

***This translation is a digest of the book's contents,  
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**Hoffnung und Sehnsucht:  
Aus alten Auswandererrathgebern**

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## Introduction

Who has not dreamed at some point in his or her life of emigrating and starting a new life in some distant part of the world?

For over 300 years this longing, which is still reflected in thousands of applications from would-be emigrants each year, has moved Germans to abandon their past lives and try their luck in an unknown continent.

In the 19th century there was a positive wave of emigrants from Germany to America and 5.5 million Germans settled in the USA between 1816 and 1914.

It is difficult for us today to imagine the hardships which earlier generations of emigrants had to bear. We can gain some impression of conditions from the letters of emigrant Germans which have become available in recent publications.

However, only a few people today know that from as early as 1840 onwards books of practical tips were published, beginning with the decision as to whether to emigrate and ending with information about the necessary steps to be taken in order to settle in America. We saw for ourselves - in America- that these books were well-thumbed: we found them next to German bibles and hymn books in the bookshelves of towns founded by German emigrants.

It would be unjust merely to dismiss such books as some kind of curiosity, since the majority of authors were seriously concerned with describing the conditions of the crossing and settlement. Of course, they were based on the personal experiences of the writers themselves, and could not always give a comprehensive picture of the situation at the time.

The writers sought ways of giving credence to their accounts and often chose the letter form, since a letter is not only a direct and personal description, but also guarantees the reliability and truth of what is being described. The author is therefore a correspondent rather than a book writer and is not required to fulfil any particularly high literary standards. At the same time, this form of writing makes it possible for him to supply more personal information.

"I therefore hope to be useful to my friends by means of this report and to prevent some from making overhasty decisions; maybe also to encourage some to come over here to us and to share sorrow and joy with us.

I know from my own experience that an American letter, particularly one written on the bad quality postal paper here, is soon read to shreds. Therefore, I have decided to have these

pages printed; maybe then others of my countrymen outside my circle of acquaintances , will be induced to draw instruction from them.”

de Haas

“I have received requests from many of my friends and acquaintances to send information in letters about my journey to America and the conditions there. I cannot satisfy all these demands because it would claim much of the time which is so valuable to me; I have, therefore, decided on publishing my communications so that they are available for all those who may be interested in them, without any particular costs.”

Wettstein

There was inevitably criticism of these texts. The Royal Almanach for 1863 recorded that such publications “in part confuse more than thy inform”.

Emigrant literature was not accepted without criticism on the other side of the atlantic either, as the “Atlantische Studien” for 1854 show:

“It is difficult to say how peculiar the notions of America which the majority of our countrymen on the other side of the ocean continue to hold appear to us here. In knowledge of each other Germans and Americans seem to have changed characters, since the superficial Americans are often better informed about conditions in Germany than the thoroughgoing Germans are about America. The most commonplace talk, the dryest statistical listings and the inventions of the novelists are not seldom accepted in Germany, the land of critique and philosophy, as criteria for the level of America’s culture.

German literature still lacks writing which describes life in the United States with vigour and truth. The gaps are only just being filled although it would be easy to get hold of a whole library of German books about America. We find rich instruction on geology, fish, insects, a variety of animals and manifold objects of natural studies. On the other hand, we have been content with very paltry information about aniestaations of the human spirit, which seems to scorn the continually increasing connections between both parts of the globe.”

This appraisal may be largely correct, but we should nevertheless not forget that the writers were not concerned with probing the American soul, but rather with giving those who had decided to emigrate down-to-earth and essential advice; they wanted to do no more than this - on condition that they meant their efforts seriously.

What effects did these books of advice have? Were they really important only for the useful information which appears somewhat ludicrous today, or did not many still undecided readers glimpse another, romantic America between the lines. In 1900 Rudolf Puchner wrote the following in the New York State newspaper:

“In the spring of 1849 I entered a bookshop in Heilbronn with my friend Bruckmann and asked: “Have you a reliable book on America?” This was a question often asked at that time; many people were starting to look longingly towards the west. Without hesitating, the bookseller reached for a pile of books which had newly arrived and showed us one with the remark: ‘The newest, and at the moment best is this one by Carl de Haas - ‘Tips for Emigrants’ - especially if you are intending to settle in the state of Wisconsin.’

We bought the book. While we read it, it cast its spell over us, just as the Wise Men from the East were held spellbound by the star which showed them the way to the Holy Land. But the book did not merely show us the way, it did much more: it filled us with a burning desire for the land of freedom; it made leaving the home country easier!

You see, it described the state of Wisconsin and induced me to go and see the town of Calumet which he described. My eyes skimmed over the hardships endured by the new settler mentioned there but lingered on the description of the magical shores of the lake, in whose waters the deer drank, where the sun slowly sank in the crimson splendour in the west of the undulating prairie; when the imagination populated the picture with the romantic figures of a band of Chippewas - who could resist the magic of such a picture?

With de Haas’ book in one pocket and the English dictionary in the other we stepped, our hearts pounding, onto American soil...”

### **Who should emigrate?**

The German Society in Baltimore writes: “We would like only those to emigrate who are t completely destitute when they arrive in the New World and who are at all events intending to work daily to earn their daily bread” and they might have added: and who can work, which would quickly answer the question posed above. However, since this would hardly serve the reader who wants to know who will be able to work in America, we shall supply such information in this section.

However, we consider it fitting to say some words first for those people who should not emigrate, the matter of money will be considered elsewhere.

Firstly we should cite the idle who do not want to work, America is certainly no place for them, although more so than with us here because in America they learn to work; the bread basket is hung up so high there that it can be reached only by work, they do not say, "do or die" but "work or die" and those who think they can achieve something by other means are mistaken. Begging achieves nothing at all, and the Americans do not tolerate thieving in the least, wood is not so rare that they cannot build gallows in order to do away with thieves. For this reason it is our opinion that we should not prevent loafers from emigrating, it is in fact the best thing for them, for there is no greater act of charity than letting a person learn something honest.

It is a different matter for people who are infirm, they should stay at home where they can be sure of help and support and where a little work at least procures some wages. They can find light work for small wages just as well in America as in Germany, but if they are unable to work, even for only a temporary period, no one will take care of them, their savings will be used up during such times and they will sink ever lower until they are completely destitute. Those referred to here include such as a suffer from consumption, epilepsy, derangement, loathsome ulcers or rashes etc., or who are deaf or blind or who are prevented from working by heria, missing or deficient limbs, or who are old or suffer from other infirmities of any kind.

Only completely healthy and strong people are required, and even these do not always live as they would like.

An important matter here is to rebuke the cruelty with which poor families are sent to their misery in America at the cost of the parish and without any further support at all. Unmarried people without means can always help themselves, if they are young and strong, but poor families have little or no chance. In order to pass judgement yourselves you should imagine that you arrived with your family in a large town in your Fatherland, where you were completely unknown and had no money. At least you could rely on charity or forced transport back to your home "under escort", but not in America.

Expectant mothers are incapable of starting out on the journey, although they may risk it at the start of their pregnancy and if they are quite sure of finding good accommodation as soon as they arrive in America; the journey on the ship easily gives cause to miscarriages and we need hardly point out the dreadful aspects of a confinement during the crossing. When several families emigrate together they would be well advised to see that there is a midwife amongst them."

However, whether a person suitable for life in the new country was not merely a matter of profession. In order to hold one's own another factor was equally important: the right attitude, the ability to adjust to the new situation and make use of opportunities as they arose. An 1851 advisory book writes:

“When answering the question as to who would be well advised to emigrate, based on my own experiences and those of my friends, then I should say right from the beginning that the answer depends not only on exact knowledge of the situation and means of each individual but also of his character.

The immigrant ships bring a most singular type of person into the country, whose heads are full of the most remarkable ideas and expectations. For example, some think that they can earn money to burn here without much work or effort and that the employers stand at the lake waitin in droves for immigrants looking for work, and fight over the workers when the steamer arrives. These good people see that there is no truth in this when they arrive, particularly once they have heard the American saying: “Help yourself!” and they are extremely unhappy at being so disappointed. Instead of acting according to that saying and being intent upon setting up a line of business with a will and being sensible enough to see that there cannot necessarily be enough work and wages for all immediately in the small place where a large number of immigrants land every day, they complain about their fate and express their dissatisfaction by making critical remarks about America. They think that everything they encounter is bad, much worse than it had been at home. They extol Germany, which they left with exactly the same ill-feeling, they talk of the German Rhine and its honest citizens, even if they only crossed the bridge in Cologne in order to reach the railway to Belgium, or maybe have never even seen the Rhine at all - in short, they behave as if they had exchanged paradise for hell..

Others again, predominantly women, start making the loudest complaints about small, unimportant deprivations, they start missing this and that which they owned in Germany. For example, a woman from Elberfeld, whose husband earns very respectfully and makes a good living, behaves just like that. Her expectations were greater, she is dissatisfied and feels homesick. I considered it my duty to talk my countrywoman out of her longing for her home, as much as I was able, but when I reached the conclusions that she was missing nothing more than her grandmother And a chest of drawers, I left her to her fate.

Based on such experience, a general rule as to who should be advised not to emigrate would include those who cannot without their ordinary circumstances and comforts and who

cannot, and do not have the courage, to adapt to circumstances and attitudes towards life which are worlds away from European and German ones. On the other hand, those can be encouraged to emigrate are those who are endowed with a cheerful, fresh, healthy heart, those who can shape p in any circumstances, however different they may be from what they have been used to until now, people who can work as shoemakers today and taylors tomorrow.

It would be considered a humiliation in Germany if a wholesale merchant were to open a store and trade in aches and wooden spoons, shoe blacking and soap, etc., all i the smallest possible quantities, or if a building contractor were to open a joiner's workshop and work at the carpenter's bench himself, if a notary were to give up his office and start up trade with pork and lard; however, here it is considered quite natural if someone gives up a line of business when he believes that he will do better in another or that the new work will suit him better, or mabe when he considers that he can put his own labour or that of his children, to better use suo. No one would consider having a low opinion of a man because of such a change in business. The highest officials in the state come from all possible positions in life, are craftsmen, farmers, businessmen, pedlars or whatever, and we see them return quite happily to their workshops or their grocery stores etc., at the end of their term of office, when the former alderman, justice-of-the-peace or governor busies himself as before, without it occurring to anybody that the man should be pitied. One also sees various kinds of business carried on by one and the same person here, when in Germany all would say, 'They do not go together well', or 'It is not seemly that the same man who has chosen a profession should also carry on that other business because it dishonours the profession.' Thus, I could name notaries here who, in the time when they are not required in their own special profession, carry on all kinds of secondary business; even giving dancing lessons, or peddling matchsticks - it does not in the least lessen the respect which the man earns as a human being and a citizen; here it is no disgrace even for a clergyman to undertake the other useful work in his free time. Recently, an extremely highly educated, knowledgeable and respected notary joined up with two other citizens here in order to buy pig, slaughter and salt them down etc., and then to sell them, all in addition to their own professional business, and without offence being given to anyone, and even without anyone removing business from them because of their behaviour which is 'not in accordance with their social standing'."

Wettstein

## Preparing the Journey

After much consideration the decision to emigrate has been made and there is no going back on it. The whole undertaking must now be thoroughly planned in order to avoid ruin in the new country. Imagine someone preparing to emigrate in the 19th century. What should he take with him to his new home?

He, let us call him Georg, undoubtedly has many possessions which he values. However, he cannot himself decide whether the chandelier which Aunt Erna gave him will be useful in America, or whether it will merely be an additional burden. Therefore, he reads the following advice, written in 1869:

“To get to the heart of the matter, let us list the following articles which should be taken on the journey:

Clothes. A good supply of these should be taken for each emigrant, regardless of his intentions, and they should under no circumstances be sold before departing. Clothes which are not new are just as useful in America as here since working clothes will be needed there too. A decent, and above all clean suit is a great help when finding accommodation since a respectably clothed person is held in higher esteem everywhere than one dressed untidily or in rags. Clothes are even more essential for emigrants to the Western states because they are very expensive there. The destination should be taken into consideration when buying new garments, with lighter fl clothes for cooler climates. The rapid changes in the weather which are typical of the American climate make it essential that the emigrant take warmer clothes with him. No emigrant should be without warm underclothing, whereby flannel is most suitable; those of lesser means could also choose coloured garments which show the dirt less easily. To maintain propriety, females should wear long drawers in case they travel together with the other passengers in steerage. Americans like clean and sturdy clothing, and superfluous finery is even more out of place than in Europe. Any kind of distinguishing clothing should be avoided by the emigrant, including short leather trousers which are worn in some regions but which should not be newly acquired for the journey; those already in use may be kept, particularly for those who are travelling to the interior. A hat with a wide brim is useful to protect the head both in rain and sunshine. Women should not buy any new clothes before leaving and those who are planning to stay in the towns should plan only a short time ahead since costume worn by American women is considerably different from that customary here.



Household effects: it would be inappropriate to want to take household effects and would involve more costs and effort than they themselves are worth and they would in any case arrive damaged.”

“We also took a moderate smith’s bellows with us and have not yet regretted doing so.”

de Hass

“Live domestic animals are also not recommended for the journey, they can be bought for the same price in America, where the types available are accustomed to the climate and the conditions there.

Books and writing materials. We particularly recommend that those emigrants who want to settle in the interior of the country should bring such items with them, since they may live in a very isolated situation and a good book can be a true comfort in the long winter evenings. The Bible, a hymn-book and a prayer-book should not be missing in any Christian family, particularly not in an emigrant family; such an important, momentous undertaking certainly requires God’s help and the distressed and unhappy have no safer refuge than in the prayer which will always comfort, strengthen and encourage them. Those who maybe cannot attend a church for years on end should take their family devotions extremely seriously, furnish themselves with a Bible, one or more prayer-books and a hymn-book. Those who possess other useful books should retain the best: books, particularly German books, are not merely expensive in the western states but also difficult to come by. The head of the family should also think of his children whom he will sometimes have to teach himself, as best as he can, due to the lack of a nearby school and he should prepare for this by taking some suitable books, some slates etc.. Paper, nibs, ink powder are as common in the American towns as they are here, but they are rare and expensive in the country. A packet of ink-powder and instructions for use, several dozen steel nibs and a few quires of paper take up only a little space and it is better to take them from home since purchasing them later can easily be forgotten when the emigrant must attend to so very many things.”

“After he has read the foregoing and chosen which of his possessions he intends to take with him, the emigrant will need to consider how to convert the rest into money in the best

possible way. There are two things which he must in particular consider here, firstly that he sells everything which he cannot take with him, this means that he leaves nothing behind him and the second is that he does not sell in haste and should instead rather postpone his journey by a year or two.

As far as the first is concerned, everyone will see that the emigrant should not be thinking about finding possessions when he returns, he is not moving away in order to come back again, he is taking his leave for ever and needs no more property in his old home, but requires it all the more in his new one. He then has no choice, either succeed or go to ruination, and those who are aware of this will put all their strength into achieving their objective. Anyone who believes that he can try first with part of his property and send for the rest if he is successful or turn back again if it does not please him - in ten cases only one will perhaps succeed, for he is thinking too much of his old home and what he has left behind and he is therefore prevented from attending to his new business with true persistence. However, a completely new spirit enters an undertaking if that is the only available course of action and success is inevitable if at all possible. If someone who is only 'trying' loses the greater part of his fortune it is usually the result of his excessive caution: if he had had more money available maybe he would have been able to buy more or better tools and more comforts and would have been satisfied with his new situation. It is costly and complicated to bring over what has been left behind later, and in the meantime it will not have been treated as the owner would have treated it. It is a different matter for unmarried people who come from a less well-to-do families who go ahead in order to establish an income for the parents or brothers and sisters who will follow in a few years, because the means available for the journey are not adequate for all the family. It can be justified only in this case, but where the financial means are available absolutely nothing should be left behind, neither money nor valuables and least of all members of the family; every pair of hands that can work will richly repay the costs involved in the journey.

Rau

"...but how should I pack all my worldly possessions for the journey?" Settling in America was the very first journey of their lives for most of the emigrants. It was therefore not surprising that they had no practice in packing suitcases; and even if the advice from 1869 seems amusing at times to us, it will certainly have prevented some travellers from disappointment of arriving at their destination with their treasured possessions damaged or missing.

## Packing the Possessions

“The greatest possible attention should be given to packing the possessions, firstly because this will decide to a great extent whether the objects arrive undamaged at their destination, and secondly because it will determine whether the costs are increased or lowered.

In order to have the greatest safety against damaging the possessions one should not use old worm-eaten cases; they are thrown around when being loaded and unloaded and must be made of good, new deal wood with oak mouldings and strong iron fittings. It has been known for cases to break open when the larger ships are unloaded into smaller ones and the contents have fallen into the water. Perhaps not everything was lost because some things could be caught, but that is a small comfort. Should a case be moved to the ship's lower holds during the journey and should then by chance water come in, or some other liquid be spilled near the case, all the contents would rot because no one can see to its condition during the journey. IT is therefore not worth shrinking from a small extra expenditure in order to have peace of mind in this matter. Strong, securely attached handles facilitate loading and unloading. Since iron handles damage the boxes and cases next to them, it is best to have them made of leather.

It is better if the lids are flat rather than domed since when calculating the space taken up the height of the case is taken into consideration so that half of the lid's dome is lost space for the emigrant.

As far as packing itself is concerned, it is important to distinguish between those objects which will be needed during the journey, and those which will be needed first when the destination is reached. Those things which will be required during the journey, such as a double suit, clean linen, some medicines, mirror, comb, shaving equipment, sewing equipment etc. should be packed separately. Where possible, foodstuffs should be separated from the remaining luggage, at least if they do not consist merely of dry goods, since they can easily cause damage to clothing etc. should an accident occur. Those who have only one case can obviously not separate so strictly, but they would be well advised not to take any liquids with them if they intend keeping them in the case with their other possessions, and they should also pack the most important articles on top in order to reach them more easily. It is a good idea to have an extra, lockable drawer made for those tools which will be needed frequently, or even every day, such as knives, forks, spoons, scissors, thread, combs etc., so that the case will be opened as infrequently as possible.

Firearms, which one or another emigrant may own, must be handed over to the captain on the ship, and should be packed so that they can be taken out without difficulty when asked for.”

Rau

### **Arriving in the New World**

“As soon as an emigrant ship docks, a swarm of so-called runners arrives on the scene, most of them Germans, Irish, and Dutch, a few french and english but very few Americans. These sluggards welcome the new arrivals and literally besiege them with offers. After each one of them has gathered a group of people around them and recommended inns etc., they then leave with them. Having arrived at the hostelry the runners’ greatest concern is, of course, that brandy or beer should be served; and the emigrants, happy to have arrived safely on American soil after a long and difficult journey, feel they now deserve a reward, while the commissionaires are not slow in encouraging them in this feeling. Stories about how everyone in America is bound to succeed, glowing promises and eulogies put the people into a mood whereby a cent here or there seems unimportant; in this way, some are parted from the rest of their cash on the very first day and have then to starve the following day, for it usually takes several days to find work; they are then obliged to sell or pawn their clothes or some other possession in order to live. It is in the runners’ interests that as much money as possible is spent, since they are then given more by the innkeeper for bringing the guests. Under these circumstances, it is not seldom the case that the emigrants end their first day in America with wrangling and quarrels. The gentlemen reappear the next morning, ask how their charges have slept etc., and breakfast with them, at the emigrants’ expense of course; then they take them to the agents where they can buy land or find work, having made it clear that these agents should be well paid. This is again in the runners’ own interest since their commission depends on how much the agents are paid; they are in the employ of both the agents and the innkeepers. It goes without saying that their services are also amply remunerated by their charges.”

“Many foolish tricks have been played and are still played daily on the emigrants because they go out with the intention of buying property as quickly as possible. Hardly having arrived and knowing nothing of the region and the prevailing circumstances, they put their trust in the first agent they find and acquire a farm from him. The method advised above, which

allows sufficient opportunity to become acquainted with experienced and disinterested people and discuss the possibilities with them, offers protection against such foolish tricks. Those who spend 3 or 4 weeks in the way described, observing the farms and the countryside, can always tell themselves that they are earning money on their walks simply by becoming accustomed to the situation which is so foreign and acquiring wealth in that they will be able to decide for themselves on the basis of the standards which apply here.”

“If the settler and his family cannot live with neighbors, which is the case sometimes, his first business will be to build a house. He will have to start doing it sooner or later and the circumspection and precision with which he does so determines whether he will live satisfactorily or badly. He should not hope for much comfort or beauty in his house, the only decoration he can give it is cleanliness inside and this will contribute a great deal to maintaining his health. To begin with he should choose the place where he is going to build his house very carefully. The most suitable site is the side of a low hill, which protects him from the wind, with a spring nearby and the house should at least be somewhat elevated so that it will not be damaged by heavy rains or possible floods and so that it will not be in the least damp.

Those who buy wooded land should build their houses of wood, if poor, modest or in need of shelter quickly, they should build a log-shanty, or if they are prepared for greater exertions, a log-house. Those who buy prairie land and possess little or no wood should build their houses of unbaked bricks. The method for these constructions, where each man is his own foreman, carpenter, mason, joiner, glazier and toolmaker, is given in the following, in addition to instructions for constructing stables and granaries.

A log-shanty is a very simple house and not difficult to build, its size depends on the settler's need, but in most cases around 20 feet long and 12-14 feet wide should be adequate. To begin with good, straight tree trunks of medium size are selected, if possible close to the site of the building, felled and cut into lengths to suit the length and width of the future house. The bark should be removed completely and each beam should be hewn cleanly on two opposite sides so that it will join up as closely as possible when laid on another beam. Notches should then be cut at both ends of the beam on both of the hewn sides, which should be approximately as deep as  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the thickness of the beam and so wide that another hewn and notched beam just fits when laid across it with hardly a gap left. Trial is the surest method of instruction here. The number of tree trunks depends on their width and the intended height of the building.

In order to elevate the house from the ground, a layer of large stones or blocks of wood should be made (stones are preferable), and then the neighbors should be invited to set up the house. They are glad to help, without an special reward, though there should be some glasses of brandy available; we also consider it worth celebrating when a house is set up. Openings for doors and windows and the chimney are cut out only when the tree trunks have all been laid on top of each other and then pieces of board or, failing these, pieces of split wood cut flat, are nailed onto the sawn off ends in order to make the whole more stable.”

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