Off to America

Life was increasingly difficult for the Albright family in 1892. Despite all their efforts, their farm in Ireland wasn’t very productive. It had been a terribly cold winter, and the previous summer had brought little rain. One afternoon, young William was helping his parents pick some vegetables. Judging from the appearance of the fields, the Albrights would have hardly enough food to last for the rest of the week.

“William,” said his father, “why don’t you and Mattie venture down to the lake and see if you can catch a fish or two?”

“Yes, Dad,” said William. His parents watched as William and the dog strolled down toward the water. A stranger watching them would have thought they didn’t have a care in the world. But a stranger wouldn’t have known how important it was for the boy to catch something. His parents, however, knew the feeling of desperation too well.

As soon as William was out of hearing range, his father gently took his mother’s hand. Looking into her eyes, he said, “Shannon, let’s leave this country for a better life. We have taken all we can from this land, and it is time for us to move on. I’ve saved some of the money we made from selling the farm animals to Mr. Carroll and there’s enough for all of us to sail to America.”

Mrs. Albright turned away at his words, but Mr. Albright continued trying to persuade her. “It would be a better life for us, and there would be more opportunities for William.”

Five weeks later, early in the morning, the Albrights hurried to Dock 3 with their luggage and their dog, Mattie, in tow. They stood anxiously on the dock, waiting to board the ship. Then they slowly climbed aboard with the other passengers, being careful not to hit their heads on the low beams as they headed to their cabins. They were off to an unknown future in America.