

CHAPTER V

THE VOYAGE TO AMERICA

Either the feel of so much money in his pocket moved John Baker to a bit of extravagance or someone made him a going-away present. At any rate he became possessed of a leather-bound note book, so well made that now, a hundred years later, it is still in good condition. In this note book he kept a diary of the Voyage to America -- and of several items preliminary there-unto. Most of the entries were made in ink and are still clear (it must have been good ink) although some auxiliary notes, made in pencil (and probably later) are very dim. Except for a little punctuation, added in the interest of clarity and rapid reading, plus a few parenthetical remarks by the writer, the quotations from this diary will be direct and use the original spelling.

The diary contains an ALMANACK 1849 which gives an important date in history or a church festival for each day of the year. It contains, at the beginning, several notes giving information which might be useful en route and after arrival. There are names and addresses of persons "across the water". Among these are Edmund Chapman two miles and a half from Ft. Atkinson on the Madison road Jefferson County Wisconsin". And the route to Mr. Chapman's home follows, "From Milwaukee to Waukesha and on to Whitewater, on then to Ft. Atkinson". (Florence Chapman Rogers, who was a student of mine at Ft. Atkinson High School was probably a descendant of that Mr. Chapman). There was also "John Hicks: 1st county Township of Steppins districk Urin (probably Erin) Upper Canada".

The most interesting of these names and addresses is the following, because it belongs to the family who first housed the Bakers in America. "To John Peardon, melandays Prairy (Melendy's Prairie) township of Eagle Palmyra Jefferson County Wisconsin. (Personally, I am not sure whether Melendy's Prairie is in the township of Eagle or that of Palmyra; in either case it is near the border). There are also names of lodging houses en route. One of these in pencil does not give the name of the city but was probably in Launceston or Plymouth, "Four Castles Old Town

street by & (probably 8) o'clock Tuesday morning." Then in ink "Cross Keys House, East Water Street, Milwaukee."

Somebody must have been giving him advice for one of the earliest notes reads "The best land in America is bur or white oak". Also, he had jotted down passenger and baggage charges in America, such as "Quebec to Montreal 4 s. Montreal to Kingston is 10 s. and 2 s. per hundred for luggage. Kingston to Queenston 6. round by Niggrafalls (Niagara Falls) is 4 s. from Queenston to Buffalo is 1:10 s. from Buffalo to Milwaukee". This is a little confusing but I think it means that the fare from Queenston to Buffalo is 4 s. and from Buffalo to Milwaukee is 1 pound and 10 shillings. If comparison be made with his actual payments, as shown by later entries in the diaries, it will be found that he was not able to quite get these rates.

There are also the names of some land agents in Canada, shipping agents and ship "master". Not all the news which the emigrants had heard from America was good, evidently, for there is set down a "cure for ague" consisting of:

“1 oz tinter(sic) of pipper
1 oz sweet spirit niter,
15 grams of quinine. Mix in half-pint best brandy,

Take one tablespoon three times daily before you eat". Then follow recipes for "A cure for the white skeat in calves" and another for "A cure for bloody skeat in calves". There was a note, in pencil of things to buy "Do lantern (?) Beef, flower, bread, Buy hat (?) pen an ink" and several notes of amounts due him, as follows;

Due to John Baker old bills	5:11:10	
The savings the bill is	327	(This must have been from the sale of Pattacot, but not the entire proceeds.)
"Due me fore the old mare	4:10:0	(Old Dumpling, probably)
John Fry ? ?	2:2:0	
"Due me from James Baker	2:0:0	(His youngest brother, no doubt)
	<u>6:6:0</u>	
"Due me from E.Trough	15	
Two barrels	1: " "	
Feed & plowing	<u>2:12:</u>	
	4:27	

But the very first entry in the diary is as follows:

“1849, March 6. Paid Mrs. Restarick the sum of £4: ':' for the deposit and agreed with Mrs. Restarick for a passage to Quebec for myself and family for the man of £18:0:0” (I judge that this was arranged enough in advance to give time for him to get his affairs in order and pick up information as it became available and as noted in the items just listed.)

A note without date and apparently entered in a vacant space in the book some time afterward, reads:

"All the time Grace came on board the seamen were very kind and gave us so much bread and sweet tea as we could eat, had us up to the cabin by the fire & treated us with great kindness so it cost us little in meat, but it is a terrible place for spending money"

(I gather he refers to Flymouth and the ship on which they sailed. Why this was not entered at the chronological place may be surmised from the next item, which begins a day by day record.)

1849
April 2,

We left Launceston for Plymouth in the van, reached there about 5 o'clock and saw the train come in, went to the Bridgments (Bridgman's). (People of the same name came to the Bakers in later years to begin life in America). He was very

kind but I had great trouble to get lodgings, next day (the 3rd) Mary Coran & Jane Bone came to our lodgings and a breve hubub the' (they) made and told the ship carpenter an mate of my property an persuaded Grace all the could not to go and Grace and the five young whent out with Jane an poor little Bill (He was about 12) and I whent on board ship to sleep by our shelf. I appointed to meet Grace at Wm. Bridgments on the 5 (Does he mean the 5th, which was Thursday?) by 10 o'clock but she came not till I wen for her, when I met her and Sally Ebbott coming it was so late we could do but little business. Good Friday (the 3rd she was so late that the shops were all shut and we could do no business.

The mate gave me the order to get her on board, but did not go in, Grace and me went out after the children but I told her that if she would not go I would strike her name off the Books. Jane and Stevens (Jane's husband, I believe) asked me very harty but I did not go in so whent we all on board. Jane Stevens and Sally came on board and gave us cheese & potatoes and behaved very respectful so we parted in peace.

(You will note that Jane Bone had the satisfaction of making no little trouble for that "ghastly Jan Baker", but that when matters get to a serious pass, she subsided gracefully).

(The irregularity of the dates and the order of several notes, seems to indicate that many were written afterwards as they were recalled.) Thus, the note referred to above as being out of context, should probably be a continuation of the following: "Sunday, 8th was a very fine day and we had music on board."

(Thus, there would follow "All the time Grace came on board the seamen were very kind, etc". It makes sense this way)

The diary then skips several days to April

"9 I arose early and whent to Devonport (across the Plym river from Plymouth) and bought those things we wanted. The parson came on board and gave us some tracks sung & prayed an gave exortation. The steamer Sr. Francis Drake about 2 o'clock came towed us outside the breakwater. (Thus they were in Plymouth a week before sailing. The name of the ship on which they were embarked appears nowhere in the diary) I soon got sick and so did Grace and all the children except the infant (James) I lay sick that night next day was very sick and so were the children but I was forst to get up to tend my poor children for most of the

passengers were sick and we could not help one another. A young man by the name of Sargent gave the infant some meat but soon I got about again but Grace lay in bed so long before the chief mate said he would come in with her but she continued very sick so I will let you judge of my place were I had to cook and tend all."

"11th was a fine day an I was much better. The Captain asked me to come on the cabin with him and a gentleman to play the violin with them. The captain had a beautiful fiddle cost £20 the gentlemen asked me if I could play sharps I told them I could play any key, then he sayd take your violin and play any tune you please fore you can play better than me. we have many musicians on board and have had good weather all the way, the wind fresh to the north the ship lying over on one side which made it very uncomfortable."

"14th. Grace got better to my great joy, the children all well. it a fine day, and Sunday the 15th (there is something wrong with the reckoning somewhers, for earlier Sunday was the 5th) It was a fine morning, the wind changed to the east much in our favor and continued smart all day and cured me of our yeardaras. In the evening it began to blow very mart & rained and the sea ran high, the ship rocked & overturn our things about the decks."

"16th Monday was a very rainy day, the wind start turning to the south but we have kept near a straight course ever since we came out. my little Francis is very unwell an can eat but little".

"17 was a fine coming the wind blowing smart to the southeast going on very pleasant & so continued all day an night. In the evening the mate Mr. Wilson gave Francis medicine".

"18th the wind was very smart from the south which made the ship un on her side. it was a grand sight to see the water frothing and flying, she was going 8 miles an hour. we passed by a fine ship, we hoisted colors & so did she, the wind changed to north".

"19 was a wet morning the wind to the north, weather cleared up and my little Francis was a little better, he eat some pancake we had plenty to do we clean our berth place and carried our bedding on deck to to fore times a week, the sailors began to prepare their fishing gare and said if the wind was fair we should be on the banks of Newfoundland in 24 hours (Pretty fast sailing, I should say, Plymouth to Newfoundland Banks in eleven days.J.E.B.) at night the wind blew from all four

quarters ahead for an hour then settled into a fair wind. the third mate said he never knew the wind to continue so long fair in his life".

"20th was a fine morning with a beautiful clear wind southeast 8 1/2 miles an hour. All well except Francis but he is rather frail.

#21 was a cold wet rainy day, the wind blew John's hat overboard".

"22 Sunday was a very wet sist cold day. we were on the banks of Newfoundland and the horn blown which made a doleful sound. Mr. Wilson the mate was going fishing but the Capt. would not have it.

"23 We are now on the banks. it is a fine morning, we scarce any wind so we lay to and went fishing & caught cartloads of fish such a sight I saw, the first mate is a very rough fellow, I was cleaning some and he threw a bucket of salt water over me but I said nothing to him (sort of" appeasement" I judge) then he met me again an began to laugh at me so we had some sharp words and soon let know that Jack was as good as his master. Once before he threw water in my bed and spoiled my fustian jacket. I am not the first that has fell out with him. (he must have been a regular "Russian")

"From the 23 to 30th the wind and the weather hath been so changeable an I have been so much occupied in cooking on deck and the room so small between decks an so many children to attend to that I have not kept a daily journal of the weather, but in general we had contrary winds and very cold. I have suffered much while on deck cooking."

"May 1st we saw land but not much to our comfort for the hills were covered with snow and the sea covered with ice an the sea loaded with snow so that we could not enter the gulph. the weather still cold it took great effect on my bowels and was ill, I think I never was worse in my life I kept my bed for two days. the wind blew but we would not get through all the ice. we went through some ice and it sounded against the ship like thunder. Grace was first to go on deck to cook an she became ill and Thomas Strike was the same".

4th was a fine morning the wind fair and wild. I got up to see the ice and a splendid sight our ship was surrounded with ice and the ice covered with snow. Our capt, was standing on the forecastle with the glass in his hand to spy out our way through the ice. We came alongside a beautiful ship from Liverpool, he had been

there twelve days before we came to them trying to go through the ice. the two capt. talked together.

“5,6.

7&8 we had a very rough wind right before us It was very cold we are now in the gulph we passed St. Paul's islands on the 4th and now we are farther back & the wind just the same very cold we are drifting back but the worst thing we have to contend with is cooking on deck”.

“9&10 the wind is still against us we are still in sight of St. Paul's islands we can make but little progress, at night the wind went down.

“11 was a fine pleasant morning and so continued all day, we have many miserable people on board to contend with we have old John Howe on one side of us, he is a shoemaker of Stratton, the are the biggest heathen I ever saw In the evening it became calm and misty”

“12 was a misty frosty morning the ice falling down from the ropes about noon the wind blew a fresh breeze and blew off the mist an we saw the ice coming just before us I wish you could sit in your chimney corner and see these fields of ice that I am now seeing floating on the water” (Evidently a paragraph which he intended as part of a letter to the folks back in England.)

“13 the wind blew a strong breez (sic) in our favor, myself and family all pretty well”

“14 wind still in our favor, the pilot came on board and told us there were about 150 vessels gone up before us an also said one of the capt. told him that there were two ships loss in the ice he saw them on the ice but could not give them assistance so the all had a watery grave he said the were Irish the name of the ship was hannah she had 220 souls on board but another vessel could not tell how many she had”

“15th wet day wind fair”

“16 a fine pleasant day got up early saw many whales rolling and blowing up the water like a misty cloud. the wind fair but very light breeze family all well pilot boy said the never had such a cold winter as this 16 pleasant weather head wind”.

“17 weather fair saw many white porpises as we sailed slowly up the river!

“18 is a fine day wind still against us*

"19 the weather cold the wind ahead the ship tacking about the river where we gain one time we lose another".

"20 Sunday the weather blew very rough and cold we were forced bout ship many times a day the wind blew fair for a short time and about 4 o'clock then changed against us again, the sailors up all night and many of the men passengers,"

"21 in the morning about 1 o'clock the wind blew fair and smart and brought us many miles up the river we whent to lose our anchor an one of the sailors caught his hand under the anchor chain an he could not get it out again so we were all hands with takels to get him out, poor fellow, he squat his hand terrible"

"22 the wind blew fair an we soon got into Coventine (quarantine, probably) ground, the doctor came on board and we all had to muster on deck an pass the doctor so we all passed very well. We came to Quebec about 2 o'clock the same day we had to pass the doctor again at Quebec we were detained at Quebec from 22 to 25"

(Thus the voyage, from April 9 to May 22, had required 43 days six weeks and a day, almost to the hour. At Quebec they were still a long way short of their destination. Their progress toward. Wisconsin is well told by the diary. J.E.B.)

"I asked the capt how to get a steamboat (Note the change from sail to steam. J.E.B.) so he said he would manage that so he went ashore and came back again gave orders to get our things packed early in the morning, so we packed all our things and got it out on deck to pass the Custom officer then we had orders to get the things below again for the officer would not come, it was the Queen's birthday. The Capt of the steamboat came on board, Mr. Richardson, the name of the boat is Adventure we agreed with him to take us to Toronto for 8 s. head and half price for children under 12 years under 3 free hundred and a half of luggage for every adult and the same in perportion for payable children. I paid him 1:15s:0 for taking my family to Toronto. We got our things on board the steamboat and started the same evening we reached Montreal, Can." (Probably some punctuation should be inserted between the words "started" and "the" in the preceding line)

"27 Sunday about 7 we went ashore and saw the parliament House the rebels have lately burnt down. Canada is a very disturbed state the gentlemen of Montreal would not let the five men come near to see them thus setted on fire in few minutes

the Governor was forced to fly in his carriage to save his life the broke in carage windows with eggs and stones an cut his face”.

*28. we started from Montreal for Kingston the entered the canal there there are several short canals between Montreal and Kingston to cut off rapids of the river. we reach Kingston on 30 at Montreal Thomas Box from Marham church and his wife were left behind the were forced to run for miles before the boat came to a lake then the got in with her again at Kingston Mr. Liskin and his wife to are left behind.”

Cousin Will retells accounts by his father to the effect that the steamboat went alongside some wharf every few miles to refuel with cordwood. While the boat was so tied up, the older children would swim ashore and were with difficulty recalled when the boat was ready to procede. Only tales of Indians lurking along the wooded trails in the hope of scalping those who went too far, prevented bothersome delays. On one such shore exploration, his father found a rather fancy whiskey bottle, empty, which he brought on board as a personal treasure. This bottle figured in the early establishment of poultry on the Baker farm, as will be told later.

“31 we started from Kingston for port hope came there about one o’clock there many of our ships company got out there we parted with Thomas Strike we came to Toronto about three o'clock the weather fair an warm all the way, we had to get our things out on the wharf We got on board the steamboat Admiral staid on board all night.”

“June 1 I rose early went in town with John an William to have some breakfast and buy somse bread we left Toronto and game to Lewiston I paid 3s. for all my family an luggage then we had to send our luggage on the wharf and pay 6d. for warfage then we had to load our things on horse cars and draw it up a steep hill by horses then I bad to load my luggage into the steam car & we came on a little way then change cars again for Buffalo I had to pay one dollar head and half price for children my family came to (undecipherable) we saw Niggra Falls and came to Buffalo about 4 of the clock, when on board the Steamboat St. Luis agreed with the clerk to take me to Milwaukee for 3 dollars head in the steerage cabin and pay for drawing our lugage on board I never eat nor drank from Toronto to Buffalo then I was very thirsty I drank some whisky water but eat no supper we started from shor the same evening it is very warm in this cabin were ?rred for 4 passengers that cost se £1:9s. We landed safe at Milwaukee on the 5 (5th about 9 o'clock at night paid

4s. for warfage an paid 3d. for drawing our things to quarters. Family unwell we slept in Milwaukee on night and paid 6s. for our lodgings and breakfast (that was the equivalent of \$1.28 for two adults and six children, Try to do it now! J.E.B.)

June 6 we started for Rickard Peardons in the wagon reached Prairieville (Waukesha) thare that night paid about 5s. for our lodgings and breakfast”

June 7 we came to Rick., Peardons about 2 o'clock in the afternoon an paid the waggoner £1:5s. for drawing our things an all our family”.

(This was the equivalent of \$6.05 for a 36 mile haul and return, probably empty. J.E.B.)

The Peardons were a family from North Petherwin parish, the same as the Bakers. Thus they were old acquaintances. Hospitality was much more free in those days than now for the very good reason that on the frontier, people had to help each other, not knowing when the giver might become the receiver, But one way well wonder if the Peardons did not inwardly gasp a little "What are we to do with them, their eight and our seven in a one-room cabin with loft?" But "do" they did and for fully two weeks while grandfather Baker looked for a farm. The Bakers had brought their bedding. The infants were put in trundle beds which were pushed under the big "four-poster". The older boys climbed into the loft where they rolled up in blankets on the floor. The others did the same on the cabin floor. And no record or legend of discomfort has survived, if indeed any discomfort was felt.

The journey from Plymouth to the Peardons may be recapitulated as follows:

Placed	Date (1849)		Ship	Fare		
	Arrived	Left		£	s	d
Plymouth		April 9				
Quebec	May 22		Unknown	18	0	0
Quebec		May 25	Adventure	1	15	0
Toronto	May 31	June 1	Unknown		3	0
Lewiston	June 1	June 1	Railroad		18	9
Buffalo	June 1	June 1	St. Lewis	1	9	0
Milwaukee	June 5	June 6	St. Lewis	1	5	0
Melendy's Prairie	June 7		Wagon			
				£	23	10 9

Plus lodging, food and luggage handling.