

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.

Now as we view the landscape, it is changing and it is very beautiful  
As far as the eye can see, the land lies flat with pretty houses  
And with this train we have the first of things being clean  
So we are sitting snug/comfortable and cozy.

This train bears the name of three towns  
"Chicago" and "Milwaukee" and "Saint Paul" is what we can read  
This train will go as far as to the west coast if one wants to  
travel that far  
But I shall go to the mid-west area and will get off at Saint Paul.

A little before midnight we are in Saint Paul  
And we must go from the train directly to the station  
As soon as we had arrived, a train came in from the south  
And now we hear music and the beat of drums.

The music we are hearing is from a band  
That is accompanying many soldiers who have come from Texas  
The United States is having a war with Mexico  
So these soldiers have been called to the Texas area.

This army of soldiers went through the station  
Directly to the hotel located near the side of the station.  
But first in the line the little drummer goes  
And following him were the others, in their own style and custom.

The next morning the soldiers returned towards the train  
With the drummers in the lead beating the time  
Now that it is morning I can easily see them all  
The soldiers numbered 33 in all.

A little after 8 o'clock a train makes ready to go  
And I again must get in line  
The whole time from the start I was headed to the west  
But now the course is changed directly to the north  
I don't have any traveling companions on this train  
As we were all marked and so recognizable by each other up to now.,  
Views of the landscape is the same today as yesterday  
There are many pretty houses on the flat lands.

We came to Rush City right about midday  
And I must hurriedly change trains.  
I was not long at this station  
As it was clear that the train I was to take is ready to leave.

I have begun another direction..as now I am headed east  
It didn't take long before we were standing at Bencon (is Bencon-Benson??)  
I exited the train at the Bencon station (the script says Bencon or is it  
In haste in order to greet Eliason, Benson??)

For now I am through with train rides  
And also with being in lines and changing trains  
The train ride I used when I left Saint Paul  
Was a train named.. "Northern Pacific".

As I was waiting for my ride an old woman approached  
And in a friendly manner asked me to follow her to her room (place)  
She had heard of the war and about the dire needs, the expensive  
provisions, the scarceness of food, etc.  
And wanted to know: "Where would folks get their bread"?

I then told her what I had experienced  
Of the many passengers who were on the trip from Sweden  
And that Sweden had already provided bread  
On hearing this the old woman cried..

Now Eliason had arrived so I had to leave with him  
Two horses and a sleigh waited..outside  
We were to drive 6 miles..I see two farmers  
I feel a bit anxious, downhearted; I wonder..are there any wild  
animals?

We have now come out of the forest into a wide open area  
And I can see on the other side that there are buildings  
And as we move on a little farther I recognize these buildings  
As I had seen them a long time ago on photos.

Now the destination has been reached  
Now I understand everything; God has been especially good to me.  
I have remained in good health and have not had any accidents  
It has been exactly five weeks since the trip began.

This letter was started many years ago  
By now the paper had yellowed, so I wrote it anew  
During the days as I worked, my thoughts were formed  
And in the evening, written down..a big work (labor in doing this)

I have also received another letter from you  
That I here with thank you from my heart  
I am happy to see that all goes well with you  
God in Heaven, take care of you both in body and in soul.

Bring my greetings to all who are in your home  
My wishes are that I can meet them all in Heaven  
There we will never be parted but will together stay  
With God in eternity, with happiness and perfect joy and peace.

A greeting is also included to the valleys, the wooded, grassy  
mountain side and the mountains  
And greet the brook as it slowly ripples; greet also the gushing rivers  
To the ocean as it slowly ripples, and  
Greet the ocean also when its waves hit the shoreline violently.

In closing, I offer a prayer to God..that as the summer stands in bloom  
And you at times will go to church  
That you will bring with you some fresh flowers that you have picked  
and place them on the graves of my dear ones..from me.

Now, my pen I shall put away as this letter I will end  
It is written in a simple, every-day, common-place style  
In spite of all that, I send it as a remembrance from me  
You remember that Godmother Malla is especially fond of you.

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