



Dan Burr, painting from *The White Ox*, (Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press, 2009).

Thousands of pioneers faced insurmountable odds as they came to America to make a better life for themselves.

Immigrants

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Musing on my Shaw ancestors from the Staffordshire Potteries in England, 1840s

How many west winds,
tossing wild,
drown the cries
of a pioneer child?

How many mothers
in birthing travail,
suffer on board
under listless sail?

How many pieces
of hardtack left,
how much water
before they're bereft?



How many fathers,
pacing the deck,
plan and pray
for a merciful trek?

How many winsome
girls brave the foam,
crossing an ocean
for mountain home?

How many miles
of song and shout
does it take until
all the shoes wear out?



Dan Burr, painting from *The White Ox*.

How many promises
heaped with stone
left against wayside
wolves alone?

How many moonlights
comforting boys,
curling for sleep
with rocks for toys?

How many couples
shaping the clay
with straw for adobes?
Determined to stay. **RE**