

Berthold Woltze, *A Letter from America* (c. 1860)

Abstract

This genre painting by Berthold Woltze (1829–1896) introduces a small family group consisting of a young woman and two older adults, presumably her parents or even grandparents. The three are dressed in rural attire and situated around a modest wooden table. Their faces are animated and their attention is wholly fixed on a letter sent from a relative or close friend who had emigrated to America. German immigration to the U.S. rose dramatically in the nineteenth century. Letters mailed to Germany by individuals who had settled in America, and perhaps even prospered there, were eagerly awaited by friends and family back home. In many cases, these missives even prompted “chain migrations.” Indeed, it seems that the letter featured in this scene was written to encourage further emigration. Though it is difficult to make out the text (on the side visible to the viewer), the letter closes with the lines “... I have enough money, for you [all] to come here, too. Greetings from your Johannes.” [... de ich soviel Geld haben, dass ihr auch herkommen könnt. Es grüßt euch euer Johannes.]

Source



Source: Deutsches Historisches Museum, Inv.-Nr. 1987/344

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