

America Letter A Leave of Absence Odysse

Taken in its entire length from "Yearbook for North-Troms 1983"

Odysse is found in the dictionary as a adventure type of trip telling of many personal experiences.

When we dare ourselves to place an odysse explanation on this special America Letter it is because it gives us the experience of such a trip/adventure in many ways. In the first insights, it gives us the trip itself in time and space.

Amalie Gaare tells of her own trip to America in 1917..a trip that gives birth to ones own personal experiences under a stressful time of 1917. It gives us a personal chance to take part in such a trip that reading it affords. As still waters flow forward, this account takes us along and we become involved in various hurdles with many unexpected events happening. It is overwhelming and touching.

In addition, it is a traditional trip: To write tales, verses and poems, if not unusual, is in the least extended. Big incidents or adventures have been written in rhyme or thought of to be set to music and perhaps as such have been kept through history and in itself recorded in a memorybook. To have written poetry or verses in rhyme has been seen as an achievement. An account with 115 verses must then be considered a master achievement. We repeat the entire yearbook's account here. Because we see the whole story. To have edited or shortened the writing would not be right. As we see each new verse as being important for the whole, whether in form or in detail with small side-events happening with new verses bringing the traveler and the reader to new places and new experiences.

With this in mind, we invite the reader to an America trip in the year 1917 through 115 verses.

America Letter written by Amalie Gaare to Nora Bersvendsen.

To you my dear Nora I will write a letter,
And thank you for the latest and that you wrote to me.
It was for me much fun to read from your pen
Then you had to wait a long time before you got my answer again.

You also thank me for the card I sent to you
And you want to hear if I was in the cathedral
Yes, now I shall tell you the best way I can
Of my trip entirely from home to the new land.

It was on Friday morning that I from Rotsund left
With motor conveyance "Bjarne" I had a splendid beginning
I intended to go to Skjervøy to obtain a certificate/testamomial
From the mayor, the doctor and the pastor.

Early Saturday morning I was off to Tromsø
There I had things important that had to be made clear
But the time there was short, I could not stay late
Then I moved on to the street or gate of Rektor Steen.

To Harstad I went that same evening
Went directly to the hotel Norden and got a room
Because early the next morning I would be leaving
with Postman (mailman) to Kvedfjord, that I was allowed to accompany.
And over the land we went fast
So, Grandmother didn't know before I stood before her
On the same Sunday evening arrangements had been made
for a gathering in my honor.

When the next day dawned, we had received New Year
Me along with several others also to church we went
To hear God's word as the scripture says:
We cannot live by bread alone.

When the day was ebbing out
My dear Magnus and I went for a walk
We agreed to go to Vikeland
We wanted to greet Sina and also her man.

One more day I am still in my grandmother's home
But good-bye must be said to her and all others
I had lived with during my childhood years
Yes, and several of the young people..those beautiful light years.

Wednesday afternoon I left for Harstad
As I would be leaving on the hurtigruten (cruise ship route) the same night
But I don't see any travelers at this point
It was only I, myself traveling as an "emigrant"

The ship went fast towards the south
So, I was standing on land Friday evening in Trondhjem.
There I was immediately taken to "Normens" Hotel
Available for travelers such as I only.

Saturday, about 10 o'clock I went to the office
Very near the hotel, just past the corner
As there anyone can order and arrange
Necessary papers needed to continue travel.

A bit later in the day I had to go out again
To the political office I first had to appear
Next, to the Private Bank I also had to go
Because all that the trip required I must have in order.

And as I wandered about through the streets
I see among the other churches, also the big dome
And even if I am a stranger, my thoughts were immediately clear
That this was the Cathedral that before me stood.

I thereby immediately wondered how I could show
this church that is so familiar in name in the north land
That stands here peaceful but mighty/~~colorful~~ ~~but speechless~~.,
as thousands of olden time memories tumble from its bosom.

The next day the church bells ring
And I make my way to the cathedral
There was also a big happening..a big festival day
A son of Bishop Bøchmann was ordained as a pastor.

I still had a day to be around the town of Trondhjem
I had to buy some things so I had to go into the town
While I was wandering I spent time observing
My eyes behold a dear, yes, holy spot.

Before me on the street I see a house
Where my dear father in days gone by must have been
As then he operated a market/business for many, many years
And obtained much of his wares in this house.

"Andreas Moe" was the name that first caught my thoughts
There, next, in quietness and determination it began
It reminded me about a time when father went in and out
My eyes became veiled over and sorrow filled my soul.

That same afternoon, Monday, a ship will go to Bergen
that takes along emigrants..we were six in numbers
But the weather was stormy for Stadt and Hustadvik
So many became sea-sick.

When Wednesday morning came we were in Bergen
On the dock we were met by officers
Who immediately let us know we had to go to the office
To be inspected from top to bottom.

When the office opened, we are a large group
Finlanders and Swedes, yes, Danes and Spaniards
There are children and ladies, and also many men
And all are on this trip from home and the native country.

When we were well examined on our eyes, our hair and skin
The same officers took us out from there
We were certain to be observed as a flock from afar
As one at the front led us and one walked after us.

Again we reached the dock where a ferry boat lay waiting
It will bring us to the place where
We will have our orders/directions from the "General-office"
That the "Line" there will be paid for a one-day stay.

In a short time we were delivered to the hotel
Where we were given a sleeping room, two stairs up
It had not been "aired-out" and was in dis-array
It was so unfit/miserable, we stood there lost/disheartened.

One dame was very shy and bashful and
Said, here it smells like "oh-oh" as the innkeeper led us in
One chair, a table, two beds, and hardly space enough to stand
As we leaned against the wall.

We came to this site at mid-day
And we didn't get anything to eat until after 3 o'clock
As time went on we expected to be getting an evening meal
Then came the innkeeper and said, "Now we shall go on board".

He walked ahead of us and we followed after
The baggage/luggage was heavy to carry and the way was long.
At the Trondhjem hotel area a wagon-man was available
But this poor wretched group had no such convenience.

Finally we reached our destination, along the water's edge
And we could see the "Bergensfjord"
The leader said, "Yes, you shall soon be taken care of"
"Boats will soon come that will ferry you to your boarding".

We are left standing there near the water, first an hour, then two
We are feeling the cold temperatures too, before we have left.
We could help ourselves to keep warm if we could be walking about
But we had to stay as we were in order to watch out for our luggage.

That this had all be arranged this way, we later understood
That the innkeeper of the Line was paid for the day
And could not bring us out to the ship
Before the day was ended and the service was also ended.

As everything must end, so also was this stressful time
As we wondered if we would be on board as the clock struck 10
We finally were delivered and immediately received instructions
Regarding our belongings, that would go the entire trip.

We were hungry and tired and were ready for bed and sleeping
Let sleep wipe away the thoughts of yesterday.
Of the innkeeper (hotel-host) who did his business as that man did
Must surely earn his money, but not our blessings.

When the next day came we were far on the North-sea
The roughness of the sea keeps us on the lower part of the ship
The North-sea is known to make sea-sick folks afraid
So that's the reason this day there are not many up on deck.

Now it is nearing evening and darkness is falling
Right before us as a leader, a English watch/guarding ship is seen
The man of war has ordered each ship to Kirkwall
There too, we observe that the Censor (safety issues) are strict.

With the morning, I went up on deck
I see a forest of mast heads
With flags from all lands, a special sight it was
I see also a man plowing his land, think of it..January 12th.

Now, English officers have control of "Bergensfjord"
They over everything, with control and a guard at each stairway
We are all pushed together on the ship's lowest deckside
As tight as herring in a barrel..it was frightening and gruesome

When all had been put down, more were found
We had to go back to our places, but at a snail's pace
As we had to be sure we had all of our papers in our hands
As one could only go through the guards one time.

We were all glad when this ended
As a little more than 900 went through this inspection by the guards
It took us a day and a half
So our minds felt lighter as we left there.

As Saturday begins we are on the Atlantic Ocean
It has been a total of eight days
Sunday forenoon, we have a worship service
A pastor conducted the service; he also was a passenger on board
All days have been stormy and this Monday also
The masts and rigging are creaking and knocking and the waves are
hitting with violence
Monday....night I awoke because of the
storm at high sea.

Tuesday..I went up on the deck
I understand that most of the passengers are sick
The ill are needing help
From room to room I wander, door to door.

Many are lying sick on their beds, but worst is the stillness
And the many who are entirely alone with strangers everywhere
Including a lady that I found
Had been lying sick for three days without a drop of water.

She was fully aware of all things as I reached her
She knew Monday had passed
I cannot here describe what I saw
But I must tell of one more discovery.

A found a wretched creature, a Finnlander, age six years
His mother was not with him
He was bound for Canada as his father was in Canada
And this poor child had had very poor care.

A caregiver (nurse) and a doctor were on board
But they did not visit or tend to anyone, even if called to do so
This small boy was ill with a high fever
I called for the nurse to come at once to help the child.

From the first day that we went on board
I took care of a lady, as we had to share a berth
She was from the highlands near Trondhjem
She had crossed the Atlantic Ocean eight times before this trip.

One day she said to me, " This is my 9th trip
I can say this is the best trip
Never before has anyone brought food to me as I was lying sick
Perhaps because the others were just as ill as I".

From the day that I began to go the rounds helping the sick
I was kept very busy bringing food and drink to the sick
I helped them through every meal time
As they were too ill to sit at a table for food, but were sick on their be

I had every opportunity to be a waitress (of service)
and to bring what was necessary to the sick.
Two other easy-going persons
Helped me in bringing food to the sick.

If I must be completely honest
Bitter memories would spring up from the past
When I was often misjudged or not appreciated for my work, my sweat
But, here God gave me satisfaction amongst the strangers.

Now, Wednesday passed as usual with stormy weather and high waves
But "Bergensfjord" was brave and strong moving forward
On Thursday the storm has its mind set
To hit on the ship's bow with might.

Thoughts were not changed on Friday
As the waves were up over the ship's bow
The engines were working harder than ever before
And the next thing we knew the propellers were up high and dry.

It felt as if a stirring-stick was under the ship
As it was standing still as if being bored from below
But as the ship kept competing with the sea's wild behavior
It began to move forward, blow by blow.

These last days the advancement on the sea was not much
And many places are empty around the card tables
Each evening some musicians provided music
About three of us women would be attending this at times.

On Thursday after breakfast in the largest dining area
We are all to meet and each will be called by name
Each of us will be given a certain kind of paper
That will describe us as we go off the boat on to land.

Thursday afternoon as the clock said three
We learned we could exchange our Kroner (money)
Because our Norwegian money will not be needed
And when the office opens we will hurry to do this.

On Friday we all had to be examined
It was called going through quarantine exam
A doctor has set himself by the side of a door
And now it is a law, we must all pass through this.

Now this Mr. Doctor in the first place wants to learn
If any certain sickness has been brought in
He doesn't find any diseases with us
As he reports "They are free of diseases".

When Saturday comes, the storm has surrendered
Those who were sea-sick, many are now on the deck
It was so gray and foggy..as far as one could see
But now we experience passing by Newfoundland's banks.

A festive meal was enjoyed Saturday forenoon
This meal was specially in honor of the Captain
And by each person's plate an orange had been set
With a Norwegian flag stuck into the orange.

With this Captain's meal, a new custom should take place
That each was to give to the waiter, a shilling for drinks
But several of the assembled decided that the money was needed otherwise
And before midnight money was put to a different use.

As morning moved on, on Sunday we were in Brooklyn
We also had a church service that Sunday
That Sunday we remained quiet and still in Brooklyn's harbor
Waiting for the next morning when we were to go on land.

Monday morning early we all went on land
Each hand held many papers
But additionally, more was made for us
As now we are garnished or dressed up as if we are going to a side-show.

Each of us now delivers a special type of card
With tall numbers that had been put on each card
On the backside was printed in Swedish
This must be fastened to our chest/breast area.

As such we were marked
We stood out in the crowd but afterwards a man brought us out.
Now, baggage and boxes were brought out also
And each one had to show what was his own.

When all of our baggage had been searched, it was marked as having had that procedure done
Then as each had had this done, each person went back to the line and spot where we had begun
And so it went, from the first to the last person
As we were many hundred in number, the time was very long.

From there we had to move to where there was a barge
From there we went a short distance farther and on to land
Forward we marched until a house stood before us
With our hats in our hands we were allowed to advance.

There were two doctors on the steps by the door
Now our life/destiny was laid in their hands
The passage way from the door was arranged as such
That past two stair rails, one had to go through three rows/aisles/divided

We all had to go upstairs where decisions were made
The Mr. Doctors had looked us over
Those who were judged to be well and not ill were to stand in the middle line
But those who were suspected of being not well were told to go to the side line.

The doctors did not say a single word to us
In tending to our line, with their hand they gestured
The women were sent to the left and the men to the right
What was to happen to everyone, we were not yet told.

We who were found to be well moved on to an office
Where inside a door was a large counter (desk top)
And along this counter top we saw new authorities
Who had us stand before them to answer them as they asked us questions.

One man in authority asked questions regarding money
He asked, "Can you show us that you have \$25.00..?"
The other authority asked questions regarding knowledge and understanding
He asked, "Are you trained to read and can you write?"

I can't quite recall how far this went
But one would like to know just how we are doing
Another would inquire regarding our work..what we can do best
Third interviews were regarding our attitudes towards ourselves and this new country.

It seemed as if we were going from King Herod and on through Pilate
(of the Biblical testing of Jesus)
As more authority figures we must stop for
Now we are asked to again bring forth our papers
And more of the authorities are examining them.

When it all was brought to order and each paper examined
The ticket for our train ride was also handled
With this we were through at the office
And directed to go stand in a hall.

We were directed to the middle area of the hall
To stay as a group we were told to stand
Until the last person would be through at the office
Which took many hours before all of this was accomplished.

So, then we stood and waited until the last one would come and join us
And all felt so tired we could fall asleep
Then we were held in a watch (control) in a round circle
And held tightly together like threaded into a bundle.

Now the watch was over and we were free again
Food and drink was for sale a distance away in the rooms
Which we truly needed as we hadn't tasted food
Since early in the morning and by now it was far into the day.

There were also benches on which we could sit
But we were so many, there was a traffic problem
Soon as we were to go out, we saw a ferry boat
That we are to take from there.

We knew we all had to be on board this ferry
We could not exactly comprehend how all of us could have room on it
Ourselves and our belongings..we were all pushed together
We hung on each other..there was hardly room for our feet.

It didn't take long before we were in New York
And immediately we all were trying to get to the station
And to a big area where we all had room to sit down
We were also all, very thankful.

We were not able to stay long at this spot where we sat
We very soon had to get to the train's departure gate
And now at the station the total number of persons had increased
Because from many other lands, more emigrants had come.

The train took us off, shortly before midnight
It is a certain fact, that Monday felt very long
As the emigrants had to go to Ellis-Island
And with such a heavy traffic of persons in big numbers..such a
problem would be unlawful.

On this trip all the way from Trondhjem, two Swedish boys were also passengers
Their money was held only by the one boy.
As mentioned in an earlier verse, they also had to go up the stairs to be examined
One was allowed to progress forward the other was sent to the side line.

The end result (fate) of these young men seems gruesome
The one who had the money was the one who was kept back
The other of the two was very sad for his companion
As even now on the third day he has not heard from him.

Two women on this trip had a similar experience
One cannot find the other
As up to Ellis Island they both had to go
But surely one of them had been kept back.

A train had been ordered for us on a local route
And we were transported in the country's style and custom
As the emigrant is not held in high regard in this land
So we were transported in a simple manner.

The rail-car in which we are riding is tremendously long
And only emigrants are taken in to ride in it
The interior was filthy dirty - like a toilet
Everything one touches, sticks to the fingers.

So much dirt on the windows..one can write ones name
And where you sit, it is just the same
I had almost forgotten, but after some thought
Remembered that this train had the name "Burtingtown"

As the train moves forward we sit here in peace
It is not long between stops
This whole Tuesday we move along
Towns and farms are seen along the entire line.

We reach Chicago Wednesday forenoon
And we are through with the "Burtingtown" line
We are taken immediately by bus to the station
Where we are to take another line.

At this station we don't see a watchman
As long as the doors are locked, the safer we are
It was about two hours that we were locked in there
But, then the doors were open and the train will be starting to go.