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Norfolk and the Mormon Folk: Latter-day Saint Immigration through Old Dominion (1887–90)

Fred E. Woods

On 11 September 1887, the front page of the *Norfolk Virginian* had a bold headline, “**Four Hundred Mormons,**” along with the following information:

The Old Dominion steamer Richmond, which arrived from New York yesterday, had on board four-hundred and twenty Mormon immigrants from the British Isles who had arrived in New York on Thursday on the steamship Wisconsin. The immigrants are all new converts to the Mormon religion and will swell the number of adherents to the Brigham Young faith in the territory considerably. The party is composed of men, women and children, and when the special train with nine coaches put in appearance, there was a rush and scramble to get aboard. Mr. A. S. Butt, the immigrant agent had his hands full in attending to their wants, and allowed a large smile to overspread his face when the train pulled out. The train goes direct to Utah without stops. This is the largest party that has passed through the city.¹

On this same day, the *Norfolk Landmark* noted, “Four hundred and eighty loaves of bread were ordered from one of our bakers for the Mormon immigrants who left over the Norfolk and Western railroad yesterday morning.”² The increase of Mormon immigrants was certainly providing a boost to the Virginia economy.

Brief History of LDS Immigration (1840–90)

Latter-day Saint immigration research following the wagon train era is not as plentiful as for the earlier pioneer period. Research regarding immigrant voyages by steam and travel by rail are rare. Furthermore, the fact that

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Norfolk served as an important depot for Mormon immigration for several years is virtually unknown.³ The tide of Mormon immigration began in 1840 with the departure of forty-one American-bound, Mormon proselytes (members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) from the docks of Liverpool, England. The stream of immigrants did not begin to subside until the end of the nineteenth century. “Nearly 90,000 known Latter-day Saint immigrants crossed the oceans to gather to America between 1840–1890. They had a most unusual success rate, making about 550 voyages, and losing no vessels crossing the Atlantic and only one vessel crossing the Pacific.”⁴ These Mormon immigrants were responding to a call to gather with the righteous in a promised land, which they called Zion.

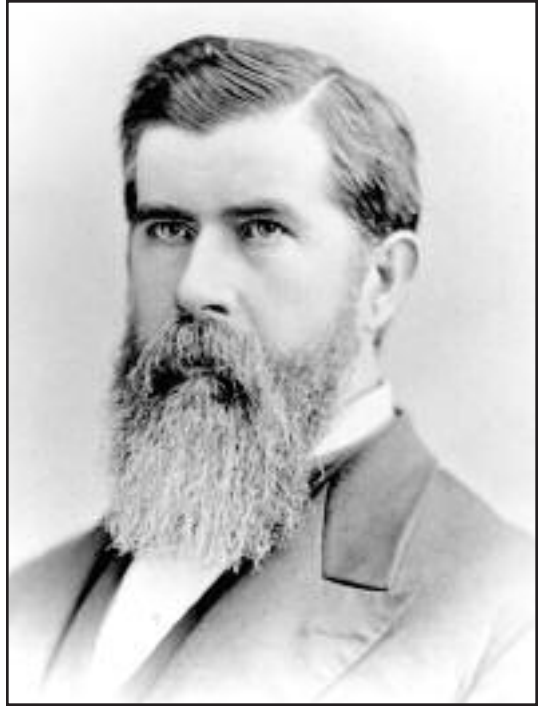
The Mormons used New Orleans as their primary port of entry between 1841 and 1854; however, because of the threat of yellow fever and cholera, Church President Brigham Young issued the following letter, on 2 August 1854, to Elder Franklin D. Richards, Mormon emigration agent in Liverpool: “You are aware of the sickness liable to assail our unacclimated brethren on the Mississippi river, hence I wish you to ship no more to New Orleans, but ship to Philadelphia, Boston and New York, giving preference in the order named.”⁵

Although several boatloads of Mormon immigrants arrived in Philadelphia and Boston in the mid-nineteenth century, New York soon became the port of choice and served as the primary port of arrival for Mormon immigrants from 1855–90. It was here that the fine immigration depot known as Castle Garden was located. After the completion of the



Emigrant-Landing in New York
Harper's Weekly, Vol. 11, No. 78 (June 26, 1858), p. 405.

transcontinental railroad on 10 May 1869, most Mormon immigrants traveled from New York due west by rail to Salt Lake City, where they settled somewhere in the Utah Territory. The travel arrangements for their journey were made by Mormon agents assigned to New York to oversee the needs of passing Mormon immigrants. The agents selected the most economical rail route. This system proved very effective until the spring of 1886 when vexing obstacles commenced.



James Hart

Courtesy of LDS Historical Dept., Archives

The Need for an Alternate Route for LDS Immigration

On 27 May 1886, James H. Hart, the Mormon agent then assigned to New York, wrote to Church President John Taylor about a serious problem. The Grand Trunk Line Immigration Clearing House Commission had issued a circular that assumed, among other things, “the right to control the transportation of all immigrants from New York to their destination in Salt Lake and all their points west of New York.”⁶ The commission not only insisted on monopolizing the immigration route of the Saints but also raised railroad rates from New York to Chicago and from Chicago to Salt Lake City. In addition to these challenges, Mr. Edmund Stephenson, a member of the New York Board of Commissioners of Emigration, led a wrongheaded and unsuccessful attempt to block Mormon immigration into Castle Garden, feeling it his legal duty to regulate Latter-day Saint immigration. He categorized the Mormons among those who were “foreign paupers, idiots, convicts and persons likely to become a public charge,” but he was repeatedly overruled by his fellow commissioners.⁷

In the face of these issues, alternative ports of entry were considered. New York had been the only port on the east coast used by Mormon immi-

grants for over two decades, but in this turbulent situation, the *British King*, which brought the last Mormon company to immigrate in 1886, disembarked at the port of Philadelphia.⁸

At the conclusion of his letter to President Taylor, Hart commented about negotiations that had been launched by Brother John W. Young with the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad (C&O) and indicated the following:

This would involve the reshipment on said company's steamers from New York to Norfolk, and the rate given \$14.00 from here to Kansas City. . . . Brother John W. [Young] has talked with Mr. [Collis P.] Huntington about the matter, who is one of the principal owners of said road, and thinks the route is predictable. I shall follow up the matter in view of the possible contingencies.⁹

Although Huntington, a well-known entrepreneur, was successful for a time in steering a portion of non-Mormon immigrants to the C&O, he did not land the contract with the Latter-day Saints. Instead, they left the port of Norfolk and migrated through Virginia on the Norfolk and Western Railroad.

The New Immigration Depot at Norfolk

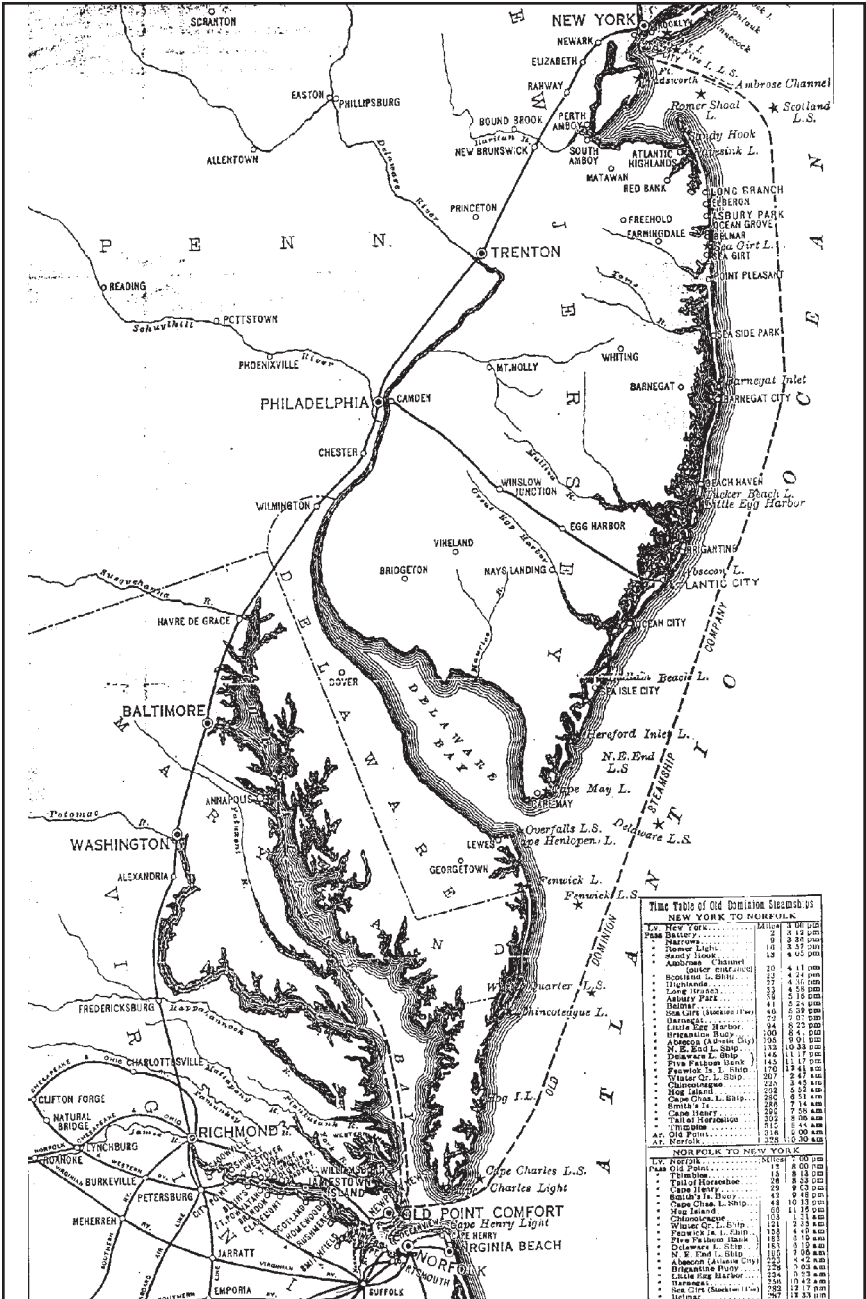
On 5 April 1887, Church leader George Teasdale, who also dealt with Mormon immigration, wrote to N. C. Flygare concerning the rerouting of the Saints because of problems that had escalated from a state to a federal level as a result of the Interstate Commerce Act:¹⁰

In a letter to Bro. Hart just to land he states that in order to get the rates quoted he has to contract with the Southern Railways by [the] following route: New York to Norfolk by steamship (Old Dominion Line) 24 hours thence by Norfolk & Western Railway to Bristol, thence to Chattanooga, thence to Kansas City &c. This is necessitated by the action of Congress in passing the Inter-state Railway law which went into effect Apr. 1st 1887.¹¹

That same month, *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, a Church-owned periodical in Liverpool, published the following news for British Saints planning to immigrate to America during the coming season:

By advices from Elder James H. Hart, we learn that the route for this season's emigration will be by the Old Dominion Steamship Line from New York to Norfolk, along the coast, the passage taking about twenty-four hours. Thence by the Norfolk and Western to Bristol, thence to Chattanooga, thence to Memphis, and from there to Kansas City, which takes, including stoppages, about three days and twenty-two hours. From Kansas to Salt Lake, about three days and a half.¹²

Although the railroad route varied a little once the Saints left the west-



Old Dominion Steamline
 Eldredge Collection, courtesy of the Mariners' Museum

ern boundary of Virginia, between 1887 and 1890, over forty Mormon companies, comprising more than five thousand Mormon immigrants, were passengers on the Old Dominion Steamline before taking the Norfolk & Western Railroad from Norfolk across the state of Virginia to Bristol, Tennessee, and the Far West.

The coverage of the Mormon immigrants in Norfolk newspapers sometimes used information first published in New York when the Mormons reached America's shores. The articles may have influenced the Virginians' opinion of the Mormons before their arrival in Norfolk. One article, titled "Immigration's Black Sheep," read:

Three long-bearded Mormon elders arrived yesterday from Liverpool on Guion steamer Wisconsin with 132 new converts to their faith. The party consisted of men, women and children from various Norwegian towns, and after being specially registered at Castle Garden were transferred to a boat of the Old Dominion Steamline, which runs in connection with the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad. They will go direct to Utah. Some of the girls were quite pretty and very robust, and a dozen of them acknowledge that they expected to find husbands in their new home.¹³

A New York dispatch dated 21 June 1889 indicated that of 731 new passengers at Castle Garden, 345 were Mormon converts. The dispatch then noted, "They were carefully culled out from the other passengers and transferred to the Old Dominion steamship Roanoke, which arrived here this afternoon, and the party was forwarded Utahwards. The Elders in charge of the party travel first-class, but their dupes have to take 'pot luck' in the steerage and in immigrant cars."¹⁴ The following day, the *Public Ledger* further noted, "More than half of the Mormons landed here yesterday were men, all seemed to be a tough lot."¹⁵

Old Dominion Steamship Company

Primary sources reveal that the Saints used eight different Old Dominion Line vessels during this period.¹⁶ The Old Dominion Steamship Company, chartered in 1867, was a thriving business at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁷

The transition at New York through customs and on to the Old Dominion Line seems to have generally been a very smooth one. For example, William Wood, the Mormon company leader on an 1888 voyage of the vessel *Wyoming*, wrote the following letter to Church leader George Teasdale upon Wood's arrival in New York:


At 2 p.m. we arrived at the Guion Wharf and were met by Mr. Gibson at the Guion Company. Our baggage was overhauled by the Customs officers, and afterwards the Saints were placed aboard the tender, and taken to Castle Garden, where they

passed the authorities without the least trouble. At 6:30 p.m. our company left there on the same tender for the Old Dominion Wharf, where they were put aboard the *S. S. Wyanoke*, and very comfortably located for the night. At 6:30 Wednesday morning, the Saints were called together and counselled, and after singing a hymn of thanks were rendered to God for his preserving care that has been over the company. The Saints are feeling well, not a hitch has occurred to interfere with our progress thus far. We leave this afternoon, about 3 o'clock for Norfolk.¹⁸

OLD DOMINION STEAMSHIP CO.

THE MAGNIFICENT STEAMSHIPS

GUYANDOTTE,
WYANOKE,
BREAKWATER,
SENECA,



OLD DOMINION,
MANHATTAN,
RICHMOND,
ROANOKE,

Norfolk, Petersburg, and Richmond, Va.

SAILING FROM NEW YORK

Every **TUESDAY, THURSDAY, and SATURDAY**, and for **NORFOLK** every **WEDNESDAY**.

FOR

NEWPORT NEWS and WEST POINT, Va.

Every **MONDAY, WEDNESDAY and SATURDAY**.

Steamers on Delaware Division leave New York Monday and Thursday at 3 p. m. for **Lewis, Del.**, opposite Cape May, connecting with Delaware, Maryland & Virginia R.R. Leaving Lewis for New York Tuesday and Friday.

(Steamers for Delaware leave DAILY in Season.)

POPULAR ROUTE TO

"HYGEIA HOTEL,"
OLD POINT COMFORT, VA.

VIRGINIA
SUMMER RESORTS.

"HOTEL WARWICK,"
NEWPORT NEWS, VA.

CONNECTING: All Weekly with the Company's and the Low Route for **PETERSBURG, OLD POINT COMFORT, &c.** with the **NORFOLK & WASHINGTON** Railroad for the **WILMINGTON**.
All Tri-weekly with **WILMINGTON AND DELAWARE** and **ATLANTIC COAST LINE**.
All Steamer Lines with **CHESAPEAKE AND RICHMOND** for **Richmond, Va.**, and the West.


THROUGH TICKETS AT LOWEST RATES.

Through Tickets, and Baggage Checked to Destination. Baggage called for at residence (at regular rates) on notice given at Office, 207 Broadway.

All Tickets and Baggage of this Company are at the W. H. STAMFORD Office of sale, and 170-172 Main and Watermen accommodations at the Old Dominion Company, without extra charge, on all FIRST-CLASS SERVICE.

These Steamers are fitted with every appliance for Safety and Comfort of Passengers, and have on Deck Coal and Delightful Stoves in Cabin, Delaware and the South. Tickets and Full Information sent by Mail at President Street, 222 and 224 Broadway, at Special Office of the Company, 212 West St., and Main St., opposite the Company's Pier, 10 N. E. corner South Street, New York.

WORLD TRAVEL CO., 207 Broadway, cor. Fulton St.
W. H. STAMFORD, Secretary O. D. S. S. Co.



Hygeia Hotel
Old Point Comfort, Virginia.

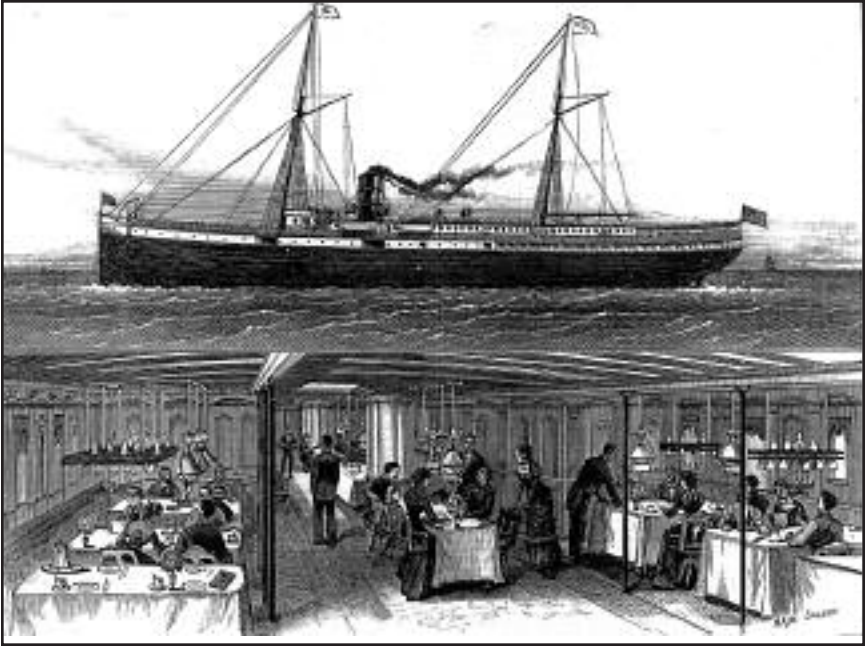
is situated on a beautiful point from Fort Monroe, at the entrance of the Chesapeake Bay and Hampton Roads, where the ships of the world, and it is one of the finest and most beautiful of the Old Dominion.

The place is reached by the splendid steamer of the Old Dominion Line, which runs weekly, Monday and Wednesday, between Baltimore, Washington, Richmond and Norfolk, and by rail from New York, Philadelphia, New Jersey and the West.

The Hygeia is one of the finest and most comfortable hotels in the Old Dominion, and is one of the best in the South. The hotel is one of the best in the South, and is one of the best in the South. The hotel is one of the best in the South, and is one of the best in the South.

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Old Dominion Steamship Line Advertisement
Eldredge Collection, courtesy of the Mariners' Museum



*Exterior and interior views of the Guyandotte, Old Dominion Steamship Line.
Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper (June 24, 1882)*

Special Treatment of Mormon Immigrants by Sail and Rail

The Mormon company leaders were very watchful of their immigrating flock. Mormon immigrant accounts also indicate that the companies were generally treated very well by the Guion Line crossing the Atlantic during this period.¹⁹ Captains and crew were generally glad to have Latter-day Saints on board, thanks to their unprecedented safety record crossing the Atlantic.

Although the required procedures for passing through the New York custom authorities at Castle Garden were generally adhered to, the captain on an 1888 voyage of the *Nevada* seems to have stretched the procedures a bit, going far beyond the call of duty to protect his Latter-day Saint cargo. Mormon company leader John S. Stucki, who presided over seventy immigrating Saints on this unique voyage, wrote:

The captains of the different ships like to have our people cross the ocean with them, because they are better behaved than some other people for one thing, and because they feel there is more safety in having Mormon people with them in crossing the ocean. . . . It seems that even the captains of the ships had begun to find out that there is some supreme power watching over the Latter-day Saints, which should add to and strengthen anyone's testimony. . . . Our captain was well pleased with us

and as we had some old people in our company, the captain favored us very much again by fixing it so that the Mormon people did not have to go to Castle Gardens to be examined. A couple of days before we reached New York the captain had the sailors stretch a chain across the deck of the ship and requested all the Mormon people to go on one side of the chain and all the other emigrants to go on the other side of the chain. Then he had our people go down into a large room where there were some clerks before whom they had to report their condition. Then before we got to New York, he had another ship, which would take us to Norfolk so that our people would not have to go to Castle Garden to be examined. So our people did not have to undergo the examination like the other emigrants, otherwise, perhaps, some would have to be sent back.²⁰



*Charles Henry Haderlie,
missionary aboard the Nevada
1888 voyage.*

Several personal accounts note that the Latter-day Saints seemed to receive special treatment aboard the Old Dominion Steamship Line passage from New York to Norfolk. A diary entry of James J. Chandler, one of 137 Saints in his immigrating company, reads: "Left the docks at three p.m. for Norfolk. Company all feeling well. . . . Had saloon passage. Splendid entertainment. Evening, had concert with our company."²¹

Levi Naylor, who immigrated that same year, offered sincere praise for those involved in the transitional movement from New York to Norfolk:

The New York officials at the dock of the Old Dominion Steamship Company were also kind and obliging, in providing against an emergency for which neither they nor us were responsible. We desire also to mention the names of Mr. J. G. Halphers (captain) and Mr. W. H. Mayor (purser) of the S. S. *Roanoke*, who said if we could suggest anything beyond what had already been done that would contribute to the comfort of our people, it should be attended to.²²

The following year, Lars S. Anderson, who shepherded 359 Saints across the Atlantic, wrote:

We passed Castle Garden all right, and set sail for Norfolk on board the S. S. *Roanoke* at 3 p.m., and expect to arrive there about 3 o'clock on the afternoon of the 21st. The *Roanoke* is a fine steamer, and everything is done to make us feel comfort-

able. Mr. Gibson, the agent, was present himself as the boat landed, and carried everything out in first-class order. An agent has been sent with us from New York, to see that everything is attended to properly at Norfolk.²³

On 1 May 1890, Mormon company leader Thomas E. Ricks recorded the following diary entry aboard the steamship *Roanoke*: “We had the best of treatment all the way on the water from the officers aboard.”²⁴

However, as evidenced in a letter by Mormon Elder H. E. Browning, who crossed the Atlantic with a group of 118 Saints in 1888, the steerage conditions were occasionally found wanting:

On board the *S. S. Wyanoke* all were well cared for, and we left yesterday, July 4th at 3 p.m. for Norfolk. The accommodation for steerage passengers was not so good as we might have wished, through having some horses on board. We had a good company, and thus far I think the record of the Saints have made it very praiseworthy. We have a railroad agent with us who is doing all in his power for our comfort under the circumstances. We expect to reach Norfolk at 5 p.m., and have no fears but what all will be well. God has blessed on the sea, and we trust Him on land.²⁵

The various transitions at ports, wharfs, and depots were due not only to the Mormon leadership by land and sea but also to the steamship and railroad personnel who provided excellent service throughout the entire Latter-day Saint immigrant experience. The transition at Norfolk was as orderly as it had been in New York. A typical account of the quick transition from steamship to rail at Norfolk in 1888 was as follows: “Arrived at Norfolk, about 7 p.m. Changed to another boat, crossed the river, and found a special train waiting for us and about 8 p.m. we left Norfolk. The Saints are all feeling well. The officers on boat and rail are very kind to us.”²⁶

The special waiting train was not a singular experience, as attested to by local Norfolk newspapers, including one that reported the following, under the title “Mormons to Arrive”: “The Norfolk and Western Railroad this morning received instructions to have a special train in readiness upon the arrival of the Old Dominion steamship *Wyanoke*, to take a large party of Mormon immigrants, accompanied by several elders of the faith to Utah.”²⁷ According to John H. Hayes, the leader of this company, their group of 122 Saints was met in Norfolk by a Mr. Toms, the passenger agent for the Norfolk and Western Railroad, “who let us have three cars for our company, which made us very comfortable. . . . The agents along the line extended every kindness to us that anyone could desire, even furnishing agents part of the way to assist us.”²⁸

A Remarkable Rail Accident

The immigrating railroad accounts of Latter-day Saints provide evi-



*Panorama of Norfolk, Virginia, 1892.
Courtesy of Norfolk Public Library*

dence of a railway safety record comparable to the one they had on the Atlantic. There was only one exception. In Norfolk, *The Public Ledger* carried the following article on 16 September 1889 under the title “Immigrants in a Railway Disaster”:

Saturday afternoon the Old Dominion steamship Roanoke landed at this port one hundred and forty odd immigrants, Mormon, all of them, in charge of four elders, and bound for the promised land—Utah. They were all English, most of them from Yorkshire, and were generally of a better class than the average run of incomers. They left the city on a special immigrant train at 4 o'clock P.M., and during the night ran into a “washout” a short distance this side of Lynchburg. The engine and baggage car, it is said, passed safely over the undermined rails, but the next car, filled principally with women and children, went down, dragging back the baggage car and engine. The scene in the darkness is said to have been a terrible one, but almost miraculously, there was no loss of life and the casualties were confined to two women among the passengers having their collar-bones broken and an arm each fractured, while the fireman was severely scalded. All the rest were gotten out safely, and the sufferers were taken to Lynchburg for treatment.²⁹

Mormon Company leader William P. Payne gave a detailed account of the accident, adding information on the later tedious rail ride to Salt Lake City:

It was raining heavily when we started from Norfolk, and so continued during the remainder of the day. The streams of water began to increase rapidly in volume until midnight, when we reached the stone bridge at which the unfortunate accident occurred, four miles east of Lynchburg, Virginia. Questioned as to this catastrophe, Elder Payne proceeded to say: The engine and tender, after passing over the



Norfolk and Western freight yards, eastern branch of Elizabeth River, ca. 1910.

H. C. Mann Collection, Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia

Courtesy of the Mariners' Museum

bridge, were thrown from the track on to their sides, and completely wrecked. The engine lay about sixty feet from the track, the tender about thirty feet, and the baggage car forty. The last named was wholly demolished, while the baggage was literally crushed to pieces. The first coach struck the opposite abutment of the bridge, the coach wheeling around and dropping upon its side on the bed of the creek, some thirty feet below. Three of its four sides were mashed up, and the passengers within were violently thrown upon each other in a huddled mass, the seats, racks, luggage, broken glass, etc., being piled upon them. One of the sisters, Mary Evans, aged 32, had her shoulder blade broken; Catherine Evans, her daughter, aged 11, had her leg badly bruised; Margaret Lewis, 22, sustained a similar injury, as did also Sarah Hills, 36, whose foot was likewise hurt; and Frederick Holton, 59, received an injury to the back. . . .

But yet another trouble was in store for the unfortunate immigrants. Just before they arrived at Memphis, Tennessee, they were run into by another train, which had the effect of throwing the end car off the track. Though it was very full of passengers, yet strange to say not one of them was injured. Mrs. Wheeler, an elderly lady, was jerked from her seat, but in no way hurt. This caused a further delay of quite three hours; but, after all, the detention proved fortunate as it afterwards transpired that shortly before a washout had occurred in several places ahead, and had the train proceeded uninterruptedly on its way serious consequences might have ensued. When the collision happened the immigrant train was going very slowly, but the other one was moving along at a good rate. The occupants of the damaged car were transferred to another which had been brought up from Memphis, upon reaching which place the entire company changed cars and transference of baggage was again made. . . .



View of harbor showing Norfolk and Southern railroad terminals, 1895.

The City of Berkley is on the opposite side.

Art Book of Norfolk & Vicinity, 1895

Newport News Public Library

Courtesy of the Mariners' Museum

By and by another start was made, and the remainder of the journey proved uneventful, the company landing safely and well, though tried and weary, in Salt Lake City. The entire trip from Liverpool occupied twenty one days, and the experiences of that journey I shall never forget.³⁰

The Beginning of a New Era

A different kind of obstacle faced Mormon immigrants the following spring. The state government made an effort to stop Mormon immigration into New York. George Q. Cannon and other Church leaders spent time with the immigration officials in New York and were successful in their effort to move forward the tide of immigration.³¹

In 1887, the Edmunds-Tucker Act heightened problems for the Mormons because of the issue of plural marriage.³² This act disincorporated the Mormons and put an end to the Perpetual Emigrating Fund, a revolving fund that brought tens of thousands of foreign converts to Salt Lake City.³³ The act may have had some influence on Mormon immigration, but the tide did not stop. The act did lead to an increase in the persecution and prosecution of Mormons, however, because of their practice of unlawful cohabitation.

An article from the *Norfolk Public Ledger*, titled "Pretty Mormon Girls" and dated 2 October 1890, noted that immigration authorities at the port of

New York separated thirty-two young Mormon women from their group and assisted three female missionaries from the Emigrant Girls' Home in urging them, unsuccessfully, to abandon their polygamous faith.³⁴

Just four days after this article was published, LDS Church President Wilford Woodruff issued the "Manifesto" in a Latter-day Saint general conference. The Manifesto declared, among other things, the following: "Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, which laws have been pronounced constitutional by the court of last resort, I hereby declare my intentions to submit to those laws, and to use my influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise."³⁵

It is of interest to note that when the 1891 season of immigration began, for the first time since the *Millennial Star* had commenced in 1840, no mention was made of emigration from Great Britain—no emigration notices for departure were published, and no correspondence was printed from Mormon company leaders of immigrant voyages to America.

Although the Saints continued to immigrate to the United States, there was a noticeable decline, perhaps in part because of the persecution of polygamists. The details of Latter-day Saint immigration at this time seem to have been deliberately suppressed. The names of vessels and Mormon company leaders and immigrants are generally not mentioned in the *Millennial Star*, although general year-end statistical reports were published. Annual statistics of the Latter-day Saint British Mission reveal that while 1,256 Saints had immigrated in 1889 and 1,146 in 1890, only 904 Mormons had gathered to America in 1891 and only 130 by the end of the 1894 immigration season.³⁶ Mormon immigration to America gradually decreased in the twentieth century as Church leaders encouraged foreign converts to build the Church in their homelands.³⁷

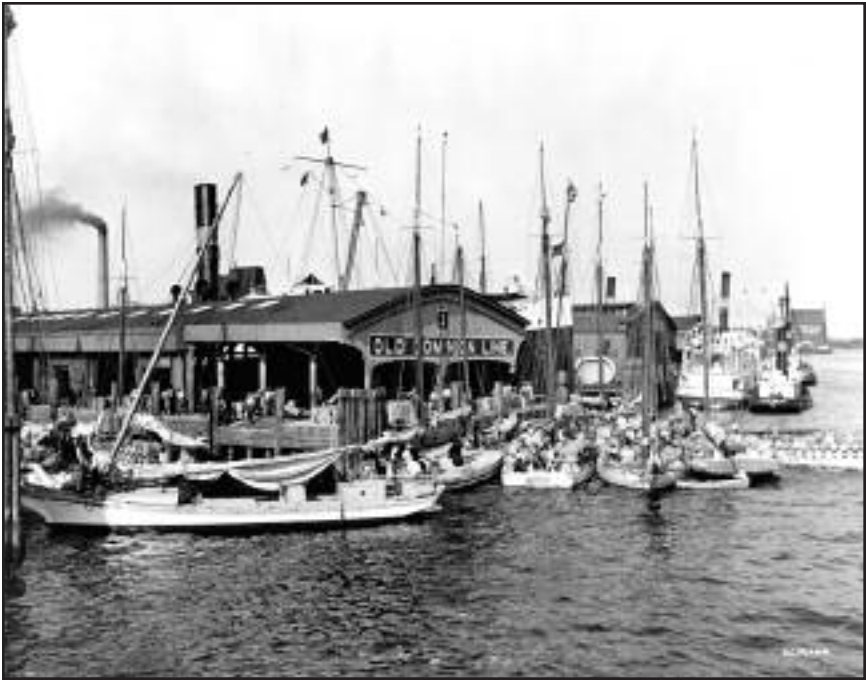
As the 1890s dawned, all immigration to America was influenced by the federal government. On 19 April 1890, the U.S. government took control of immigration in the state of New York. Castle Garden was replaced by a temporary immigration depot at the Barge Office, and the New York Board of Commissioners of Emigration, which had influenced the rerouting of the Saints through Norfolk, fell into federal hands.

The Immigration Act of 1891 had a profound influence on immigration throughout the United States. The act determined that the federal government would control all aspects of immigration throughout America. No longer could any state determine the reception and protection of immigrants; these actions would be handled by the United States government.³⁸

The following year, a new immigration depot opened at the Battery,

replacing the Barge Office, which had been used temporarily after the closure of Castle Garden. The new depot, opened on 1 January 1892, was called Ellis Island. Before its doors closed in 1954, about twelve million immigrants passed through its gates, including some Latter-day Saints who could not resist the desire to gather to America.³⁹

Though many Saints traveled directly from New York to Utah by rail, from 1887 to 1890, a well-planned Mormon detour took over five thousand Saints through Virginia.⁴⁰ The southern detour helped boost the economy of the state for several years, primarily because of the passenger service rendered by steamship and railroad companies. During this period of Mormon immigration, Norfolk received the Saints, who experienced firsthand “southern hospitality” before being sent safely on their way west through Virginia to the Salt Lake Valley.⁴¹ There, in the Great Basin, they made the desert blossom as a rose. Some Mormon immigrating folk would later recall vivid memories of their passage through “Old Dominion.”



Old Dominion Line, Norfolk, Virginia
H. C. Mann Collection, Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia
Courtesy of the Mariners' Museum

Notes

1. Anthony Southgate Butt was a private in the 39th Battalion Virginia Cavalry, Company A. He served as a courier to General Robert E. Lee. Butt was forty-seven years old when he assisted this large group of Mormon immigrants, demonstrating the same kind of diligence he exhibited during the Civil War when he was shot in the head at Cold Harbor (1864) and refused to leave his post. (Application form for entry into the Pickett-Buchanan Camp of Confederate Veterans of Norfolk, Virginia, dated 18 October 1889. These forms are bound in volumes in the Sargeant Memorial Room of the Norfolk Public Library. This application form on A. S. Butt is found in vol. 4, p. 16. The document was brought to my attention by library volunteer Marian Rudd.)

2. A clip from "A Summary of Local Affairs," *Norfolk Landmark* (11 September 1887): 1.

3. One notable exception is Richard L. Jensen, "Steaming Through: Arrangements for Mormon Emigration from Europe, 1869–1887," *Journal of Mormon History* 9 (1982): 3–24.

4. Fred E. Woods, "On board the 'International,' All Joyful and Lighthearted," *The Log of Mystic Seaport*, 51 (Summer 1999): 23. This safety record is quite remarkable, as evidenced by the fact that between the years 1847 and 1853 alone, there were at least fifty-nine immigrant vessels that sank crossing the Atlantic; see Conway B. Sonne, *Saints on the Seas: A Maritime History of Mormon Migration 1830-1890* (University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City: 1983), 139.

5. *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 16 (28 October 1854): 684. Hereafter cited as MS.

6. Letter of James H. Hart to John Taylor, dated 27 May 1886, papers of James H. Hart, Church Archives for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 3–4. Hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives.

7. G. O. "A Meddling Official," MS 48 (6 September 1886): 568–70. See also Jensen, "Steaming Through," *Journal of Mormon History* 9 (1982): 7–8.

8. "Landing Mormons," MS 48 (15 November 1886): 734–35.

9. Letter of Hart to Taylor, 6.

10. The Interstate Commerce Act set up federal regulation of railroads and other forms of interstate commerce.

11. Letter of George Teasdale to N. C. Flygare, dated 5 April 1887, European Mission Letterpress Copybooks, 1851–89, LDS Church Archives.

12. MS 49 (11 April 1887): 235–36.

13. Several local Norfolk newspapers mention Mormon immigrants during these years. See, for example, "Mormon Immigrants," *Norfolk Landmark*, 10 September 1887, 1; "Items in Brief: Small Matters of Interest Picked Up Here and There," *Norfolk Virginian*, 30 April 1887, 1; "Items in Brief," *Norfolk Virginian*, 21 October 1887, 1; "A Large Party of Mormon Immigrants Arrive in Norfolk," 29 August 1890, 1; "Large Lot of Immigrants," *Public Ledger*, 4 June 1887, 4; "Mormon Immigrants," 1 June 1888, 1; "Local Sorts," *Public Ledger*, 1 June 1889, 1; "Mormons En Route," *Public Ledger*, 21 October 1889, 1; "Mormons to Arrive," *Public Ledger*, 5 June 1890, 1; "Mormons Passed Through," *Public Ledger*, 20 September 1890, 1.

14. "Mormons Going Through," *Public Ledger*, 21 June 1889, 1.

15. "Local Sorts," *Public Ledger*, 22 June 1889, 1.

16. The names of these Old Dominion Line steamships are mentioned several times in the *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*: *Roanoke*, *Breakwater*, *Guyandotte*, *Wyanoke*,

Seneca, Richmond, New York and Old Dominion. See, for example, *Millennial Star* 50: 26 (25 June 1888): 414–15; 50: 31 (30 July 1888): 491; 50: 39 (24 September 1888): 619–20; 51: 29 (8 June 1889): 460; 52: 20 (19 May 1890): 316–17; 52: 22 (2 June 1890): 349.

17. “Old Dominion Steamship Company Celebrates Its Fiftieth Anniversary—March 1867–1917,” *The Pilot*, 27: 5 (March 1917): 5–7, indicates that the development and organization of this company began with a New York business in 1851 called the New York and Virginia Steamship Company. A decade later, the company added to its first steamer, the *Roanoke*, two other steamers: the *Yorktown* and the *Jamestown*. When the Civil War broke out, the *Yorktown* and the *Jamestown* were seized by the government of Virginia and made into gunboats. The *Roanoke* fared much better, as she was in northern waters at the commencement of the conflict and was thus safe. The U.S. government chartered it to transport federal troops. Later, it was used for commercial purposes on a route between New York, Havana, and New Orleans. Its security did not last; it eventually fell prey to Confederate privateers and was destroyed. In 1862, the company was rehabilitated and grew, but because of competition from two other steamship companies, it eventually sold out to the Old Dominion Steamship Company, which continued to use some of its steamers and used the name of one of the old steamers, the *Roanoke*. The new ship served Old Dominion well from 1872–99 before it was sold. See R. E. Prince, *Norfolk Southern Railroad Old Dominion Line and Connections* (Millard, Nebraska: R. E. Prince, 1972), 214.

18. Letter of William Wood and Charles Kingston to George Teasdale dated 29 May 1888, MS 16 (25 June 1888): 414–15.

19. The excellent treatment of the Saints by the Guion Line seems in large part due to the superb service of a Mr. Gibson, who is praised repeatedly in the immigrant accounts. For more information on the Guion Line, see “Rise and Fall of the Guion Line,” *Sea Breezes* 19 (1955): 190–216.

20. John S. Stucki, *Family History of John S. Stucki* (Salt Lake City: Pyramid Press, 1932), 131–34.

21. Reminiscences and diary of James J. Chandler, LDS Church Archives, 104.

22. Letter from Levi Naylor to George Teasdale dated 4 September 1888, MS 50 (24 September 1888): 620.

23. Letter from Lars S. Anderson, et al., MS 51 (22 July 1889), 460.

24. Diary of Thomas E. Ricks, LDS Church Archives, 211.

25. Letter from Henry E. Bowring, MS 50 (30 July 1888): 491.

26. Diary of Henry Charles Eddington, vol. 2, 11 May 1888, LDS Church Archives, 71.

27. “Mormons to Arrive,” *Public Ledger*, 5 June 1890.

28. MS, “Correspondence from John H. Hayes,” dated 13 June 1890, 52 (7 July 1890): 426–27. *Chataigne’s Directory of Norfolk and Portsmouth, 1888* (n.p.: J. G. Chataigne & Co.), 462 lists Joseph E. Toms as a clerk for the N & W RR with his house located at 88 Chapel. *Chataigne’s Directory of Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Berkley, 1890–91* (n.p.: J. H. Chataigne, compiler and publisher), 304 lists Toms as the chief clerk for the N & W RR with the same home address. He likely was the agent that Hayes refers to in his correspondence.

29. *The Public Ledger* vol.27, no.38 (16 September 1889), 1. A local Lynchburg newspaper reported the following day that four railroad employees were injured and eight passengers were injured from a group of 165 Mormon immigrants. A veteran employee for the Norfolk & Western Railroad, awed by the fact that there was no loss of life in this accident, reported that “it was the most remarkable accident in this respect in his experience” *The Daily Virginia* (17 September 1889), 1.

30. William P. Payne, "From England to Utah," MS 51 (14 October 1889): 644–46.
31. Diary of Joseph Eckersley, 4 June 1890, LDS Church Archives, Book C, vol. 3, 126.
32. Ray Jay Davis, "Antipolygamy Legislation," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, et.al. (New York: Macmillian Publishing Company, 1992), 1:52–53.
33. David F. Boone, "Perpetual Emigrating Fund," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 3:1075–76.
34. "Pretty Mormon Girls: An Immense Amount of Moral Persuasion Used to No Purpose," *Public Ledger*, 2 October 1890, 4.
35. *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), Official Declaration—1, 291-92; Paul H. Peterson, "Manifesto of 1890," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:852–53. A few days after this official declaration to end polygamy was publicly declared, the *Public Ledger* printed an article titled "Surplus Mormon Wives Cared For" (10 October 1890), 2, in which this issue was again brought to the attention of the citizens of Norfolk.
36. The British Mission compiled statistics from three general areas: Great Britain, Scandinavia, and Switzerland and Germany. For annual statistics for years listed above, see MS 52 (17 March 1890): 174–75; MS 53 (9 February 1891): 86–87; MS 54 (8 February 1892): 86–87; MS 57 (21 March 1895): 182–83. The British Manuscript History kept private historical records, and minutes of the British Mission document 733 total Latter-day Saint immigrants and a small company coming to America on twenty-six voyages for the year 1891. Unfortunately, only the Petterson family of four, for the date of 18 June 1891, and an individual named Maria Wuthrich, noted on the date of 30 November 1891, are mentioned by name. See British Manuscript History, LDS Church Archives, 1891 for a list of each of the voyages.
37. As recently as 1 December 1999, the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued a letter reiterating the policy of encouraging world-wide members to strengthen the Church in their homelands and discouraging immigration to the United States. See *LDS Church News*, which is published by the *Deseret News* in Salt Lake City (11 December 1999): 7.
38. George J. Svejda, *Castle Garden as an Immigrant Depot, 1855–1890* (National Parks Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1968), 143–46.
39. "Ellis Island," a brochure produced by the U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service and currently distributed to visitors at Ellis Island. Since 1994, Latter-day Saint volunteers have donated millions of hours in digitizing records from Ellis Island, which will help millions of Americans in tracing their ancestors. See "LDS Scene," *Ensign* (February 1999): 80.
40. There appear to be more voyages that passed through Norfolk after 1890, as evidenced by the British Mission Manuscript History for the date of 30 April 1896 (LDS Church Archives). This entry notes that a company of fifty-two LDS emigrants left Glasgow, Scotland, along with fourteen returning elders "bound for Utah." Among the returning missionaries was Joseph Buttle. The *Deseret Weekly* 52 (23 May 1896): 721 reported the missionary labors of Elder Buttle upon his return to Salt Lake City and noted, "Elder Buttle . . . sailed from Glasgow on the *Furnessia*, leaving the Clyde [River] on April 30. The ocean voyage was pleasant, as was also the railway trip from Norfolk to this city. The route followed was via New York, the journey from the latter place to Norfolk being by steamer." The author is currently working with post-1890 Mormon immigration history and is hopeful that other LDS companies passing through Norfolk will be identified.

41. This southern hospitality was extended to me during my research in Virginia. The author wishes to thank the Mariners' Museum for providing me with funding and assistance as its Wilkinson research fellow for 1999. Sincere gratitude is also expressed to Peggy Haile, the Norfolk City historian and librarian at the Norfolk Public Library, and Marian Rudd, a volunteer at this library who spent many hours assisting me with my research.