

Voyage of the Clipper Ship *Ringleader*

Excerpts from a Journal kept by nineteen-year-old Edward P. Sargent of Salem during a voyage from Boston to San Francisco, China, and London in 1855 and 1856.

EDITED BY QUENTIN L. COONS

PART II

SAN FRANCISCO TO CHINA

THURS. *Feb. 21st/56* Went across the bay to Contra Costa in the "Clinton" by the kindness of Mr. Warner, he being agent of the line. Gold was discovered there in the town of San Antonio about two weeks since and many flocked there from San Francisco but about twenty are now digging and these about a bit a day. Seeing a dray carrying a miner and his baggage, engaged a ride for two bits. He had pitched his tent in a gulch through which a small stream flows, made a sluice way in which to wash his dirt and his cradle was standing near by.

Friday Feb. 22d Mr. Quarles and Wm dined with us . . . went to Calvary Church (Dr Scott's) to hear a lecture upon China from the Rev. E. D. Lyle who with his wife three children and a chinese servant goes as passenger to Shanghae.

Sun. Feb. 24th/56 . . . went to the first Congregational Church (Rev. Mr Lacy's) . . . Nearly all the stores are open on Sunday except the Merchants, Brokers, Silversmiths. A very small part of the population attend church and the PM is devoted to riding, walking, &c. and in the evening the theatres are crowded. Mr. Brierly delivered a lecture to young men upon amusements. Capt. Matthews, Ben Howard, Mr & Mrs

Warner and Mr & Mrs Quarles were there.

Monday 25th . . . busy finding Mexican Dollars to carry with me to Shanghae, the only current coin. Dined at Flint Peabody & Co's. They board all connected with the firm in their store house. In the P.M. bade good by to friends and at 6 o'clk went on board ship probably for the last time in California.

Tues. 26th . . . awakened by the noise from the steam tug which had just come alongside. After an hour spent in cleaning the anchor we got under weight and glided with the current out to sea.

The motion of the ship was so great that the tug was sent ahead to tow by a single hawser, instead of being lashed alongside. While crossing the bar which is situated some three miles out side the heads . . . the Capt. (was) sea sick. . . The steamer was obliged to leave to prevent parting the hawser. Gradually I grew sick . . . the wind increased and at one lurch the mainsail was well wet and the spray wet the main topsail yard, dashing up from the leeward, a very remarkable thing. Sail was taken in immediately, a narrow escape from going over.

The barque Oregon which we spoke on the 26th of Dec. arrived in San Francisco last evening and also the Comet which we expected to have arrived before

us. The capt. of the Oregon said we could not have passed him quicker if he had both anchors out. The Comet is a very fine ship probably handsomer than the Ringleader.

Thurs. Feb. 28th The crew are putting on chafing gear &c. The studding sails are rigged and we make 9 to 10 knots.

Sun. March 2d . . . divine service was held on the lee side of the main deck. A table was brought out and was placed on trunks or benches. All on board attended except the second mate and the man at the wheel. A hymn from the Episcopal prayer book was lined out and sung, and then followed a prayer & another hymn. Mr. Lyle then made some ex temporaneous remarks founded on a verse in the 19th chapter of Luke—"the things that belong to thy peace". The crew were very attentive and serious & an hour was profitably spent.

Thurs. Mar. 6th We fare considerably better from having more passengers; for dinner we had mock turtle soup, tongue, veal pie,—and duff apple pie and raspberry jam for dessert.

The paint work has been washed and the decks holystoned.

Sunday 9th Awoke . . . to find Oahu . . . nearly 40 miles to the S, was very much disappointed. The wind during the forenoon was blowing from the S, so that we could have headed up no nearer.

At 2 o'clk all hands came aft and service was performed by Mr. Lyle; he commenced . . . on a former passage he noticed a man who on Sunday always took his bible and read a chapter, closed the book . . . till the next Sabbath. He asked the mate what it meant, the mate says that is what we call rub and go; the old score is rubbed off and he commenced again.

For dinner we had mock turtle soup, fresh pork, ham, cabbage, beets, cranberry sauce curry & duff, raspberry jam & lemonade.

Friday 21st Last night we crossed the meridian of 180° . . . Consequently we have no Thurs. of the week and the men are grumbling much at losing their duff, the Thursday pudding.

Wednesday Mar 26th The painting the outside of the ship has been nearly completed. To-day the whole deck has been rubbed over with a coating of tar & oil.

Little Freddy [Lyle] . . . 18 months. . . The Chinaman—A Foo (the beautiful) has almost the entire control of the baby . . . with the little thing on his shoulder, at all times. He is above average stature . . . talks a few words of English, but the general answer you receive from him is "no sava".

Wednesday April 2d . . . the Capt and myself went to the fore topsail yard and could just discern an island on the port bow. We concluded that it must be Almazan the island south of Grizan, between which two we intended to go. At noon, we found by observation that the land . . . was Grizan . . . current has been setting us to the N Eastward. Assumption Is to the north has been seen. . . We are now 35 days out; the Sword Fish made the passage from San Francisco to Shanghae in that time.

Tues. Apr. 8th The Capt says that he will allow the carpenter to work on a model of the ship which intend making, in consideration of my services.

Friday April 11 . . . the location of Ousima Is . . . was wrong on the chart and the Sailing directions of Horsburg & Maury give neither the latitude or longitude. The land first seen was Bungalow Is. & after an half hour Ousima showed

itself ahead. Between Ousima and a small island next south of it we sought for the passage twice passed through by Capt Rantlett of the "Surprise" & to which he gives the name of Surprise Straits. No account is given of any other vessel having passed through them, though they lie in the direct track of vessels from San Francisco to Shanghae. The passage is generally made between Loochow Is. & Formosa, to the South.

Before $\frac{1}{2}$ past three we were between them; . . . dangerous . . . passing through in the night. Saw, with the spyglass some palm trees on a ridge & several long sandy beaches . . . When directly opposite the island on the south a fire was kindled on the shore and something could be seen resembling thatched houses on a hill side near by.

Saturday April 12th 1856 The masts have been scraped, hatch combings, stud-ding sail booms & heavers scraped & varnished, anchors put in shoes &c.

Monday April 14th . . . a ship was seen . . . the *Gulnaire* of Glasgow from Melbourne to Shanghae. At one o'clock we had passed Barren Rock . . . & came rapidly to Saddle Islands, bit rock, Pillion, Stirrups &c. Gitzlaff Is. will next be made and we hope to anchor near it, or between it & the light ship, recently stationed there, to night. Off the islands we saw several rows of Bamboos which we took to be buoys for fishing nets. Came to anchor about 8 miles from Gitzlaff; 7 fishing junks & an American Schooner in sight at 8 o'clock.

Tues. April 15th/56 Got under weight at 6 o'clock . . . several boats . . . coming from the mouth of the river . . . one approached & coming up under our lee, a Chinaman sung out in a clear voice "back the main yard"; he had hardly got on board when another native boat

showing the American flag passed; had we seen it before we should have taken the American in preference to the Chinese pilot . . . till we came to anchor, which was at 3 o'clock a man was stationed in the weather main channels constantly heaving the hand lead & shouting out the fathoms as " $\frac{1}{4}$ lefs five", "five & $\frac{1}{4}$ " &. At 10 o'clock we passed a light ship painted red and having a basket-like wicker work at the head of each mast & we constantly passed fishing junks. Before noon the low fertile banks of northern China appeared in sight.

Proceeded rapidly up the river to the Shanghae branch & let go the anchor in four fathoms . . . two compradors, or agents for ships chandlers . . . told the Capt. . . that freights were . . . dull, only two Am. vessels in port & a half dozen Englishmen, so the capt . . . to go up the river immediately in the boat belonging to Richards & Co., Ship Chandlers. . . ebb tide prevented . . . reaching the city till 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ o'clock . . . chilly . . . reached the wharf at nearly nine o'clock, having landed Mr Lyle near the American Consul's and their Mission House. Dr. Fish is acting consul, a surgeon sent out by the Am Episcopal Board. . . The boatman showed us to Richards & Co's . . . parlour of the house . . . handsome chandelier, sofa side board &c & . . . a warm fire. . . Mr. Lutton a sail maker showed us to the "Commercial House", a hotel equal to the best of American but unpopular . . . since the landlord . . . Donaldson is a great scamp & charged the Capt & myself for one supper lodging & breakfast for both \$7⁰⁰—a great shame.

. . . surprised at the beauty of the houses. The English part of the city covers a square mile . . . regularly laid out, streets with English names, lighted . . . & clean . . . no pavements . . . soil

... dries hard & a little rain... one sinks in it over their ankles... no side-walks... natives walk in all parts of the streets... only noticed two carriages, though almost all... hongs have a stable... & a race course has been built.

Wednesday April 16th ... took a coolie to show me about the city within the walls... entered by the north gate... after walking for two hours returned to Crampton & Hanbury's... to see Capt. Matthews.

There is great sameness in... streets, ... succession of shops occupied by artisans of every description. The streets occupied by the tea & silk merchants exceed the others in neatness... some... very fine... all rather small... streets narrow so that not more than six persons can walk abreast; some have a narrow pavement in the middle. You can see blacksmiths... shoemakers making the... sandle... the soles of which are made of rags, stitched through & through... tailors... second-hand clothing... fans & fancy articles & little trinkets... tea silk... china & earthen ware... very beautiful furniture.

Saw three temples devoted to the worship of Budha... You come into an open court through a paved archway, guarded on each side by a brazen lion, and before you is a building with a large open front, made very fancifully and adorned with very many little nicknacks, ornaments of wood & paper, and much carved work; within an altar, almost concealed from one outside, is a large statue... before him were some worshippers—prostrating themselves;... candles burning... lanterns also... interior filled with many little articles....

The whole country bordering the lower Yang-tse is... low, which ren-

ders the city very unhealthy;... particularly so last summer... snow sometimes falls.

... went with the Capt... to Augustine Heard & Co & Messrs Rupell & Co, two of the principal American Merchants... no encouragement... of obtaining freight. Then went to Hanbury's and Mr Christie (junior partner) kindly showed me his immense establishment. In the rear of his dwelling house a long court leads to the kitchen, stable ware houses for tea &cc... A cupola on his house has a greater elevation than any other in the American portion... "Ring-leader" could be seen anchored 10 miles off... whole house is fitted up magnificently.

Saw also the sample room where some merchants from the interior were submitting a sample chest... to... the tea taster... Afterward 20 or 30 chests in every 100 are examined.

Labor is very cheap... mechanics... 10 cts a day;... eggs 25 cts for 4 doz—beef, 1.00 18 lbs—potatoes sweet 1.00 per 100 lbs. Articles brought from England & America bring a great price—brooms are 1.00; Ham 35, 40 cts. lb., Soap 14 cts. &ce.

Returned to Richards & Co. at 4 o'clk & took their boat to go to the ship—stopping at Mr. Lyle's... Episcopal Mission... pretty little chapel & is well located... people on board anxious to hear as to the destination of the ship... The pirates... bold... of late & the captain sent down orders that every precaution should be taken.

More freedom is allowed in Shanghae to foreigners, than at Canton, Amoy, Ning po, Foo-choo-foo... Some missionaries have been through the country from Shanghae to Foochow unmolested.

To be continued.