

My Grandmother's Migration

Journal Entry - recount

Today was a very hard day. I felt overwhelmingly sad as I said my final goodbye to the rest of the family who will stay here in England, while we begin our boat journey aboard the SS Northumberland, headed to Victoria, Australia.

Mother and Father said that there are prosperous opportunities waiting for us. With fortune and freedom to be found, it is what we must do to seek a better life for ourselves.



SS Northumberland

As we carried our luggage on to the ship, piled in tightly among other excited travellers, I overheard people talking about how long it might take us to arrive. It could be over four months and that is if we have favourable weather conditions! However, if our first day is any sign of what is yet to come, I am not so hopeful that our journey will be smooth or fast.

Once boarded, we were shown to our room on the bottom deck. The excitement I felt quickly left as I saw our living quarters. Mother and Father could not afford for us to journey in first class, so we are with many other men, women, children and crying babies – all of us without much space, light or fresh air to breathe in. Our beds are made of hay and we have shared rags to wash ourselves with. My little sister, Anna, and I took to making our chambers as comfortable as possible, unpacking the few belongings we brought with us.



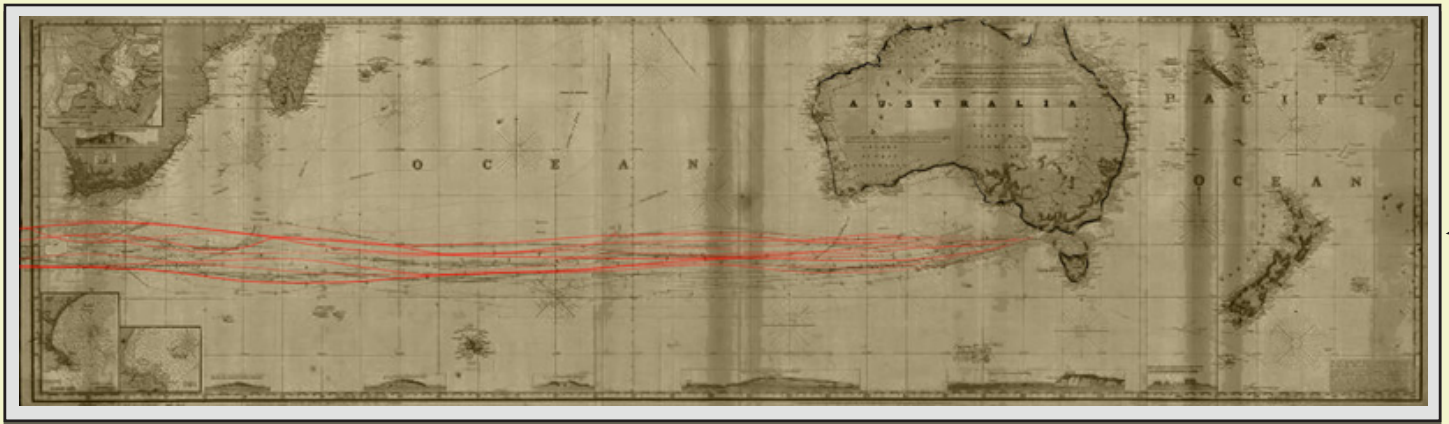
Immigrants at dinner on board

As evening came around on the first day of our voyage, the seas became rough and we felt the strength of every crashing wave. Father's briefcase slid across one side of the boat to the other with the motion so powerful, the entire contents spilled out. When we tried to eat our supper, I had to grip on to the underside of the bench where I was seated just to make sure I would stay put. The ship's doctor has said he can do nothing for my sea sickness. He is just a young boy himself who has also never sailed at sea.

I do hope that sometime soon, maybe even tomorrow, the weather might improve so that we can spend our days on deck, playing quoits or maybe even shuttlecock. I saw another passenger holding a badminton racket along with the rest of their luggage. I will make it my mission to find and befriend that person. She looked to be a young girl around my age too, so I am sure we will have lots in common and I know that it will certainly help to pass the time each day.

As I sit and write this now at nightfall, I find it difficult to focus on the words on my page while the ship sways in the ocean; however, this journey to Australia is once in a lifetime. I am lucky that my education has given me the ability to read and write. I plan to record my thoughts in this journal, daily. My trip across the seas is one that will not be forgotten.

-Mary



A ship's navigational chart from 1873 showing its route to Australia.