

This Day in History... October 9, 1825

Arrival of the *Restauration*

On October 9, 1825, the small sloop *Restauration* arrived in the United States, marking what is often considered the first organized emigration from Norway to America. This voyage represented not just a physical journey across the Atlantic, but the beginning of a long and significant chapter in the history of Norwegian-American immigration.

Centuries before the *Restauration* crossed the ocean, Norse explorers had already made contact with North America. Around the year 1000, Leif Erikson, the son of Erik the Red, led an expedition from Greenland to the coast of what is now Newfoundland, Canada. These Norsemen were likely the first Europeans to set foot in the New World—nearly 500 years before Christopher Columbus. They established a small settlement known as Vinland, but their stay was short-lived. Conflicts with Indigenous peoples and the harsh environment eventually forced them to abandon the colony and return to Greenland. Although their early exploration was largely forgotten for centuries, it showed that transatlantic voyages were possible long before the Age of Discovery.

In the 1600s, a few Norwegians trickled into the American colonies, often through connections with the Dutch or English. Many settled in places like New York and Pennsylvania, blending in with other Scandinavian and Northern European settlers. These early immigrants, however, were few in number and not part of any organized migration effort. It wasn't until the 1820s that Norway would see its first major wave of emigration to the United States.

The *Restauration* voyage was born out of both faith and frustration. Norway at the time was experiencing social and religious tension. Members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and followers of lay preacher Hans Nielsen Hauge—known as Haugeans—faced restrictions and persecution for their nonconformist beliefs. Seeking religious freedom and new opportunities, 52 Norwegians decided to leave their homeland and sail to America. On July 4, 1825, they boarded the single-masted sloop *Restauration* (also known as *Restoration*, *Restaurasjonen*, *Restaurasjon*, or *Restorasjonen*) in Stavanger harbor. The ship was small, only about half the size of the Mayflower that had carried the Pilgrims two centuries earlier, yet it came to be affectionately known as the “Norwegian Mayflower.”

The journey across the Atlantic was long and challenging. The *Restauration* was crowded, supplies were limited, and conditions were difficult. Still, the passengers persevered, guided by their faith and hope for a better life. During the three-month voyage, their number

even grew by one with the birth of a baby girl, Margaret Allen Larsen. Finally, after more than ninety days at sea, the ship arrived safely in New York Harbor on October 9, 1825.

Upon arrival, however, the ship's captain, Lars Larsen, was promptly arrested. US law at the time placed limits on how many passengers could be carried per ton of a ship's weight, and the small *Restauration* was considered dangerously overcrowded. Fortunately, President John Quincy Adams intervened and pardoned the captain a month later, recognizing the courage and historic nature of the voyage. The immigrants soon settled in Kendall, New York, where they built homes, farms, and a new community rooted in faith and perseverance. Their success inspired others back in Norway to follow in their footsteps.

Over the next century, nearly 800,000 Norwegians would immigrate to North America, most of them to the United

States. Many settled in the Midwest—in states like Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and the Dakotas—where the landscape reminded them of home. They brought with them their language, traditions, and strong work ethic, leaving a lasting imprint on American culture.

A century after the *Restauration*'s voyage, the US Post Office commemorated the event with two special stamps, known as the Norse-American Issue. Released in 1925, they celebrated both the arrival of Leif Erikson and the *Restauration*. These stamps were notable for their bi-color printing, a complex and expensive process that had not been widely used since the 1901 Pan-American Exposition issue. Because printing them was slow and difficult—they were produced in sheets of 100 rather than the usual 400—only a limited number were made. When released, they were in high demand, with post offices across the country receiving daily requests. Although a second printing was proposed, it proved too costly. It's believed that fewer than 300 post offices ever received the stamps, and many got only one or two sheets each, making them prized collectibles today.



This stamp image was based on a sister ship of the Restauration since there were no known images of it.



Issued on Leif Erikson Day (October 9) in honor of the arrival of the Restauration.



WWII-Era Overrun Countries Stamp picturing the Flag of Norway



Stamp reportedly pictures a replica of a Viking ship sailed to America for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.



John Quincy Adams 1939 Rotary Coil Prexies Stamp

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