



PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

This is a short story of the Norwegian emigration to the United States, the reasons for leaving, the journey across the Atlantic, where they settled and how they adjusted to the New World.

It is also a story about those who returned to Norway, about American influence on the Norwegian society and newcomers in our country.

The Great Migration



*Norwegian emigrants at the Christiania harbor in 1903 waiting to board S/S Montebello bound for Hull, England. From Hull the emigrants took the train to Liverpool before making the Atlantic crossing on big transatlantic steamers.
Courtesy: Norsk Folkemuseum*

From 1820 to 1925 close to 50 million people emigrated from Europe to other continents, mainly to distant overseas countries. Most of them had the United States as their first choice.

Being the great magnet, the United States attracted no less than 34 million Europeans. More than 5,9 million were Germans, 4,5 million came from Ireland. The Scandinavian countries counted more than 2,1 million. 860,000 of them came from Norway.

The majority of emigrants left Europe in the course of the seventy years from about 1846 to World War I.

Europeans Populated the World

Not all Europeans emigrated to America. Some took the long journey to Canada, or more exotic destinations like South America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Others settled in Asian Russia.

In 1900 close to 33 percent of the world's population of 1,5 billion people were Europeans.

The Sloopers



The sloop "Restauration" sailed from Stavanger, July 4th 1825 with the first Norwegian emigrants. They made the transatlantic crossing in 98 days, anchoring the New York harbor on October 9.



Cleng Peerson, «Father of Norwegian emigration».

The first Norwegian emigration to America was not economically motivated. The people leaving Stavanger on the sloop "Restauration" on July 4, 1825, were mostly farmers from the district of Rogaland with strong ties to the Quaker and Hauge movement. Both were in opposition to the authorities and the powerful position of the Norwegian Lutheran State Church. They sought religious freedom and the right of lay people to preach the Word of God.

In 1821 the Stavanger Quakers had sent Cleng Peerson from Tysvær and Knud Olsen Eide to America to investigate conditions over there. Cleng Peerson returned to Norway alone in the summer of 1824 and reported favorably on his findings. He went back to prepare for the arrival of the Norwegian dissenters, and welcomed them as they arrived New York harbor on October 9, 1825.

In 1925 the descendants of the Sloopers, as these pioneers were called, formed the Norwegian Sloop Society of America.