about two hours, then made very near. The Ice appeared more dissolved and less dangerous than that of the former week. Soon tacked about and made from it for the night.

11th- Very cold with strong breeze, Sea running more than it has for the last fortnight. Saw several black fish near the ship, early in afternoon made in sight of Ice, not very near it. Myself poor by sickness a gain, retired with other of my fellow passengers. We thought of liberty, how sweet, no meeting in evening in consequence of unsteadiness of the ship.

12th- Sunday. A strong breeze, not very favorable, myself helping to cook forenoon, made a good dinner on pork and oatmeal pudding and plum pudding. After. Afternoon passed several icebergs on either hand of us in huge forms. No preaching in afternoon in consequence of people sick, roughness of the sea & myself sick and poorly toward evening, Could not attend evening meeting!

13th Passed rather an uncomfortable night, our vessel tossed, a pretty Seas, very Unwell this morning can hardly get my breakfast, still a strong cold unfavorable breeze, wind rather more ahead, sea boisterous, myself worse than yesterday, many passengers very unwell. Passed a few parcels of Ice, afternoon wind abating, sea going down, still cold – another coat very desirable, have not been much on deck today, did not attend meeting this evening, went to bed a little before eight o'clock.

14th- A beautiful sunshine morning, myself feeling better. On deck just after breakfast, quite pleasant when compared to yesterday. Asked the captain if we were on the banks, he said we had been on them, was just now passing over the skirts of them. I felt thankful that we were on so far, Ship making about 3 miles per hour. Afternoon in sight of Newfoundland, toward evening made in sight of two vessels at a great distance the first we had seen since 29th April!

15th- A fine morning, very little wind. Ship making but little headway, myself and passengers generally getting better. In the course of the afternoon, ended bound to ascertain how many Christian Members on Board. Found them to be as follows. Mr. John Langdon, Mary Langdon, Henry Brokenshire, Elizabeth Brokenshire, George Davey, William Trewyn, Ann Trewyn, William Trebilcock, Mary Trebilcock, James Jewell, William Chapman, Matthew Biddick, Petrnell Biddick, John Williams, Mary Williams, Hannah Biddick, Richard Biddick, Ann Biddick, Mary Biddick, Charles Williams, Richard Rundell, Grace Brentor, Jane Kellow, Jane Brentor, Elizabeth Ivey, Stephen Ivey, Catherine Ivey, Mary Ivey, Elizabeth Howe, William Gilbert. In the evening held our second class meeting when upward of 20 were present. Bro. Geo Davey took the lead, the second mate of the ship joined with us, a good meeting.

16th- Fine weather, very mild, a little breeze toward evening, had a good prayer meeting. First mate commenced meeting.

17th- Morning rather misty. A fair wind. Sailing from 8 to 9 knots per hour. Afternoon wind blew stronger. Sea ran very high, myself feeling poorly, turned in bed to prevent sickness – night rather rough.

18th- Called up early this morning to see some Ice bergs. Got on deck, passed between two large ones, a great height and beautiful, one of them resembled a cot house with a chimney at one end, and a kind of stack near it, the other a solid junk some say sixty feet or upwards out of water! Also, saw a brig not far from us early in forenoon, went on deck again, found we were very near the cliffs of Newfoundland, as we drew nearer the better was our view. The land appeared to us to be very high and barren, could not see a house or cultivated spot, a few flakes of ice or snow scattered about, a cheering sight though uncultivated, some large junks of ice near the cliffs; wind & sea much abated, a thick mist towards evening, wind unfavourable for getting around the point!

19th- Whit Sunday, (beginning of Pentecost---ed) A very strong and unfavourable breeze, sailing about 8 notts per hour, a cold thick mist, passed very near an ice berg in the afternoon, prayer meeting about three o'clock. Preaching in evening when Mrs. Langdon preached from 138 Psalm, 7th verse.

20th- Whit Monday. Weather more pleasant today but still a thick mist. Captain says many ships have been lost here having loosened their beaconing. Several on board have been fishing today but caught nothing. Could not enjoy myself for the day, a bad head ache & other causes, felt revived in the prayer meeting.

21st- Had a good night's rest, feel better. The night clear this morning mist came in again about half past ten o'clock, sailing about 5 ½ notts per hour when we found some small pieces of Ice coming against us, some a few inches, others a foot or upwards though, soon increased in size and number. We soon discovered a vast field just ahead, in a few minutes our ship drove into it, this is indeed the most awful sight I have seen since I left home, the great fog and immense size of the junks of Ice surrounding us, but thank God he has again delivered us. Many were the pale faces and trembling limbs that again possessed our ship, but now joy and gladness fills every bosom, much praise due to our Captain & active sailors who was so far prepared to meet the difficulty that we were again free from danger. In about twenty minutes took a tack off and returned again in about 1 ½ hour, no passage, again tacked off. I believe we were now entering the gulf of a little way into it. Still very misty, felt the lord's presence the afternoon while remembering Hi goodness. We had a good prayer meeting. In evening retired to bed just before ten in peace & quietness, fell asleep, woke again about ½ past 12 o'clock when to my great surprise heard the sailors again on the deck apparently in some confusion. Soon hear the ship strike, hastened on deck as soon as possible with other passengers, and found ourselves once more entered a field of difficulty, again surrounded with slabs of Ice, immensely large and dangerous, but He who holds the winds in his fist and controls the raging of the waves kept it both calm and peaceful, our ship drifted very easy into it having but a little canvas and in less than half an hour was again delivered. After a little conversation on the subject, I again turned into bed had a comfortable nap but awoke on the

22nd- Morning with anxious thought, mind somewhat cast down when these gracious words were applied to my mind. What shall harm you if you are followers of that which is good? Soon felt encouraged. I got on deck again between 7 and 8 o'clock, all was well as a ship at some distance on the starboard side of the ship. Everyone on board expresses gladness, somewhat misty still. Now about ten o'clock our seamen are making preparations for anchorage. About 2 in afternoon mist cleared a little in sight of another field of Ice. As we drew near, discovered it a very narrow passage through. Our valiant captain, willing to do his best prepared his sails and gently put our little barque into it. At our first entrance rather excited our feelings, there being a little swell in the sea, having passed a few yards, she became very steady, the sea very still. This Ice did not appear anything dangerous as that of yesterday, we got through what we tern? (term?..ed) the field as immense thick Ice in about an hour, we had then to contend with a vast number of slabs or flakes, some of them to the extent of many years over. This we had to pass through, for I suppose from 8 to 12 miles upward, felt impressed on my mind the language of Moses to the children of Israel, Exodus, 11th Chap, 13 verse, "The Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever". Something amusing to see several seals some floating on the ice and some on the water. We

passed the whole of the Ice in about four hours, now about six o'clock feel hopeful this is the last Ice we shall meet with on our passage, in evening we held our third class meeting, a goodly number present, Brother Trebilcock took the lead, a good meeting!

23rd- Morning rather misty with fair wind, forenoon ship sailing from 7 to 8 knots, a little bird came on board, much like a little sparrow, it appeared very tame and confused. About noon the mist partially (sic) cleared away, I could see a long way ahead. Early in the afternoon, again on deck when the sun again shone on us being the first time since Saturday 18th. Wind died away toward evening; received two names more as members of the Christian Church, Thomas Rowe and Ann Rowe making altogether (sic) 32 twenty-five members seven new converts, several more appear concerned. Had a good prayer meeting in evening.

24th- Morning very fine with sunshine; several vessels in sight, land on each side, cheering sight. Passengers whitewashing and cleaning our vessel. Making no great headway today, in evening held a total meeting, Geo. Davey & Wm Trebilcock address the meeting, obtained 24 signatures. Meeting held in the Gulf of St. Lawrence between Cape Gaspy & Gaspy Point.

May 25th- A beautiful day just as we sometimes get at home in the month of May. Several vessels in sight sailing near the shore, very high land, apparently snow on the top of it, can see at one glance as if it were both December and May. Amused with the sight of several large whales. Early in afternoon a ship on starboard side to which the captain spoke, had some conversation, a large Brig on starboard side whose captain had long been ill. Chief mate and two sailors came on board to solicit a parcel of medicine of our captain. Very shortly came long side, we had a full view of the passenger & number of passengers 130 sailed from Limerick, Ireland. Towards evening a large barque came up to us. Captain spoke to them. A splendid sight, 3 ships abreast, full rigged. In evening went about the ship to ascertain how many teetotallers on board. Obtained 7 new ones which now makes the number 28. Old members 23, total of 51 including mate & 2 seamen. Mate said he had been in 4 quarters of the world and could do without intoxicating drink.

Here the diary ends. According to the Naturalization Papers of George Davey, the barque Belle docked at Quebec on May 29th, 1850.

Signed by 'George Davey'