



A Teapot's Journey to Prairietown

Conner Prairie Interactive History Park

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A Teapot's Journey to Prairietown: Words to Know!

- Goods-** items made to be bought and sold
Canal- a human-made waterway
Cargo- freight transported by ships
Textile- woven fabric
Voyage- a long journey to a faraway place
Bustle- to be busy with activity
Jostle- to bump, push, and shove
Inspect- to look at something carefully
Practical- useful
Community- a group of people with shared interests who live in the same area
Hospitality- treating guests in a warm and friendly way
Cloak- a loose outer piece of clothing; a cape
Brooch- a decorative pin; a piece of jewelry
Extravagant- very fancy and expensive

Have you ever taken a journey to a faraway place? Have you ever travelled over land or sea to a new home that is different from the place where you started? I have. I have made a voyage many people only dream about.

My name is Tibby, and I am a teapot. I came to life in a place called Staffordshire, England. England is a country far across the wide Atlantic Ocean. In Staffordshire, there are a lot of factories and craftspeople who make teapots and other china goods just like me. The area is so famous for its china that it is called The Potteries.

After the craftspeople in The Potteries finished making me, they packed me nice and snug with lots of other teacups, plates, bowls, and saucers into a wooden crate. They put the crate onboard a small, flat boat. My friends and I had so many questions. Where were we going? How long would it take to get there? I was glad I had so many friends making the journey with me.

We floated along a canal through the English countryside. The trip was quite smooth as our boat made it through the system of locks. We passed by busy towns and green meadows full of bleating sheep. Soon we made it to the bustling port in the city of Liverpool.

I had never seen any place like Liverpool. The Potteries had been busy, with lots of people working to create my friends and me. But the docks at Liverpool were full of

noise and activity. There were people calling out orders as workers unloaded cargo from the bellies of ships. Others were filling ships with goods heading for faraway places. The air smelled salty, and I heard the sea birds as they cried overhead. They seemed to call out farewell.

"Where do you think we're going?" a little saucer named Susie asked.

"Maybe to Ireland?" said Petey the plate, who hoped for a short trip.

"I bet we're going to the West Indies," said Toby the teacup.

"No, surely we're going to Canada," I said.

Soon, as they put our crate onto a ship, I heard a fellow cry out, "This one's bound for America." That was it. We were going to America!

I remember my last glimpse of the soft gray English sky just before the workers packed us into the dark, cool cargo hold down in the ship's belly. The next day the ship set out to sea. Soon I could not hear the sea birds calling out anymore, so I knew we must be a long way from Liverpool. For seven weeks, our ship sailed across the water. Some days the weather was fine, and we travelled smoothly. Other days it stormed, and our ship tossed across the water. Every day I wondered what would happen once we reached America.

Early one morning I awoke and could feel that the ship had stopped moving. I heard some men on the deck above making plans to get the cargo off the ship. We had arrived in New York City! I woke up my friends, and we waited excitedly to be unloaded.

They brought us out onto the main deck of the ship. It felt so fresh and bright after spending so long down below. There were sea birds here too. They called out in greeting as they flew through the bright blue sky. Soon men carried us off the ship and into a warehouse while we waited to be picked up by people who wanted to buy us.

Within a few days workers loaded our wooden crate on a wagon filled with lots of other crates and bags and boxes. The wagon was pulled by a team of six big, strong oxen, and we set off. As we left the big city, the road was bumpy, and its sides were lined with tall, tall trees. Within a few days I could tell the wagon was traveling upward. Soon the slope of the road got very steep. We drove through the mountains. The air was cold at night, but the stars shone brightly above us. They felt so close that I wanted to reach out and touch them with my spout.

The road down out of the mountains was dangerous. To keep the wagon from overtaking the oxen and going out of control, the drivers used chains to tie the front and back wagon wheels together. This way, the wagon slid

down the mountain like a sled, but could not roll away. After a week of traveling across the steep and bumpy mountain roads, we came to another busy city called Pittsburgh.

We arrived at a dock. I soon learned that we were to board still another boat. This time, though, it was a boat like none I had ever seen before. It had two tall smokestacks and a big paddle wheel. As they unloaded us from the wagon, the dock workers said we were going to travel down the river to a place called Cincinnati.

“Did you hear that?” said Toby the teacup.

“Cincinnati? Where’s that?” said Susie the saucer.

“Won’t we ever get where we’re going?” said Petey the plate with dismay.

They put us back in a room with other cargo. The next day, bright and early, I felt a push forward as the boat began moving down the river. Before long, the steady rhythm of the paddle wheel lulled us to sleep. I’m not even sure how long we slept. I just know that I woke up as workers pulled us off the boat once more.

As we waited on the dock, we were surrounded by goods from all over the world. There were spices and tea from India, coffee from Brazil, sugar from the Caribbean

Islands, and textiles from Massachusetts on the eastern coast of the United States. They all had a story to tell, but we soon learned that we had something important in common. We had all travelled a very long way.

Our crate was packed onto a wagon belonging to a man named George Whitaker, and we set off down another road. The road was full of holes and tree stumps and mud. Twice we had to stop and wait because the path was blocked by fallen logs. Our team of horses had to be unhitched so they could pull the logs away. Another time we had to stop while a whole herd of pigs and their drivers passed us by. As we bounced along down the road, the other dishes and I were jostled around inside our crate. It’s a wonder nobody broke.

Finally, after three days, we arrived in a place called Prairietown. At first I wasn’t sure if this was the end of our journey. We were so used to stopping and starting. It seemed as though we never stayed in one place very long. The next morning, though, Mr. Whitaker unloaded us from our crate. He inspected each of us, and put us on a high shelf in his store. All around were different goods waiting to be sold. There was paper, nails, candlesticks, and a hundred other things.

“Welcome to Prairietown,” said a brilliant red cloak that hung on a hook near us.

"What is Prairietown?" I asked her.

"It's a little village near the center of Indiana," she said. "It's a growing town, with lots of people who work hard to create a good life for themselves."

During the day lots of folks from the village came in to visit Mr. Whitaker or to buy things from his shop. We saw woman named Mrs. Zimmerman, who came in to buy supplies for her business, the Golden Eagle Inn, and a boy named Thomas Curtis came to ask Mr. Whitaker if a book his mother ordered had arrived yet. A few of the ladies noticed us. Mr. Whitaker bragged that we had just arrived, all the way from England. The ladies said we were pretty, but not very practical for life in such a small farming community.

Then, near the end of the day, a lady who looked a bit fancier than the rest came into the store. The other ladies we had seen wore plain dresses and simple hats. She wore a bright green dress with a lovely gold brooch at her middle and a hat with a satin ribbon.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Campbell," said Mr. Whitaker as she entered.

"Good afternoon to you sir," Mrs. Campbell said. "I just saw Mrs. Gregory in the street. She says you have a new china set from England. I'd like to see it please."

Mr. Whitaker directed her to our shelf.

"Why Mr. Whitaker, this is quite like the china I brought to Prairietown when Dr. Campbell and I moved here from Kentucky," she said. "Sadly, some of our pieces broke in the wagon along the way. I believe I'd like to purchase this set. It is a bit extravagant, so please hold it for me while I discuss it with my husband."

Soon she returned and said, "I'll take it, Mr. Whitaker, along with my usual amount of flour and sugar, if you please."

Mrs. Campbell took us home. It was the fanciest house in Prairietown, but very small compared to some of the grand homes we had seen in England. Still, Mrs. Campbell prided herself on her warm hospitality and she treated us with great care. She often had visitors. Even though many people would have thought us too fancy to use every day, she always used us to serve her guests tea and cookies. Soon we came to know everything there was to know about the people of Prairietown. We were there for every important event in the village- New Year's Day, Election Day, and even a wedding! It was wonderful to be a part of a growing community.

Our journey had been long, over land, rivers, mountains, and sea. It was a voyage most people can only dream about. We had seen the world, and then we found our home in Prairietown.