



Crossing the Atlantic in 1635 Background

R. Carter Blaisdell, Black Mountain, NC, prepared the research for Angel Gabriel's "Crossing of the Atlantic in 1635" in 1997. He based his research on the 1635 diary of Rev. Richard Mather, a Puritan divine, and on a paper by J. Mason Burnham, presented in August 1985 at the 350th anniversary of the Angel Gabriel's crossing the Atlantic from Bristol, England, to Pemaquid Point, Maine.

Pemaquid, Maine, which had seen European planters [immigrants] from Europe as early as 1605, was a common destination for the Angel Gabriel, a 240-ton, 16-gun ship, built in 1614 for Sir Walter Raleigh for his voyages to Guiana, South America. Pemaquid Point and harbor is composed of black and gray granite rock.

After 1618 the ship was used for immigrant trade between England and America until 1635 when she was shipwrecked off Pemaquid Point on August 15, 1635, during The Great Colonial Hurricane. She was the first passenger ship until then to meet with catastrophe.

Angel Gabriel had won distinction for defeating three Spanish ships to defend the city of Bristol, England in 1631. Angel Gabriel left Thursday, June 4, 1635, from Bristol, England, harbor with four other vessels: the Diligence, Mary and Bess, who were headed for Newfoundland, and the St. James, who with 100 passengers was headed for Boston. Angel Gabriel's first stop was to be Pemaquid Point, Maine.

Stalled by unfavorable winds, the five ships waited 12 days at Milford Haven, Wales, and then with the aid of a freshening easterly wind, the five ships left Milford Haven and by noon were out of sight.

Angel Gabriel's last voyage was captained by William Andrews. Thirty (30) passengers came over on the last voyage:

1. Captain Robert Andrews, who settled in Ipswich's Chebacco Parish, where he had a house and family. He was made a freeman on May 6, 1635.

2. Thomas, John and Robert Burnham, three nephews of Captain William Andrews, being the sons of his sister Mary and her husband, Robert Burnham. The three nephews also settled in Chebacco Parish.
3. John Bailey, a weaver from Chippenham, England, settled in Newbury with his son and daughter. His wife and other children in England remained separated forever as the wife refused to risk the New England voyage, and Bailey would not return. However, in his will dated 1851, John Bailey left his wife twenty pounds sterling provided she come over.
4. John Cogswell, his wife, eight children, and servants William Furber and Samuel Haines migrated from Westbury, Wiltshire, England. Mr. Cogswell had recently sold his woolen business and all his property to settle in Ipswich where he received a town lot and a large grant of 300 acres in Chebacco Parish. Cogswell salvaged only a part of his freight from the wreck of The Angel Gabriel, although goods and spices valued at \$25,000 were aboard, a large sum for the 17th century.
5. William Furber departed Ipswich on expiration of his apprenticeship with John Cogswell. He moved to Dover, married and settled down.
6. Samuel Haines also left Ipswich on expiration of his apprenticeship and returned to England to marry and brought his wife back to Dover, where they also settled.
7. William Hook.
8. John Tuttle settled in Dover. Other Tuttle's immigrated in other in ships in 1635, but John Tuttle was always referred to as "John Tuttle who came in the Angel Gabriel."
9. Ralph Blaisdell, age 42, his wife Elizabeth Parker Blaisdell, and their son Henry Blaisdell, age 3. He was from Lancashire, England, the same area that Richard Mather and his family were from. Ralph first went to the southern Maine town of York, and within a few years was one of the first settlers of Salisbury, MA.
10. Henry Simpson, wife and children "planted" in York, Maine.

Two were lost on the voyage, and three during the August 15 Hurricane. Governor of New England, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, said that "planters" [immigrating colonial settlers] were "going to New England in heaps." South of Pemaquid, Maine, and east to Monhegan Island [the cradle of New England] were English settlements. North of there and inland were French settlements. People came to the New World for religious freedom and for the trade of furs, fishing and to own their own land.

The Ralph Blaisdell and Henry Simpson families were bound for York, on the coast of southern Maine. The other passengers were headed for points farther south in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, where they had relatives waiting for them. Rev. Richard Mather of Lancashire, England, on the James ship (which accompanied The Angel Gabriel from June 4 to July 4, 1635) had been removed from his Anglican Church in 1633 because of his nonconformist beliefs.

By April 1634 restrictions were placed on immigration and a system of searchers, who boarded outgoing ships looking for persons who were not licensed “to pass beyond the seas,” was instituted.

On May 23 “two searchers came on board the James, viewed the list of all passengers, ministered to us the oath of allegiance to all of a full age, viewed our certificates from the ministers of the parishes from which we had come, approved of the lists, and gave us licenses with their signatures and seals to pass the seas, cleared our ship for departure,” wrote Richard Mather in his diary.

Bristol city is about five (5) miles inland up the Avon River from the Severn Estuary where the wharves and merchant establishments were located. Kings Road was along a deep-water harbor at the mouth of the Avon River on the east side of the Severn Estuary, but with tides and contrary winds it was a most difficult channel to navigate.

Part I

Angel Gabriel Arrives at Bristol

The Angel Gabriel comes into Bristol, England, harbor, known also as the Kings Road on the east side of the Severn Estuary.

May 26, 1635, Angel Gabriel – 240 tons – enters Bristol harbor area and joins up with the James, much lighter – 110 tons, but can carry 100 passengers. The Angel Gabriel did not yet have its full complement of 30 passengers and cattle. May 27, 1635, Passengers from three boats came aboard The Angel Gabriel.

Sir Ferdinando Gorge was granted the Province of Maine in 1629 and was appointed Governor for New England in March 1635. He came on board the Angel Gabriel, asking the passengers about their country, occupation and calling of life. He expressed his good will and promised if he ever came to Massachusetts, he would be a true friend unto them. May 28, the cattle for the Angel Gabriel were brought on board.

While winds delayed departure, the immigrants had time to go ashore to wash and buy more oats and hay for the animals, and bread for themselves.

We assume that the Angel Gabriel's passengers were also inspected by two searchers as had the James on May 23. Richard Mather, a passenger on the James, said of the passengers on the ship Angel Gabriel, "Among them some loving and godly Christians that were glad to see us." Richard Mather is the father of Increase Mather [who later to became President of Harvard College] and grandfather to Cotton Mather, minister, scientist and scholar. The passengers met with each other several times until wind conditions would be right for departing:

The more heavily armed Angel Gabriel would help protect James on the high seas from pirates or in case of disaster. May 28, the Captain of the Angel Gabriel and some of her passengers came on board the St. James. Food brought on board: oats and hay for cattle, bread, victuals, water, milk, fowl, cheese, eggs, fresh fish. A typical meal on the Angel Gabriel consisted of mutton broil, turkey and good sack. When the wind blew strong and the waves were high, the ship bounced around. Many of the women and some children got seasick, dizzy and lightheaded, vomiting, and could scarcely stand or walk without falling unless they took hold of something.

Part II

Departure from Bristol, England, Harbor

June 4, Angel Gabriel – 240 ton and the James – 110 ton, along with the three ships bound for Newfoundland (the Diligence – 150 tons, the Mary – 80 tons, and the Elizabeth – 240 ton) departed Bristol's Kings Road and went as far as Lundy Island at the mouth of the Severn, where they dropped their pilots on June 9.

June 9, A Thursday, tacked north to Milford Haven, Wales. The passengers and crew bought "victuals, visited, went to church, held joint services with the "Gabriel" and other ships, and variously occupied 12 wind-bound days.

June 12, Near Hartford, a knight of the country, Sir James Parret, came on board. After conversing with the men, he lamented that "so many of the best people for upholding religion were removed and taken away" to New England. June 14, Second Sabbath since leaving Bristol. Many of the passengers from Angel Gabriel went to a church on shore at Nangle and heard two refreshing and "comforting" sermons from Rev. Jessop from Pembroke, a grave and godly man, who "had lost a good living, because of his non-conformity." His text was Psalm 91:11

June 18, one of the sailors, by the name of Jeffrey Cornish, of the James was put on shore by the ship's Captain for "drunkenness, blasphemy, brawling and cursing."

Monday, June 22 the two ships set sail from Milford Haven, where they had waited for the wind for 12 days, and by noon had lost all sight of land.

June 23, James and Angel Gabriel lost sight of the three ships bound for Newfoundland. "The Angel Gabriel is a strong ship, furnished with 14 pieces of ordinances [canons], and the James seamen desired Angel Gabriel's company. But Angel Gabriel was slow in sailing, and at times the James went with three less sails to let the Angel Gabriel stay with them," wrote Mr. Richard Mather in his diary. On the Angel Gabriel were found several children recovering from smallpox. Afterward they stayed for supper with Captain Andrews.

June 24, Seen porpoises [dolphins] leaping running near our ship. The James and Angel Gabriel pursued a Turkish Pirate ship, which had taken the Newfoundland-bound Mary captive, but could not catch them, so turned back onto their regular course.

June 28, Fourth Sabbath since leaving Bristol and first Sabbath on the high seas after leaving Milford Haven on June 22.

June 29, one of the seamen struck a great porpoise, and hauled it into the ship with ropes, about the size of a hog which would sell for 20-25 shillings. The flesh was fat and lean with color like a hog.

And when cut open, had liver, lights, heart and guts like that of a swine. It was like a sporting event for the women and children.

June 29, Captain Taylor of the James and Rev. Mather went on board ship the Angel Gabriel and found that several children were recovering from smallpox. Many women and children had been seasick as well. We remained for supper with them and had “good cheer, mutton boiled and roasted, roasted turkey, and good sacke.”

June 30, we saw porpoises and crampushes [whales] as big as an ox, puffing and spewing up water as they went by the ship.

July 4, Mr. Mather wrote, “We saw the truth of Scripture, Psalm 107:23-31. ‘Some went out to sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters. They saw the works of the Lord, His wonderful deeds in the deep. For He spoke and stirred the tempest, that lifted high the waves. They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. ‘They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits end. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He brought them out of their distress. (v. 28) He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and He guided them to their desired haven. Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for men.’”

Part III

James Goes Ahead of Angel Gabriel

July 4, some were very seasick. None could go or stand on the deck, because of “the tossing and tumbling of the ship.” This was the last day passengers on the Angel Gabriel saw the ship, James. The James went on ahead, concerned that the hay or cattle could not hold out if they slowed up to let the Angel Gabriel stay even with them. The James was now able to go full sail.

July 7, A bird was sighted, like that of a swallow, called a Petteril, which follows ships against foul weather. Another whale is spotted as big as an ox.

July 18, Many Bonnyetoes leaping and playing about the ship. This is a fish a little larger than a cod, but less than a porpoise.

July 19, Seventh Sabbath since leaving Bristol. The wind was so strong that the preacher’s loudest voice could not be heard while leading the services. July 20, many dolphins were playing about the ship; many sea fowl, hagbats and others.

July 21, the seamen caught a Bonnyetoe and opened him up on the deck. It was as good a tasting fish one could desire.

July 22, An abundance of sea fowl like Pitterels and hagbats.

July 23, an abundance of porpoises and crampushes [whales], leaping and spewing up water about the ship. The seamen thought that the ship was near land, because they noted a change in the color of the water, but with their sounding with a line of 160 fathoms, they still could not find bottom.

July 24, Exceedingly cold, like a winter December day. Saw fish twice as big as an ox swimming alongside of the ship. We saw mighty whales, spewing water like chimney smoke, making the sea about them white and hoary as in Job 41:32. Behind him he leaves a glistening wake; one would think the deep had white hair. Mr. Mather no longer wondered if the body of Jonah could be in the belly of a whale. At evening the seamen sounded and found ground at 50 fathoms.

July 25, Seamen sounded again and found no bottom, concluding that the day before they had been on the Newfoundland banks. The captain estimated that the ship had 250 leagues to go before reaching its destination.

July 25, the passengers and crew feasted on three porpoises, struck by the seamen, and seasoned with salt, pepper and vinegar. The fat was like fat bacon and the lean meat like bull beef.

July 26, Eighth Sabbath since leaving Bristol. The wind blew the rain so strong that the rain leaked through the sides of the ship and got the bedding wet.

July 28, so hot that people and cattle afflicted with faintness, sweating and heat, but the goodness of our God caused a north by east wind to come up about noon, which relieved the heat and helped us forward on our way.

July 28, A bluebird landed on the ship, which meant we were not far from land.

July 30, at about sunset we saw with admiration and delight innumerable multitudes of huge crampushes [whales] rolling and tumbling about the sides of the ship, spewing and puffing up water. Also seen were Bonnyetoes and lesser fish, "so marvelous to behold are the works and wonders of the Almighty in the deep."

August 1, Seamen sounded and found land at 60 fathoms. Another land bird came and landed on the sails of the ship. Seamen fished and caught cod as fast as they could hale them in. August 2, the ninth Sabbath since leaving Bristol.

August 3, at about three in the morning, a strong storm and tempest of wind and rain came to us. The seamen let down the sails. The ship was tossed with fearful mountains and valleys of water, as if we could have been overwhelmed and swallowed up. This did not last long. The wind was against us, so we floated along the coast. There was also great fog and mist all day. We did gain an abundance of cod and halibut. Many mackerel were caught. Saw multitude of great whales, which we were now used to seeing.

August 9, the tenth Sabbath since leaving Bristol.

August 14, Angel Gabriel made her landfall off Monhegan Island during the early morning hours. Captain Andrews tackled Angel Gabriel safely to anchor in Pemaquid Harbor by early evening, probably in the cove opposite Shurt's Fort, present day Fort William Henry.

Part IV

Arrive Pemaquid Point, Destroyed by Hurricane

August 15, Early Saturday morning, Angel Gabriel, anchored to the north, was caught by the Great Colonial Hurricane. Three or four passengers lost their lives. One seaman was drowned. Most of the cattle perished, and the passengers lost their goods.

From Richard Mather's diary: "The Angel Gabriel, at anchor at Pemaquid, was burst in pieces and cast away in the storm, and most of the cattle and other goods with one seaman and three or four passengers did also perish therein, besides two of the passengers who died on the way, the rest having their lives given them for a prayer."

Epilogue

[We now know that in the early fall storm tracks come from the Caribbean, rotating counterclockwise, bringing great quantities of rain from the sea on their leading edge. The cyclonic winds can get up to 200 mph and are capable of huge destruction. See “The Great Colonial Hurricane” under Angel Gabriel.]

Angel Gabriel had sailed 1000 leagues or 3000 miles from England. The trip took ten (10) weeks and one (1) day after leaving Bristol, having departed Bristol on June 4 and landing at Pemaquid August 14, 1635.

Passengers remained healthy by walking the deck in the fresh air and having a variety of food. They had good and wholesome bread and beer, salt fish and salt beef, bacon or buttered peas, buttered bag pudding from currants and raisins, pottage beer and oatmeal, water pottage well buttered. After the storm “we saw many mighty trees rent in pieces from the storm. Others were uprooted.”

Down the coast in the Massachusetts Bay on Marvil Head 23 colonists and seamen had been swept into the sea and perished, except one man and his wife, who survived to report the news. The Angel Gabriel of Bristol, England, was the first ship to carry passengers to the New World and suffered a catastrophic fate. – end –