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## GEORGE RAMSDEN, THE GUION LINE, AND THE MORMON IMMIGRATION CONNECTION

*Fred E. Woods*

In the late nineteenth century, over forty thousand Latter-day Saints crossed the Atlantic Ocean to gather in Utah upon a dozen steam vessels owned and operated by the Guion Line, a British shipping company.<sup>1</sup> Spearheaded by Stephen B. Guion and his business partners John H. Williams and William H. Guion, the enterprise was registered in 1866 as the Liverpool and Great Western Steamship Company, though it was commonly known as the Guion Line.

Stephen Barker Guion, a native American born in 1819, moved to Liverpool in 1851 to work for the Black Star Line, where he had previously partnered with Williams and Guion, who specialized in immigrant transportation from Liverpool to New York. Fifteen years later, though his colleagues were relocated to New York, Guion was stationed in Liverpool, where he served as the primary representative for the company. Not only was the name Guion Line strongly influenced by Stephen's mere presence in England, it is also asserted that the title sprung from his request that all maritime employees wear shirts with his name on them.<sup>2</sup> While Stephen B. Guion's character grew in familiarity and respect among the community, so too did his business; both the Latter-day Saints and shipping industry held the Guion Line in high regard.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Conway B. Sonne, *Saints on the Seas: A Maritime History of Mormon Migration 1830-1890* (University of Utah Press: Salt Lake City, 1983), 117, 173.

<sup>2</sup> "Rise and Fall of the Guion Line," *Sea Breezes*, vol. 19 (1955), 190.

<sup>3</sup> This may be evidenced by the fact that the *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* (hereafter cited as MS) sent out a notice of his death in Liverpool at the age of 66. Among other things, the article noted, "On the announcement of his death flags were hoisted half mast at the Town Hall and police buildings, and also at most of the steamship companies' offices, as a mark of respect to his memory. Mr. Guion was well and favorably known as a man of honor, integ-

This esteemed shipping line could readily be identified by the fact that most of the line's vessels were named after American states, though the ships were British by law.<sup>4</sup> The Guion steam vessel *Wyoming* alone made thirty-eight voyages—amounting to the transportation of over ten thousand Mormon passengers. This represents a considerable chunk of some ninety thousand Mormon immigrants who traveled to America in the nineteenth century, and about ninety-eight percent of those who went by steam.<sup>5</sup> The vessels themselves were not only impressive, but perhaps their greatest attribute was their main shipping agent, Mr. George N. Ramsden.

Ramsden was born and raised in Huddersfield, Yorkshire, England in 1831.<sup>6</sup> He and his wife, Ellen [Hellen], also from Yorkshire, and had eight children.<sup>7</sup> In 1853, he moved to Liverpool to supervise the

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rity, and great business capacity. Our own intimate relations with the Guion S. S. Company, in connection with our emigration business, which have been so long extended and mutually pleasant and satisfactory, invest Mr. Guion's death with more than common interest." See "Death of Mr. Guion," MS, vol. 47, no. 52 (December 28, 1885), 822. His obituary, *Liverpool Daily Post*, December 21, 1885, notes that S. B. Guion was "a man of stern will, of keen judgment and of daring enterprise. . . . He was of singularly upright character." The *Liverpool Courier* for this same date, in a notice titled "Death of Mr. S. B. Guion," noted that Guion "may be said to have been one of those pioneers of the steam navigation which has been so perfected and worked such a revolution in ocean travelling as to justify Lord Palmereton's happy remark that we have at last bridged the Atlantic."

<sup>4</sup> George Chandler, *Liverpool Shipping: A Short History* (London: Phoenix House, 1960), 122–23.

<sup>5</sup> Conway B. Sonne, *Saints on the Seas*, eds. S. Lyman Tyler, Brigham D. Madsen (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983), 17:173.

<sup>6</sup> 1861 England Census, database, Ancestry.com (<http://ancestry.com>; accessed 4.9.2008). Appreciation is expressed to Professor Kip B. Sperry at Brigham Young University for his help in researching the Census Records and Death Register used in this article.

<sup>7</sup> 1871 England Census, database, Ancestry.com (<http://ancestry.com>; accessed 4.9.2008). In the 1861 and 1871 Census Records, Ramsden's wife is listed as Ellen. Yet in the 1881 Census Record, her name is listed as Hellen. At this time, the Ramsden family was living in the town of Egremont, in the district of Wallasey, near Liverpool. As noted on the 1881 Census, they were living in the "Ecclesiastical Parish or District of St. Johns Egremont."

passenger shipping business of the *Black Ball Line*, where he worked for a number of years and was gained the experience he would later need to take on a more active role in managing the Guion Line.<sup>8</sup>

The beginning of Ramsden's warm relationship with the Mormons began on May 13, 1869 when he met with LDS British Mission President Albert Carrington, in Liverpool. Here, an arrangement was made for the Trans-Atlantic conveyance of a company of Mormon converts aboard the *Minnesota*.<sup>9</sup> According to their plan, the Saints boarded the *Minnesota* in Liverpool on June 1, 1869. The "British Mission Manuscript History" records, "On their arrival on board they were provided with tea, and everything was done by the manager, Mr. G. Ramsden, for the comfort of the Saints. They had the best part of the steamer entirely for themselves and could use the aft part of the ship in common with the cabin passengers."<sup>10</sup>

Five years later, European Mission President Joseph F. Smith found he could secure a better financial deal with a different shipping firm than what the Guion Line was offering. Therefore, Ramsden, whom Smith defined as "a very shrewd, keen man, with both eyes open to business,"<sup>11</sup> quickly made a counteroffer to keep the Latter-day Saints' business. This proposal affected the entire shipping conference cartel, which decided to permit the Guion Line to lower the rates of

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<sup>8</sup> "The Late Mr. George Ramsden," *The Liverpool Courier*, May 27, 1896, further notes that he lived on Church Street in Egremont. *Gore's Directory for Liverpool and Environs* for 1859, 211, has Ramsden listed as an emigration agent living at 25 Hunter Street. Nearly a decade later, *Gore's Directory for Liverpool and Environs* (Liverpool, 1868), 998, has Ramsden living at 55 Church Street, Egremont.

<sup>9</sup> "British Mission Manuscript History," vol. 24 (1869-1871), Church History Library (hereafter cited as CHL), Salt Lake City, May 13, 1869.

<sup>10</sup> "British Mission Manuscript History," vol. 24 (1869-1871), CHL, June 1, 1869. However, the Guion Line did not provide food at Hull for its transmigrant European passengers as other shipping lines did. This is one way the Guion Line was able to cut the cost of the trip.

<sup>11</sup> Letter of Joseph F. Smith to Franklin D. Richards, September 9, 1874, Joseph F. Smith Letterbook, 122, CHL.

Mormon passengers only.<sup>12</sup>

The extraordinary relationship between George Ramsden and the Latter-day Saints was not only kept alive, but lasted for a quarter of a century. In praise of the trust he enjoyed with the Saints, British Mission President Anthon H. Lund pointed out that Ramsden worked for decades with the Church in absence of a written contract.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, by 1880, the entire maritime industry held the Guion Line in great esteem inasmuch as it had “never lost a life” during its shipping years.<sup>14</sup> Not only did the sea-going Saints receive exceptional service, but they could travel in peace, confident of the Guion’s impeccable safety record. In addition, the successful conversion from sail to steam on the journey westward significantly reduced travel time to America.<sup>15</sup> Rams-

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<sup>12</sup> Richard L. Jensen, “Steaming Through: Arrangements for Mormon Emigration through Europe, 1869–1887,” *Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 9 (1982), 7. In a letter written by Joseph F. Smith to William Burton, August 13, 1874, Joseph F. Smith Letterbook, 58–59, CHL, Smith told of Ramsden’s bold efforts in breaking with the Liverpool “Shipping Conference,” to offer a low bid on prices to keep the Mormon immigration business. In addition, several entries in the Diary of Joseph F. Smith, April–May 1874, Joseph F. Smith Papers, Church History Library, make reference to business dealings with Ramsden during this period. See for example Smith’s entries for April 9, 17, 23, May 1–2. Furthermore, Smith wrote to W. C. Haines of the integrity of Ramsden and noted, “I believe he is as good as his word.” See Joseph F. Smith August 11, 1874 letter to W. C. Haines, Joseph F. Smith Letterbook, 61–64, Church History Library. In this same year Ramsden also showed his vigilance through a memo he sent Joseph F. Smith, informing him that a family of six had not been allowed to emigrate from England because one of the children had measles. See Memo of George Ramsden to Joseph F. Smith, June 26, 1874, Joseph Fielding Smith Papers, CHL.

<sup>13</sup> Richard L. Jensen, “Steaming Through: Arrangements for Mormon Emigration through Europe, 1869–1887,” *Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 9 (1982), 6–7.

<sup>14</sup> Edward Cloward, *The Steam-Ship Lines of the Mersey and Export Trade Register*, published annually, first issue (Liverpool, England: The Nautical Publishing Co., May, 1880), 17.

<sup>15</sup> The Guion Line shortened the length of the Atlantic crossing from 32–36 days to 10–16 days. (See the forthcoming doctoral dissertation by Nicholas J. Evans entitled “Aliens En Route: European Transmigration Through Britain, 1836–1914” (University of Hull). Though the Morris and Co. of Hamburg was instrumental in providing good service for the European Mormon mi-

den's trusted leadership, paired with the timely and safe voyage the Guion Line offered to Saints, created a truly thriving partnership and business.

Within this relationship, the Saints also found support and protection against those who wished to do them harm. For example, in 1879, U.S. Secretary of State William M. Evarts tried to campaign against the Mormon practice of polygamy by sending a circular to a number of European countries, ultimately hoping to halt Mormon immigration to America. "Several of Mr. Ramsden's friends engaged in the shipping business warned him of the risk he ran of having our people sent back should he attempt to land them in America; but this did not deter him from booking them. He saw how unjust this measure was, and knew that it had its origin in prejudice and religious intolerance."<sup>16</sup>

According to Anthon H. Lund, just as a consul put up posters announcing Mormons could not land in American ports, Ramsden came aboard a Guion ship and took charge: "In a towering rage [Ramsden] commanded the Consul to pull down the notice. The latter said he was acting [on] order from the government. Ramsden replied that the government had nothing to do with his ships, and that he did not ask a passenger what his religion was. His strong stand saved our emigration from being stopped."<sup>17</sup>

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grants from 1852 to 1869, its sailing vessels could not compete with the faster, more elaborate Guion steam vessels. Furthermore, its base was farther away from Liverpool than was Guion's.

<sup>16</sup> Anthon H. Lund, "A Good Friend Gone." MS, vol. 58, no. 23 (June 4, 1896), 360-62. After the circular surfaced, Ramsden was invited to meet with Mr. Packard, U.S. Consul at Liverpool, to discuss the issue of transporting Mormon immigrants. He and LDS missionary Elder Nicholson met with Packard and Ramsden again supported the Mormon position. See "The Emigration Question—Interview with United States Consul," MS, vol. 41, no. 38 (September 22, 1879), 600-02.

<sup>17</sup> Letter of Anthon H. Lund to Heber J. Grant, March 22, 1905, Lund Letterbooks, Church History Library, as cited in Richard L. Jensen, "Steaming Through: Arrangements for Mormon Emigration through Europe, 1869-1887," *Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 9 (1982), 7. In this same year, a letter

In addition to dedicated employees who helped the Mormons, the Guion Line also published annual guidebooks which covered a variety of information for Trans-Atlantic travel, suggesting that a well organized system was established. For example, in 1875, it advertised that its line was running to New York, Philadelphia and Boston, "TWICE A WEEK, Forwarding Passengers to all parts of the UNITED STATES and CANADA, at Low Rates. New York is the best, safest, and quickest route for all Passengers going to the United States of America." In addition, it provided rates and booking instructions: "Children under 12 years of age £2. Infants under 12 months 10s. Passengers can be engaged by a deposit of Two Pounds on each berth ... Passengers booked to all parts to the States, Canada ... and San Francisco at low rates."<sup>18</sup>

Steerage passengers were informed that upon arrival at New York, they would "[land] at the Government Depot, Castle Garden, where they will receive every information respecting the departure of trains, steamboats." Furthermore, all passengers were told that they would receive three quarters of water every day, "with as much provi-

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written by William Budge to Samuel Goddard, July 15, 1879, EM Letterbook, Church History Library, sheds light on the circumstances and plans the LDS Church had in dealing with the Guion Line: "Our arrangements with the [Guion] shipping company is to take only our people and they do not knowingly take others at our special rates on account of their contract with other shipping Companies [.] We however would like to send our people those who are interested in our Church and people ... likely to become so[.]"

<sup>18</sup> The Liverpool, London & Paris GUIDE AND CONTINENTAL INDICATOR FOR GRATUITIOUS DISTRIBUTION TO THE Passengers sailing by the Steamships of the **GUION LINE PROPRIETORS** (LA FORGE, HARTWICK, & DELILIE, 1875), 5, Mersey Maritime Museum Library, Liverpool, United Kingdom. Although the price for children under twelve is listed in the Guion travel guide at two pounds, the adult price is not mentioned. Yet an article published in the Latter-day Saints' *Millennial Star* this same year notes the concern the Saints had with regards to the price of an Atlantic passage being raised to five pounds. Therefore, we can assume that the average price of an adult Atlantic passage from Liverpool to New York was about five pounds during the period the Saints worked with the Guion Line. See L. J. N., "Departure of the Fifth Company, and prospective change of fares," MS, vol. 36, no. 36 (September 8, 1874), 569.

sions as they can eat, which are all of the best quality, and which are examined and put on board under the inspection of Her Majesty's Emigration Officers, and cooked and served out by the company's servants." Breakfast was to be served at 8:00 a.m., dinner at 1:00 p.m. and supper at 6:00 p.m. As far as sleeping arrangements were concerned, the Guion Guide stipulated that "married couples are berthed together. Single females are placed in the room by themselves, under charge of the stewardess."<sup>19</sup>

The Guion partners were also skilled in their business relationships with other shipping lines. For example, they wisely joined hands with the Wilson Line based in Hull, England, which met the need for bringing thousands of transmigrant Scandinavians (including thousands of Latter-day Saints) through Hull to Liverpool before engaging a Guion steamship across the Atlantic.<sup>20</sup> Both the Wilson and Guion Lines profited from their role as carriers of LDS Church members to Utah.

The Guion and Wilson Line provided a standard of steamer that surpassed most of its North Sea rivals.<sup>21</sup> An example of this superior service is evidenced by the Guion Line's hiring of Charles Maples, a Hull-based emigration agent who met migrants upon their arrival in port and escorted them safely to the railway station.<sup>22</sup> Maples, like many

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<sup>19</sup> Guion Line Guide, *ibid.*, 3-7.

<sup>20</sup> For more information on the story of LDS Scandinavian transmigration through the British Isles, see Fred E. Woods and Nicholas J. Evans, "Latter-day Saint Scandinavian Migration through Hull, England, 1852-1894," *BYU Studies*, vol. 41, no. 4 (2002), 75-102.

<sup>21</sup> In 1866, increasing alarm at the standard of accommodation provided for third-class or steerage passengers prompted the Hull Town Council to interview Charles Wilson, who was a member of Parliament representing Hull and the Managing Director of the Wilson Line. This action led to an improvement in the standard of accommodation provided for passengers carried by the Wilson Line but not by other European shipping operators.

<sup>22</sup> The 1881 England Census database, Ancestry.com (<http://ancestry.com>; accessed 4.9.2008) describes Maples as being born in Thorne, a town thirty miles west of Hull. Since his wife and daughter were born in Australia, it can be assumed that Maples gained his knowledge of the emigration business through his own personal experience in immigrating to Australia during the late 1840s or early 1850s. Maples had returned during the early 1850s and

of his counterparts, was noted by LDS transmigrants for the help he provided in assisting the foreign converts en route to Liverpool.<sup>23</sup> Organized groups, such as the Mormons, were able to gain a reduction in price by purchasing their tickets in bulk. Booking with experienced agents and trusted shipping operators ensured that the standard of service provided was high—yet the costs were kept at a minimum.<sup>24</sup>

The Guion Line treated the Saints a cut above other emigrants. One Mormon convert named Alma Ash explained:

At the Guion Office we were told that it was too late to go aboard and they would find us lodgings for the night for a reasonable sum. It was evident to us that the agents were looking more after the money they could get out of the emigrant than his comfort and well-being. We informed them that we wanted to find the docks and go aboard that night if

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established himself as an emigration agent working alongside Richard Cortis, Hull's leading emigration agent, who had been used by the Scandinavian Mission since the very first pioneers arrived in December 1852. Later, Cortis and Maples would combine their business, with Maples taking sole control after the death of the former.

<sup>23</sup> Latter-day Saint migrant Jesse N. Smith recalled, "Mr. Maples on behalf of the forwarding company furnished a meal for the emigrants and sent all forward the same evening to Liverpool." (*Autobiography and Journal of Jesse N. Smith*, 259, CHL.) Another passing migrant noted, "Mr. Maples, the Guion Agent, came on board and got the list of emigrants." (*Reminiscences and Journal of Hans Jorgenson*, 174, CHL.)

<sup>24</sup> Apparently, this line had many staff members who also provided excellent service. Another Guion agent who is praised in several Latter-day Saint immigrant accounts is a Mr. Gibson. See, for example, Letter of L. F. Monch, MS, vol. 50 (24 December 1888), 829; Letter of George Romney Jr., MS, vol. 51 (23 December 1889), 811; Letter of E. L. Sloan, MS, vol. 51 (25 November 1889), 749. However, the agency apparently did not avoid some criticism by the British government. According to government inspector W. Cowie, while other Atlantic passenger lines provided temporary lodging and meals for passing emigrants at Hull, the Guion Line transferred its passengers directly to the rails "so that those people are the greater portion of the day without a meal." (See *Reports Received by the Board of Trade and the Local Government Board Relating to the Transit of Scandinavian Emigrants through the Port of Hull*, 11 July 1882, 9.) Yet, for those traveling to Utah, such speed was often welcomed because it shortened the long journey time needed to transport converts from their homelands in mainland Europe to a new life in the Salt Lake Basin.

possible and asked them to direct us to 42 Islington, the office of the church in Liverpool, and which the Guion company were very familiar with. Just as soon as we mentioned 42 Islington they changed their tune and treated us very politely and directed us where to go.<sup>25</sup>

Notwithstanding, sometimes the Saints ran into obstacles that not even the Guion Line could avoid. For example, a letter from LDS New York emigration agent James H. Hart revealed that in late August 1886, forty-five Saints were detained and threatened to be sent back to Liverpool.<sup>26</sup> There was no valid reason for such an action, inasmuch as the Saints were not paupers or suffering from poor health conditions. Soon thereafter, the *Millennial Star* noted, “We learn from Mr. Ramsden that all the Saints who were detained in New York have been permitted to continue their journey Zionward, with the exception of a woman and three children.”<sup>27</sup>

A few days later, Daniel H. Wells of the Church First Presidency, wrote of this unfortunate incident and related to the other members of the Church’s foremost hierarchy (John Taylor and George Q. Cannon) the value of dealing with Mr. Ramsden and the Guion Line:

I trust that our emigrants will have no difficulty or interruptions in New York by the Government officials. The American Consul here has visited with Mr. Ramsden of the

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<sup>25</sup> Autobiography of Alma Ash [August 1885], 27, CHL.

<sup>26</sup> G. O., “Detention in New York of Some of Our Emigrants,” MS, vol. 48, no. 38 (September 30, 1886), 601–02.

<sup>27</sup> “The Fourth Company,” MS, vol. 48, no. 38 (September 30, 1886), 603. Three years later, Ramsden also reported, via telegram, a delay caused by a railway accident. Miraculously, none of the Latter-day Saints were killed. See “An Accident,” MS, vol. 51, no. 39 (September 30, 1889), 620–21. The term Zion in Mormon theology has reference to a place where God’s covenant people gather or to the righteous themselves. *Zionward* simply implies in this context that the immigrants were headed for Salt Lake City, Utah, which at this particularly period of time was the main gathering place for the Latter-day Saints. For more information on this topic, see A. D. Sorensen, “Zion,” in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992), 1624–26.

Guion line to make enquiries. ... Mr. Ramsden has written a favorable letter on the subject ... giving a statement of the number, age, sex of our Emigrants sent through them for the last few days and adding that the Mormon Emigrants are the most orderly, cleanly, intelligent and best to do for any class of Emigrants that they carry across the sea, and if they do not as a rule have much money, they have their fares paid through to their destination. ... It would be very unfortunate for us to be obliged to break our connection with Guion & coy as we cannot only get better terms with them than others, but their influence in our favor and assistance in many ways ... is of great value to us and I am quite sure will continue to be exercised in our favor when we may need it more than at the present.<sup>28</sup>

A number of accounts and letters published in the *Star* further attest to the excellent service Ramsden consistently gave to the Trans-Atlantic bound Saints. For instance, the statistics were compiled for the emigration report of 1874 noted, "It is very gratifying to us to state that the kind and agreeable arrangements as made by Mr. Ramsden, General Passenger Agent and Manager ... have been in every respect satisfactory." The report also mentioned the "courtesy and gentlemanly good feelings extended by [the] Captains."<sup>29</sup> The following year, C. C. Larsen and others wrote, "In Hull we were met by Mr. G. Ramsden, of Liverpool, ... a gentleman of first class business tact, whom we found ready and on hand to make all arrangements necessary for the comfort and convenience of forwarding our company."<sup>30</sup> Additionally, in a letter to European Mission President, Albert Carrington, Junius F. Wells wrote, "Please remember me to all of the brethren, and to Mr. Ramsden."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> September 1, 1886 letter of Daniel H. Wells to John Taylor and George Q. Cannon, EM Letterbook, 65–67, CHL.

<sup>29</sup> "Statistical Emigration Report for 1874," MS, vol. 36, no. 42, (October 20, 1874), 666.

<sup>30</sup> Letter of C. C. Larsen et al., to President Joseph F. Smith, MS, vol. 37, no. 27 (July 5, 1875), 428.

<sup>31</sup> Letter of Junius F. Wells to Albert Carrington, January 6, 1876, MS, vol. 38, no. 5 (January 31, 1876), 76. In another letter written by Adolph Anderson et al. to President George Teasdale, Teasdale was asked, "Please extend to Mr.

An 1877 telegram published in the *Millennial Star* further attests to the attention Ramsden continued to show to his Mormon clients after their voyage had ended: "By courtesy of G. Ramsden, Esq., of Guion & Co., we are informed that the S. S. *Wisconsin* arrived in New York at 4 a.m. on the 7<sup>th</sup> inst. All well."<sup>32</sup> In another notice titled "Departure," the writer noted, "Mr. Ramsden, of Guion & Co., met the company at Hull, and by his irrepressible force and indefatigable labor, aided materially in bringing them safely to Liverpool."<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, in preparation for an 1879 voyage on the *Wyoming*, it was said that Ramsden was unrelenting in his labors for making "all necessary arrangements for the comfort of the Saints, and in this he was highly successful. The portion of the vessel assigned to the company was fitted up in a manner highly commendable to his ability to render the situation as pleasant as possible."<sup>34</sup>

Later that same year, two other articles noted Ramsden's painstaking labor and commitment to provide excellent service to the Saints: "As usual, Mr. Ramsden and his aids were indefatigable in their efforts to provide for the well-being of the passengers, and the company were in fine spirits."<sup>35</sup> Further, "As usual, Mr. Ramsden, assisted by his aids, was on the alert to make matters agreeable and comfortable as possible on shipboard. His part in connection with seeing to the well-being of the people is always well and willingly performed."<sup>36</sup>

Nearly a decade later, the *Millennial Star* provided a composite testimony of the excellent treatment the Saints had received on their many Trans-Atlantic voyages with Mr. Ramsden and the Guion Line:

The Guion Company, whose steamships have carried our people across the ocean, have secured many eulogies from the companies of Saints emigrating for the uniform kind-

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Ramsden my personal thanks and appreciation for his courtesies extended." See "Correspondence," MS, vol. 52, no. 22 (June 2, 1890), 349.

<sup>32</sup> "Telegram," MS, vol. 39, no. 28 (July 9, 1877), 443.

<sup>33</sup> "Departure," MS, vol. 40, no. 26 (July 1, 1878), 411.

<sup>34</sup> MS, vol. 41, no. 16 (April 21, 1879), 251.

<sup>35</sup> "Third Company of the Season," MS, vol. 41, no. 26 (June 30, 1879), 412.

<sup>36</sup> MS, vol. 41, no. 36 (September 8, 1879), 571.

ness, care and consideration they have received at the hands of George Ramsden, Esq., their agent, and the officers of their excellent line of steamships. It would be impossible for emigrants to be treated with greater consideration, and they have freely expressed verbally and in writing to the captains and officers their appreciation of the treatment received.<sup>37</sup>

Notwithstanding such exceptional service, on Christmas day 1892, the *New York Times* reported that the Guion Line had “leased its pier to the White Star Line [which] was taken as an indication that the former company was going out of business. This was confirmed later in the afternoon by the Guion agents.” Although their agents did not want to discuss the details of this business transaction, it was clear that the line was definitely going out of business. The *Times* also noted in this article that the “Guion Line has been much affected by the attitude of the Government, as it has derived its principal revenue from its steerage business. Its entire fleet is now lying idle in Liverpool.”<sup>38</sup>

With its outdated fleet, the Guion Line simply could not compete with other shipping companies, although it managed to hold on for an additional year until the Guion Line Corporation was finally liquidated in 1894. Yet the outdated fleet was not the only problem which spelled financial disaster for the business. In this same year, the LDS Church hierarchy counseled that foreign converts “‘should, not be encouraged to emigrate until they are firmly grounded in the religion by labor and experience,’ and that those who were earning good wages and were in relatively favourable circumstances should not be encouraged to emigrate to this place, where labor is so scarce.”<sup>39</sup> This statement led to

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<sup>37</sup> “Our Emigration,” MS, vol. 48, no. 48 (November 28, 1887), 763–64.

<sup>38</sup> “Going Out of Business.” *New York Times*, December 25, 1892; ProQuest Historical Newspapers *The New York Times* (1851–2004), 5.

<sup>39</sup> Richard L Jensen, “The Gathering to Zion,” in V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss and Larry C. Porter, eds., *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles 1837–1987* (Solihull: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987), 189. Although this official statement was made by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, British converts continued to trickle into America at a steady rate until the

an even steeper decline in Mormon immigration business, which had already significantly subsided in the early 1890s, factors that certainly affected the decline in the Guion Line's revenue.

Nonetheless, when the Guion shipping business closed its doors, it went out with a global reputation for "quickness, regularity and safety of their passengers," having brought over a million people across the Atlantic without losing a single life by accident.<sup>40</sup> At this time of transition, Ramsden helped Latter-day Saint British Mission president, Anthon H. Lund, arrange for a transfer of business to the Allan Line, which changed its LDS base of operations that year from Liverpool to Glasgow, Scotland.<sup>41</sup>

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London Temple was erected in 1958. In fact, over a century after the 1894 statement, the First Presidency reissued an official policy regarding Latter-day Saints immigrating to the United States: "In our day, the Lord has seen fit to provide the blessings of the gospel, including the increased number of temples, in many parts of the world. Therefore, we wish to reiterate the long-standing counsel to members of the Church to remain in their homelands rather than immigrate to the United States." See The First Presidency, "Remain in homelands, members counseled," *Church News*, December 11, 1999, 7.

<sup>40</sup> "Rise and Fall of the Guion Line," *Sea Breezes*, vol. 19 (1955), 206, 209. It is an equally impressive fact that the Trans-Atlantic Latter-day Saint voyages had a perfect record of safety. Furthermore, all but one Mormon Pacific voyage arrived in safety in the 19th century. This is in sharp contrast to the fact that at least 59 non-LDS immigrant carrying vessels sank just between the years 1847-1853. See Conway B. Sonne, *Saints on the Seas: A Maritime History of Mormon Migration 1830-1890* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1983), 139.

<sup>41</sup> See the "British Mission Manuscript History," June 30, 1894, CHL. Although the Anchor Line is mentioned herein, not only for the date of June 30, but also for the dates of July 5-6 and September 20, 1894, most probably the Allan Line was the shipping company running from Glasgow at this time. This change rerouted Mormon converts from the Scandinavian and Swiss-German missions through the port of Leith to Glasgow, where they began the Trans-Atlantic voyage to New York. The Journal of Anthon H. Lund for the dates June 30 and 2, July 5-7, 1894, CHL, notes that arrangements were made by Lund, the British Mission President at this time, and converts were then rerouted to travel with the Anchor Line [Allan Line], based in Glasgow. President Lund made these new arrangements known to President Sundwall of the Scandinavian Mission, President Naegle of the Swiss German Mission and President Wilford Woodruff.

Two years later, on May 26, 1896, the reputable Christian businessman George Ramsden died at the age of sixty-five.<sup>42</sup> The following day, the *Liverpool Mercury* eulogized his life: “No man was more respected and admired than Mr. Ramsden. His attitude to all was consistently kind and courteous, which in business he proved himself a man of strong determination and commendable foresight. Doubtless his long illness was due to a great extent to the misfortunes which overtook the once flourishing Guion line.”<sup>43</sup> The *Liverpool Daily Post* added that he was “a man of great integrity, ability and determination [and] ... successful in securing and retaining for many years for his shipping company a contract with the Mormon elders for the conveyance of their emigrant proselytes, large numbers of whom were sent across the Atlantic. Brigham Young’s converts were then a flourishing source of revenue for this port.”<sup>44</sup>

Praiseworthy remarks were also made by Anthon H. Lund at the time of Ramsden’s death, noted in the *Millennial Star* under the title “A Good Friend Gone.” Publicly, he wrote to his readers that with the death of Ramsden, “Latter-day Saints lose one of their best friends, ... a man of integrity and honor.” Lund added, “The mutual confidence that has continuously existed between Mr. Ramsden and our people is shown by the fact that for the last thirty years they have transacted their

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<sup>42</sup> “The Late Mr. George Ramsden,” (May 27, 1896) notes, “Mr. George Ramsden ... died yesterday at his residence Church Street, Egremont. Mr. Ramsden, who was sixty-five years of age, had been unwell for a considerable time, his health having been seriously affected by the worry consequent on the collapse of the Guion Line. Mr. Ramsden was well known and universally respected in shipping circles, his geniality and kindly disposition having gained him hosts of friends.” The Death Register lists George at age 65 at the time of his passing and his wife’s death date at age 66. Drawing from the 1871 Census, which lists George as age 40 and Ellen [Hellen] as 43, it is reasonable to suppose that his spouse had died about two years before he did, though the Census records previously noted are not consistent in the age difference between George and Ellen [Hellen]. According to *Gore’s City Trade Directory for Liverpool*, 1894, at the end of his life, he was listed as the manager of the Fern House, at 51 Church Street, Egremont.

<sup>43</sup> “The Late Mr. G. Ramsden,” *Liverpool Mercury* (May 27, 1896).

<sup>44</sup> “Death of Mr. George Ramsden,” *The Liverpool Daily Post* (May 27, 1896).

business without any written agreement.” Furthermore, Lund noted although Ramsden “did not share the religious views of the Latter-day Saints, ... his business connections with them for so many years had convinced him of their honesty and integrity, qualities which he highly treasured, possessing them as he did in so high a degree.”<sup>45</sup>

Shortly after attending his funeral on Friday, May 29, 1896, Lund also privately recorded his feelings about Ramsden, his dear and trusted friend:

In the afternoon Bro. Burrows and I went over to the Wallesey Church to attend the funeral of Mr. Geo. Ramsden. We sent a wreath to him which cost ten dollars[.] I felt that in him we lose one of our best friends in this country. He has ever been on hand to help us and in spite of being called a jack mormon he has always taken our part. There was a large turn out. The hearse was full of wreaths but only one was nicer than the one we had sent. The parson read the service of the English Church. It was a cold formal burial not a word was spoken originally[.] I would have liked to had the same chance of speaking and would have liked to read the text ... (I Cor. 15.) His sons came up and shook hands with us. I do not think his family there was any who mourned his loss more than we.<sup>46</sup>

Although it has been over a century since his death, George Ramsden’s name certainly deserves to be held in high regard for his assistance in transporting nearly half of the Latter-day Saint converts across the Atlantic during the late nineteenth century. His example of integrity and trust certainly merit a page or chapter in Latter-day Saint history as one of the most loyal and admired friends of Mormonism.

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<sup>45</sup> Anthon H. Lund, “A Good Friend Gone.” MS, vol. 58, no. 23 (June 4, 1896), 360–62. For more information on Anthon H. Lund, see Jennifer L. Lund, “Out of the Swan’s Nest: The Ministry of Anthon H. Lund, Scandinavian Apostle,” *Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 29, no. 2 (Fall 2003), 77–105.

<sup>46</sup> Diary of Anthon H. Lund, May 29, 1896, private copy in possession of Jennifer L. Lund. Appreciation is expressed to Jennifer L. Lund, who is married to a great-grandson of Anthon H. Lund, for bringing this excerpt to the attention of the author.

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