

**The journey to a new life in America:
the experiences of a West Sussex family getting to New York****Suggested age groups:** KS3 and Lifelong Learners**Subject areas:** History, Literacy, Numeracy, Geography,**CONTEXT****Tourle Family Background**

The Tourle family of West Grinstead emigrated to New York in October 1849.

William Tourle was born in West Grinstead to an unmarried mother – Sarah – and was baptised in July 1802. He served in the army in his early years, including a period in Ireland, and it is likely that he met his future wife Mary there. Their eldest daughter, Maria, was baptised in Drypool, East Yorkshire, in January 1830. Shortly after Maria was born, William left the army, and the family moved south, to his home parish of West Grinstead in Sussex. Over the next decade and a half, William and Mary had seven more children identified in parish baptism records.

William's job, as given in the 1841 census, was an agricultural labourer. The jobs listed for him in his children's baptism entries include servant, (general) labourer as well as agricultural labourer, showing he was taking any work he could get. In the 1849 Parish Rate Book the Tourles are listed renting a small property of 8 perches (about 200 square metres) called Butchers Row. This was located near other family members, across the river from the parish church of West Grinstead.

Life was hard for William Tourle as an agricultural labourer in the 1830s and 40s. The booming population did not correspond to the amount of work available, and because there were so many people looking for work, employers did not have to pay particularly high wages. There was always someone else who needed the money – *any* money – if you felt your pay was too low. Also mechanisation was increasingly putting people out of work; what would take four men all day to complete often took a machine one morning, and some machines only required one (trained) man to operate. Many agricultural labourers had little choice but to move to towns or even overseas to find work. It became clear there was greater job security and higher wages abroad. The Government, trade unions and many local parishes began to encourage emigration, printing posters and paying emigrants' travelling.

George Thorns was the Overseer of the Poor in West Grinstead in 1849. He was responsible for getting the funding together and accounting for all the expenses paid out to any emigrants.

So the Tourles, with the support of the parish of West Grinstead, left for America in October 1849.

Source B

**West Grinstead Parish Records:
Miscellaneous Papers 1849-1852, item 5**
Receipt of goods bought near London Docks
(ref.no. Par 95/38/7/5)

[Click here for hi-res pdf image and transcript.](#)

Octo-30

London, 18 ⁴⁹

Mr. J. B. Whyte

**Bought of J. B. WHYTE,
GENERAL PROVISION WAREHOUSE,
10, UPPER EAST SMITHFIELD,
Opposite St. Katherine Docks, near the London Docks.**

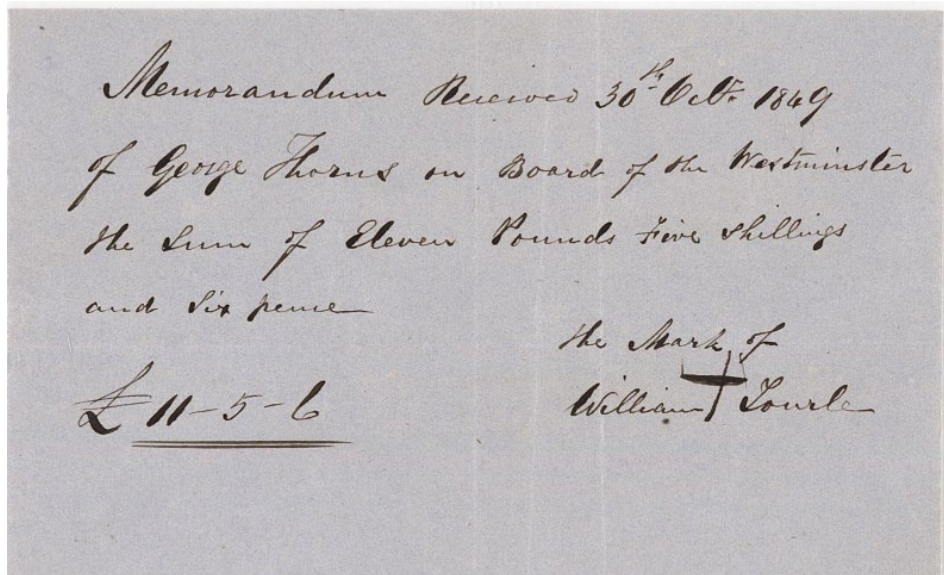
Tea		
Coffee		
Cocoa		
Sugar		
Loaf Sugar		
Tobacco	<i>1 lb</i>	<i>2 10</i>
Hams	<i>8 10</i>	<i>2 11 8</i>
Bacon		
Corned Beef		
Pickled Pork		
— Tongues		
— Cask		
Suet		
Butter	<i>16</i>	<i>16 00</i>
— Jar		<i>2 00</i>
Lard	<i>6</i>	<i>4 00</i>
Eggs		
Cheese	<i>2 1/2 lb</i>	<i>1 4</i>
Raisins	<i>2 1/2 lb</i>	<i>1 4</i>
Currants		
Rice		
Spices		
Mustard	<i>1/2 lb</i>	<i>2 6</i>
Pepper	<i>1/2 lb</i>	<i>2 6</i>
Salt	<i>2 1/2 lb</i>	<i>2 0</i>
Soap	<i>2 1/2 lb</i>	<i>2 0</i>
Soda		
Candles	<i>2 1/2 lb</i>	<i>2 0</i>
Vinegar	<i>1 1/2 lb</i>	<i>2 0</i>
Pickles		
Oranges		
Lemons		
Oatmeal		
Packets of Groats		
Barley		
Peas		
Fine Biscuit		
Second ditto		
— Bag		
Loaves of Bread		
Rusked Bread		
Flour		
— Bag		
Herrings	<i>2 0</i>	<i>13 0</i>
Potatoes		
— Bag		
Onions		
German Sausages		
Knives and Forks		
Spoons		
Net	<i>1 1/2</i>	<i>1 3 6</i>
Sea Bed		
Blankets		
Coverlid		
Provision Chest	<i>1</i>	<i>3 0</i>
Bottled Ale		
Ditto, P orter		
— Casks		
Saucepan	<i>1</i>	<i>2 0</i>
Fryingpan		
Plates		
Mugs		
Dishes		
Wash Bowl		
Chamber	<i>2</i>	<i>6 0</i>
Slop Pail		
Water Bottle	<i>5 4 2 3</i>	<i>6 0</i>
Hook Pot	<i>1 1/2</i>	<i>3 0</i>
Lantern	<i>1 1/2</i>	<i>3 0</i>
Tea Pot		
Port		
Sherry		
Brandy	<i>1 0</i>	<i>2 6</i>
Rum	<i>1 1/2 lb</i>	<i>1 6</i>
Geneva		
— Bottles		
Bipies	<i>1 1/2</i>	<i>2 1/2</i>

*Recd of J. Whyte
10 Upper East Smithfield
Oct 30 1849
J. B. Whyte*

Source C

West Grinstead Parish Records: Miscellaneous Papers 1849-1852, item 1

Memorandum of money received by William Tourle from George Thorns
(ref.no. Par 95/38/7/1)

A photograph of a handwritten memorandum on aged, slightly yellowed paper. The text is written in a cursive script. It reads: "Memorandum Received 30th Oct^r 1849 of George Thorns on Board of the Westminister the Sum of Eleven Pounds five Shillings and six pence". Below this, the amount is written as "£11-5-6" and underlined. To the right, it says "The Mark of William Tourle" with a cross-like mark above the name.

Memorandum Received 30th Oct^r 1849
of George Thorns on Board of the Westminister
the Sum of Eleven Pounds five Shillings
and six pence
£11-5-6
The Mark of
William Tourle

[Click here for hi-res pdf image and transcript.](#)

ACTIVITIES

Key Questions:

How did the Tourle family travel from West Grinstead to New York?

How was the journey funded, by whom and what was covered by the funding?

CHECK/ DISCUSS

- Have a look at the three sources. What do you think each one is?
- With a partner try reading each source.
- Now check what you have managed to read against the transcripts.

SOURCE A

- When was the document written?
- Who paid for the Tourles to emigrate? How much?
- What was the name of the ship which took the Tourles to New York?
- The journey was in three stages. Which places did the Tourles visit enroute to board the ship?
- List all the things covered by the funding money? Is there anything you are surprised to see on this list or anything you think is missing?

SOURCE B:

- What is the date on the bill and how much was it for in total?
- Who supplied the items?
- Which was the most expensive and the least expensive items purchased?
- What was a sea bed, a chamber and a hook pot?
- What do you notice about the items purchased?

SOURCE THREE

- How much did George Thorns give to William Toule once he was aboard the ship?
- What do you think William used this money for?

INVESTIGATE

- Using a map of England work out the distances the Tourle family travelled by carriage from West Grinstead to Horsham, by train to London Bridge and by carriage to the London Docks.
- Research the Ship Westminster. Which type of ship was it? How long would it have taken the Tourles to reach America and what would life have been like on board for them?
- [Find out more about the Tourle family and their journey to the USA.](#)
 - When did they arrive in New York?
 - Which records tells us this?
 - Do you know what happened to them after they arrived?
 - Why is it hard to trace them once they land in the USA?

DO

- Work out how much £67 10 shillings would be worth today using the National Archives currency converter below. This amount was spent on one family of 9 to emigrate to the USA. Do you think this was a good use of money at the time? If so why and if not, why not?
- If you had to suddenly leave your home and emigrate to the USA today what 6 key things would you take with you from your old life here to your new life abroad. Why have you chosen these 6 things? Justify your choice to a partner/group.
Do not include any electronic devices such as mobile phones, laptops, tablets etc in your list.
- Imagine you are one of the Tourle children. Write an account of your journey from West Grinstead up to your arrival on board the Westminster. Remember you have never left West Grinstead before or travelled by steam train or ship. Also you have never been to London before. Include how you felt and the sights, sounds, smells etc you encounter on your journey.
- Write a letter as George Thorns, the Poor Law Overseer, thanking the two donors for the money to fund the Tourles emigration to the USA. Be sure to include the reasons why you think it was a good use of their money and explain how the money was spent and not a penny wasted.

RESOURCES

<http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/>

[Emigrants of West Sussex: The Tourles of West Grinstead, a case study](#)

[A Blog about the ship Westminster \(1837\) by kind permission of Stephen Kuta](#)