

Clipper Sailing Ships Put Into Use When Gold Was Discovered In Calif.

The discovery of gold in California was the direct cause of the birth of these masterpieces of sailing ship construction, known in song and story as the "Clippers."



Never before or since has the incentive to excel in ship speed been so great. American packet ships had already set the world pace for record sailing and for the skill of our seamen; in seamanship, navigation and utter fearlessness in driving their winged vessels through any and every adversity of wind and sea. These men were truly master mariners who knew their ships down to their last ounce of resistance to the strains upon hull, spars, sails, and canvas; who carried their light sails to their last fraction of speed production; who carried them until they were worn from the bolt ropes, ripped and every ribbon by the fury of the winds. It was cheaper to lose these sails than it was to lag behind in the race across the Atlantic, or to China, or around the Horn. It sounds simple and commonplace on paper, this hanging on to a sail in the face of the storm until it burst asunder with the report of a cannon. One must have experienced the whole wild scene to know what real courage and skill the driving of those winged ships required from the masters of them.

A little error in judgment; a few seconds of relaxing the control of the entire vessel, and the whole fabric may go to pieces. In the wink of an eyelid, what was but a moment before one of the masterpieces of man's creative genius is in an instant's time reduced to a mass of tangled wreckage, left to the scant mercy of wind and sea, probably lost with all hands, down in the wild frozen waste of the desolate waters south of Cape Horn. Courage and skill! Yes, every iota of them at top pressure every second of every hour for days and weeks at a time! No wonder the "Flash Packet," and "Clipper" ships produced a race of super seamen. They had to be to survive with their ships in the mad speed demands of the period between the war of 1812 and the conflict between the states.

In all probabilities the Clipper ship would never have come into being had it not been for the stampede to the newfound land of gold. There was no overland means of reaching California, so the thousands who heeded the lure of the yellow wealth had to go by way of Cape Horn; a long, tempestuous road. Everyone was in a fever heat to get their hands into the golden soil as quickly as possible. They offered high prices for passage in the only ships available. Their personal belongings and the food and other supplies needed to sustain them in a new

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Henry Armstrong's arm being raised

With the raising of Henry Armstrong's arm following his bout with Barney Ross, welter champ, in New York, the fast-punching featherweight champion adds another title to his belt in New York's Long Island Bowl. Armstrong won the decision over Ross in 15 rounds in the catchweight title scrap before 2,000 persons.

first record passage in 1851. "June 7, 1851. (Three days out from New York): Lost main and mizzen topgallant masts and main topsail. June 7th: Sent up main and mizzen topgallant masts and yards. June 8: Sent up main topsail yard. June 14. Discovered main mast badly sprung about a foot from the hounds and "fished" it. July 11: Very severe thunder and lightning, double reefed topsails, split fore and main topmast staysails. At 1 p. m. discovered mainmast had sprung, sent down royal and topgallant yards and studding sail booms off lower and topsail yards to relieve strain. July 13: 6 p. m. carried away maintopsail tye and band around main mast. July 23: Cape Horn north 5 miles whole coast covered with snow. July 31: Latter part strong gales and high seas running. Ship very wet fore and aft. Distance run this by observation is 374 miles. During squalls speed to eighteen knots. Aug. 29: Lost fore topgallant mast. Aug. 30: Sent up fore topgallant mast. Night stormy and squally. 6 a. m. made South Farallones bearing northeast half east; took a pilot at 7; anchored in San Francisco harbor at 11:30 a. m., after a passage of 89 days, 21 hours."

From these scattered extracts of the log book of the "Flying Cloud" one gets an idea of the loss sustained to spars and canvas during the average run around the Horn when speed was required of these clipper ships. They carried a complete set of spare spars to replace those carried away, and the carpenter and sail maker were constantly employed in repairs to damaged equipment. The "Flying Cloud" stood this driving for many years. She was burned and destroyed at St. John, N. B., in 1874. She was a huge ship for her launching period, being 1783 gross registered tons. Her captain, Josiah Perkins Creesy, of Marblehead, Mass., was one of the most distinguished clipper ship masters. To him and to others of his type must go the credit of gaining for America at least a temporary supremacy upon the sea. All of the clipper captains started to sea as boys, and most of them rose to command in their early twenties.

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country had to be transported by the same means. This all resulted in the highest bidder getting accommodations, for there were not ships enough to meet the demands suddenly placed upon the transportation facilities. The enormous earning capacity of ships with speed as the first requisite made possible the sacrifice of cargo space for fleetness of passage from port to port.

At once shipbuilders began to experiment with entirely new ideas in hull construction. They recognized the necessity for streamlining their vessels, that they might offer the least resistance to the water, yet be of a shape over a part of the ship's body to give stability sufficient to enable them to carry the enormous spread of canvas that gives them speed. The results of the designer's efforts were to put afloat ships much longer and much sharper in proportion to their width, than anyone had dared to do before. And upon these radical departures in hull construction they erected lofty masts and long yards to spread a cloud of canvas the like of which made the old shell-backs along the waterfront shake their long grey beads in wonder, prophesying dire calamity to ships with so little width for such a spread of lofty spars and canvas.

These ships far surpassed the fondest dreams, of even their most ardent advocates. But they drew to the limit upon the courage and seamanship of their commanders. Handled properly, however, they were found to be much easier in heavy seas, they strained less, and were much easier on their cargoes. They were "wet" ships cutting through the seas with their sharp bows at speeds that were impossible for the old type of full-bodied design. Their lofty canvas allowed them to "ghost" along in light winds, and their sharp lines enabled them to work into the wind when the old type of blunt, low sparred vessels would be standing still. This enabled them to make the long voyage with a regularity almost equal to steam.

During 1950 thirteen new California Clippers were launched, and many more were under construction. Great wealth was in sight for the successful ship owner, and they resolved to take advantage of it. Ships entirely, or almost, paid for themselves in a single voyage. The "White Squall" cost, with a year's stores and supplies aboard, about \$90,000. Her freight on the first voyage to San Francisco brought her owners \$70,000. This, with money received for passengers and mail wiped out her original cost the first year of her service.

During 1851 thirty-one extreme Clippers were launched, including the most famous sailing ships of merchant marine history. The "Flying Cloud" was launched at this period. She was the masterpiece of that master builder, Donald McKay. She was a flying ship, making the all time sailing record around the Horn to Frisco of 89 days. She did it twice. This record was never lowered and but once equaled. The best previous record had been 97 days, made by the "Sea Witch" in 1850.

No more graphic idea of the driving of these clippers can be given than to quote extracts from the log book of the "Flying Cloud" during her

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