

# The new country

This exhibition catalogue sheds light on the Swedish emigration to North America and puts in relation with the current problems our new multi-cultural society is facing. There is a deliberate alignment with an urban, more recent history, which is more relevant to a younger audience and it provides people with a link between present-day life and history. The new perspective may also be valuable for new Swedish citizens and refugees who get to see an important part of the Swedish history in a new light. "The new country" places the Swedish emigration in a European perspective and provides comparisons with the Irish, German, Italian and eastern European emigration. In the same way the Swedish immigrants are compared with other immigrant nationalities in America, between which the relations weren't always that good. Topics discussed, among others, are the Americanization of the Swedes, their changing status in work life over generations and the eternal question whether they made it in America or not. The catalogue also makes comparisons between the Swedish immigrants in America and today's immigrants in Sweden. The text (Swedish) is produced by the emigration historian Jimmy Engren and the design is a work of Carolina Jonsson. The pictures are provided by: Minnesota Historical Society, Library of Congress, McPherson County Old Mill Museum, the photographer Mike Rodriquez from Lindsborg in Kansas and the Swedish Emigrant Institute.

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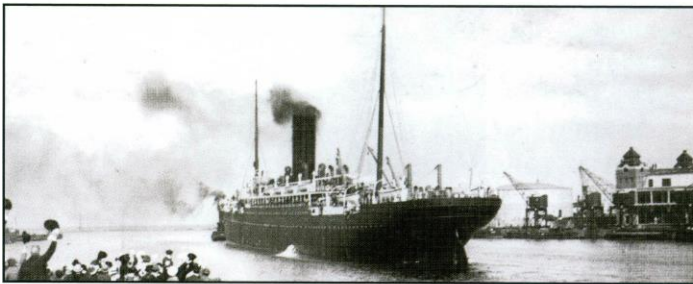
# Europe in change

The Europe that many chose (or were forced) to leave between 1820 and 1930 was a continent in rapid change. The modern industrial society was advancing and the choice to move to work or farmland became more and more common within countries, within Europe, or to North America. High birth rates resulted in a population surplus, in many places, which had no place to fill in the labor market; neither in the rationalizing agriculture nor in the industry.



People left Europe for economic reasons. The dream of running your own farm or getting a well paid job in the American industry played a crucial role, but certain parts of Europe had other reasons. The political oppression in Ireland combined with poverty and social injustice proved to be the best breeding ground for emigration in all of Europe. The Russian pogroms made the Jewish people leave the Russian Empire. The Swedish circumstances also included political and religious oppression but the dream of owning land or getting a well paid job were the most important reasons for the Swedish emigrants to leave.

The industrialization and a transforming agriculture created a mobile society. People relocated to an ever increasing extent when the old farming society was coming apart. The results of the changes were growing cities and a growing population in regions where it were possible to run large scale farming. Emigration provided people with yet an alternative.



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## Mass migration from Europe 1821 - 1960



### The European immigrants had much in common

Despite coming from different countries, speaking different languages, belonging to different churches and cultures, the European immigrants had a lot in common. They left a Europe where the right to vote was restricted and religious oppression was common; the economic circumstances were deteriorating for many as society was transitioning from agriculture to industrial production. USA was tempting with its expanding industrial economy, the accessible farmland and ideas of the individual's political and religious freedom.

### Ireland lost half of its population

More than 35 million Europeans left their old home countries for destinations in North America, between 1820 and 1930, of these were just over 1.2 million born in Sweden. Germany was the largest contributor to the emigration in actual numbers, but comparing in proportion to population size we find Ireland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden in the top. Hadn't it been for the fast growing population every fifth Swede during 1880 would have been an emigrant. Ireland had the biggest loss in population during this time; the country lost half of its population to America. From 8 million in 1845 the Irish population decreased 'til about 4 million in 1930. Ireland's population was still smaller by the year 2000 than it was when the mass emigration started in 1845.





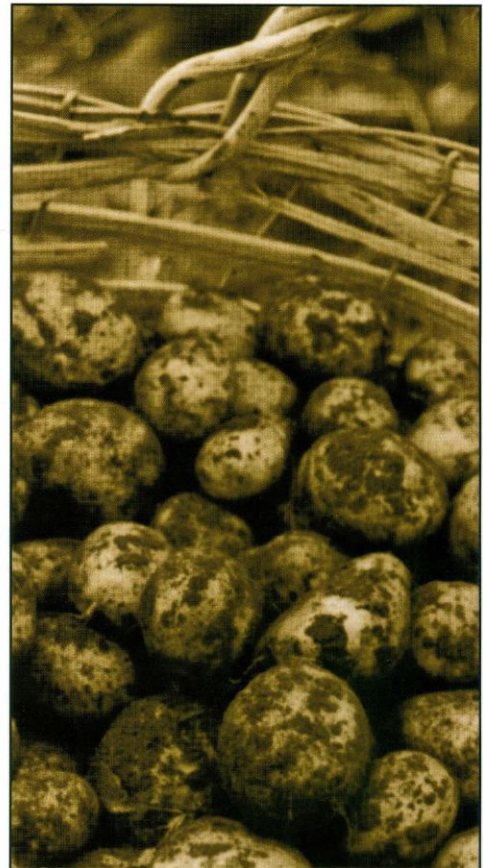
# The emigration from Ireland

English landlords owned a great part of the cultivable Irish lands during the 19th century. That century's growing population in Ireland, from 6 to 8 million people in 30 years, and falling grain prices led to large changes in farming practices. More and more of the larger landlords evicted their leaseholders. The growth in population and a trend towards farming on an industrial scale led to a gigantic surplus of labor.



The labor surplus led to falling wages and deterioration in living standards for the growing group of propertyless. The Irish industry was poorly developed and was not in need of the labor that was excluded from the agriculture. When a pestilence virtually destroyed the 1845's harvest of potato, there was no economic space left for the poorest. This started an emigration causing grave consequences not seen anywhere else in Europe.

There were also ethnic, political and religious grounds for the emigration. The English harsh governance, control of the economy and monopoly on the political power created an oppression of the ethnic Irish catholic population. The Irish poor immigrants didn't receive any warm welcome in the new country. Discussions about "Boats filled with catholic penniless from Ireland" filled the American east coast newspapers during the 1840's and 1850's. But through their large numbers the Irish came to play an important role in the USA's 19th century history as heavy workers but also as trade union leaders, politicians, military personnel and as intellectuals.



# The emigration from Germany



## The largest emigration

The German emigration was, in actual numbers, the largest in Europe at the time of the mass emigration. No less than 6 million Germans emigrated between 1820 and 1930. During the first half of the 19th century there were some smaller waves of emigration due to religious causes. Emigrating pietists from Prussia and Saxony founded religious communities in, among other states, Iowa and Pennsylvania.

## Economic reasons the main cause

There were also political motives for emigration, particularly after the failed attempt to introduce democracy in 1848. The political emigrants, after the 1848 turmoil, were however limited to a few thousands, numbers that drown in the flood wave of emigrants that left because of economic reasons the following decade. The main causes for emigration from Germany were a growing population, economic and social changes.

## Migration within Germany

Migration, as a phenomenon, spread from the west to the east within Germany. Migration from the Western part of Germany was dominated by small farmers during the period leading up to 1865. From central Germany it was in stead craftsmen and industrial employees working from their homes who led the migration. From north eastern Germany the migrants were day workers or servants from large German estates. From 1870, and forward, there were a growing proportion of propertyless and industrial workers among the migrants. At the turn of the century the emigration to America was replaced by migration within Germany. The migration went from the eastern parts to the industrialized parts of Germany, e.g. the Ruhr Area. Many German immigrants in USA kept the professions they had held in Germany, such as farmers or craftsmen. But a larger proportion became employed as heavy workers or in the service industry during the second half of the 19th century. By the year 1890 45% of the German immigrants, in the USA, were employed as workers or domestic servants. In the beginning of the 20th century the children of the German immigrants had advanced from low paid sectors to work in offices or other sectors tied to the modern industrialized USA.



# The emigration from Sweden

The Swedish emigration started already in the 1840's when a group from Hälsingland, "Erik Janssarna", left the country for religious reasons. They came to found a colony in Bishop Hill, in Illinois. The emigration in the late 1860's was due to years of failed harvests and starvation while the 1880's saw a growing group of propertyless farm workers that couldn't establish themselves within the agricultural sector.

## Large population growth and famine years caused emigration

Sweden experienced a large population increase during the 19th century. A late industrial development meant that there was no work to be found in the cities for a growing labor surplus. For every man that found a job in the industry two men emigrated around the year 1900. Beginning the 20th century more and more people had had experience from cities and industrial work, but the main portion of emigrants was propertyless from the rural areas of Sweden. Political and religious reasons played a part, as did young men's escape from military service; the weight of these causes are however difficult to estimate. More than 500.000 emigrants were women; emigration became a route to a growing independence for many of them.



In the earlier years, between 1840 and 1880, many Swedish immigrants became farmers. But as USA became industrialized more and more Swedes found themselves employed in the American industry. Already by 1910 2/3's of the Swedish immigrants were living in cities. By the year 1930, when the American depression eventually put an end to immigration, more than 70% of the Swedish immigrants were living in cities.

# The emigration from Italy



Many Italians came to settle on the American east coast where they could find work in the expanding industry. But Italians also found jobs in heavy work such as rail road constructions and mining, in regions that made a living of exploiting mineral findings and transports like the Midwest. Few of them became farmers.

## 19th century Italy was a divided country

The Italian industrialization came late and the country had a large population increase between 1880, at which time Italy had a population of 29 million people, and 1910 when the population had grown to 35 million. More than 4 million people left the country for USA during this period of time. Even larger waves of emigration left for South America. The emigration affected mainly the south of Italy which was more dependent on agriculture. The Italian emigrants often came back to Italy; many Italians work migrated back and forth over the Atlantic several times. They were sometimes called "birds of passage" in the USA.





# The Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe

## Many Jews in Eastern Europe lived under economic oppression

6.8 million Jews lived in Eastern Europe by the year 1900. 75% of these lived in Russian provinces (including parts of Poland). In Russia the Jews lived under the oppression of Russian authority, in particular designated areas (Poles) where they had restricted citizen's rights. Many also lived under economic oppression since they could not run businesses under the same conditions as other ethnic groups. The reasons for the Jewish emigration were political and religious repression. The economic changes in Eastern Europe, in the end of the 19th century, dealt a hard blow to the Jewish population which traditionally had made a living selling their craftsmanship. From the beginning of the 1880's Jews in Russia suffered periodical waves of open violence and persecutions sanctioned by the Tsar regime. The Jewish immigrants migrated for work in the American industrial sector. Few became farmers.

