

The Big Journey: The Story of the *Restauration*

A long time ago—almost 200 years back—a small wooden ship set sail from Norway. It was July 4, 1825—America’s Independence Day—and the ship was called the *Restauration*.

Onboard were 52 brave Norwegians, packed tightly into a 54-foot sloop (that’s a small sailing ship). These passengers were part of the first organized group to leave Norway for America, and they were ready for a brand-new life across the sea.

The *Restauration* had been carefully prepared for the journey. Below deck, bunk beds were stacked three or even four high. Families had to wiggle in and out, and kids probably slept toe-to-toe with their brothers and sisters. Each family had just one chest to carry their most important belongings – clothes, tools, and favorite keepsakes.

The deck was crowded too. There was a tiny kitchen called a galley, tanks of fresh water, and lockers stuffed with ropes, sails, and supplies. Everyone brought food that wouldn’t spoil: flatbrød (crispy flat bread), salt pork, dried beef, cheese, and smoked fish. Some families packed home-brewed ale, sour milk, tea, or a little coffee to share.

The journey had taken three years to plan—carefully organized by a group of Quakers and Haugean Lutherans. Now it was finally happening. As the *Restauration* left the harbor in Stavanger, Norway, crowds of people gathered to wave goodbye. Soldiers on Kalhammer Hill even fired a cannon to wish them well as the little ship sailed out, flying its brand-new flag.

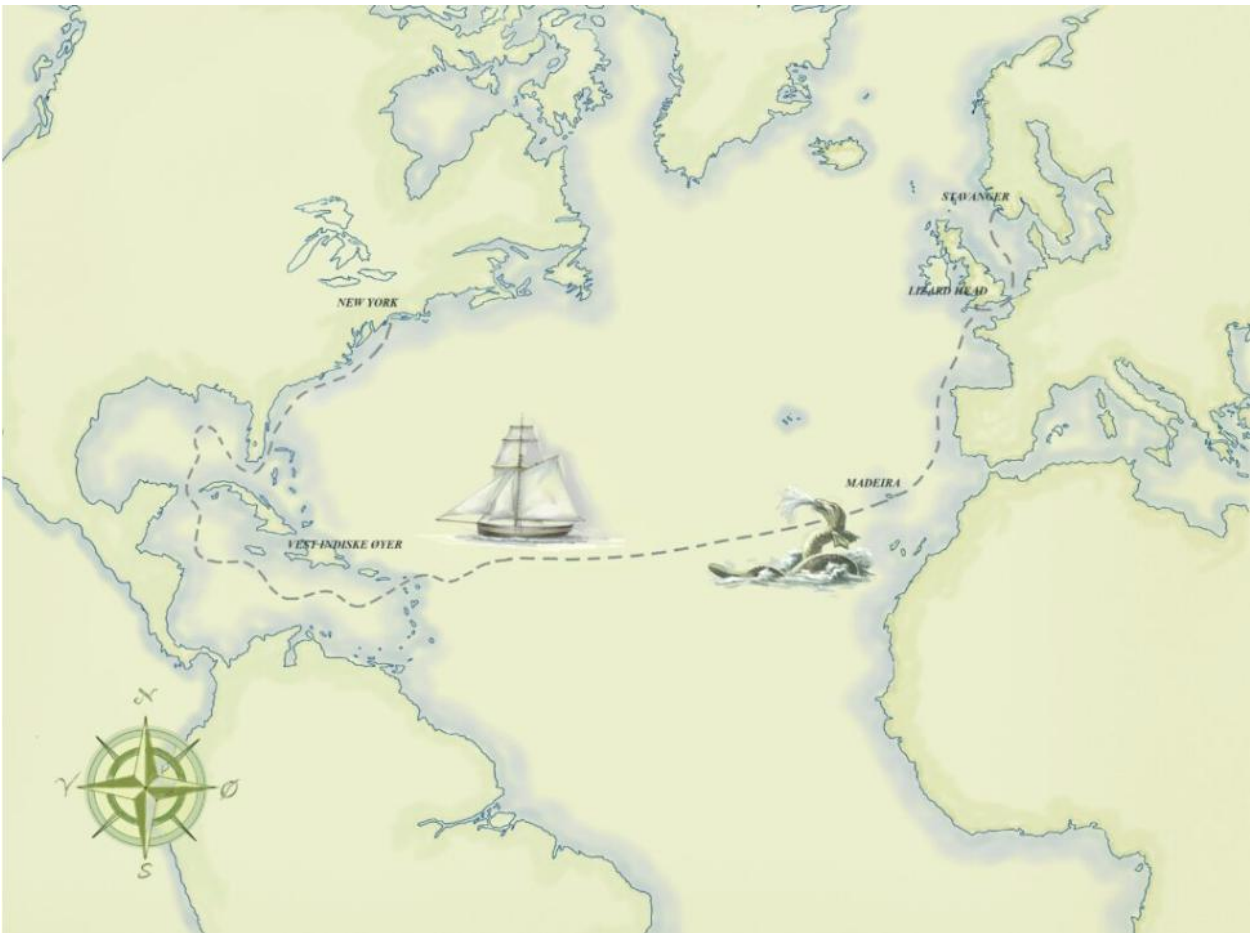
The trip would take 98 long days. The *Restauration* stopped at the southern tip of England, then sailed to the island of Madeira, near the coast of Morocco in North Africa, before crossing the wide Atlantic Ocean to reach New York City.

During the journey, something very special happened—a baby was born onboard! In the middle of the rocking ship, far out at sea, one family welcomed a brand-new little passenger. Just imagine being born on a tiny ship in the middle of the ocean!

When the *Restauration* finally arrived in America, the passengers were tired, but excited. Some stayed in Kendall, New York. Others traveled farther west to Fox River, Illinois, or Wheeler’s Grove, Iowa. One bold family kept going all the way to Napa, California!

These early travelers helped start the story of Norwegian Americans—and it all began with a ship, a big dream, and even a brand-new baby.

In 2025, the *Restauration* retraced its historic 1825 voyage from Stavanger, Norway to New York, commemorating 200 years of Norwegian emigration.



Overview of the 2025 Voyage

On July 4, 2025, exactly 200 years after the original departure, the Restauration set sail from Stavanger, Norway, with a commemorative crew and passengers, following the same route as the 1825 journey to New York City, arriving on October 9, 2025. The voyage was part of a national 200-year commemoration of Norwegian emigration, highlighting the historical struggle for better living conditions and religious freedom.

Historical Context

The original Restauration carried 52 Norwegian emigrants in 1825, tightly packed into a 54-foot sloop, with families sharing a single chest for belongings and sleeping in stacked bunk beds. The ship sailed via England and Madeira before crossing the Atlantic, and during the voyage, a baby was born, bringing the total to 53 upon arrival. The passengers were motivated primarily by religious freedom and the hope for a new life in America.

2025 Commemorative Events

The 2025 reenactment included a large public celebration in Stavanger, with approximately 15,000 people attending the sail-away event alongside the King and Queen of Norway and the voyage's patron, actress Liv Ullmann. The journey was also filmed for a documentary, "Restauration – In the Wake of the Emigrants," which recreated the historical voyage and premiered at the Norwegian International Film Festival in Stavanger in March 2026.

Ship and Route Details

The Restauration used in 2025 mirrored the original vessel's specifications: a sloop 54 feet long and 16 feet wide, originally built in 1801 and rebuilt in 1820. The commemorative voyage followed the historical route: departing Stavanger, stopping near England and Madeira, and crossing the Atlantic to New York City, replicating the 98-day journey of the original emigrants.

Cultural Significance

The reenactment served as a living history experience, connecting modern audiences with the challenges and hopes of the first organized Norwegian emigrants. It highlighted the importance of emigration in Norwegian history, celebrated cultural heritage, and provided educational opportunities through public events, media coverage, and the documentary film.

The 2025 Restauration voyage successfully combined historical accuracy, public engagement, and media storytelling, allowing participants and audiences to experience a tangible connection to the 1825 journey.

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