

# Swansea Docks, the *Troubadour* and the Latter Day Saints

Jill Morgan

A February 1849 article in the *Cambrian* reported the arrival in Swansea of

*'several wagons loaded with luggage, attended by some scores of the "bold peasantry" of Carmarthenshire and almost an equal number of the inhabitants of Merthyr and the surrounding district, together with their families.'*

The newspaper's interest in this luggage and its owners lay in the fact that these were all Latter Day Saints – members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, sometimes referred to as 'Mormons' or 'Mormonites.' Their purpose for coming to Swansea was to take the *Troubadour* around the Welsh coast to Liverpool where they would take ship for the Americas. The article is titled *EMIGRATION TO CALIFORNIA*, but this was a term used at the time for the whole of western America. They were of course heading for Utah Territory.

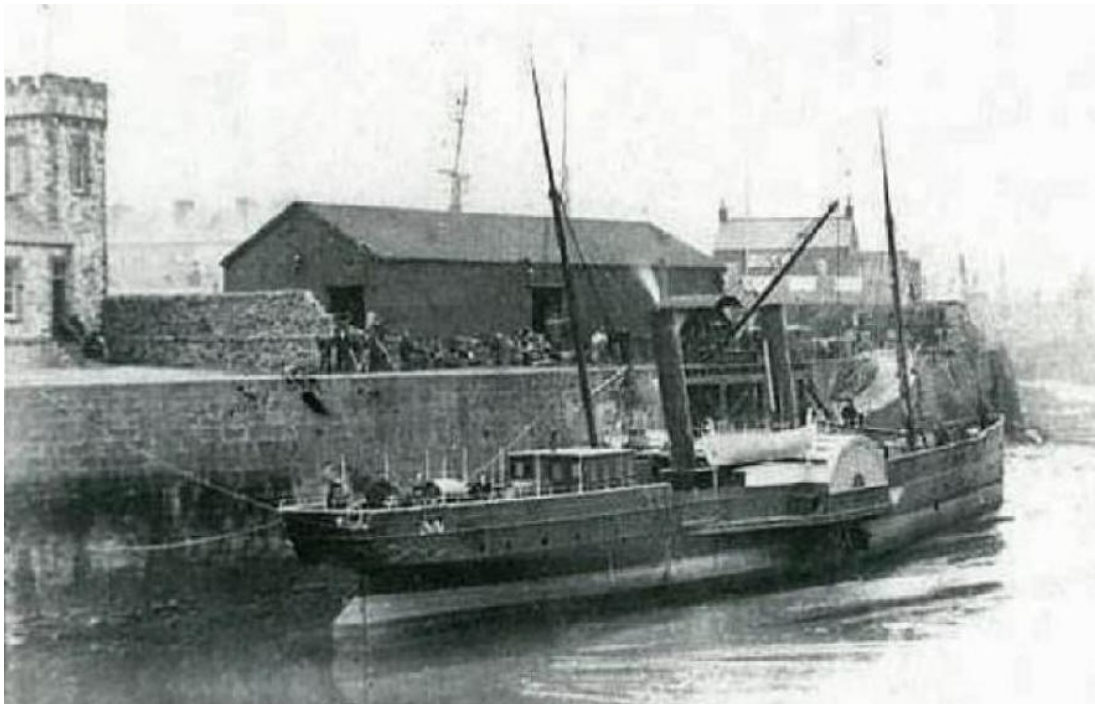
In charge of this group was Dan Jones, a North Walian who had previously emigrated to America and made his living as the captain of a steamboat on the Mississippi. Converted to the 'Mormon' faith, he returned to Wales to spread the gospel to his compatriots, and experienced significant success, as this first harvest of souls demonstrated. More than 300 Welsh converts were to meet in Liverpool and board the *Buena Vista* the following week, and thousands more would follow them across the Atlantic in succeeding decades.



Jones and his '*faithful band*' meanwhile offered entertainment for the locals. According to the report, hundreds gathered to watch the group pass and a '*numerous audience*' met to hear Jones speak in the evening at the Trades Hall in the High Street, which local Latter Day Saints rented as a meetinghouse. The following morning the group boarded the *Troubadour*, with their departure again witnessed by '*hundreds of spectators*' who cheered them on their way as the boat passed between the piers and entered the Bristol Channel.

Travel by sea around the coast was still very common in the mid-nineteenth century. It was both faster and less expensive than rail travel, and indeed until the 1850s there was nothing resembling a rail network in south Wales, railways being used almost exclusively for short journeys and industrial purposes.

The *Troubadour* regularly covered the route from Swansea to Liverpool, calling at Milford Haven on the way. It left on a Wednesday with departure times varying with the tides. It was owned by the Pockett family who established a steam packet business in Swansea in 1840, under Walter Pockett. In 1852 his son James took charge of the business, with destinations including Bristol, Weston-super-Mare and Ilfracombe. The *Troubadour* originally berthed in Swansea's North Dock. In 1871 the point of departure was moved to Pocketts Wharf, on the river itself near the entrance to the South Dock.



Photograph (courtesy of [www.swanseadocks.co.uk](http://www.swanseadocks.co.uk)): The paddle steamer *Velindra* berthed at Pocketts Wharf. The *Velindra* was acquired by the Pocketts in 1868.

Pocketts Wharf is now an apartment block in an area which is a mix of residential and leisure facilities.



The *Cambrian* article refers to there being '*many substantial farmers from the neighbourhoods of Brechfa and Llanybydder, Carmarthenshire* in the group. These included:



**Daniel** and **Sarah Davies** who farmed at Llystyn outside Brechfa. With them were their daughters **Ann** (age 22), **Sarah** (age 20), **Mary** (age 14) and **Diana** (age 12), and son **Daniel** (age 18). Their married daughter **Letitia** also travelled with the company with



her husband **Benjamin Thomas**. And Daniel's nephew (his sister Esther's son **Ricy Davies Jones**, age 20) accompanied them.



Daniel Davis and his sister Diana in later years



**Benjamin** and **Margaret Francis** from Llanwenog, Cardiganshire, just over the county border from Llanybydder. They were emigrating with their four children: **Ann** (age 16), **Daniel** (age 12), **Margaret** (age 10) and **Benjamin** (age 8).

Ann Francis Howells as a young mother



**Thomas Evans Jeremy** and his wife **Sarah** with their seven children: **John** (age 11), **Thomas** (age 10), **Hannah** (age 7), **Sarah** (age 5), **Esther** and **Margaret** (age 3) and infant **Mary**. Thomas Jeremy was also a farmer. He and Sarah were the first converts to the LDS Church in the area when missionary Dan Jones knocked on their door at Glantrenfawr

outside Llanybydder. They are pictured here in their later years.



Their sons, John (right) and Thomas Jeremy as adults





**Benjamin Thomas** and his wife **Lettie/Letitia** from Llanfihangel-ar-arth, with their son **Daniel Davis Thomas** (age 2). Benjamin played an important role in settling the town of Malad, Idaho, along with other Welsh converts.



Daniel Davis Thomas as a young man

Also from Carmarthenshire were:



**Daniel Leigh** from Llanelli and his wife **Ann**, with children **John** (age 11) and **Mary Annella** (age 4) from his first marriage and daughter **Anna** from this marriage.



Mary Annella Leigh  
in later years



Anna/Annie Leigh in  
later years



**Elizabeth Lewis** and her six children: **Thomas** (age 16), **John** (age 14), **Eliza Ann** (age 13), **Canaan** (age 8), **Sarah Elizabeth** (age 5) and **Lewis** (age 3). Mrs Lewis kept the White Lion in Kidwelly with her husband David, and welcomed LDS missionaries there, despite her husband's lack of interest in their doctrine. He would emigrate later.

**Isaac Nash** and his wife **Eliza** from Kidwelly. Their emigration costs were covered by Elizabeth Lewis because Isaac was able to persuade her husband to give permission to sell the jointly-owned White Lion. The sale would fund emigration for Mrs Lewis and her children as well as others such as Isaac and Eliza.







**Thomas** and **Margaret Mathias** from Abergwili with their daughters **Ada** (age 13) and **Zillah** (age 10) and son **Jonah** (age 6). They settled in Brigham City, 60 miles north of Salt Lake City, where Thomas - like many of the pioneers - took to farming, although he was a blacksmith by trade.

**Benjamin Thomas** and his wife **Anne** from Penboyr with their children **Daniel** (age 10), **Sarah** (age 4) and **Ann** (age 1). Benjamin died of cholera on the journey upriver from St Louis, and Ann would later marry his brother **Samuel Thomas** who was travelling with them and took care of Ann and the children after Benjamin's death.



Samuel Thomas

**William Treharne**, his wife **Ann** and their four daughters **Mary** (age 23), **Jane** (age 21), **Sarah** (age 19) and **Sage** (age 17), and youngest son, **William** (age 11). The Treharnes were from Llangendeirne. Their oldest son John would emigrate the following year.

Below: The Treharne siblings in later years: (L to R): Mary, Jane, Sarah, Sage with their younger brother William.



**Converts from Glamorgan included:**

**Morgan** and **Cecelia Morgan** from Merthyr Tydfil and their children: **Barbara** (age 16), **Mary** (age 13), **Sarah** (age 11), **Morgan** (age 9) and **Thomas** (age 7). They settled in Tooele, southwest of Salt Lake City.



Widower **William Morgan** from Whitchurch and his young son **Edward** (age 7). William would re-marry in Salt Lake City in 1855 and would have two more children from that marriage.



Edward in later life.

**William Rees Davies** and his wife **Rachel** who lived in Rhymini near Merthyr Tydfil and were the first converts to be baptised in the area in February 1843. They were accompanied by their daughter **Elizabeth** (age 20). Two sons would also emigrate later.



Elizabeth Davies as a young woman

**William Rowland** and his new, young wife **Rachel**, both from Hirwaun. With them were four of William's surviving children from his first marriage: **Mary** (age 11), **Rachel** (age 8), **Ann** (age 6) and **David** (age 4). Sadly, William and two of the children died on the Missouri river aboard the steamboat *Saluda*, when a boiler exploded. There were more than 100 casualties, the majority LDS converts on their way to Council Bluffs where they would prepare for the trek west.



**Benjamin T. Jones** and his wife **Jane** with their children **Elizabeth** (age 23), **William** (age 20), **Evan James** (age 15), **Esther Ann** (age 6), and **John** (age 2). The family left from Cwmaman near Aberdare.



Jane William Jones in later years



Evan James



Elizabeth Jones

John L.  
Jones



These are just some of the faces which would have been seen passing through the town and leaving on board the *Troubadour*. A full list of Welsh converts who left on the *Buena Vista* (or the *Hartley*, which left Liverpool some weeks later as the *Buena Vista* was over-subscribed) can be found online in the Appendix of Ron Dennis' *The Call of Zion*. (See below)

According to a history of William and Rachel Davies, the *Troubadour* left Swansea at 9am on Wednesday 14 February 1849, carrying its complement of LDS converts. They arrived in Liverpool the following day around 3.30 pm. There had been much sea-sicknesses among the passengers, but this was just a prelude to the long Atlantic crossing facing them.

In February 1850 the *Cambrian* reported another group of about one hundred Latter Day Saints who had come to Swansea to take the *Troubadour* to Liverpool 'en route for the Land of Promise.' And in April 1856 the paper again reported that a large number of 'these deluded fanatics' had left port on Wednesday on the *Troubadour* for Liverpool and thence to Salt Lake City. Friends and relatives, who gathered on the quayside to bid them farewell shed tears, but the paper commented that: 'Society at large however has little cause to deplore their departure.'

The *Troubadour's* destination in Liverpool was the Trafalgar Dock on the northern end of the extensive docks system on the Mersey. The dock has since been largely filled in. The same route was used for the *Glendower*, also owned by the Pockett family.

Many of the converts who travelled on the *Troubadour* (or *Glendower*) from Swansea Docks would successfully cross the Atlantic only to perish in the American Midwest, generally because of cholera. Others survived the rigours of the journey to live long and useful lives, raising families and contributing to their communities. Some fell away from the LDS faith. However on departure, as the *Cambrian* reported:

*It is due to them, however, to state that they are far from being smitten by that mania for gold the discovery of which has imparted to the modern El Dorado such notoriety of late. They seem animated only with the most devout feelings and aspirations ... they intend, they say, by helping one another, to reside in peace and harmony to exemplify the truth of "brotherly love" not in name but in practice.*

**Sources:**

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