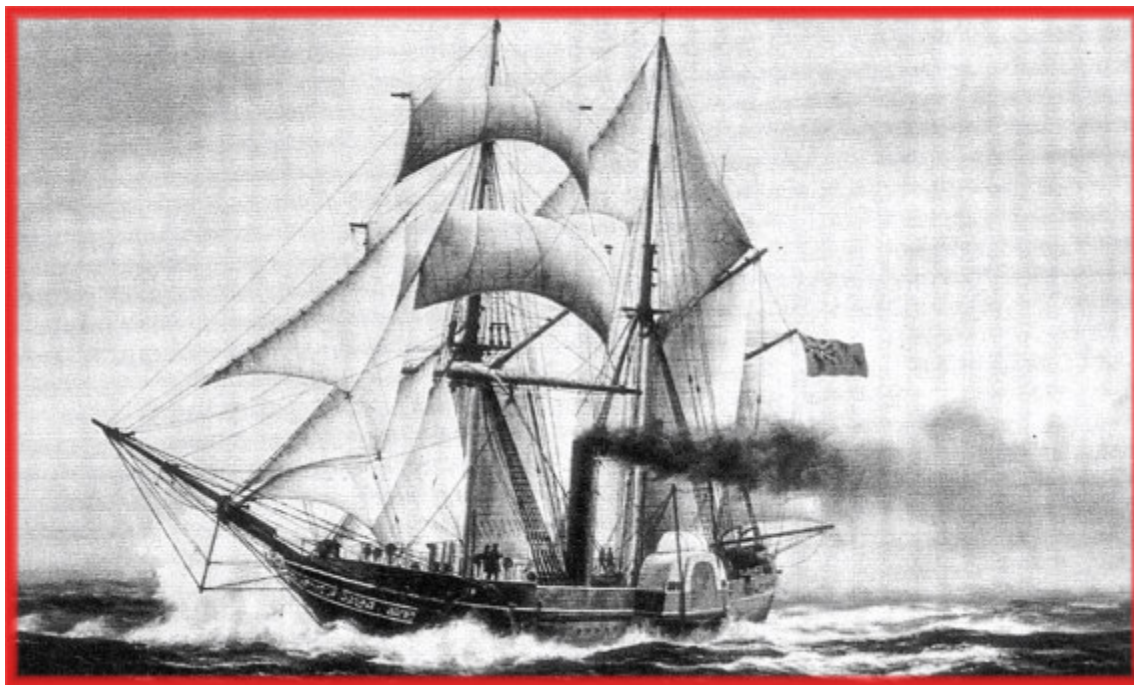


# OUR BRITISH ANCESTRY

By

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*H.M.S. Birkenhead—26 February 1852*

## Preface

The history of the Howard side of our family is a story I've been wanting to write for a long time. My mother's maiden name was Lucie Howard and this is a history of her father's ancestors. I've read about them and have been interested in them since I was a teenager. But the most that seems to have been written is a page or two about the sinking of the *Birkenhead*. My Grandmother Howard's journal contains a couple of paragraphs about John Richards Howard and this particular shipwreck, and this she copied from the encyclopedia. Other members of the family have found bits and pieces about this story and have brought them and shared them at family reunions. So I started with a somewhat bare skeleton, and a disjointed one at that. I also had a book of family group sheets that I had copied from my mother's book of remembrance when I was fourteen years old. These sheets carried the Howard line back to the 1500's to the Dukes of Norfolk in England and even further which went back to Lady Godiva. There have been a lot of "begats" in all those represented years on these sheets, and for most of my life, most of the names have not meant much to me. In writing this history I've gone carefully through all the "begats", and just with names and dates, stories have been unfolding before my eyes.

I found myself relating to these women who lost so many children at birth, or hurting for those men who lost their wives at such early ages. I included many of these dates and relationships and found a story in them. I don't know how interesting this will be to everyone, but I hope my own family (who I have written this for) will be touched in their hearts as I have been. This history begins with my great-great-grandfather who lost his life when the *Birkenhead* sank in 1852, and continues with the story of his son, my great-grandfather, John Richards Howard (born in 1841), who was one of the few who survived this great disaster. Because of the

genealogy work that John Richards Howard did, I have used his hand-written book of names and dates to tell the story of these Howards who lived in the 1500's. In the end I have tried to explain the physical and spiritual connection, which I feel with them all.

I need to thank my sisters Joyce Ridge and Cheril Snow who have kept copies of these genealogy sheets and have worked feverishly themselves to verify all the physical connections our great-grandfather made. Joyce has many of the original records and letters and journals, so she was the logical person for me to interview for this project. She has spent hours with me as we followed all the "begats" over and over again as they were written by John Richards Howard until we understood who actually begat whom! She also helped me decipher some of the hand-written letters. A short conversation with Uncle Lloyd Howard (my mother's only living sibling) gave me a few very interesting glances into the character of John Richards Howard, which I have included. I've used books, magazines, tour-guide books, journals, obituaries, certificates and the internet to fill in the blanks, but the best experience of all was when we lived in Scotland for three years and were able to walk on the same soil as these ancestors. I have a great deal of love for most of them. A few didn't leave a very good impression, but maybe five centuries of repenting have brought them around!

# Our British Ancestry

## Chapter One The Howard Family from 1813-1927

### Introduction

*Totally helpless and frightened, little John Richards watched his Father stand in line, waiting for the ship to go down. The waves washed over the deck of the ship and the men were plunged into the sea. At last the soldiers and sailors were freed from their ranks. Now the sea was full of men desperately trying to grab onto anything that would stay afloat. Most of them drowned, but what extraordinary heroism!! Their story would go on forever!*

My great-grandfather, John Richards Howard was that little frightened boy, just ten years old, who watched as his father went down with that great ship, *The H.M.S. Birkenhead*. Whenever I'm asked a question like, "Who are you and what is your family history?" well, this is the story I've always told. I was fourteen years old when I read it for the first time in my Grandmother Howard's journal. The story of the sinking of the *Birkenhead* is as much a part of me as those experiences in my life that I witnessed first hand—my mission to Australia, my college years at BYU, the births of our nine children, our incredible three years in Scotland, the fire that swept through our home ten years ago destroying nearly everything in its path, the death of loved ones.

All of our experiences, whether first or second hand, contribute to making us who we are. Each and every story is important. Each storyteller varies the rendition, but in fact, the story is still true. As my mother, Lucie Howard James, always said, *"If a story isn't worth exaggerating, then it isn't worth telling."* She in turn was a product of her own mother who wrote,

*“And now that I’ve reached sixty-five,  
My children think I should write  
Of the things which have happened to me  
Since I came here one cold winter’s night.*

*“. . . But wait ‘til I’m seventy-five,  
And then if I’m still going strong  
I may write with fun of things I have done  
And put them in story and song,*

*“For I have observed that the years  
Add much to the thrill and the style.  
And stories get longer, and many times stronger  
Until they are really worth while. . .”<sup>1</sup>*  
(by Sarah Drucilla Sears Howard, 1939)

Now, thanks to my Grandmother Howard’s recording of the “Story of the *Birkenhead*”, and a great deal of research, my story is now longer, and many times stronger, until it is more than worthwhile! I hope you enjoy it. . . .

### **Richard Howard (1813-1852)**

Richard Howard, my great-great-grandfather, was a seaman. He was the first son of six children born to Richard and Elizabeth Jenkins Howard. He was born on January 18, 1813 in Fareham, England. Richard (the son) was enlisted in the Royal Navy. During this period of time, sailors of the Royal Navy did not enlist for a set period of years of continuous service. They entered for a “ship’s commission”, which might last two or three years. When the ship completed her commission and was paid off, the sailors (according to their ratings) were paid off too. Usually they stayed ashore for a week or so and then “entered” another ship.




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<sup>1</sup>Unpublished journal of Drucilla Sears Howard in possession of Joyce Ridge, Provo, Utah.

The first ship Richard entered was the *H.M.S. Caledonia* on January 14, 1831, just four days before his 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday, and his rating was “Boy First Class”. He was on this ship for six months, on shore for a month, and then joined the ship again with a new rating of “Domestic” and was there until October 1831. His second year he was most likely serving in the Merchant Navy because he didn’t enter another ship until September 15, 1832, but when he did he had a higher rating of “AB”. After that he was constantly on ships until July 3, 1838 and didn’t enter another until December 22, 1841. It was during these three and a half years that he married, worked as a “groom” in Fareham, England, and had a son, John Richards Howard. He married Martha Richards on August 5, 1840 and his son was born on September 18, 1841. Three months after John was born Richard entered another ship—just three days before Christmas, and was constantly on ships after that with no more than one day to two months’ break in between. This continued up to July 12, 1850.<sup>2</sup>

On April 12, 1843 his wife, Martha, died leaving Richard alone—alone to comfort and hold and rock his little son. She was 28 years old and Richard was 30. She was 25 years old when they married (the marriage certificate says “spinster”) and they were only married three years when she died. He was serving on the *H.M.S. St. Vincent* at this time so he was not even able to be with her while she was ill. Richard was continually on ships after that. On August 17, 1843 he entered the ship *H.M.S. Eurydice* and married Rosina Ann Masters on August 23, 1843. Their certificate also had her marked as “spinster”, as she was about 28 years old at the time. I have tried to imagine what life was like for a woman who was married to a seaman. It was lonely—almost never feeling his presence in the home, or hearing comforting, soothing words at the end of the day, or wrapping her body around his on a cold night. Richard now had a two-year-old son who needed a mother. He

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<sup>2</sup> Certificate dated 2 July 1852 which lists the service of Richard Howard, Royal Navy, Ad. 73/160. A photo copy of this is now in possession of Cecile J. Scribner, Santa Rosa, California

and Rosina and Martha were all members of the same Parish Church in Portsmouth, so must've all known each other. This marriage was a quick decision after Martha's death, but a good one, particularly for Richard's little son. Richard was on a ship most of his life and probably only could see family for a few days at a time when the ship was in dock. Apparently he was on shore long enough to court and marry Rosina, but the honeymoon was probably non-existent, as he was on duty.

During his marriage to Rosina, his biggest break from duty was between July 12, 1850 and November 23, 1851, more than a year. He was almost 39 years old when he entered the ship *H.M.S. Birkenhead* in November 1851 and was only on this ship for three months when on February 26, 1852 it struck a rock and sank. Richard Howard had served in the Royal Navy for a total of 14 years, 7 months, 1 week and 3 days. His death certificate says "Drowned, Danger Point, Simon's Bay, South Africa." In his will he bequeathed his effects to Rosina Howard.<sup>3</sup>

### **Richard Howard (1813-1852) and The Sinking of *H.M.S. Birkenhead***

In the last couple of years a lot of attention has been given to the *Titanic*, and the visual portrayal of such a disaster has given me a feeling for the fear that went through those who died on the *Birkenhead* or, for that matter, on any of the several ships that have gone "down" in the sea in the history of the world—and there have been many. Nevertheless, the *Birkenhead* disaster is the one I like to read about because it claimed the life of my great-great-grandfather, Richard Howard. Richard was part of the crew as he had been on many other ships before this one. In a twenty-year period he served on the *Caledonia*, the *Raven*, the *Sparrowhawk*, the *Pelorus*, the *St. Vincent*, the *Eurydice*,

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<sup>3</sup> Claim (A.D. 44/H30/7399) dated 5 June 1842 (photocopied).

the *Superb*, the *Harlequin*, the *Amazon*, the *Hastings* and lastly, the *Birkenhead*. His job on most of these ships was listed as “gun room cook”, “gun room steward”, “subordinate officers’ cook” or “Captain’s Cook” (perhaps this is why some of my ancestors always thought he was Captain of the ship!).<sup>4</sup>

It’s been almost 150 years since the *Birkenhead* sank. In that year the British were fighting tribesmen along the Eastern frontier of the Cape Colony. This was called the Kaffir War. It was a tough fight and they needed reinforcements. The *H.M.S. Birkenhead* picked up men from ten regiments in Britain and headed toward the Cape. She left Cork, Ireland on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 1852 and sailed into a terrible winter storm in the North Atlantic (Michener, *Life Magazine*).

There were 638 people on board, including 20 women and children—most of these were families of the military and they were being sent to help form part of a permanent British colony in South Africa. My great-grandfather, John Richards Howard, ten years old, was one of those children. It had been eight long and lonely years since his mother had died. Nevertheless, since his father, Richard Howard was a ship’s officer all of John’s young life, he grew up with a natural love and curiosity about the sea and always begged his father to take him with him. Richard finally agreed saying,

*“I’ll keep you so long on the water that you’ll never want to see it again.”*<sup>5</sup>

Not only was the ship crowded, but the terrible weather only caused the miserable conditions to get worse. John Richards found out the hard way just exactly what his father meant!

The *Birkenhead* was under the command of Captain Robert Salmond, Royal Navy. The proud ship, an iron paddle steamer (with sails), was powered by two massive paddle wheels, one on

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<sup>4</sup> Certificate of Service of Richard Howard dated 2 July 1852 (photocopied).

<sup>5</sup> Quoted from Drucilla Sears Howard’s personal journal in possession of Joyce Ridge, Provo, Utah.



each side. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 1852, the ship left Simon's Town at 18:00, sailing at 8,5 knots. There were "look outs" who watched for signs of the coastline and depth measurements were taken at all times. The paddle wheels turned in a rhythm that soon lulled most everyone to sleep. Ships didn't usually travel as close to shore as the *Birkenhead* did that night, but there was an urgency for them to get to their destination and they were traveling close to the shore as they approached the Cape of Good Hope in order to save time. At two o'clock in the morning of Thursday, February 26, 1852, she struck a huge submerged reef (or rock) about a mile off the coast. A violent shock



The Birkenhead Rock is easily seen when the sea is more turbulent!

was felt, there was a tremendous crash and the ship shuddered. The rock they hit was less than four yards below the surface. Had the sea just been a little rougher, water would've been swirling around the rock and this would have been noticed by the lookouts. Then they could've turned a little in order to miss it. However, the sea was calm, and the

rock wasn't seen. The blow tore open the bottom of the ship (C Net Search.com).

*" . . . The rush of the water was so great that there is no doubt that most of the men in the lower troop deck were drowned in their hammocks. The rest of the men and officers rushed on deck when Major Seaton [sp] called all the officers about him, and impressed on them the necessity of preserving order and silence among the men. . . Sixty men were immediately put on the chain pumps on the lower afterdeck. . . 60 men were put on to the tackles of the paddlebox boats, and the remainder of the men were brought on to the poop, so as to ease the fore part of the ship. She was at this time rolling heavily. . . "*<sup>6</sup>



Captain Salmond reacted quickly. He was anxious to save the ship and ordered the paddles to stop and go in the other direction to see if they could get off that rock. But it was a mistake. It

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<sup>6</sup> Captain Wright of the 91<sup>st</sup> Regiment as quoted in the Illustrated London News April 10, 1852.

simply tore a bigger hole in the bottom of the ship and immediately filled up the lower deck of the ship, drowning all the panic-stricken men that were in that part of the ship. The whole ship started to crack and in only fifteen minutes the bow broke. As it fell, more passengers and members of the crew were either killed or knocked into the water, and what was left of the ship only stayed afloat for



“The Wreck of the Birkenhead”  
by Thomas Henry (Birkenhead, England)

ten more minutes. It was a dramatic twenty-five minutes, but what happened in that short amount of time caused a change in naval history. When it first struck almost everyone was asleep, except for a few sailors, but they all hurried on deck. Some of the men followed the example of their officers and appeared in full uniform, but many were in nightshirts. *“All fell solemnly into line and stood at attention in the dark night, their faces lighted by flares”* (Michener, *Life Magazine*). There didn’t seem to be a panic because the officers were giving orders, and everyone obeyed. Captain

Salmond immediately ordered that the horses

aboard be driven over the side to prevent a stampede that might imperil the lifeboats. Almost immediately the water around the *Birkenhead* turned red with blood as the horses became bait for

sharks. Even with the horses gone, water still poured into the ship, and everyone who was left knew the ship was going down.

The next job was to launch the boats. A falling spar or smokestack smashed one of the boats and two more were “swamped” before anyone could be put into them. Two other large boats were on the paddle boxes, but they couldn’t be pried loose. Time was of essence, but they were losing. However, the most dramatic part of the story is what happened next. Faced with this tragic circumstance, Captain Salmond issued the command which has determined behavior in sea disasters ever since:

*“Women and children first!”*<sup>7</sup>

Without any protest from a single man, the women and children were hurried into the boats though some of them had to be pulled from the arms of their soldier husbands and fathers. The abrupt separation did not leave enough time to say “good-bye”. There was only time for tears. One big boat (a gig) and two small ones (cutters) were filled with women and children and pushed off safely, enough to hold about 80 of the hundreds of people aboard.

Richard Howard, in the panic had forgotten about his son who had been asleep in his hammock. In Drucilla Howard’s journal she wrote:

*“. . . as he didn’t waken he was pulled out of the hammock and tossed overboard by his father into a life boat that was just leaving the ship. He remembered hearing his father call to those in the boat to ‘save the boy’ and as the boat glided away he saw his father go down with the ship.”*

The soldiers were drawn up in ranks and stayed that way even when the ship broke in half. Captain Salmond, realizing that they were all doomed to die, tried to set them “free” from his command with the order,

*“All those who can swim, jump overboard and make for the boats.”*

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<sup>7</sup> Michener *Life Magazine*, December 1962.

But Major Seton saw what disaster that would cause and gave a countercommand,

*“Stand fast.”*<sup>8</sup>

Captain Wright, one of the surviving officers of the 91<sup>st</sup> Regiment recalled, *“The order and regularity that prevailed on board. . . far exceeded anything that I thought could be effected. . .”*<sup>9</sup>

Only three men broke ranks in an effort to save themselves. It was this moment that inspired

Rudyard Kipling to write:

*“But to stand an’ be still to the Birken’ead drill is a damned tough bullet to chew.”  
An’ they done it, the Jollies—‘er Majesty’s Jollies—soldier and sailor, too!”*<sup>10</sup>

Major Seton stayed very proper to the last. He shook hands with a young Lieutenant Lucas and wished him well. Lucas said,

*“I hope we shall meet on shore.”  
“I do not think we shall,” Seton replied, “as I cannot swim a stroke.”*<sup>11</sup>



John Richards, only ten years old, was frightened and shivered with cold. He sat helpless as his father, standing in line with the other men, went down with the ship. He watched with horror as they plunged into the sea and fought for anything to hold onto—the last struggle for their lives.

Most of them lost the struggle. This vision never left him the rest of his life.

Several kept hold of the floating driftwood, and the swell of the water carried them in the

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<sup>8</sup> Michener, *Life Magazine*.

<sup>9</sup> Illustrated London News April 10, 1852.

<sup>10</sup> Bevan 132.

<sup>11</sup> Michener, *Life Magazine*.

direction of Point Danger. The shore was about a mile away so a few managed to swim to safety, but Richard Howard wasn't among those. A few held on to the wreckage and managed to stay afloat until a passing vessel picked them up along with those in the boats, but Richard wasn't among any of those either. Captain Wright, one of the survivors told the press:

*“As soon as the driftwood got to the weeds and breakers, finding that it would not support all that were on it, I jumped off and swam on shore, and when the others and also those that were on the other pieces of wood reached the shore we proceeded into the country. . . Many of the men were naked, and almost all without shoes. . .”*<sup>12</sup>

There's a legend that many of the men were taken by Great White Sharks and the local natives of Gansbaai call this particular shark the “Tommie-haai” (Tommy Shark), after the British “Tommys” (C Net Search.com).

The next morning help arrived. A schooner called the “Lioness” rescued the people on the boats first and then picked up whoever could be saved from the wreckage. One can imagine how high the hopes of all those women were, each praying that her own husband would be among the “saved”. There were 14 military officers on board the Birkenhead, but only a few survived—Ens. Lucas of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment was one of them. The total number of people on board at the time of the disaster was 638 of whom only 193 survived. 438 (or 454—depending on which account you read) British soldiers and sailors were drowned.<sup>13</sup> Eight of the nine horses were able to swim to shore, and all of the women and children were safe.

### Aftermath

There was an interesting aftermath that followed. Many newspapers around the world, in order to find the “cause”, criticized Captain Salmond for sailing too close to the shore just to save a

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<sup>12</sup> Illustrated London News, April 10, 1852

<sup>13</sup> *Book of Knowledge*. Vol. 3, Page 88 as copied in Drucilla Sears Howard's journal.

few hours. Before 1852 there had been many ships at sea that had gone “down”, but nothing seemed to cause the stir that the troopship, *Birkenhead*, caused. For example, the story so impressed the King of Prussia, Frederick William IV, that he ordered a full account of the conduct of the British Soldiers to be brought to the attention of his troops in every single Regiment in the Prussian Army (Bevan 3). This was because of the valiant conduct of the men at sea when the *Birkenhead* sank. Their behavior had a profound continuing effect on other men at sea. This was a romantic age, so the sheer gallantry and chivalry of the men on board caused emotions to run high with everyone who read and wrote about the disaster.

*“ . . . the troops, quite simply, behaved as every man in England would like to think he himself would have behaved, and they did what every woman would wish her man to do. That was the mood of the country, and what could have been more romantic, or more gallant and chivalrous, than so many men nobly laying down their lives so that a handful of women and children could be saved. And after all, they did have a choice. The choice between a slim chance of life, or certain death. There was no hesitation in their decision.”*<sup>14</sup>

This and hundreds of statements like this seemed to contain that common thread of “awe”.

*“ . . . We defy the whole history of our race to produce a more striking instance of bravery and coolness.”*<sup>15</sup>

The disaster even fired imaginations of poets like Sir Francis Hastings Doyle, Professor of Poetry at Oxford (1867-77). His poem is long, but a few of his verses give us a feeling of the passion that this wreck aroused:

*“ . . . The stout ship Birkenhead lay hard and fast  
Caught without hope upon a hidden rock;  
Her timbers thrilled as nerves, when through them passed  
The spirit of that shock.”*

*“ . . . So calm the air—so calm and still the flood,  
That low down in its blue translucent glass  
We saw the great fierce fish, that thirst for blood,  
Pass slowly, then repass.”*

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<sup>14</sup> Bevan 128.

<sup>15</sup> Bevan 129.

*Then amidst oath, and prayer, and rush, and wreck,  
Faint screams, faint questions waiting no reply,  
Our Colonel gave the word, and on the deck  
Formed us in line to die.*

*To die—"twas hard, while the sleek ocean glowed  
Beneath a sky as fair as summer flowers:  
All to the boats! cried one—he was, thank God,  
No officer of ours.*

*“ . . . So we made women with their children go,  
The oars ply back again, and yet again;  
Whilst, inch by inch, the drowning ship sank low  
Still under steadfast men.*

*--What fellows, why recall: The brave who died,  
Died without flinching in the bloody surf,  
They sleep as well beneath that purple tide  
As others under turf.*

*They sleep well! and roused from their wild grave,  
Wearing their wounds like stars, shall rise again,  
Joint-heirs with Christ, because they bled to save  
His weak ones, not in vain. . .”<sup>16</sup>*

Richard Howard was one of those brave and chivalrous men. There is a “Roll of Honour” that has been compiled and published in *Drums of the Birkenhead*. Many of those officers and seamen on the *Birkenhead* are listed by name, including some of the children. Under “Boys”, the third name mentioned is “J.R. Howard, Boy” (Bevan 118). However, some (at least 68 members of the ship’s crew) are not identified because of lack of proper records, so Richard Howard is not listed here. His death certificate says, “died at Danger Point”.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Bevan 130-131

<sup>17</sup> Certificate in possession of Joyce Ridge, Provo, Utah

## John Richards Howard, son of Richard Howard (1841-1927)

My great-grandfather, John Richards Howard was born to Richard Howard and Martha Richards in Fareham, Hampshire, England on September 18, 1841, exactly 100 years before I was born! Since he was only a boy of ten when the *Birkenhead* went down, he was most likely the longest living survivor from this disaster. However, there are only a few lines that can be found in his own handwriting about the wreck of the *Birkenhead*.



*“ . . . I can distinctly remember hearing the old Salts exclaiming the Flying Dutchman, and hearing their comments of our probable Ship-Wreck, for there is a tradition that what ever Ship sights the Flying Dutchman, is sure to be lost.*

*We arrived at Simon’s Bay on the 24<sup>th</sup>, Feb, landed a portion of our reinforcements, coaled, and left for Algoa Bay, the Evening of the 25<sup>th</sup>. Struck at 2 AM. After She Struck the fore part broke off, Captain Salmon preserving his usual calmness, and. . . .”<sup>18</sup> (See note)<sup>19</sup>*

This seems to be the extent of the recorded information about John Richards Howard’s connection to the *Birkenhead* disaster, but since his father died in service to his country and John was now an orphan, the British Government educated him at the Royal Hospital Greenwich Naval Academy and at 18 years of age he entered the British Naval Service (Obituary of John Richards Howard). One of his teachers at the school wrote the following on June 26, 1859 when John was 18 years of age:

*“I feel great pleasure in bearing testimony to the amiable and exemplary conduct of John R. Howard during the entire of the time he has been under my care in the class.*

<sup>18</sup> Journal of John Richards Howard in possession of Joyce Ridge, Provo, Utah

<sup>19</sup> The dictionary gives the following: **Flying Dutchman**, 1. A legendary Dutch ghost ship supposed to be seen at sea, esp. near the Cape of Good Hope. 2. The captain of this ship supposed to have been condemned to sail the sea, beating against the wind, till the Day of Judgment.



*He has also been very industrious and has made considerable proficiency.” Signed: John Smith Master.*<sup>20</sup>

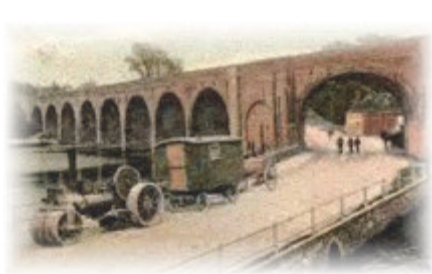
He entered his first ship, the *Falcon*, on May 25, 1859 where he was a “Ship’s Stewards Boy”. He was still on *Her Majesty’s Ship Falcon* on October 6, 1862. On a certificate from the paymaster it said, “. . .*he is sober, trustworthy and industrious, and fully competent in every way for the duties of his situation.*”<sup>21</sup>

### Fareham, England<sup>22</sup>

Fareham, or the Borough of Fareham as it is more properly called, is on the coast in the County of Hampshire about 75 miles south of London. It is positioned right



between Southampton and Portsmouth—all three of these



towns are strategically positioned in the heart of some of the most famous historic maritime sites in England. Southampton’s maritime history goes back to the Mayflower and the Pilgrim Fathers. It’s a wonderful town whose history dates back to the Romans in AD 43.

The Portchester Castle, which dates back to Roman times, adds to the rich history of this town.



For many centuries Fareham was a flourishing seaport, and by the 18<sup>th</sup> Century shipbuilding was at its peak and continued for over 100 years. When shipbuilding began to slow down other industries prospered—these included strawberry growing, leather tanning, brewing, timber, flour and pottery. Fareham grew to support these agricultural needs and to also support the Royal Navy.

<sup>20</sup> (AD.73/260. Royal Hospital, Greenwich. School Admission Papers.

<sup>21</sup> (No. 52. Certificate from Paymaster to Ship’s Steward, &c.

<sup>22</sup> See map at end of chapter.

Many of the high-ranking officers built beautiful homes in this area so they would have a peaceful retreat away from the docks. It's interesting that this town was one of the first in the country to be lit by electric lights (C Net Search.com).

With this background it's easy to understand why John Richards Howard, and his father, Richard Howard, had a love for the sea and a desire to be on ships. Not only them, but most likely their neighbors



and friends as well. The wives were probably very friendly and supportive of each other while their men were at sea.

#### John Richards Howard's Conversion to Mormonism

After it was recorded that John was on *H.M.S. Falcon* in 1862, the details and dates of his life aren't specific, but it was early in the 1860's when he was on a ship sailing between England and America that he became acquainted with some Mormon elders who were going to England to preach the Gospel. There are those who say this story that follows just can't be true, but this is how my Grandmother (who was the daughter-in-law of John Richards Howard) wrote the story in her journal:

*"He and another sailor read the tracts and books that the missionaries gave them and listened to their message. They became convinced of the truth of the Gospel as taught by these Elders and decided to go to Utah and join the church.*

*"And so one night when the ship was in harbor they slipped overboard and swam about a mile to New York. From here they made their way to Utah travelling across the plains in the Arthur Brown Company. . ."*<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Unpublished journal of Drucilla Sears Howard.

This is the exciting story of John's conversion that my mother and grandmother always told, so this is the one my children and grandchildren are going to hear from me. I've heard other logical and illogical stories, but none of them have been documented.

In doing this research I have come to love John Richards Howard. He lost his mother when he was practically a baby and, in a moment of historical drama, lost his father when he was only ten years old. He grew up basically as an orphan, and was on his own making daring decisions at an early age. The most daring decision of all (in my mind) was when he heard the Gospel preached and although only in his early twenties, believed it so strongly that he "jumped ship" and worked his way to Nauvoo and Salt Lake City to meet Brigham Young and join the Church. Somehow, I feel that the courage his father displayed when he went down with the *Birkenhead* at Danger Point, South Africa instilled courage in John—courage to stand erect in the face of anything. I don't believe that vision of his courageous and daring father ever left him.

John Richards understood the Gospel when he heard it. He understood the need to be with those who believed as he did, and he understood the need to give service, and he had the courage to follow through with his convictions. He was always at the beck and call of Brigham Young to help in the establishment of Zion. Brigham Young hired him to drive a team of oxen, back and forth, across the plains to the Rocky Mountains. He did this in order to help other pioneer saints make the arduous and perilous journey to Utah. It is recorded that he brought the first mowing machine into that valley in 1864 and was also the first to introduce "public bathing" in the Great Salt Lake. My early memories include floating in the buoyant and brinish waters of the Great Salt Lake with my Grandmother Howard. It was always fun until we slipped and salt entered our eyes, burning them like crazy. We went there often. The first bathing resort was at Haight's property in Farmington and was opened to the public in 1870. John became a close friend of Brigham Young and was

employed by him to take charge of the first tollgate in Parley's Canyon (Obituary). In connection with the late Captain D. L. Davis he ran "The Cambrian", a pleasure boat on the Great Salt Lake. He was known as "Commodore Howard" throughout the Salt Lake Valley. He was also one of the first volunteer policemen and firemen of Salt Lake City (Obituary).

### John Richards Howard's Posterity

John's greatest contribution, however, was the posterity he left and the work he did for them in researching their "roots" and the legacy of courage in the face of tribulations that he also left. His life was never without challenges and tribulations. In 1866 he was married to Harriet Spinks Brooks who had also come from England and who had pushed a hand-cart across the plains. She gave birth to nine children, four of whom died in childbirth. His baby daughter, Mary Fitz Alan died at three months of age in 1871. Martha Fitz Alan, born in 1872, did not even live a day. A set of twins died at childbirth in 1880. Five children grew to adulthood, but only two of those children outlived John.

On September 1, 1880. John was called from the 20<sup>th</sup> Ward in Salt Lake City to serve a mission in Great Britain. President John Taylor signed his "hand-written" call.<sup>24</sup> This was the same year that his wife gave birth to twins, but they did not live. In a letter written in March of 1979 my Aunt Jessie (granddaughter of John Richards Howard) wrote:

*"I recall listening to my father tell of how his Mother, Harriet Spinks Brooks, returning from a meeting at the 20<sup>th</sup> Ward in the dark, during a terrific thunder storm, fell over a tree which had been uprooted and had fallen across the path. . ."*<sup>25</sup>

She was expecting a baby and this accident started her into labor. She lost the baby and her life was

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<sup>24</sup> Church Records of 20<sup>th</sup> Ward Salt Lake City. Photocopy in possession of Cecile J. Scribner, 3153 Montecito Meadow Drive. Santa Rosa, California

<sup>25</sup> Unpublished letter written by Jessie Howard Buckmiller March 15, 1979. Photocopied.

hanging on a thread while her husband, John *“with hands laid upon her, pleaded with the Lord to spare her life.”*<sup>26</sup> Harriet died at age 40 on September 10, 1883, leaving John to care for his five children, all under the age of sixteen. My Grandfather, John Fitz Alan Howard, was only fourteen years old when his Mother died, and he never seemed to be reconciled to her death according to Aunt Jessie. “Why couldn’t medicine and doctors save her?” “Why would he now have to be without his mother?” “Why was his heart hurting so much?” His mother’s premature death caused him to go into the Medical field when he was older. He was determined to find answers.



Just ten months after Harriet died, John and Harriet’s oldest son, Richard Fitz Alan Howard, died at age sixteen. On August 28, 1884, a year after Harriet died, John married Mary Browne who was also an English convert, and together they had seven children. But again there was so much sadness ahead of him. All seven of these children grew to adulthood, but in 1913 one died at age 20. Two months after the death of this son, John’s wife, Mary (also known as Polly) Browne, died at age 50 (John was 72 years old at this time). In 1918, another child died at age 28, and in 1921 another died at age 34. In 1924 a child from his first marriage died at age 49, and then another at age 46 in 1925. So by the time John died in 1927, he had buried two wives, five adult children and four babies. Two children from his first marriage and four children from his second marriage lived to old age as he did. We speak of great reunions which take place on the other side when one dies. I can just imagine the reunion that was had by John Richards Howard with his wives, his parents and nine of his children—joy beyond description! I admire his courage in the face of these tribulations and his ability to stand erect as his “ship” sank many times over. I am anxious to greet him on the other side (but I can wait!).

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<sup>26</sup> Buckmiller.

I have read many letters that he wrote to my grandfather John Fitz Alan Howard while John Fitz Alan was serving a mission in Switzerland. These letters indicated that all was not “perfect” in this relationship. It was easy to sense that the father and son did not always see eye to eye, but being a parent of several children, I too know that things don’t always run in perfect order in a family. In a telephone conversation with Uncle Lloyd, he told me of the rather gruff man that John Richards Howard was in his later life. When he wanted butter or bread, instead of saying, “Please pass the bread,” or “Please pass the butter”, he would just grunt “Butter!” or “Bread!” My grandmother, Drucilla Howard, who was his daughter-in-law would then sometimes say, “If you are such a “blue blood”, then what are the rest of us?” To which he would answer, “A race of mongrels!” They had their differences!

#### A Legacy of Family Records

Besides the legacy of posterity and courage, John Richards Howard left another legacy. In beautifully handwritten script, he carefully kept records of his ancestry—his desire to link to the past was insatiable--and more than anyone else, he was the one who tried for over twenty years to solve the “mystery link” of the Howard Family Line. He felt so certain that we came directly from Thomas Howard, Fourth Duke of Norfolk and Mary Fitzalan (who date back to the 1500’s), that he gave most of his children from his first marriage, girls and boys, the middle name of “Fitz Alan.” The mystery has never been totally solved, but he did seek the answer and any information that would lead to the answer. No one really believes that we will ever know because the “mystery link” is the mother of an illegitimate child. The father never married and the mother’s name has not been recorded on any family genealogy sheets!

John wrote near and distant cousins, those that shared this same “shamefully born” grandfather. Alvin Charles Howard was an older cousin who still lived in England. He wrote him often. In one letter written on December 15, 1895, Alvin wrote John Richards a very interesting letter that told, first of all about a visit that John’s son, John Fitz Alan Howard (my grandfather) had just recently made to him (probably on John’s return home from his mission in Switzerland). Together, John Fitz Alan and Alvin made a visit to another relative. This letter contains the most convincing information of all because it tells about other relatives (who all seem to share this same grandfather) who also share the same legends (or gossip). Alvin wrote:

*“I must say at once, the visit there (to the other relative) together with that of your Son, has created an interest within me to know the Truth as far as I can relative to our common ancestor. . . I understand there is a point far back in the seventeen hundreds odd where we (you and I) had a common grand grand Father. . . He (the other relative) mentioned he had a ‘book’ dealing into a mystery in the Howard Family, but that we did not see. . . My general impression of the visit is: that the old Family Legend as to our origin was strengthened—here was another branch, totally unknown to me yet with somewhat the same ‘tale’ about their ancestor, and that proved this point—that the late was not of recent growth but was traced very close back to the time when this ‘Richard Howard’ must have died. . . You may rely upon me doing my best to second your 20 years labour: It may be possible that some ‘clue’ may be struck upon which one can work. . . and I shall try and find out what the ‘House of Howard’ as represented by the present to be as regards this 4<sup>th</sup> son Richard and what became of him. . . this may be difficult to get at, but it shall be tried.”<sup>27</sup>*

Alvin could never seem to understand John Richards’ conversion to Mormonism, but he also never tried to criticize. Actually, he was quite a philosopher.

*“Even the word ‘Latter Day’ at once tells me how far removed we are from thought and feeling. . . all those old ‘Prophetic Ideas’ of what would happen, upon which so much is based seems to me a mistaken liberalism of words which are figurative and of which those who uttered them did not and could not fully understand.”<sup>28</sup>*

Until I started this research, I knew nothing of Alvin C. Howard, but he’s a colorful character I’d like to get to know better! To me, he sounds so typical of the British people we tried to

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<sup>27</sup> Letter to John Richards Howard from Alvin Howard, 114 East Street, Southampton, England, December 15th, 1895 in possession of Joyce James Ridge, Provo, Utah.

<sup>28</sup> Letter from Alvin Howard to John Richards Howard, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1895 in possession of Joyce, Ridge, Provo, Utah.

introduce the Gospel to in England and Scotland—so there’s another 100 British years in which there seems to have been little change.

John Richards Howard has done much for the Howard Family. His interest in family history has literally affected generations of Howards, and at this very moment I am reaping the rewards of all of his efforts. Though he never was able to get his answer to the mystery link in “print”, he firmly believed the legendary story. So many extended family members had heard the “gossip” which had come down all the different lines from so many sources. Because of John’s research I felt “connected” while our family lived in Scotland and when we toured a good share of the British Isles. Had it not been for all of his work my favorite Scottish historical person, Mary Queen of Scots, would have merely been another person in history to me, but now I can read about



Three Generations: John Richard Howard  
John Richards Howard, John Fitz Alan Howard  
Picture taken about 1920

her with greater interest, as I do those Dukes of Norfolk and St. Philip Howard and Anne Boleyn. With all of the stories that have come down with the sinking of *Her Majesty’s Ship Birkenhead*, I have a wonderfully exciting moment in my past to tell about. It adds interest to my own life. Because of John’s work, thousands of ancestors have had their temple work done, including the Howard royalty dating back to Thomas Howard, the Third Duke of Norfolk.

But I’m most thankful for the fact that John Richards Howard was one of the courageous pioneers who met and faced all the privations of frontier life. He gave up an exciting life on the sea for a greater cause—the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He performed a great work in helping to build up a city and a place where others who came later might live in peace and comfort, and he retained his faith in the gospel to the end of his days. How little anyone knew on that night of the 26<sup>th</sup> of




February 1852 when the Birkenhead was sinking and a young 10 year old boy's life was saved by a quick toss over the side of the ship, that he would do so much good and make so many valiant and daring decisions and connect so many hundreds of family members together. He died at the home of his daughter Marie H. Robins in East Midvale on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1927. He was in his 86<sup>th</sup> year.




## Map of England Home of the Howards




# Line of Descent Between Richard Howard and Cecile JAMES




**Richard Howard**  
B: 18 Jan 1813  
, , , United Kingd  
M: 5 Aug 1840  
A, H, England  
D: 26 Feb 1852  
D, , South Africa




**Martha Richards**  
B: 18 Mar 1815  
PSM, H, England  
D: 12 Apr 1843  
S, H, England




**John Richards Howard**  
B: 18 Sep 1841  
, , , United Kingd  
M: 2 Nov 1867  
SLC, SL, Utah  
D: 26 Apr 1927  
, , , United States




**Harriet Spinks BROOKS**  
B: 24 Dec 1843  
o, M, N, England  
D: 10 Sep 1883  
, , , United States




**Richard Fitz Alan HOWARD**  
B: 3 Apr 1868  
PsC, SL, Utah  
D: 5 Jul 1884




**John Fitz Alan HOWARD**  
B: 27 Nov 1869  
, , , United States  
M: 26 Sep 1895  
, , , United States  
D: 17 Jul 1953  
S, SL, Utah, USA



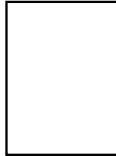
**Sarah Drucilla SEARS**  
B: 20 Dec 1874  
, , , United States  
D: 11 Feb 1951  
, , , United States



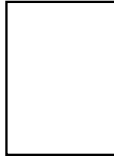
**Mary Fitz Alan HOWARD**  
B: 26 May 1871  
, , , United States  
D: 28 Jul 1871



**Martha Fitz Alan HOWARD**  
B: 22 Mar 1872  
, , , United States  
D: 22 Mar 1872  
SL, SL, Utah



**Alice Fitz Alan HOWARD**  
B: 25 Jan 1875  
, , , United States  
D: 10 Nov 1924  
SLC, SL, UT



**Josephine Mowb HOWARD**  
B: 31 Jul 1877  
, , , United States  
D: 19 Dec 1962  
Ogden, W, Utah



Marguerite Mow  
**Howard**  
B: 4 Oct 1879  
, , , United States  
D: 21 Feb 1925  
, , , United States



Stillborn  
**Howard Twin**  
B: Nov 1880  
SL, SL, Utah  
D: Nov 1880  
SL, SL, Utah



Stillborn Howarc  
B: 1880  
SLC, SL, UT  
D: 1880



Gordon Maxwell  
**HOWARD**  
B: 13 Mar 1899  
, , , United States  
D: 15 Jul 1979  
, , , United States



Lucie  
**HOWARD**  
B: 2 Mar 1900  
, , , United States  
M: 7 Oct 1925  
, , , United States  
D: 27 Dec 1980  
, , , United States



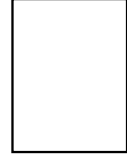
Cecil Syme  
**JAMES**  
B: 14 Mar 1900  
, , , United States  
D: 8 Jun 1988  
, , , United States



Jessie  
**HOWARD**  
B: 29 Sep 1901  
, , , United States  
D: 22 Nov 1994  
K, , Utah, USA



John Richards  
**HOWARD**  
B: 7 Feb 1903  
B, D, Utah, USA  
D: 31 May 1942  
A, B, NM, USA



son (Stillborn)  
**HOWARD**  
B: Mar 1905  
B, D, Utah, USA  
D: Mar 1905



Marcus Stuart  
**HOWARD**  
B: 4 Jun 1906  
, , , United States  
D: 29 May 1996  
, , , United States



Winifred  
**HOWARD**  
B: 5 Aug 1908  
C, Cook, I, USA  
D: 26 Oct 1934  
SLC, SL, Utah



Alan Sears  
**HOWARD**  
B: 27 Jun 1910  
C, Cook, I, USA  
D: 19 Dec 1933  
D, D, C, USA



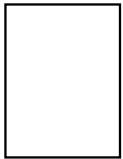
Richard Brooks  
**HOWARD**  
B: 2 Aug 1912  
M, Cook, I, USA  
D: 2 Aug 1912  
M, Cook, Illinois



Lora  
**HOWARD**  
B: 11 Aug 1913  
, , , United States  
D: 16 Jul 1935  
SLC, SL, Utah



Lloyd Ellsworth  
**HOWARD**  
B: 6 Dec 1916  
M, Cook, Illinois  
D: 24 Sep 2006  
, , , United States



William Sears  
**HOWARD**  
B: 14 Sep 1918  
M, Cook, I, USA  
D: 14 Sep 1918  
M, Cook, Illinois



Richard Alan  
**JAMES**  
B: 8 Jul 1926  
, , , United States



Edwin Howard  
**JAMES**  
B: 27 Jul 1927  
, , , United States  
D: 28 Jul 1927  
, , , United States



Lois Joan  
**JAMES**  
B: 1 Aug 1928  
, , , United States



Thomas Arthur  
**JAMES**  
B: 11 May 1930  
, , , United States



Joyce  
**JAMES**  
B: 25 Jun 1932  
, , , United States



Cheril  
**JAMES**  
B: 21 Apr 1937  
, , , United States



Cecile  
**JAMES**  
B: 21 Jul 1941  
, , , United States