

# U.S.S. Marblehead (CL-12)



Clyde William Aiton, 1945  
Brazilian consular document

## Marblehead Biography Clyde William Aiton

Clyde William Aiton was among the oldest enlisted men aboard the U.S.S. Marblehead during WWII, and this fact made researching him difficult. He was born on 13 AUG 1902 in Quincy, Adams County, IL, then a town of about 36,000 people situated on bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River and the state of Missouri to the west. Originally called Bluffs, the town was renamed in 1825 after newly elected President John Quincy Adams.

Clyde's mom, Effie Mae Morris, was born 15 AUG 1873 in Payson, Adams County, IL. His dad, John, was born 31 AUG 1867 in Largs, Scotland, on the coast 32 miles west of Glasgow. John immigrated to the U.S. and worked as an accountant and postmaster. Effie died in Dallas, TX in 1920. Five years later, John remarried to Alice Roberts *nee Percival*, a widow, and in 1928 the couple moved to the New Llano Co-operative Colony, a socialist community that had relocated from Los Angeles County, California to Vernon Parish, Louisiana a decade earlier.

John was a prominent member of the Colony, and was described as *"tall, spare of flesh and as active as a man of thirty, there was always that gentle, courteous air about him that was found in the cultured man, with a dignity that did not smirk of conceit. He was an interesting conversationalist, telling his stories in a straightforward manner that held the attention. Reason governed his actions rather than emotions and he longed to be a writer -- not of fiction, but of ancient history dealing with the British Isles before the Christian era."*

Clyde had one sister, Florence Margaret (1914–1971) who the colonists described as *"...a blond lass whose forehead resembles that of her father."* Florence in the Colony's theatre and sang in its Glee Club. The colonists, which at times exceeded more than a thousand, *"purchased their membership and then became an equal owner in the colony. They owned all the industries which they ran themselves, all the homes where they provided water and electricity for themselves, even all the entertainments which they produced themselves. Everyone worked together to produce whatever they needed."*<sup>1</sup> In Feb 1952 in Rockwall, Texas, Florence married Aubrey L. Douglas, a custodian for Dallas Power and Light.

Clyde was never part of the New Llano commune. The U.S. census enumeration in Dallas, TX on 21 JAN 1920, showed that he was 17 ½ and already a sailor on a merchant vessel nearly a year before his mother died in 1920.

On 10 APR 1931, at age 29, Clyde enlisted in the Navy and was assigned service #3553647. Little is available on the Internet about his early ships or shore posting in known however he did reenlist on 21 MAR 1935 in the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong. On 26 APR 1939, he transferred from the Naval Receiving Station in San Francisco to *USS Worden (DD-352)*, was a Farragut-class destroyer. At the time, he was already a Chief Quartermaster, permanent appointment - CQM(PA). On 7 JUL 1939, he is transferred to *USS Chaumont (AP-6)* at San Diego, CA for further transfer to the Asiatic Fleet. *Chaumont* was one of two veteran transports that kept the Asiatic Fleet supplied with sailors (*USS Henderson (AP-1)* was the other) but unfortunately, *Chaumont's* muster rolls for prior to 1941 are not available on the Internet.

It appears that Clyde spent part or all of the intervening 18 months as part of the Yangtze River Patrol Yangtze River Patrol Force (COMYANGPAT), from which he was received on 26 FEB 1941 at the Naval Receiving Station, Cavite, Philippines, again via *USS Chaumont*. He joined the obsolete light cruiser *USS*



John Aiton and his dog Dingle,  
eyeing construction of Ft. Polk  
in 1940

Source: [newllanocolony.com/](http://newllanocolony.com/)

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*Marblehead* on 5 MAR 41 in Cavite, Philippines. Six months later, on 14 SEP 1941, he was transferred to the Fleet Reserves and then immediately recalled to duty onboard *Marby*, as the cruiser was affectionately referred to by her crew. War was eminent and the Navy wasn't going to let a seasoned CQM go at that time.

Clyde would spend 2 ¼ years aboard *Marby*. The events of that period included the bombing of the ship on 4 FEB 1942 and her subsequent 20,589-mile, 90-day escape to New York, adventures which are more fully described in [Marby's own biography](#) and in the 1944 book [Where Away – A Modern Odyssey](#). As with all the loved ones of the sailors aboard *Marby* throughout that perilous voyage, Clyde's family thought he was dead or in enemy captivity until he called them with the good news the day after the ship arrived in New York on 4 May 1942.

*Marby* spent the next 5 ½ months in drydock in Brooklyn Navy Yard undergoing a massive overhaul. He may have taken leave to visit his dad and sister in Louisiana and Texas during that period, but he was back aboard *Marby* when she rejoined the war effort on 15 OCT 1942, redeploying to the mid-Atlantic Ocean to operate out of Recife, Brazil hunting Nazi blockade runners and U-boats.

On 26 DEC 1943, Aiton transferred from the *Marblehead* as a Chief Quartermaster at Recife, Brazil, to the *USS Cincinnati*, an Omaha-class light cruiser and sister ship to the *Marby*. He was transferred for temporary duty and subsequent transfer on arrival in the U.S. On 1 JAN 1944, he was received at the Naval Receiving Station in New York. This is his last appearance in the U.S. Navy muster rolls. He may have served in shore-based roles for the remainder of the war.

His date of discharge from the Navy appears to have been 1 Apr 1951. However, he appears on various vessels of the US Army Transport (USAT) service until the late 1950s. These ships included *SS Cape Porpoise*, *General William Weigel*, *Sergeant Andrew Miller*, *Lieutenant Robert Craig*, *Private Joe E Mann*, *Sergeant Jack J. Pendleton*, and *Sergeant Archer T. Gammon*. During this stage of his career, he visited ports such as Recife, Brazil; Manila, Philippines; Jinsen and Pusan, Korea; Okinawa, Sasebo, Kure, and Yokohama, Japan; and Kwajalein, Marshall Islands.

It is unclear when, where and how Clyde met his wife, Clara Lois Morris (b. 21 Aug 01) but it appears to have been later in life. Also unclear whether they ever had children. However, the words "Wife of Clyde W. Aiton, QMC, U.S. Navy" appear on her headstone in Willamette National Cemetery, Portland, OR. She died on 21 MAY 1992 in Oregon City, OR. She is buried alongside Clyde, who had died at age 59 on 5 JUL 1961. His inscription indicates that he also participated in WWI, which was likely to have been in a merchant mariner capacity.

Clyde William Aiton is listed on page 234 of the 1944 book [Where Away – A Modern Odyssey](#).

Don't forget to read [Marby's own biography](#).

*Biography by Steve Wade, son of Frank V. Wade, BM2c, USS Marblehead 1939-1945, with contributions from Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com, and other Internet records.*

*Corrections, additions and photos are welcomed by email to [spwade@gmail.com](mailto:spwade@gmail.com).*