

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.