

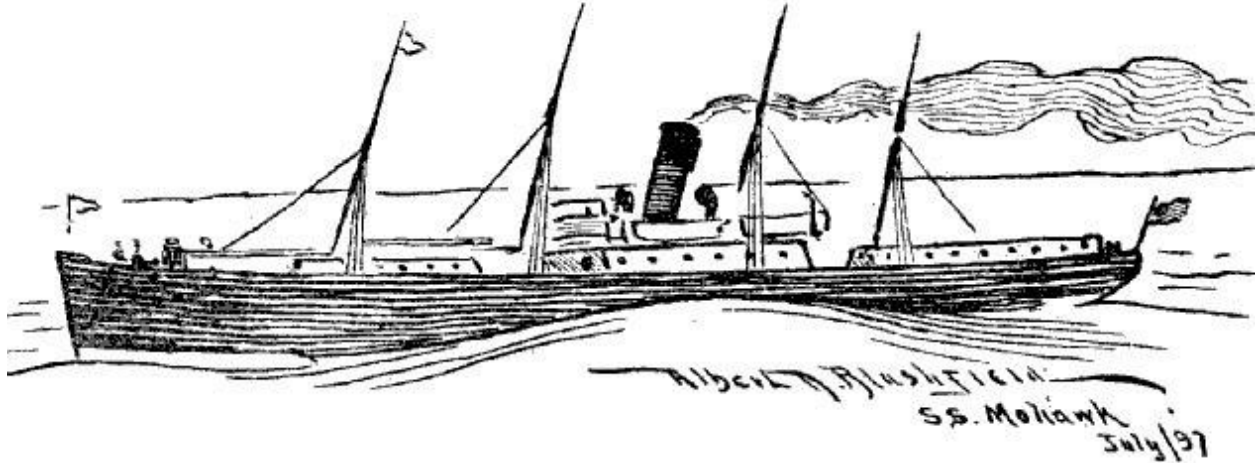
Sailing with the Atlantic Transport Line 1897 – 1898



Lemuel Potwin and his wife Julia (above) traveled to Europe for a protracted business trip in July 1897 and returned home in September of the following year. They sailed with the Atlantic Transport Line for both ocean crossings.

The tour was obviously a major event for them. The couple kept a journal chronicling their travels and determined that when one of them died, the other would publish it "for the benefit of family and friends." After Lemuel's death Julia duly published the journal privately in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1911. It contains the following account of their voyages:

FOURTEEN MONTHS ABROAD



S.S. MOHAWK

ATLANTIC TRANSPORT LINE

July 18, 1897.—Yesterday morning L. and I came on board the steamer after having spent two weeks of very hot weather with relatives and friends, and Friday night (July 16) at the Palace Hotel, New York. This is the beginning of our first voyage to Europe. L. said yesterday that it "seemed almost like beginning life over again." It is a great event in our lives and is undertaken with the hope that L.'s health will be improved thereby. The ocean has been smooth and the weather on deck delightful.

We have been to see the cattle and have seen the fins of a shark this afternoon.

There are fifty-eight passengers, all first-class, and I am finding interesting people all the while. We resemble one large happy family.

July 19.—It is difficult to realize that yesterday was the Sabbath—our first on the ocean. Last evening a pleasant song service was held. We were in a dense fog during the latter part of yesterday afternoon and during the night. All night long the dreadful whistle kept blowing in my ears. Now the fog has lifted and it is delightfully cool without being rough. We are thankful indeed for such smooth sailing.

July 20.—L. and I played shuffle-board this afternoon with Prof. Stoller and Mrs. Nicholson. It was a pleasant pastime which we enjoyed with our new friends.

July 21.—We are crossing the fishing banks about two hundred miles south of Newfoundland. These banks extend four hundred miles from the shore. The water is a hundred and eighty feet deep.

July 22.—Today the water is said to be three miles deep. All day long there have been fishing boats in sight—large schooners with small row boats attached. The ocean has been a most exquisite blue in color—not green. We are glad there was no fog on the banks. There usually is, they say.

July 23.—We are not all so happy today. The ocean is somewhat rough. I am holding on to the upper berth as I write. Quite a number are sea-sick. L. and I so far are exempt. We were influenced to cross the Atlantic by this line because the steamers are built purposely to prevent sea-sickness among the cattle. We also hope to escape.

July 24.—Last evening we could hear the man at the bow of the boat call out, "All's well—the lights are burning bright." This he does all night long, every half-hour, in response to a bell that is rung on the Captain's bridge where the man at the wheel is and where the captain and other ship's officers are. We saw the sailors practice on the life-boats this afternoon.

July 25.—This morning we attended "divine service" in the saloon, conducted by Captain Thomas Gates, who read the Episcopal service. A hymn for sailors was sung and for others. The President of the United States and Queen Victoria were prayed for. There was other singing. Miss Smythe, who played the piano, is an English lady on her way home from Florida. She sits next to me at our table. Each day we turn our watches about a half hour faster.

July 28.—I was the first person on deck this morning—before it was washed. The sea gulls were flying about and resting on the water. We are in the English Channel off the coast of Devonshire. During the night we passed the Scilly Islands. The Lizards were hidden by the fog. When the air became clear we saw the Eddystone light, opposite Plymouth, then a low strip of land, then the high promontories and cliffs beyond Dartmouth and Brixham. We were interested in the barracks of the coast guard; the farms, their hedge rows of hawthorn and crops ; the cliff on which is the signal station from which our arrival was telegraphed to London and elsewhere; the lighthouse on Start Point; the chalk cliffs, some of which are white; the half hidden houses of Dartmouth, and the brownish red sails of the trawlers fishing with their long lines. Can it be that we are looking upon the shores of England! We passed the Isle of Wight, which we saw through a veil of mist and could see, through a glass, the towns of Ventnor and Shanklin. This evening lights from watering places are visible. Sat in my wraps for a portrait drawn by Mr. Blashfield at the request of Miss Field who wished it as a souvenir of the voyage ! A horrid affair !

The Return Voyage, 1898

August 30. —We had been expecting to say goodbye to London and to Europe tomorrow but the steamer Cleopatra in which we were to sail is undergoing repairs. It has been a matter of anxiety to us inasmuch as they proposed to send us back on an old Cunard steamer, the Servia, which rolls badly, we are told, and would also be crowded. We feared sea-sickness in such a steamer and we are glad and thankful to secure stateroom (N0.40) on the Victoria, belonging to the Atlantic Transport Line, although it delays our going one week and will hardly enable L. to reach Cleveland in season for his college duties. The steamers are all crowded and we consider ourselves especially favored in this matter. Thank the Lord !! We are glad to have one more week in London.

STEAMSHIP VICTORIA — ATLANTIC TRANSPORT LINE

September 9.—At 12:30 yesterday Bessie whistled for a four wheeler and at 1:15 we left Bedford Place for the Liver-pool Street Station. There we took the train for the Royal Albert Docks at 2:15, where the S. S. Victoria was waiting for her passengers. We reached the dock about 4:30 P. M. Slept as well as usual last night. Our three trunks (two steamer trunks and one purchased in London shortly before leaving) fill our small state room. We cannot both dress at the same time.

There is a dense fog this morning. The fog whistles keep blowing. We are still in the English Channel. On our way to the station yesterday afternoon we took our last look at St. Paul's dome, which L. greatly admires. We sat out on deck together last night. Noticed the bright changing lights and the bridges as they opened for us one after another. L. and I are sitting in the music room or ladies' boudoir—a very pretty room. We have been going slowly on account of the fog. It is passing away. At one time this morning the boat almost ceased to move. A man lost his hat just now. It was blown into the water. We could hear the conversation through the open window. It was his only hat. The man had a cap in his trunk which he thought was not accessible.

Yesterday afternoon before our steamer started L. saw two men who had been fighting on the boat. One man caned another. The onlookers cried out, "Don't choke him," and tried to separate them. The man who did the caning said to the spectators, "You'd better find out what he has done before you sympathize with him," and then said to the man, "You have taken my wife away from me but you're welcome to her!"

Yesterday a Mrs. Crane came to our boarding house before we left. We took lunch with her and had some pleasant conversation about the Cranes. I was able to tell her some things about our ancestors that she did not know. She seemed sorry that we were going away. I was sorry that she had not come sooner. Her home is in San Francisco. Her husband has relatives in New York by that name.

September 11.—A severe fall in an unfastened chair in the dining room yesterday almost disabled me. It was early in the morning, before breakfast. I was seeking a place of shelter from the strong ocean breeze while my husband was dressing. Was on my back the most of yesterday with severe pain during the night. Today there is not much relief but I have found my way up into the music-room and am sitting here propped up by pillows—trying to write a little. From our state-room window this morning we saw the fine large steamer "Fürst Bismarck" with three smoke stacks. Ours has only one. The large steamer passed quite near us.

We are having rather rough sailing yesterday and today. Our boat pitches considerably. A lady has kindly loaned me her journal to read. It is written in literary style. My poor journal is nowhere. Dr. Raw, the ship's physician, considers the fall a serious one. The injury is in the right side. A rib is broken or fractured.

September 12.—We are spending our thirty-eighth wedding anniversary on the stormy ocean, for although it is not raining now it has been and the ocean is "choppy". Many are ill. One lady has eaten nothing for three days. This morning she fainted. There are many vacant places at the table. Only three were at the dinner table last night, which ought to have been full. I have spent most of the day on the sofa in our stateroom. Have still much pain from the injury received but the motion of the boat does not increase the suffering. We have great cause for thankfulness. If we were both ill as many of the passengers are it would be hard for us. My dear husband, who is always most kind and sympathetic, has been doubly so since the dreadful fall. Several times today he has called me his bride.

September 13.—The bad weather continues. It is the worst day of all, L. says, but we have eaten our breakfast in comfort.

Afternoon.—It has cleared and the air is fine and bracing, but quite cool. The ocean is more smooth so that the passengers begin to cheer up and look brighter. Some of them are always bright and greet us with kind words and happy faces. I am not trying to make acquaintances during this voyage.

September 14.—I think we are making rather slow progress on account of the head winds or head seas, as some call them. It is really cold. L. thinks it is too much so for comfort on deck. I am lying on my sofa bed with the port-hole just above me open. Early this morning while we were both asleep the water came through our porthole while the man was using the hose to wash the deck. The pillow and blankets were wet. We thought it was raining again. Fancy my sleeping in that way at home with the water coming in upon me. L. took towels and mopped up the water. Several inches of water just above me, held in by the wainscoting, was liable to overflow at any time and pour down upon me.

Yesterday afternoon we repacked our trunks more or less, preparing them for custom house examination. Nothing in them ought to be taxed, but we do not know what to expect. It is hard to work over the trunks in our little mite of a stateroom. Last evening we spent some time pleasantly in the music room.

Dr. Bacon, professor at Yale, sang for us and Professor Beach (also from Yale) gave us piano music. It is not easy work writing in my berth and holding up my poor tired neck and head. I find my feather pillow which we bought at Eisenach a blessing. The berth pillows are very hard. I saw last night through the porthole the bright light from a passing steamer. It was some distance from us and looked like a beautiful star on the water.

September 15.—It is very cold this morning. We slept with our porthole closed and woke to find our boat rolling. We greatly wondered at it as the water looked less rough, but soon found that we were on the Banks of Newfoundland, which caused the rolling. Racks were on the breakfast tables this morning. I had not quite finished my breakfast when Miss Yates came in to tell us that there were whales in sight. L. and I hurried out to see them and had good views of them, spouting and all. We saw the tail of one high in the air. We were pleased to see them but disappointed that we did not see the iceberg which was in view about five o'clock this morning.

A bugle calls us to our meals, which is quite musical. When we first came on board the steamer we made no effort to secure seats at the table. The result was that a few of us were obliged to eat at a second table. I told the steward that it would not do for my husband to have his meals so late, especially the dinner, as we should hardly get through eating before bed time. They decided to give us our meals before the others. It is called the first table, but L. says "the second table eats before the first."

We watched the sun set behind a bank of clouds in the music room last night. I spent the larger part of yesterday there lying down. Enjoyed the singing in the music room last evening. L. sits here in our state room fast asleep.

September 16.—Sat up on deck with L. yesterday after-noon. Again we watched the sun set in the ocean. It was a beautiful sight. There were fine clouds afterwards. The weather was cold yesterday—uncomfortably so. Dr. Bacon sang for us last night "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep," a grand song which I was fond of in my younger days.

September 17.—The weather has moderated and has become quite warm and oppressive. During the most of yesterday the atmosphere was heavy, especially during the latter part of the day. The water became quite smooth and we thought we should reach New York in fine season. While at dinner, however, (about six o'clock) there was a sudden change. The boat began to rock. We ate our dinner comfortably, but those who came after us did not fare so well. I was told that they left the table in "droves." Many who were previously ill and had recovered were down again. This was the beginning of a gale or squall which lasted three or four hours. I felt somewhat alarmed, not quite trusting our single screw boat, but it carried us bravely through. People tottered about as if they were drunk. We spent the larger part of the evening in the music room, our state room being very close, as the chief steward had all the port-holes closed tight. We took our camp chairs into the passageway and sat there awhile. Before going down the stairs I went out on deck and stood for a short time. It was delightful. The rain was over and the stars were shining. After a while our porthole was opened on condition that our door should not be locked during the night. I awoke early in the morning (it seemed like night) to see a man standing over me. He was closing the porthole again preparatory to the washing of the deck. It is very close and warm this morning. L. has been fanning me while I have been writing. He has been sitting close by me in our stateroom. It is so small and we are so crowded that we cannot sit in any other way. My poor old pen is worn out and sticks in the paper as I write. It has nearly done its work.

Our bugle is calling us to lunch. L. has just gone and said, "I suppose you will come along when you get ready." There is some fog this morning. The boat is going smoothly. It is thought we will arrive in New York on Monday morning.

Later.—It is between four and five in the afternoon. We went suddenly into another fog. The fog whistle has been sounding nearly all the afternoon. I find that seamen dread fog more than a storm. They consider that the time of greatest danger and I am told that they do not so much fear meeting large boats as smaller ones. The large boats are less likely to go out of a beaten track. I think very few of the passengers have enjoyed the voyage. The weather has been too cool. L. has been on deck very little. As for me, the injury that I received so soon after coming on board the steamer would have prevented my staying much on deck even if the weather had permitted, but I have been able to sit up considerably during the voyage with the

aid of one or two pillows.

September 18.—If all goes well our voyage will soon be over. All on board will be glad, I think. The boat is rocking. I can scarcely write, and yet these boats are supposed not to rock. For the purpose of steadiness they are built with practically square shaped bottoms, are slightly rounded on the sides, and are fitted with bilge keels, one on each side, below the water line. We were in a fog all night and have been nearly all day. Now and then it lifts a little. This morning Miss Yates came down to our room to tell us that there were porpoises in sight. We hurried up the stairs and out on deck to see them. I took my far-seeing glasses and threw a shawl hastily about me. There they were, quite near. I had feared they would be gone. It was a wonderful sight ! They jumped out of the water and over the waves as though they were having a merry time and I really think they were. I thought they were four or five feet long. L. and I were both delighted to see them.

A religious service was held this morning in the music room. Last night a comic court scene was acted in the dining room—"The Breach of Promise Case." I was there a short time, but grew weary and left the room.

After dinner.—I am sitting in the music room. We have been watching the sunset. L. went up on deck (the highest deck) to see it, but soon returned with the words, "the clouds on the horizon were too much for it." However, we enjoyed it, the last sunset on the ocean ! The fog has gone and we expect to find ourselves in New York to-morrow morning ! It has been a delightful afternoon, warm and breezy. L. has been able to stay on the highest deck with Professor Beach without an overcoat. He has loaned me his pen for almost the last writing in my journal. The Captain sat at our dinner table tonight. Young ladies and subordinate officers who frequently have some merriment were quiet.

While writing the above a gentleman in the room who, was looking out of the window called to us, "Want to see the pilot boat?" We hastened out on deck and saw a large two-masted sailing vessel coming towards us. A large flag was flying from the highest point. Our ship stopped. The pilot left his vessel in a small boat which we watched as it approached us. I feared it would be swallowed up by the waves. We looked with interest at the pilot as he seized hold of the rope ladder and climbed into our steamer. He was cheered as he stepped on board. Now we are in his hands and feel safe.

I have just been out to see land ! I could see lights on the shore quite distinctly through my far-seeing glasses. How beautiful they were ! Those on the right are on Coney Island and Manhattan Beach. On the left they are on the high shore of Staten Island. The red lights are beautiful, but the most striking one is the exceedingly brilliant flash-light. We have dropped anchor off Staten Island and near one of the forts that guard the harbor. Now that all is quiet and the steamer will go no farther until tomorrow morning, I will retire to my narrow sofa-bed. Breakfast is to be at half-past six tomorrow morning. The quarantine officer is coming on board early in the morning to inquire after our health.

September 19, 1898,—Our steamship Victoria reached the wharf about ten o'clock this morning. Much to our relief the custom officials when informed of my condition did not open anything.