Extract of the diary of Max of the years 1840/41:

July 1840: Now I`m and seven years old. I live with my parents, my 6 brothers and sisters and my grandparents near Virneburg in a very small village in the german region Eifel. We are a farming family with a few cattle, a cow and two pigs. We have two rooms in our farmhouse, a kitchen with an open fireplace and a sleeping room for the whole family. We heat the kitchen with wood, but only when it is very cold. Our sleeping room is unheated.

My day starts at 6 o´clock. I go with my father, my two uncles and my brothers to our fields to plant the seed or harvest the grain. The work is really hard and the working days in summertime are very long.

December 1840: Even in wintertime we have to get up early in the morning and have to care for the livestock. Usually it is very cold, often about – 15 degrees. In wintertime we have to live from our stocks. But this year the stocks are small and often I am very very hungry. I hope, the winter will not be too long and the snow will not lay till June as last year. Then we can´t harvest the crops and the meals must be cancelled. Especially my little sister – she is 3 years old- suffers a lot, because she is very ill. There is no doctor in the small village, people don`t have any medicine and the hygiene situation is really catastrophic.

March 1841: This march is very hard. It is terribly cold. Our stock is too small. We have no longer enough to eat. What shall we do? Have we to suffer in springtime? Have we to die? Is there no way out of the crises?

Last week our neighbors told my father, that they will leave the Eifel and start a new life. They want to go to America by ship.

The last days my little sister is very week. We only can give her some potatoes to eat, because last year the grain was rotten on the fields. So we could not harvest it.

Today is the 16 of march. In the night my lovely little sister died. We are terribly sad. We will burry her in a few days.

Now, one month later my father dreams to set up for America. But we don`t have enough money and it would be a long, long way to Hamburg and a horribly long journey cross the Atlantic.

This story of the Eifel- family represents one of many families,that moved in the 19. century to America in the hope to have a better life. The region the story talks about, was a really poor one.

Many people wanted to leave the Eifel, but the dream of America often failed because of the financial situation. But in April of the year 1840 two families from Virneburg and Langenfeld in the Eifel went successfully to America. Most of the families of Germany went to Michigan, Minnesota and Kansas. Nevertheless families suffered a lot because they experienced mixed emotions.