

The Amazon

• **Ship:** 1771 tons: 216' x 42' x 27' • **Built:** 1854 by Jacob A. Westervelt, New York City, New York

One of the largest and fastest packet ships of her time, the “splendid” full-rigged *Amazon* loaded with 895 Mormons sailed from London on June 4, 1863. Prior to her departure, Charles Dickens visited the vessel and wrote a sketch “Bound for the Great Salt Lake” which was included in *The Uncommercial Traveller*. He gave this description of the Mormon passengers:

“Now, I have seen emigrant ships before this day in June, but these people are strikingly different from all other people in like circumstances whom I have ever seen.”

Captain Henry Hovey was master of the *Amazon*. Elders William Bramall, Edward Sloan, and Richard Palmer presided over the Saints, the latter two as counselors to President Bramall. The Mormons were organized into fifteen wards, each with a president. Apostle George Q. Cannon established the organization, which drew praise and admiration from government emigration officials.

Among the emigrants were William Fowler, author of the popular Mormon hymn, “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet;” Elijah Larkin, an English police detective who became an aide to Brigham Young; and Lavinia Triplett, one of Utah’s leading vocalists.

The entire membership of the brass band from Cardiff, Wales, emigrated together. One child died at sea. Another was born and named Amazon Seaborn Harris.

During the voyage the Saints held morning and evening prayers. At nine o’ clock each night “The hurricane deck was cleared of all the sisters, and the guards were stationed to see that no female went up after that hour in the evening, and that

no sailor went below. A good spirit prevailed on board, the music from the brass band, interspersed with songs and hymns succeeded each other daily to cheer the hearts of the Saints and enliven the voyage.”

After a 44-day crossing—longer than the *Amazon’s* average of 28 days—the packet arrived at the New York harbor on July 18th, just days after the Civil War Draft Riots were quelled. The *Amazon* was anchored alongside the *Cynosure*, which had also brought a company of Mormons from England. The passengers from both vessels were processed at Castle Garden.

The *Amazon* was probably the most famous packet of the 1860’s. She sailed for the Black X Line and had the reputation of being the “luckiest of western ocean packets.” This sharp-modeled, powerful sailing ship had a square stern, three decks, three masts, a round tuck, and a female figurehead. Captain Hovey was managing owner.

Unfortunately in 1864, the *Amazon’s* luck changed when she was reported burned at sea.

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