

From Hungary to North Dakota
Jacob Dolwig

1898

For the most part Hungarian immigrants settled in the cities, but there were a few scattered farming settlements in places as far apart as Florida, Iowa, and California. A number of Hungarians also went to North Dakota. This selection is from the diary of Jacob Dolwig, who brought his wife, son, and three daughters to Dickinson, North Dakota, in 1898. [*North Dakota Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 3. Translated by Richard J. Dolwig.]

On February 26, 1898, five o'clock in the morning, we left the village of Tolyadia, Banat, Hungary. We took farewell from — W —, our son-in-law, and from our daughter, Elizabeth, the only member of the family who was remaining behind.

Numerous friends and neighbors followed us to the railway station, where they bade us farewell and a pleasant journey. Our remaining daughter and her husband accompanied us on the train as far as Temesvár, where we stopped to

A családban hatan voltak:

Dolwig és felesége, Erzsébet

és fia: John

és 3 leány: Elizabeth, Kathryn,
Lena

transact business in regard to the sale of our property.

We left there at two o'clock in the afternoon and arrived at Arad at four o'clock, where we changed trains and continued our journey, reaching Solnack at 11 o'clock P.M. We departed at 3 A.M. after changing trains again, and after traveling all day, reached Hatvan, at 6 P.M. After leaving Hatvan, we arrived at Rutka, where we remained all day. In the morning at 3 A.M. the following day, we reached Oderberg, which is on the boundary line of Hungary and Germany. Our passports were examined there.

We proceeded on into Germany and reached Ratibor, the first station, at 1:30 P.M. and left there at 6 A.M. Nine hours later, we arrived in Berlin and departed at 12 P.M.

March 1st marked our arrival at Bremen, Germany. Our preparations for departure on the steamer were made the following day. This consisted of exchanging our Hungarian coin for German money, vaccination of the entire family, and a complete physical examination for everybody. The next day at 5 P.M. we boarded a train and traveled an hour until we reached the Bremen docks.

There we embarked in the steamer *Dresden* for our journey to the United States. The sky was overcast with small clouds. The sea was quiet, but at eleven o'clock a very heavy fog arose, which became so dense that one could hardly see. The ship was forced to drop anchor for a half hour. In the meantime, it constantly emitted frightful signals as a matter of precaution to prevent a collision with another ship in the dense fog.

In about an hour the fog lifted and we proceeded with full steam on. After riding an hour, our daughter began to complain about feeling queer, as did other fel-



low passengers. I consoled the children, telling them that it soon would be twelve o'clock when they would have beef broth, which would relieve them. For dinner we had beef broth, boiled beef, and potatoes; and at three o'clock we were served some tea. For supper they served sour soup, herring, and white or brown bread, according to taste. John and I brought the food for the six of us, but the girls would not eat because they began to feel dizzy, due to the swaying of the ship, and began to vomit. Mother, John, and I started our meal; mother drank her soup, and when she tried some meat she, too, felt ill. In three or four hours, almost everybody was sick. They complained and vomited. It was the seasickness.

At eleven o'clock, March 4th, we sighted England, which was visible for six hours. When we first caught sight of it we must have been about three or four kilometers from its coast. There we saw the salt beds at a distance, where they dug out the salt with machines. The fare for that day was coffee and barley soup for breakfast; for dinner, broth, boiled beef, potatoes, and herring; for supper, rice pudding, herring, tea, and white bread.

We entered the Atlantic Ocean on March 5th. The water was different: it had a deeper blue color, and seemed to be rougher with only a slight breeze blowing. The waves were larger which caused the ship to roll more. On this day John also became sick, but only for a few hours. At eleven o'clock we saw Zelisz, and later the lighthouse of Brime. A storm arose at eight o'clock. . . .

March 15th—Thirteenth day. In the morning at ten o'clock, we disembarked at Baltimore and caught our first close glimpse of the new land.

Baltimore is a great seaport. There we were registered, *giving our age, occupa-*

tion, religion, and property. They had that information from our former bookings, but they examined us again to prevent any irregularities. There were about 300 of us there. We bought our tickets to Dickinson, North Dakota.

That same day we still received our dinner free of charge from the steamship company, although some went into the city to buy food. We went into a saloon to drink a glass of beer. We were also hungry so I asked the saloonkeeper to bring us some "Semmel." He did not understand what I wanted so I asked him to give us something to eat. He answered, "There is some food," pointing to a large table laden with cold food. To my astonishment, I learned that one could eat all one wished as long as he purchased a glass of beer. A glass contained about half a liter. The beer was only five cents a glass, and the food was free.

After making our arrangements in the city, we departed at four o'clock. Upon leaving the city behind us, we saw splendid fields of wheat, although they were not numerous for the land surface, consisting of forests and mountains, was too rugged. In the evening there was a warm rain. We traveled all night and the next day, March 16th. Wonderful growths of wheat were all around us as we traveled, but the surface still consisted of mountains and forests, which disappointed us for we were interested in level land. Others, however, told us that the land was much better where we were bound for.

At midnight we arrived in Chicago. I noticed that the American trains travel much faster than those in Hungary. The passenger trains here travel as fast as the express trains in Hungary. Chicago is a large, beautiful city; horse-drawn trucks and horse-drawn streetcars run in the streets. Over the streets bridges built

of steel, on which the trains travel. The streets are very wide.

We left Chicago March 17th, and reached Saint Paul at nine-thirty in the evening. We still saw good wheat on the road. It was getting colder. On the 18th of March, we departed from Saint Paul. The train cars are different; there is no first, second, or third class. Here the passage is the same. The seats are for two persons, and are upholstered in red and blue plush. For immigrants, the berths were above. Below were the seats.

West of Saint Paul there was no winter wheat. It snowed a little and there were small drifts of snow still visible. There still were forests and mountains. We traveled till dusk but saw no level land. The next morning at dawn, on the 19th of March, everything was white with snow, which covered the ground knee deep.

Some of our fellow passengers left us at Hebron, some at Taylor, and others at Gladstone. We went as far as Dickinson. When it became daylight, we saw horses grazing in the deep snow. I noticed only a few ash trees in Dickinson.

Suddenly we heard the call "Dickinson," which meant we were at the end of our journey. It was seven o'clock in the morning, when we left the train. We sank into the snow up to our knees, as we stepped off the train. It was extremely cold. I walked back and forth on the station platform, but could not converse with anyone. When I observed the children trembling with cold and fright I became worried and discouraged for the first time during the entire journey, because I realized that I was in a strange land, where a strange language was spoken. There was no one with whom I could speak. The friend, who had written me to come, was not there. The children began to complain about the cold.
weari-

ness, and fatigue from their three weeks' travels.

As I looked around, a man approached and asked me in German, "Whom are you looking for? You are an immigrant?"

I answered in the affirmative. I asked him whether he knew a friend of mine J—G—, whom I wired to meet me.

He said, "Yes, I know him, but he cannot come to town because it snowed so

much Thursday that the roads are impassable. If you like you can stay with me until he comes."

I asked him whether he had room for all of us.

He answered, "Yes, I will make room, because I, too, was glad when someone sheltered me when I came over from the Old Country."

