

**JOURNEY
ACROSS
THE
ATLANTIC**

“Mutti – when will we be there?”

Little Joachim listened to the wailing question of four-year-old Willy whose family sat next to them on the passenger ship, Allemania.

“It won’t be tomorrow or even the day after tomorrow,” Joachim told Willy. “It could be more days than you have fingers on your hands.”

Joachim felt big and wise because when he had asked his mother the same question, she had explained that it might take almost two weeks and soon after that it would be his birthday. Joachim would be six years old when they got to the new country. Now he needed to be very grown up and help the family on their journey.

It was October of 1872.

Nearly a thousand people were all huddled together in the bottom part of the big ocean liner on its way from the port of Hamburg, Germany to America. A few rich people had the cabins and the fancy dining rooms on the upper decks. Joachim’s family had just enough money to buy tickets for a place on the ship, so they sat with all the other poorer families in a place where there were no separate rooms and where most of them slept on hard wooden bunks built into the wall. It was called the steerage part of the ship. There they waited and waited for the journey to end.

Joachim thought about all the strange and exciting things that had happened in the last few days.

His family had lived in a tiny house in Reddelich, a very little German village with only a few houses

His father and nearly all the other men in the village worked for a rich landlord. They worked very, very hard, but they could not own their own land or houses. . The little house they had lived in would soon have another family who worked for the landlord on the Gut living in it.

Many families in the village decided to move to America where they had heard there were good jobs and even free land.

Joachim, his sister Henricka or Ricka who was nine, and his brother Johann who was fourteen, all helped father and mother, or Mutti as they called her with the packing. Father's sister, Aunt Sophie, who was just a little older than Johann was going to go to America with them.

It seemed to Joachim that most of what they did was to think about things they could NOT take with them. Joachim had to leave all his toys. He wondered who would be playing with the wooden horse Father had carved for him last Christmas.

The family packed their clothes, a few dishes and pots and just a few things that they could carry with them in baskets, and blankets. Trunks would have been too heavy to carry and cost too much to ship. They tied up some of their things in their quilts, and pillows, and the featherbeds Mutti had made by saving the feathers from their geese. Father packed the tools he used to build and to carve. All the furniture Father had made had to stay behind, but he promised Mutti that he would build more like it when they got to their new home.

Mutti packed two pictures of Jesus that were all embossed with beautiful gold on white paper. Father had given them to her before they were married. Those pictures would hang on the wall of their new home in America just like they did in their little house in the village. Joachim wondered quietly to himself, "Oh what will that new home be like?"

The night before they left for America, Joachim's family walked down the one street in their village and followed it to Steffenshagen, another little village almost like theirs, except that it had a big brick church where people from several villages came on Sunday. That night there was a special prayer service so that the families who were leaving could ask God for protection on the long journey. Their cousins, another Kuse family, would be leaving a few days later on another ship. Maybe when they got to America they would all go to a new church there together.

Joachim remembered that Father had said the church was over 600 years old. He looked at the stone baptismal font where he and his brothers and sisters had been baptized when they were babies. It was so old that no one could remember what the carvings in the stone meant.

In the morning the Kuse family got up very early to walk to the place where the train would stop. All the people in their village came out to say goodbye and wish them a good trip. It seemed sad to think that they would never see any of the again, unless they came to America too. But father said that in America they would see Aunt Anna Marie and Uncle Peter and the cousins who were already living there and who had written about the wonderful place it was.

"Goodbye, goodbye, write when you get there," called all the friends and neighbors.

It was too far for Joachim to walk to the train, but Father put him in a little barrel and put that on the wheelbarrow they were using to carry their bundles and boxes. Father and Uncle Heinrich took turns pushing it. Uncle would take it back to the village after they got on the train. On and on they went, past the school where Ricka and Johan had learned to read and where Joachim would have gone when he turned six. On they went past the house where Grandpa Westendorf, who had been the village

tailor, had lived. The ride was bumpy and dusty and Joachim got tired of standing in the barrel even when there were farms and animals and people to see, but Ricka who had to walk and even carry some bundles, got even more tired. She said, **"Mutti, my feet hurt. When will we be there?"**

Then they came to the station and heard the train. **Chug, chug, chug, Choo, choo, choooooo.** . Joachim had heard the farmers talk about how they shipped the crops they raised for the landlord to market on that train.

Very soon they and their bundles were on the train and they were going faster than Joachim had ever gone before. **"Clickity, clack, clickity clack,"** The train rattled on for all of that day as Joachim watched farms and villages and trees and rivers, and some bigger towns. **"Are we coming to Hamburg? When will we be there?"**

"No," laughed Father, "Hamburg is much bigger than any of the towns you have seen so far. It is a seaport and the big ships come and go from it."

It was evening before they got there. Hamburg was a very big, scary city. They had to stay overnight in a place where there were many other people waiting to go on the ship. Joachim was glad to hear Father tell Mutti that he had asked lots of questions about places to stay and how to watch out for bad men who might take the traveler's money or sell them things they did not need to buy. Joachim fell asleep, but he knew that Father, and Mutti, and Aunt Sophie were watching.

Then it was time to get on the ship. Joachim and Ricka held very tightly to Mutti's hands as they walked up the narrow walkway to get on board. It seemed to Joachim that all he had seen all morning was legs, and skirts, and boxes, and bundles all pressing together. "I feel like we are in a flock of sheep or a herd of the pigs in our village, being herded to market," said Joachim to Ricka. All around him he heard voices---loud voices, tired, voices, angry voices, voices that talked in languages he could not understand. **"No, yes, come, stay, go here, go there, chatter, chatter, chatter."** It made his ears ache. He wondered how they would ever find their place on the ship. **"Oh Mutti, When will we be there?"**

Now they were THERE! They were on the ship. They were sitting in a hot, stuffy place down at the bottom of a set of wooden stairs with hundreds of other people. Light came through some windows in the ceiling and from some little round windows called portholes in the side of the room. There was sawdust on the floor. Wooden shelves called bunks were nailed to the walls. Those would be their beds. Men and big boys like Father and Johann would be in some of them and women and girls and small children would be in the others.

The ship had seemed so huge when Joachim first saw it in Hamburg. It was forty feet wide and over 300 feet long. That is about as long as a football field today.

Everything had seemed so big and exciting then, but now they had just been sitting for almost a week in a small part of that ship. Wooden fences and painted lines on the floor divided the space into parts. Several families had to stay in just one small part but everyone could watch everyone else all day and all night.

Someone said that there were about 300 more people on the ship than it usually carried so there was less room than usual. . It was to be the last voyage of the ship from Hamburg to New York. After that it would travel to the West Indies.

Joachim wanted to ask, "When will we be there?" But the first time he said it, his mother reminded him that a boy, almost six years old and traveling to America, must be big and brave.

Father had brought along the family Bible and a hymn book. Sometimes when there was enough light coming through the tiny portholes, he read aloud from those books. Sometimes they and other passengers would sing some of those hymns.

Ricka, Johann, and his Aunt Sophie, tried to think of things to talk about to make the time go faster. They remembered stories they had read or heard in school. Some were scary stories about were wolves and witches. Those stories made other people remember stories they had heard and they told them too. The stories were so scary that it made Joachim wish he were at home in his own bed. He tried to think that they weren't true, but some of the storytellers really believed them. Even in the Kuse family there was a story about the mother-in-law of great great Grandpa Joshua Kuse's first wife who had been burned at the stake because people thought she was a witch. The place where that had happened was near the village where the Kuses lived.

The people on the ship had fun when they remembered songs they had sung in their villages. Some were songs everyone knew and could sing and others came from different countries that the people had come from. Everyone learned new songs and sometimes people who had fiddles or concertinas or other musical instruments played them and sometimes they even danced to the music.

Sometimes, when the sea was calm people climbed the stairs to the deck and walked there. It felt so good to breathe the fresh sea air. It was fun to watch the clouds and the water change color, to see the sun rise or set over the water and to see the moon reflected in the ocean. Joachim thought about his ten fingers and wondered if ten days and nights had gone by. How many sunsets had they watched? He wanted to ask, **"When will we be there?"**

When the ship's crew came to clean the place where they were staying they sent everyone up to the deck so that they could sweep and scrub, and put down fresh

sawdust. But there were so many people on the ship that there wasn't much room on the deck either. Joachim and some of the other little boys started a game of tag but their mothers stopped them. **"Stop! Watch out! Don't fall overboard!"** The boys thought how much fun it would be to be on sand or dirt again and not on this rolling ship. They mumbled, **"Oh Mutti, when will we be there?"**

Usually there was nothing to see except sky and water, but once they saw the sails and funnel of a ship far away. Then they seemed to go down over the edge as if they had gone into the water. Father said that showed that the earth was round because the ship was going away on the curve of the big ball that was our earth. Joachim wondered if America was on the other side of the big round earth. He wondered why the people on the other side didn't fall off. He wondered, **"Will we ever be there?"**

Day after day Joachim listened to the sound of the waves slapping against the iron hull of the ship. "Splish, splash, slap, splish, splash slap."

Sometimes he could see them splashing as high as the two little windows or portholes on their part of the ship. **"Splash, crash, splash, crash."** Then even the older children felt afraid and said, **"Oh when will we be there?"**

Somewhere under the ship, the big propeller or screw churned the water and helped to move the ship through the ocean. **"Whir, Whirr, Wroom. Whirr, Whirr, Wroom."** The noise was always there. Joachim could feel the bumping and shaking of the propeller and the engine. It made children want to hold their hands over their ears and groan, **"O Mutti, when will we be there?"**

Joachim's father told him that deep down in the ship there was a huge steam engine that turned that screw. Sailors took turns shoveling coal into a big fire hole that burned under a boiler to change water into steam to run the engine. **"Shovel, shovel, thump, shovel, shovel, thump."** Joachim thought of those sailors down in that black fire room. No one could go down to visit that place. He wondered if they were also saying, **"Oh when will we be there?"**

The smoke from the fire came out of a big smokestack called a funnel. Sometimes you could see smoke drift past the portholes. You could smell it too. "Puff, puff, phew. Puff, puff, phew." It made children hold their noses and say, **"Oh when will we be there?"**

At night everyone rolled out the featherbeds and quilts they had brought with them. They tried to sleep as the ship rolled and rocked. Some people slept in the bunks built into the wall and some slept on the floor. Sometimes they would roll or bump into each other as the ship tossed. Then you could hear children whimpering, "Mutti, when will we be there?"

More than one hundred small babies were on the ship with their families. Sometimes when one baby began to cry others woke up and began to cry, too. **“Waaah, waaah, waaah. Waaah, waaah, waah.”** Mothers would try to sing to them or say, “Hush, hush.”

Often babies needed their diapers changed and the smell was very bad. Soon Joachim would hear someone cry, **“I can’t sleep. Oh when will we be there?”**

In the morning people would tie their bedding up into bundles and take out the cups, bowls, and spoons they had brought along. **“Clatter, clatter, clatter. Clatter, clatter, clatter.”** They waited for the ship’s steward to bring food from the kitchen or galley. He put it on a long table. Then the grown-ups crowded close to get a share to put into their own dishes. Fathers and mothers tried to get enough to feed their families. At first it had tasted quite good but it was almost always the same – oatmeal with molasses, hard biscuits, and coffee for breakfast and salt fish, salt pork, rice, and sauerkraut and dried fruit for other meals. As the days went by the bread seemed to be harder and the porridge did not change. When the boat rocked some of the food spilled. There was very little fresh water to wash and to clean up messes. Some of the children wailed, **“Oh Mutti, when will we be there?”** Then another long day began.

Grown-ups told each other stories about the villages they had come from. They talked about the troubles they had that made them want to move away to a new country --- the wars, the soldiers, the harsh, rich landlords, the famines, the strange new rulers, and the jobs they lost when machines began to do the work that craftsmen in villages had once done.

They talked about the diseases that had killed many people in their families and of the friends and relatives they had left behind and would never see again. Joachim thought of baby brother Henry, who died before they moved and of the tiny grave where he was buried. As the children listened to sad or scary stories they wondered, **“Oh when will we be there?”**

Some of the storytellers were more cheerful. They talked about the places in America where they hoped to go and the relatives who were already there. Aunt Sophie and some of the other young girls talked about some of the good jobs, fine clothes and rich husbands they hoped to get in the new land.

Father told about his Uncle Peter and Aunt Anna Marie and his cousins in a place called Sheboygan. They had gone to America almost six years before. They had written that there were jobs to be had, money to be earned, and even free land for farms that could be gotten if a person promised to live and work on the land.

A railroad was now built all across America and it would not be so hard to get to some of those new places. The children wondered, **“What will it be like when we get there?”**

Then suddenly there was excitement on board. The ship began to rock more than ever. People said it was a storm at sea. The sailors came and closed all the covers of the portholes so no water would get in and no one could see out at all. The air began to smell very bad. No lanterns could be lit so it was dark and scary. All the passengers had to stay in their places. But some of the furniture, baskets, bundles – even the chamber pots and everything else that was not tied or nailed down bumped and rolled. **“Bump, bump, thump. Bump, bump, thump.”**

The waves crashed and roared outside. **“Crash, splash, roar. Crash, splash, roar.”** The sails on the two tall masts billowed and flapped. The wind whistled and howled. **“Whooo, whooo, whooo.”**

Frightened children hung on to their mothers and even big boys and girls hung on to each other. Some children and some mothers and fathers got very, very seasick and the smell in the ship was awful. No one wanted to eat the meals the stewards brought to the table.

“Ooooh, oooh, oooh!”

Some very worried people wondered, **“Will we ever really get there?”**

Then the storm was over. People had a lot to remember and talk about. They said it was wonderful to be on such a big modern ship that usually took just ten or twelve days to cross the ocean. In the olden days when wooden ships had only sails and no steam engines, it sometimes took six weeks to cross the sea. Just think how many storms there could be in six weeks. Mothers and fathers who had begun to feel a little better told their children, **“Soon we will be there.”**

But it was not all that soon. One day they heard a muffled boom. The ship shivered and bumped and everyone asked, **“WHAT WAS THAT?”** None of the sailors would talk about it or answer questions. After a while the ship seemed to make all the old sounds that everyone had been so tired of hearing. They were really quite glad to hear those familiar noises again. Then someone heard a rumor and told others. A young boy who had come onto the ship as a stow-away had to work for his meals by helping the sailors. He told Johan that there had been some kind of explosion in the boiler room. A sailor had been killed and buried at sea. It had taken a long time to get the engines fixed. Everyone said, **“Oh how thankful we will be IF and WHEN we get there!”**

Then the word came that soon the ship would be close to the shore of North America. Just when everyone felt cheerful, they heard a new sound. **Tooot, tooto, tooot. Toot, tooot, tooot.** The ship's bells also began to ring as if they were sending messages.

“Those toots are fog horns,” said Father. Nothing could be seen from the portholes. The ship was in thick fog. It had to stop in one place. Because it was nearing the land there could be many other ships nearby. There might be rocks that the ship could bump. Everyone just waited and worried.

One of the young men who had read about ship disasters in a book told the others about all the ships that had been wrecked when they were close to shore. **They never got there!**

Joachim whispered to Mutti. **“Will that happen to us?”**
“Hush,” said Mutti. “All of us prayed for a safe journey. Lots of ships have come through a fog. Our captain surely has been in fog like this before.”

Still the foghorns kept blowing. **“Hooo, hooo, hooo.”**

Horns from other ships seemed to answer, “Tooot, toot, toot.” Once they even felt the ship move suddenly backwards. Joachim and Henricka held on to Mutti’s hands and said to each other, **“When will we be there?”**

Finally the fog lifted and someone called, “They have sighted the lighthouse at Sandy Hook. The bright beams of that light would help the crew to know which way to go.

“I can see the light house,” said Joachim.

“Look,” shouted Ricka. “I can see birds flying. I wish I could fly like a bird and get to land faster.” They had been on the ship for sixteen long days!

Then exciting things began to happen. A small boat came near the ship and a man came on board. He was a pilot who would help to guide the ship into the harbor.

Next there was customs inspection. A man checked all baskets, trunks and bundles to be sure that no one was bringing forbidden things to shore.

The people on the ship were to get on a barge while the ship was in the harbor and then land at an island off the tip of New York City called Castle Garden. It wasn’t really a castle or a garden but a very big building with places to buy food, places to buy railroad tickets, and even some places to stay overnight. There doctors and other people would decide if the people on the ship could really come to America. The doctors would check all the passengers to be sure no one with a catching disease would come ashore. He also checked to be sure that the people coming to the new country would be healthy enough to work and support their families. Joachim was worried. He had heard that sometimes just one sick person in a family would be sent back alone to the country he had come from. He remembered how seasick he had been. What if the doctor did not think he was healthy enough to come to the new land! What if he had to go back to the village without his family? What a relief it was to find out that being

seasick did not matter. The doctor said that everyone in the family could come to America.

The captain of their ship had to complete a long paper with the names of all the people who come on the ship. It was called a passenger list. The people coming past the inspectors at Castle Gardens had to give their names, the places they had come from, and where they were going in America.

Joachim heard Father talking to others about where the family would go to buy a railroad ticket to their new home. Some people took a canal boat and a boat across some lakes and then got on a train. That cost less money but took a lot longer. Joachim was glad they would go all the way to Wisconsin by train. He did not want to get on another ship. He held on to Father's hand and Henricka held Mutti's. Big brother Johann and Aunt Sophie watched to see that their bags and bundles went to the right place. The rolling and rocking of the ship had stopped and they were on dry land in the big city of New York. They would get to their new home in a few days and then Joachim would be six years old. That would be a very special birthday.

Even though there was still a long railroad trip ahead, they all smiled at each other and said, "WE ARE REALLY HERE!"

<http://freepages.family.rootsweb.com/~fjt32/Web/Tietbohl.htm>.

CASTLE GARDEN

From August 1, 1855 through April 18, 1890 immigrants from European ports came through Castle Garden (also known as Castle Clinton). The State of New York opened the very first examining and processing center for immigrants on an island off the southwest tip of Manhattan (Castle Garden). Immigration remained purely an affair of New York State government until 1882.