

The impact of the Restauration

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The first organized emigration from Norway to America took place in the summer of 1825 when the sailing vessel Restauration left Stavanger bound for New York with 45 passengers and a crew of 7. A baby was born during the voyage. After a long journey with days of storms and rough seas the Restauration reached the United States on October 9, 1825. The Restauration was a fore-and-aft rigged boat with one mast and a single jib. This type of sailing vessel was referred to as a sloop. The members of the party aboard the Restauration have therefore been named the Sloopers.

The sailing of the Restauration in 1825 was the first planned direct Atlantic crossing by an Norwegian emigrant group. Later Norwegians emigrated to other countries, including Canada, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and other destinations. Norway was a multicultural society at the time of the great emigration, and the emigrants reflect the multicultural makeup of the population. All told, about one million Norwegians have emigrated to various global destinations since 1825. The transatlantic crossing of the Restauration marks the observance of the Bicentennial Commemoration of Norwegian emigration to the USA in 2025.

Norway has always been a country of immigration and emigration, but the large number of overseas emigrants during a relatively limited period in nineteenth and twentieth centuries is significant in Norwegian history. About 900 000 Norwegian women and men have emigrated to North America from 1825 until present. Those who emigrated during the period 1865-1930 make up 87 per cent of the total number of emigrants.

Mass emigration has had a large impact on families, local communities, history and culture, Norway's development as a nation, the country's understanding of, and relationship to, the world. Many returned after their stay in a foreign country, and they brought back new experiences and capital to Norway. Returned emigrants had helped build the society in the country they had immigrated to, but upon their return they also helped build the Norwegian society. Returned emigrants therefore were nation builders on several continents. The knowledge about Norwegian emigration is also relevant in order to understand the migration and adaptation processes among contemporary immigrants to Norway.

An important goal of the Bicentennial commemoration of Norwegian emigration in 2025 is to bring the topic of emigration to the public sphere and to shed more light on forgotten and neglected topics relating to Norwegian migration.