



RESOURCE 6

Description: Excerpt from a letter dated 26 December 1863 from Jozef Kostlan, living in Iowa, USA, describing his journey to relatives in Bohemia (today in the Czech Republic)

There were over four hundred souls on our ship. The next day it began to rock us so unpleasantly that we could not fall asleep, and just over half of us were choking or throwing up. The crew, or sailors, were nailing and tying down the luggage chests to the posts to prevent them from tipping over. It then first occurred to us that much worse times are awaiting us, but thanks to God the voyage was good. But there was always a day or two when it was rocky, and then it was calm again. This lasted for two and a half weeks, and then it was fine all the way till the end. My weak stomach and constitution were giving me troubles for three and a half weeks, so much so that I could not eat, and as soon as I raised my head it started spinning, and my stomach was turning, but then I got used to it and food tasted good again. Francek was also in bad shape, although not as long. Anna and Krystýna were also down for about four days, but at least they were not throwing up or were not too sick. Jozífek and Anička were throwing up constantly. That is how it is on a ship, there is fear and stench, thirst and hunger.

Source: [Immigration History Research Centre, University of Minnesota](#)

Description: Excerpt from a letter dated 24 April 1891 from Marcianna Dwiatkowska, living in Philadelphia, USA, to her daughter in Poland with instructions about travelling to the USA

When you are traveling, Dear Daughter, do not buy yourself any arak for the trip, only buy yourself some dishes, a small pot and a small cup. When you arrive in Hamburg, agents will want a great deal of money from you yet. Even if you have it, do not hand it over; just say that your tickets are already prepaid, 'my mother paid'. If they will absolutely not yield, then pay at the most 2 marks. As to the rest, do not let on what you have to anyone. Whatever clothing you have take with you, even your everyday shawl, because it will come in handy for you on the ocean liner. Thus, you would not wear out the new one because you will need it here in America, just as in Poland. Now, dear daughter, if you sold the featherbed and not the pillows, then bring the pillows with you ... buy yourself a pair of shoes with buttons, if you have good ones, then do not buy any. Do not worry about money because I sent some for you to Karpinska where the steamship ticket will be, this is in Golub, I send you 24 marks and you will have enough. Now, Dear Daughter, begin the journey with God, prepare yourself with confessions because it is a horrible journey. You will have to travel across several thousand miles of water, but do not be afraid of anything; always keep God in your heart and God will guide you safely to me. Mother

Source: [Johnstown Area Heritage Association](#)



Description: Excerpt from a letter dated 10 February 1891 from Julian Kszeszowski to a friend in Poland, describing work in the USA

Here they select workers just as they pick out beasts at the market in the old country, or as they do for the army – just as long as they are strong and healthy; that is how they deal with people. But it is true that if one is strong, young, healthy, and industrious, then he can make 100 rubles a month; but he also has to know how to speak American. One can make a ruble here much faster than one can make a half ruble in an entire summer there [Poland]. And one does not reach one's goal quickly, because one does not know the language, and that is important for everyone. But if someone has the desire and he can afford to, he should not be afraid to come. But he must be strong and energetic, and he must live in a good neighborhood, have a good address, and have a friend so that he would not make out as I did ... America is the richest country [in the world], but all of its wealth is in the earth; that is why work is so hard everywhere [here] ... But everyone can come here without any hesitation and can make a grosz more quickly here than there. Julian

Source: [Johnstown Area Heritage Association](#)

Description: Excerpt from a letter dated 4 April 1938 from a Finnish woman called Saimi living in Ohio, USA to her sister in Finland

Dear Sister,

So many times I have taken a pen in my hand and a piece of paper in front of me to reply to your letter, but I just haven't been able to do it. Tears have clouded my vision so that I haven't been able to write. Mother's death came as such a big surprise to me – even though I had hoped one: dear Mother is now at rest in Holy Sabbath. I have felt badly about her so many times when I have heard that even in the twilight of her life she wasn't able to rest. She had to always work, and she was in full comprehension till the end. They have been so strong. Dear Sister, I'm so thankful to you for being able to do the last services to dear Mother. How grand and beautiful that is! Thanks to my sister Mari and Selma too. I have been so bad, not writing to Mother very often – not that I haven't remembered her. But I guess you are so tied to your own household. And Mother didn't know how to read herself – who would have even read my letters to her! I hope she didn't remember me badly? If there is any small item in Peräkoski that was made by Mother or that belonged to her, could you please keep it for me, so that I could have it as a memory of her? I have been myself in poor health; the doctor came and said that I have ulcers. Iikka broke his finger in the logging site. The ring finger of his right hand was completely cut off, like a pine nut. It got caught between heavy timbers. He has to be away from work for three weeks. How is Father doing? Please tell him, many greetings from us, and that our hope is that when he leaves this world he does so believing in Jesus. I'm saying now goodbye to you my dear Sister. May God be with you.

Source: [University of Minnesota](#)

- What are the main topics/concerns of each letter as described by the authors?
- What impressions do these letters give about life as a migrant in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?
- Can you identify any similarities and differences between the experiences of these migrants and those of today?