
Instructions from the Ohio Valley to French Emigrants

*Edited by Phyllis Michaux**

On August 10, 1816, French exile Marie Barbe François Lakanal wrote a letter to a nephew in Grand Quevy, Netherlands, now part of Belgium,¹ urging him to join her family in America. She and her husband, Joseph Lakanal, had recently settled in Gallatin County, Kentucky, near Vevay, Indiana. She wasted no time on niceties, but immediately began to explain—for sixteen pages—what he needed to do to make the journey and how the family would provide for him when he arrived. Fearing that an earlier letter might not have reached him, she put this one in the care of two immigrants who were about to return to France to bring their families to the United States. The letter of August 10, and at least two others, reached her nephews Jean François and Pierre Hennebert and are now in the possession of Adhemar Durieu, great-great-grandson of Jean François.² All of the letters encourage the two nephews and their families to come to America, but the one printed below offers the contemporary reader an unusually detailed glimpse of the mechanics of the voyage across the Atlantic, from the best way to book passage to what kind of bread should be taken aboard ship. Marie Barbe's careful instructions to her nephew about

* Phyllis Michaux is a genealogist who lived in France for a number of years as the wife of a French citizen. She and her husband were given a copy of the following document by Adhemar Durieu. She found the letter so interesting that she offered to translate it and seek publication in an American historical journal. Durieu readily agreed. Michaux then transcribed the original, with the help of her daughter, and prepared a translation. The staff of the *Indiana Magazine of History* wishes to thank James C. Klotter of the Kentucky Historical Society and Carl Bogardus, Warsaw, Kentucky, for their tremendous help in providing information about Gallatin County in the early nineteenth century.

¹ Until 1815, Grand Quevy, near Mons, was part of France. At the Congress of Vienna, this territory was granted to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

² Adhemar Durieu of Quevy-le-Grand, Belgium, kindly granted the *Indiana Magazine of History* permission to publish Marie Barbe François Lakanal's letter of August 10, 1816.

whether to land at Baltimore or Philadelphia, how long it would take by foot and by stage to get to Pittsburgh, what to buy in Pittsburgh and what it should cost, reveal her practicality and concern for her family. Finally, the letter sheds light on the Lakanal family's life in the Ohio Valley.

Marie Barbe François Lakanal may have had good reason to ask her nephews to come to America: she, her two daughters, Alexandrine and Josephine, and her husband fled France for America in 1816 with other exiles threatened with execution after the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy. Her warning to her nephew, "You should not divulge that you are coming to this country to settle because the government does not like to think that any country is better than theirs," may reflect the sensitivity of the new government to implied criticism—or it may reflect instead her anxiety about her nephews' safety in a French border region in post-Congress of Vienna Europe.

Born in 1766 in the French farming village of Gogniès-Chaussée, Marie Barbe witnessed in her lifetime radical social dislocation and violent political upheaval, sometimes at much closer range than many of her contemporaries. Joseph Lakanal was born in the province of Ariège in 1762 as Joseph Lacanal, but he changed the spelling of his name to distinguish himself from his three brothers, who were royalists. The Lakanals were more than passive observers of the French Revolution. Joseph was a deputy to the Convention that governed France from 1792 until October, 1795, and he voted for the execution of Louis XVI. He received a Doctor of Arts degree at the University of Angers and became a distinguished Latinist and educator. After the overthrow of Louis XVI, he prepared an organizational plan for a public school system and was instrumental in the conservation of Louis XVI's gardens, now part of the Museum of Natural History in Paris.³

When, after the fall of Napoleon, the Bourbon monarchy was restored in 1814, Lakanal and others who had participated in the Revolution were condemned to death as regicides.⁴ The family went into exile in Gogniès-Chaussée, which became Dutch territory after the Congress of Vienna, and remained there until they emigrated to the United States in 1816.

Although the historical record has few letters of such detail describing the process of immigration, overland travel, and settlement, it would be wrong to assume that Marie Barbe's letter typifies the pioneer experience in the early nineteenth century. Unlike most early western settlers, the Lakanals must have been very

³ *Nouveau Larousse Classique: Dictionnaire Encyclopedique* (Paris, 1957), see "Joseph Lakanal."

⁴ Joseph G. Rosengarten, *French Colonists and Exiles in the United States* (Philadelphia, 1907), 159-61.

prosperous. Marie Barbe's letters reflect the comfortable economic position of her family. She speaks of obtaining lands for her nephews in lots of 540 acres, quite a large amount for Kentucky in 1816, in addition to the prime land the family already held directly on the Ohio River.⁵ Her request that her nephew hire four indentured servants further reflects the family's economic well-being.

Other aspects of the letter, however, show the ways the family shared the pioneer experience. Although some of Marie Barbe's requests for things from home seem frivolous, her lists of seeds, cuttings of familiar fruit trees not available in the new territory, wooden shoes—because "the dew is heavy"—and finer shoes made of green moroccan leather, ring true with the experience of several generations of people who left home for rougher territory and missed what they had left behind.⁶

Historians have few letters of this kind, and women in particular are often silent in the documentary record. By writing to her nephews in such detail, Marie Barbe offers the contemporary reader an intimate, lively, and intelligent account of the process of early nineteenth century immigration and of western settlement, and an understanding of how crucial women were to the practical and economic life of the family. Although Joseph Lakanal was the family's main actor on the historical stage of the French Revolution, it is Marie Barbe François Lakanal who has left contemporary historians and readers this vivid record of the family's life in exile.

⁵ After Kentucky became a state in 1792, the price of land increased. Boundaries of plots of land were surveyed to meet the wishes of the buyer. By 1816, Gallatin County would have been fairly well settled, and the only tillable soil would have been prime land along creek beds and the river. See Robert S. Cotterill, *History of Pioneer Kentucky* (Cincinnati, 1917).

⁶ See Logan Esarey, *The Indiana Home* (Crawfordsville, Ind., 1943) and R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840* (2 vols., Bloomington, Ind., 1950), I, chapter IV, for discussions of the settlement of Indiana in this period.

*Letter From Marie Barbe François Lakanal*¹

From Gallatin County² in Kentucky this 10th of August 1816,
United States of America.

My Dear Nephew:

Fearing that the letter which I wrote to you the first of this month will be delayed or will not reach you, I take advantage of two gentlemen who have come to this region to stay with one of their aunts and who leave for France to get their families and their father, aged eighty-five. These gentlemen arrived here fifteen days ago and will return this fall. Their destination is Bordeaux. This port is too far from you for you to return together. At the end of this letter, I will give you the information they have given to me.

I urge you to come with one of your brothers and your cousin Léopole. When you arrive we will give you forty acres of land that you can cultivate for five or six years. This will be enough time for you to raise your animals and learn the language of the country as well as what is needed to run a big farm. When you have enough money my husband will obtain one or two lots of land from Congress for you. These lots are of about 540 acres.³ There will be five good years to pay for them, so that having raised your animals and having some money saved to pay farm hands, you will easily be able to pay for this acquisition with the product of these first five

¹ Marie Barbe François Lakanal, August 10, 1816. It is unclear to which nephew Marie Barbe wrote this letter. This letter, and two others written by Lakanal to her nephews, are in the possession of Adhemar Durieu, Quevy-le-Grand, Belgium. Phyllis Michaux translated the work into English; Lakanal's spelling of proper names has been changed to conform with modern usage. For example, Lakanal mentions *Arisbourg*; it appears in the translation as *Harrisburg*. The author has made every attempt in the translation from the French to preserve the sense and style of the original.

² Lakanal gives her mailing address at the end of the letter as Vevay, Indiana. The 1820 Kentucky census, however, lists Joseph Lakanal as a resident of Gallatin County, Kentucky, and Lakanal wrote her letter from Gallatin County. It seems likely that the family settled near Ghent, Kentucky, the town directly opposite Vevay across the Ohio River. Ghent was not established until 1814, and Vevay had had a post office for six and a half years at the time of Lakanal's writing. A ferry ran between the two towns. U.S., Fourth Census, 1820, Population Schedules for Gallatin County, Kentucky. Carl Bogardus, Warsaw, Kentucky, conversation with editor, February 18, 1988. See also Perret Dufour, *The Swiss Settlement of Switzerland County, Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1925), 27-28.

³ According to several Kentucky historians, this statement is peculiar. The Kentucky land laws of 1792 changed the way land was obtained, making it unlikely that the Lakanals would have acquired land from Congress. It is possible that Lakanal was referring to the Kentucky legislature. In Gallatin County, however, it is likely that a settler in 1816 would have had to acquire land from a previous owner. James Klotter, Kentucky Historical Society, conversation with editor, February 18, 1988; Carl Bogardus, conversation with editor, February 18, 1988; see also Robert S. Cotterill, *History of Pioneer Kentucky* (Cincinnati, 1917), 231.

years, so that in ten years, each one of you will have a prosperous farm and will owe nothing to anyone.

If my sisters and my brothers-in-law and my other nephews wish to come later on, you can have a vast establishment. I believe that your wife, as well as your families, will be reasonable and not oppose your coming, even if my sisters are obliged to sacrifice for your trip. You both will be able to pay them back, for it would not be just that they be strapped for you. They are no longer young and above all, children should help their fathers and mothers.

I ask you to bring two men and two women to me who are accustomed to farm labor. I don't have to say more. You know this kind of work, women in the farmyard and for the field work that women can do. As they will accompany you I am certain that suitable people will easily be found; people you can trust to keep the agreement you make with them. You should engage them for six years and make a written contract.⁴ We will give 250 francs per year to each man and 600 francs bonus to each one after ten years and 150 francs each year to the women and 300 francs after six years. If they have children they will have 50 francs less per year, because you cannot ignore that a lot of time is lost in taking care of little ones.

Because of the cost of the voyage I cannot take them for less than six years, so I strongly advise you to choose people about whom you feel sure, and who are used to pulling a cart or else harvesting on farms. Their six years done, they will have enough to buy land which we could obtain for them, as we will for you, and they will be your neighbors, this is a double motive for choosing trustworthy persons.

As the expedition of the funds needed for their passage costs a lot and there is a risk that a letter of exchange may not be honored, I ask you to procure the necessary sum for their passage and everything that is needed for their trip as well as for the purchase of the supplies which I will list at the end of this letter. Take a reasonable interest, up to the month of April to reimburse because we have sums coming due in Paris next January. My husband will give an order to the person designated to receive them to send the sum that will be owing to your father or to your father-in-law. Even though we will be paid in January, the debt should run until April because a letter can be delayed, and it is better to give a little more money and have time to spare.

You will receive my letters at the end of the summer. I urge you not to lose time and to leave in the fall. This season is more

⁴ Indentured servitude was still common in the Ohio Valley in 1816, both north and south of the river. Although the Northwest Ordinance abolished slavery in the Indiana territory, it did not rule against indentured servitude, and the articles of statehood confirmed this. In Kentucky, where slavery was legal, indentured servitude would have been accepted as well.

favorable for navigation. Do not worry that winds are strong in this season. The winds of the land do not rule over the ocean. You will see this by the numerous vessels which arrive and depart during this preferred season. And there are other advantages. The first one is that when you arrive the weather will still be fine, this good weather can last here until the end of December and as you will still have the overland route to travel, you must not lose any time.

It will be easier to find these workers after the harvest. The most important reason of all for leaving at this time is that you will have time to prepare the land for cultivation and all of the other things that need to be done. You will only have six months to wait, whereas if you leave in the springtime, you will not have time to do anything and will be obliged to buy everything for sixteen months.

We left during January, the bad roads of winter in this country delayed our voyage. This year we could not get much done.

In case you cannot leave now, your brother could come ahead with Léopole and the workers.

Here are my recommendations for the voyage:

You should not divulge that you are coming to this country to settle because the government does not like to think that any country is better than theirs and always looks with a bad eye upon emigration. Therefore you will request your passports as well as those of the workers, as if you are coming to this country for family business. If the workers are not married, you can pass the women off as servants on your passport. If they are married, they will go on their husbands' passports.

It is better to come via a Dutch port. The passage is cheaper than from the ports in the North of France. It costs less in the busiest ports because there is competition. You pay less when there is a group of several people because the captain or the owner will lower the price in order to secure the passages.

Moreover you can get special conditions such as the preparation of your own meals, which makes a big difference in the price, because on board these ships there is considerable waste of food and the passengers pay for it all.

The gentlemen who are bringing my letter came via Bordeaux aboard an American vessel for 250 francs each. They told me that they ate very poorly. There was a table, called between decks.⁵ The ship owner must estimate 100 francs for the food at the very least although he does not give you dinner for your money and with this amount per head; there will be at least eight of you, for you will be this number supposing that you do not bring your children this trip and that your brother and your cousin are not yet married,

⁵ *Between decks* is a literal translation from the French *l'entrepont*.

because otherwise you will be ten or twelve, you see that you can have double provisions. Ordinarily, in the season that you will travel, the voyage only lasts twenty-five to thirty-five days. Three young people recently arrived from Paris and who made the overland trip with the people who are taking my letter stayed at sea only twenty-one days. So you decide which route has the most advantages and you take it.

If you decide to prepare your own food these are the best provisions and the longest lasting. Also the sea air is very favorable.⁶

Well-cooked bread, for fifteen days, if it molds, it can be cut into slices and dried; biscuits for the rest of the trip, taking enough for fifteen days more than the ordinary crossing time, for fear of delay. Ham, beef cooked so-called "à la mode." Remove all bones, put it into a barrel, cover it with pork grease which will seal all openings in such a way that the meat will have no air at all. It can keep for six months. Excellent. Sausages can be kept in the same way, as can soft-boiled eggs, butter, cheese, beans and peas for soup. With these provisions there is no fear of becoming sick, except for the first couple of days of the trip; the ocean's welcome. But this sickness is only a feeling of nausea and should not even keep you from eating, because it is after eating that you will very often feel better. Cooked meat is good for this. You feel very languid and yet have a strong appetite.

You should know that women cannot go do the cooking on board, it is a man's business. If you have agreed to bring your own nourishment, stipulate that you will receive water to drink and for your cooking and that you will have your place at the fire. These are necessary preconditions, for once at sea there will be no time to arrange for them.

You should take a barrel of beer and several bottles of brandy. This last named can be put into a big bottle called the Yellow Lady.⁷ These bottles are protected with a woven willow cover and can hold twelve to twenty-four bottles.

You should not all go to the port before you are assured of a ship. For the ship owners, in order to obtain your passages, will tell you every day that they are leaving that day—and you may wait from fifteen days to three weeks in the inns. A ship leaves only when it is fully loaded, that is how you can tell. If you are obliged to wait, stay in an inn at some distance from the port and one of you go every day to the dock to check on the departure time.

When you embark take a blanket, a sheet, a pillow and a small mattress of wool or straw about two feet wide. If you do your own

⁶ Lakanal probably meant that the sea air was favorable for conservation of the food supply.

⁷ *Yellow Lady* is another literal translation, from *dame jaune*.

cooking you will need a big tin cooking pot, a big soup dish also of tin, cup and tin drinking glass for each one. For porcelain dishes are easily broken and you run the risk of eating out of the palm of your hand. Each passenger has the right to two hundred fifty pounds without paying freight charges. When you do your own cooking your supplies are not subject to freight charges. The weight of the bedding is not included either.

When you are ready to leave be sure to have all of your things together. For if they are not all near at hand you run the risk of being delayed several days getting off the ship and it is important that you not be forced to stay in the port because you will not find an inn. There are only boarding houses, extremely expensive. Whereas outside of the town and on all of the roads there are signs aplenty. You will find inns every mile, so that in case the weather is bad there is no fear of getting wet between inns.

Take a ship whose destination is Philadelphia or Baltimore, unless you will have to wait too long. In this case you can take a ship for New York. But you will have twenty-eight leagues more to do overland. As you will see below, above all, do not embark for any other port, nor on any vessel that does not go directly to the ports I have indicated. Because to sell the passages the ship owners will deceive you saying that they will only stop over a couple of days. Once they are in a port, they do not know when the wind will blow them out again any more than you do.

None of your things are subject to an entry tax, neither household furniture nor the usual tools. There are no formalities to go through for the passports, the entry visa is useless, no one will ask you where you are going, unless it be by simply curiosity.

When you arrive in America you must buy a horse if you can, and this way be able to carry all of your baggage. In case you can not, you must leave your things to be shipped to Pittsburgh to the address of Master Sutton and Mr. Nickle, merchants at Pittsburgh. Your things should be solidly wrapped and packed tight in good boxes because if they can move around, everything will be broken, even the iron tools.

Your overland journey must be done on foot because there is only one stage which does the mail service. It is dreadfully dear and horribly bad and one is terribly over-charged in the inns where it stops. There is no time to go anywhere else and you are liable to have your neck broken every time it sways or when the wheels break, which happened to us three times. Moreover you have to walk half of the way because you don't dare to stay in the stage when it goes downhill and you cannot stay in it when it goes uphill and yet you will travel four days through the mountains. Actually you can arrive at your destination just as fast on foot because the coach cannot do more than thirty miles a day.

Here is information that will be useful for your overland voyage. You will go to Pittsburgh, it is 300 miles from Philadelphia and 240 miles from Baltimore. In case you land in New York, it is 85 to 90 miles from there to Philadelphia. Therefore this way is the longest. There are three miles in a league but these leagues are very short because the mile is nothing but one thousand steps of two and one half feet, English measure. I believe there are twelve to fourteen miles between your place and ours. You can verify this by walking there counting your steps. This will give you a good idea of the route you will have to do.

There is no trouble finding a place to stay along the road. There are inns everywhere. Travelers on foot are charged less than stage passengers. Also you can buy provisions in the dwellings and in the towns. You will always find ham for it is plentiful in this country. You will not do better in the inns. I warn you that you will never see a drop of soup, nor beer. There is tea and dark water that is called coffee, although it does not contain one grain of it. You will find brandy and very good cider.

The stage takes from eight to ten days to go from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, not counting the stops you make when a wheel breaks. We had to wait forty-eight hours, so you see that without overtiring you can walk it and if someone is tired, you can stop to rest, or else have them take a passing stage.

Nota: The principal cities on the road between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh: from Philadelphia to Lancaster, from there to Carlisle, Harrisburg, Shippensburg, Chambersburg, Bedford, Somerset, Greensburg, and Pittsburgh. You will travel four days in the mountains, but you will find as many inns as elsewhere and several towns. For you will start to go up after having passed the Susquehanna at Harrisburg. Everywhere where the road divides, there is a sign to indicate the route, so one is never confused as to which road to follow. You need not be afraid of sleeping in isolated inns, you can sleep everywhere with the greatest of safety. Americans are good people. Neither do you need to fear wolves, bears, or thieves along the way, a person alone can travel without apprehension.

When you reach Pittsburgh you will embark on the Ohio, there are boats every day. Some are called flat boats, others keel boats. These last go twice as fast as the first, but flat boats are more comfortable. If one of your group knows how to navigate on rivers, I advise you to buy a flat boat. They cost between 20 gourdes or dollars up to 50 and 60 (the gourde is worth 5# French money in dollars or piastre worth also 5#).⁸ Moreover you can find people

⁸ It is difficult to determine exact monetary equivalencies for this period; Lak-anal uses a number of different terms to refer to what may have been the same

who are going the same way and purchase one together. Or you take them on your boat and they pay for their passage. The people who bring my letter came that way.

They bought a small keel boat and arrived at Vevay in ten days, three miles below our place. (This way is very good). And above all, if you have a horse, take maize to feed it. This grain is called corn in English. It is sold for one or two gourdes. The barrel weighs about 290 pounds. At Pittsburgh you must buy flour to make bread, because bread is usually sold for six sous the pound, even though flour only costs two and one-half to three gourdes the hundred.

Buy a cauldron called a country oven to make the bread. This is a good method and makes excellent bread. You will gain the cost of the cauldron on the difference in price between the bread and the flour. This article is very useful and can be used for most anything around the house.

You should take advantage of being in this town where there are so many foundries and where the goods are cheap to buy what you will need for your household. Such as an iron pot, other pans and a hoe to plant the maize. This instrument is essential. It is sold here for 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ gourde, iron pots are sold here at 10 cents the pound. If you are not strapped for money, you can get a big iron boiling pot for me that can hold six or seven pails, one big cooking pot and two hoes. It is written *hoe* in English, but it is pronounced *houë*. In case this is too complicated, don't get anything for me.

Complete your business in Pittsburgh promptly. The innkeepers are grasping and if you do not find a boat to leave right away, either to purchase or in paying your fare, which is six to eight gourdes per person, you must go to Wheeling thirty miles from Pittsburgh over land and ninety miles by the river. The Ohio makes a large loop between these two places. There you may also be able to embark or buy a boat. Things are cheaper there and you will find keel boats. As you are all young you can economize your fares by serving aboard. The captains are very willing. They economize salaries, you are well treated and you eat with him. Nevertheless, because of the women and your baggage you would do better to buy a boat because you will be able to leave when you want to and the women will be more comfortable, because you are lodged as in a room.

Food, except for the bread that I advise you to get at Pittsburgh, may be bought along the river much cheaper. Stops are made

currency. A *piaster* was a Spanish coin, and the name was often used interchangeably with *dollar*. It is not clear what Lakanal meant by *gourde*, which was a Haitian coin. The editor believes the symbol # refers to francs or pounds. See Franz Pick-René Sedillot, *All the Monies of the World: A Chronicle of Currency Values* (New York, 1971), 410. For a discussion of the history of European and United States currency, see *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 13th ed., 1926, "money."

every night near homes and what is needed can be purchased. You will find hams; they never run out, eggs, butter, potatoes and milk. Also the river is covered with wild duck. If you have your gun you can add to your menu.

In case you need powder and lead you must get it when you land at Pittsburgh, because it is brought to Pittsburgh from where it is made, at Wilmington by Mr. Dupont, a friend of Mr. Lakanal. This town is between Baltimore and Philadelphia. I will teach you how to make what you need when you arrive and how to make the saltpeter, this way we will only have the sulfur to buy.

Our place is three miles before arriving at Vevay and one mile before Prune Creek, between Cincinnati and Louisville. If you do not have your own boat, it is better for you to take one that goes to Louisville, it passes right in front of our door.

Whereas from Cincinnati there are sixty more miles by water, or forty-five by land on the main Cincinnati road to Louisville. You can also find boats at Pittsburgh that go to St. Louis, a French colony. Or to St. Geneviève, French colony or else at Natchez or at New Orleans a big French city, all of these boats go by our house.⁹ The advantage in setting out in autumn is to arrive when there are the most boats leaving, for it is the season of departure for New Orleans, a large seaport. You will always see boats on the river.

Your wife and your mother should not fear a sea voyage. Your cousin was very much afraid to embark. Now she would happily do the crossing once a year. I am urging you to do it, you must hurry and not listen to idle talk. I have done this trip and I would do it twenty times if my affairs required it. I assure you that there is no more danger than in a good stage, if by luck you are able to leave at the time I presume, because I count on having you here during the month of December. Winter does not start here much before January and only lasts about a month and one half. Leaving during the fall as I have told you to, you will have a good trip, even in the mountains, but it begins to get cold high up and later the roads are bad, but if, as I say, neither you nor your brother can leave, you must write to me and give your letter to a person you can trust in a seaport, who can give it to a ship leaving for America, because if you send it by the postal services, I will not receive it.

Here is the list of household articles that you must keep: sheets, blankets, platters and plates of pipe clay, cups, glasses, coffeepot, knives, spoons, forks, candle holders and lamps, copper pots and if you have any grills, frying pans, scoop, tongs, chimney-hook (but

⁹ All these boats from Pittsburgh would have headed south along the Ohio. Although Lakanal says the house was small, the family must have had prime land directly on the river.

instead of a bin, a cutter) because the fires are so big that we roast ourselves with our scoops with their short handles. In the way of tools you will need hatchet, spade, bill-hook, scythe, sickle. These tools are expensive here. Most of them come from England. As you will not pay any freight, nor entry duties, they will cost just half as much, as a spade is worth ten francs here.

In Holland find out what the price of potash is and how much the entry duties are for Dutch ships, and for foreign ships. Because usually duties are higher for foreign vessels than for those of the nation. We can make a large quantity. One of you could sell it and return with merchandise, notably guns, which are extremely costly here. We will do business together, you could make a trip at least once a year.

Clothing: Men's hats are very expensive. Shoes and stockings, although of cotton, are cheap. There are no wooden shoes in this country, they would be very handy nevertheless, for the dew is heavy.

If your wife wants some, she should bring four pairs. I would like you to bring me several pairs, lightweight ones and without heels. My foot is about the same as your mother's. Your cousins would each like a pair, their feet are the same as your cousin Sophie's.

Note: the articles that I would like you to bring for us: two big saws, six sickles, two spades, two bill-hooks, one axe, two hoes, one big grill, choppers (or cutters) and a big knife to kill pigs with, a large grill for the chimney hook, a large copper cauldron for fifty or sixty pots. This cauldron is to make sugar with. We have a lot of sugar, you can make your own too. There are a large quantity of bees in this country that produce a lot of honey.

I would also like for you to ask your cousin Sophie to have the following slippers made for us by Signe, for she knows how he makes them: three pair of goat skin, two pair of bronzed calf and one pair of green shoes. These six pairs should be made to fit her foot for it is the same size as her cousins'. For me a pair of goat skin, a pair of calf and a pair of green moroccan leather.¹⁰ All of these shoes should lace. Mine should be longer than those of my daughters and wider in the same proportion, because I like to be comfortable.

If your cousin Sophie wants to come, she will also have land to cultivate; her cousins would be so pleased to see her again, but tell her that first she must iron the famous overcoat with nine holes,¹¹ (if her husband wants to farm) for I would not wish for him to ply any other trade.

¹⁰ This is a literal translation from *maroquin vert*.

¹¹ The reference to the overcoat is presumably a family joke.

You and my sister Caroline have perhaps disagreed because of the affairs of my uncle, but my nephew, those things should be buried and you two must get together again with open hearts. If you choose the road I offer, neither one of you will need your parents and you will not be resentful if they do not leave you anything, because in the years to come you will be able to provide for them.

Don't forget to bring seeds and cuttings,¹² here listed: plum slips, Reine Claude, apricots, apples, some grafts of good varieties of pears. If you have cider pears, bring them as well as seeds of several other varieties. The seeds must be kept in cabbage stumps so they will not dry out, if you do not take this precaution they will not grow. Plum seeds and apricot—peaches if you can find them. All of these seeds give good fruit. They do not need to be grafted. None of these fruits can be found in this region. There are lots of apples, but they do not keep. There are no pears or plums of any kind. Bring some cuttings of black currants, or dry currants. You could still find some on the bushes. If you have several types of wheat, bring several handfuls. You could add several plants with your grafts. Two pounds of wild chicory seeds, alfalfa seeds, bring red cabbage seeds, carrots, bring turnips and some leek seeds because those I brought did not grow. White beans, peas and sugar peas. I brought all of these vegetable seeds, but my beans did not sprout. If you can get a few tarragon seeds or else two or three plants or cuttings, as well as those onions called chives. The cuttings must be put into a small box, wrap them with clay and wet moss, they must be watered two or three times with soft water (not salt water) during the crossing. If you can, bring poplar and willow tree seeds. These are the kind that grow along the streams in your area and have very pliant wood—or if there are no seeds to be had, bring several thin cuttings that can be put with the others, as well as some cuttings of Frank willows. These trees are not to be found at all here and yet they are very useful on a farm.

Please tell my sister Caroline to send Léopole to a coopery for several days to learn how to store barrels because you must be as self-sufficient as possible, because you cannot have those things done here without losing ten times more time than it would take to do it yourself, because people would rather cultivate their land then work for others.

Bring the necessary tools and divide them up among the workers who come with you, that way there will be no tax to pay, even

¹² See Logan Esarey, *The Indiana Home* (Crawfordsville, Ind., 1943), 11-15, 21-26. Settlers throughout the west brought seeds from home with them if they could and took pains to save and exchange them in order to grow plants that were not native to the new territory.

though they are new. They are very easy going when they see families arrive who intend to settle here.

What I said about necessary tools, each one of you must have his axe for there are many big trees to cut, which will give you, as I said, a considerable quantity of potash.

However, if both of you have only the needed funds for your trip, as I presume is the case, do not worry, we will advance what is needed for you to begin, so do not be hesitant for fear of the future.

As you will come via Holland, Mr. Lakanal asks that you get a half of ream of letter paper, and a half of ream of lined paper for him and a case of eau de cologne, the kind that is sold in Paris for six or seven francs the case. Divide the paper among the baggage of each one, for it is supposed to be for the use of the household.

Plates and dishes should be of pipe clay only. Because other earthenware is too heavy. If you already have some, you should sell it and buy pipe clay in the port of departure. These plates only cost fifty sous a dozen and if you get them, have them put into a small crate. And for me get two dozen flat plates, one dozen soup dishes, because I will not have enough to serve dinner to all of you, two big salad bowls—round ones, because they will also serve as soup tureens.

Do not forget some violet seeds for your cousins.

The season of October is the most favorable for crossing for there are no storms to fear. So, my nephew I urge you to be diligent, and not to forget anything I have told you. Tell my nephews and nieces that their turn will come, but that the older ones must go first.

Kiss your father and mother for me, give them my love, as well as to your brothers. Please kiss my sister Caroline and her husband for me as well as their children. If you see my uncle, give him my best regards, do not forget my cousin Jean, and my cousins Léonore and Marie Philipe, if you see them. Kiss your wife for me and present my respects to your father and mother-in-law, and Aunt Catherine. Say hello to Eugenie.¹³ If you bring people who are not married and if she wants to come, tell her that we would see her again with pleasure and if she is married and you get along with her husband, we would be happy to see them both.

This comes with all of my affection and a big kiss.

M. B. F. *fme* Lakanal¹⁴

Nota: Other advantages of this country are to have hunting rights in twenty leagues of forest where you will find deer, hare, rabbit

¹³ Eugenie may have been a servant; Lakanal suggests her as a possible choice for an indentured servant. It is not likely that she was a relative or a close friend.

¹⁴ *M. B. F. fme Lakanal* abbreviates Marie Barbe François *femme*, or wife, of Lakanal.

and partridge in autumn and winter, wild duck in abundance. Fishing in an immense river. In April you can make all the sugar you need within a week's time. No wood to buy for heating, there is as much as you want. You can have as many animals as you want. Cows are no more trouble during nine months of the year and your pigs will fatten up in the woods with beans, nuts and acorns. As you will not need to buy anything, when the year is over you will still have enough to live on.

If you write to me before leaving, this is our address: Mr. Lakanal, Vevay, Indiana, United States of America.

Here are the principle towns along the river and to our place: from Pittsburgh to Wheeling, Marietta, Belle Ville, Belpre, Gallipolis, Village Francois, Limestone, a pretty town in Kentucky, Auguste, Cincinnati and Newport opposite this last and in Kentucky, Lawrenceburg, Vevay. Our house is three miles before arriving at Vevay on the left hand side of the river. There are two houses, separated by a creek that is dry when the river is low. Our house is the first one before the creek. The house is small. The farm is a half a mile from the house we are now living in.

I will not give you the itinerary of the road from Baltimore to Pittsburgh. There are many Frenchmen in that city, you can easily get the information. Pittsburgh is a commercial city, the general center of commerce between the eastern ports and the provinces of the west where we live. If you land in Philadelphia, it is in Market Strite (that is written Market Street) where you will find all of the freight stages for Pittsburgh. You can make arrangements for your baggage there, if you do not buy a horse to carry them. These stages take one month to six weeks to do the trip. There are many French merchants in this street who will be happy to give the required information to one of their compatriots.

If it is not difficult to obtain enough funds, I ask you to bring me a man's saddle and a woman's saddle, of good solid quality that you will pack with great care, so they will not be damaged, because they lose their value if they are scratched or frayed.

I also asked you in my preceding letter for a horsehair strainer to make flour, as well as an extra linen and a silk filter to make heavy cream because we brought a mill from Paris to grind seeds for our own use and I was forgetful enough not to bring the strainers.

But if you do not have enough money to get these things, don't do it, because it doesn't matter to me to give 100 francs more or less in April; as I told you and you should not be short of money during the trip.

femme Lakanal

Buy an English grammar so as to learn enough during the crossing, to ask for what you will need during the voyage.