

RS#03: Coming to America - Documents

Source A: Excerpt from *Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America*, by Gottfried Duden, 1829

Gottfried Duden was a Prussian lawyer who visited Missouri in the 1800s looking for land for German settlements. He wrote a full report of his trip in 1829 that explained the advantages of moving to Missouri. This book was considered an influential document in encouraging German immigration to North America.

How often I have thought of the poor people of Germany. What abundance and success would the industry of a few hands bring to whole families, whose condition in their own country an American-born farmer cannot imagine to be possible. There is still room for millions of fine farms along the Missouri River, not to mention the other rivers.

The great fertility of the soil, its immense area, the mild climate, the splendid river connections, the completely unhindered communication in an area of several thousand miles, the perfect safety of person and property, together with very low taxes - all these must be considered as the real foundations for the fortunate situation of Americans.

In what other country is all this combined?

If one wanted to paint the picture more colorfully, it would suffice to call to mind the rich forests, the abundance of bituminous coal, salt, iron, lead, copper, saltpeter, and other minerals; the active interest of almost all inhabitants in cheerful industry, the utilization of the advantages of their location, and the thriving steamboat services that have already resulted from it; finally, the contrast to all European prejudice with regard to the rank in society of the tradesman and the respect in which physical activity is held...

Many times I have said to myself and to my traveling companion (whom I shall leave behind in the most fortunate situation): People in Europe will not and cannot believe how easy and how pleasant it can be to live in this country. It sounds too strange, too fabulous. Believing in similar places on this earth has too long been consigned to the fairy-tale world. The inhabitants of the Mississippi area, on the other hand, consider the reports of need in Europe exaggerated. The citizens of the state of Missouri, together with their slaves, doubt so much that there are so many white people in Europe who with the greatest exertion can enjoy scarcely as much meat in an entire year as is here thrown to the dogs in a few weeks. They cannot believe that some families would even starve or freeze to death in winter without the charity of others; they are accustomed to attribute such statements to the intention and desire to praise and flatter America. However, sometimes one hears a person say: "Yes, yes, my grandfather told us that life was very hard there."

Source: Excerpt from *Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America* [Bericht über eine Reise nach den westlichen Staaten Nordamerika's], Gottfried Duden, 1829. <http://www.teachushistory.org/nineteenth-century-immigration/resources/duden-recommends-immigrating>

Source B: Letter Written by German Immigrant Theodore Hartwig to His Brother Carl, 1851

Dr. Theodore E.F. Hartwig was a physician in Cedarburg, Wisconsin, who came to America from Frankenberg, Kurhessen, Germany in 1846.

Cedarburg, Washington County (Wis.)
November 21, 1851

My dear precious Carl,

...Concerning my journey here, I can tell you but little because it has almost left my memory due to the terrible tedium I have since experienced. I went from Cassel to Bremen in three days, there I had to remain several days which was not unpleasant....On the eighteenth of June (1846) I boarded the ship Adler, on the morning of the nineteenth we were at sea, on the third day we were between Dover and Calais. Then a Southwester arose with considerable rain, in fact, miserably stormy weather, which made us tack around in the Channel for eight days. After we had finally escaped from this odious sleeve, we were delayed for days by alternate periods of calm and contrary winds until we took the pilot on board and with him we received a splendid East wind, and although we were still a considerable distance from New York, it brought us there in two days....

On the fifty-second day at five o'clock in the morning, we had our first glimpse of the American coast, beautifully illuminated by the rising sun. There is probably nothing finer than the ride into New York Bay, however, one's appreciation is perhaps due to the sight of land which has been so long denied...(D)irectly ahead one sees the city of New York which extending to the Bay in the form of a triangle, with its many towers and churches surrounded by a forest of masts from which fly the flags of all nations in every imaginable color....

I met these acquaintances: the two Beyers' sons, (B from the Raun) and the bailiff Zurmuhl's boys. The Beyers were very friendly to me and asked me to stay with them and they would in the mean time help me develop a satisfactory practice. However, my desire for adventure would not let me accept this extremely favorable offer....I have greatly regretted this. How comfortable I could be now instead of carrying the burden of this country practice among all types of people.

After a stay of eight days in New York, I started my trip....We traveled by steamer to Albany and by railroad to Buffalo. Here we had to wait for four days, because the steamers were all over-crowded. We used this time for a visit to Niagara Falls. A little steamer took us there in a short time, and we landed on the American side. From a distance we heard the dull thunder of the falls....To describe the beauty of Niagara Falls will probably always remain an unaccomplished undertaking. For the grandeur of this spectacle does not permit itself to be captured in words nor can it be depicted with the paint brush....

After three or four days we left Buffalo and traveled over the Lakes in favorable weather. I might say incidentally that I expected these to be much more romantic, the shores are mostly flat, no sign of hills, and if they were not overgrown with woods, they would offer a very

pasture-like view. Without mishap we reached Milwaukee the principal city, that is the largest city in Wisconsin, very picturesquely situated on both shores of the Milwaukee River, which enters Lake Michigan at this point. At that time the city had but few buildings compared with the present: in 1839 there was only a log cabin, when I arrived (1846) the population was nine thousand souls and according to the last census this has increased to twenty-four thousand....

(After staying in Milwaukee for two weeks, Hartwig traveled to Cedarburg to hunt.)

Naturally, we went to the hotel to refresh ourselves with a noon meal and to enquire about Luning. The landlord, a Kurhesse from Rotenburg, asked about our circumstances and when he heard that I was a physician, he advised me to settle down here, because many Germans lived here and there was no doctor to be found within 20 miles. I made a quick decision, because I had only twenty dollars left, returned to Milwaukee, got my things and in a few days had plenty to do....I had the good fortune to be immediately called upon for several surgical operations....

During this time...I often suffered from homesickness, because we had no company and no diversion except hunting, which I soon had to give up, because patients continued to come while I was away on a hunt...

In the summer of 1847 I bought my first horse which was a great relief what with bad roads and a wide spread, that is, far distant practice. In the same year, I began to build my house, a so-called frame house as they are customarily built here where there is no building stone.

Source: Letter written by German immigrant Theodore Hartwig to his brother Carl, who still lives in Germany in 1851. <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/WI.Hartwig2f>

Source C: Excerpt from the *Annals of the Famine in Ireland, in 1847, 1848, and 1849*, by Mrs. Asenath Nicholson

Mrs. Asenath Nicholson, who was from Vermont, traveled to Ireland to document the Great Famine of 1847. She wrote of her journey in order to help Americans to understand the terrible effects of the famine on the Irish people. The following is one example of suffering from her book.

A man had died from hunger, and his widow had gone into the plowed field of her landlord to try to pick a few potatoes in the ridges which might be remaining since the harvest; she found a few — the landlord saw her — sent a magistrate to the cabin, who found three children in a state of starvation, and nothing in the cabin but the pot, which was over the fire. He demanded of her to show him the potatoes — she hesitated; he inquired what she had in the pot — she was silent; he looked in, and saw a dog, with the handful of potatoes she had gathered from the field. The sight of the wretched cabin, and still more, the despairing looks of the poor silent mother and the famished children, crouched in fear in a dark corner, so touched the heart of the magistrate, that he took the pot from the fire, bade the woman to follow him, and they went to the court-room together. He presented the pot, containing the dog and the handful of potatoes, to the astonished judge. He called the woman — interrogated her kindly. She told him they sat in their desolate cabin two entire days, without eating, before she killed the half-famished dog; that she did not think she was stealing, to glean after the harvest was gathered. The judge gave her three pounds from his own purse; told her when she had used that to come again to him.

This was a compassionate judge, — and would to God Ireland could boast of many such.

Source: Excerpt from the *Annals of the Famine in Ireland, in 1847, 1848, and 1849*, by Mrs. Asenath Nicholson, published in 1851. <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/History.NichoAnnal>

Source D: Cartoon by John Leech, April 25, 1845

***Punch* was a weekly humorous magazine that was published from 1841 to 1992 and from 1996 to 2002. It helped to popularize cartoons as amusing satire.**



THE IRISH CINDERELLA AND HER HAUGHTY SISTERS,
BRITANNIA AND CALEDONIA

Source: *Punch* Cartoon drawn by John Leech on April 25, 1845. This cartoon criticizes England (Britannia) and Scotland (Caledonia) for their treatment of Ireland.

<http://adminstaff.vassar.edu/sttaylor/FAMINE/Punch/Sympathy/Cinderella.html>