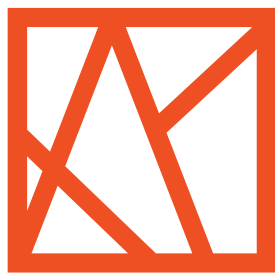


THE EMIGRATION FROM DENMARK TO AMERICA



THE TIME BEFORE THE
REBILD FESTIVAL

THE HISTORIC EVENTS THAT LED TO THE REBILD FESTIVAL



THE EMIGRATION AND MAX HENIUS

MAX HENIUS - HEAD ARCHITECT BEHIND THE REBILD FESTIVAL

Since a group of Danish-Americans bought some heather-covered hills near Rold Skov forest in 1910, Rebild Bakker has been an integral part of the story about the emigration to America.

Danish emigrants chose Rebild Bakker especially due to one man, namely Max Henius. Danish circles in America raised money for the purchase of a plot of Jutlandic land with Max Henius as the spearhead of the fundraising.



The Max Henius bust in Rebild Bakker.

The newspaper Dannevirke wrote: “The heaths are characteristic of Danish nature. The heaths overwhelm and spellbind. (...) The Danish Heath speaks a language that resonates with the unfeigned Danish nature”.

Once the plot of land had been purchased

it was to be preserved “for all eternity”. Max Henius had emigrated from Aalborg at the age of 22, and he knew Rebild Bakker, which was already a popular excursion spot, from his childhood. He suggested that they found a plot in this particular area.

Max Henius was out of an immigrant family himself. His father had emigrated from Poland to Aalborg, where he established The Danish Distillers.

Max Henius was not among the founders of The Rebild National Park Society aiming to “foster understanding and strengthen the connection between our compatriots in Denmark and The United States”. He did, however, participate in the founding general meeting in 1906, and he was elected president soon after.



Hyldegårdsminde, which houses The Rebild National Park Society.

THE EMIGRATION TO AMERICA

The fundraising for the purchase of a plot of land in the Jutlandic heath was led by The Rebild National Park Society. The land was to be used as a venue for the annual celebration of the American Independence Day, and Rebild Bakker was the perfect spot.

In 1910, seven plots of land – 71.7 hectares in total – were purchased. The official handover of the deeds to Rebild Bakker National Park took place at Marselisborg Castle on the day before the first Rebild Festival on the 5 August 1912.



The celebration on 4 July.

Christian X of Denmark participated in the celebrations in pouring rain along with 10,000 other people. From this day on, the annual gathering of Danes and emigrants has been a tradition. The Rebild Festival is now known as the biggest Fourth of July (Independence Day) celebration outside of America. When the festival was at its peak in the late 1940s, 50,000 people participated. In 2012,

when the Rebild Festival celebrated its 100th anniversary, 5,000 people joined the festivities.

UNDERLYING REASONS FOR THE MASS EMIGRATION

There are several explanations as to why one in ten Danes chose to leave their home country. An essential factor was the elimination of the Danish adscription (a form of serfdom) in the late 1700s and the dissolution of the village communities that followed.

The “emigration fever” spread during the 1800s and culminated right before the beginning of the First World War. It was a time of change and a new state of mind, where freedom was central, and the opportunity of status rise emerged.



The bust of Victor Borge, who was announced honorary president by The Rebild National Park Society in 2000.



*The Lincoln Log Cabin
at the peak of Rebild Bakker.*

THE WISH TO GET AWAY AND ENTICING FACTORS

THE WISH TO GET AWAY

Particularly in the beginning, the emigrants left Denmark due to poor conditions in rural areas. The rising population, a strict land allocation, and high lot prices were contributing factors. The divide between rich and poor increased in the rural districts, as both independent farmers and estate owners benefitted from increasing wages in the 1800s. For those that did not benefit from the increasing prosperity in these areas, the living conditions were particularly rough.



The emigrants waiting before their long journey across the Atlantic.

Naturally, most of the Danish emigrants came from the rural districts, because the majority of the populations lived in these areas. However, in relative terms, more people emigrated from the urban areas. Many of the emigrants from the ur-

ban areas had previously moved from the country to the city to find work. If they did not succeed, trying their luck in America seemed preferable to going back to their lives in the rural districts.

ENTICING FACTORS

The reason for people seeking out of Denmark became more and more significant during the 1800s. In the middle of the 19th century, a mass emigration occurred, partly due to the American Civil War approaching ending in 1865. At that time, the American government wanted to attract Europeans to cultivate the prairies where the railroads were being constructed.



The first emigrants lived in poor conditions when they came to America.

THE BREAKING UP OF RURAL AREAS



One of the big ships that brought the emigrants to America.

Emigrants who found better lives on the other side of the Atlantic would write to their families and friends and tell them about higher wages, free land, gold, and a society where class distinctions did not matter like in Denmark. USA was “the land of freedom”, where no one had to bend and scrape. Here, everyone was equal. Here, poor people could end up wealthy, as long as they were willing to work hard.



One of the first means of transportation used in the United States.

MORE PEOPLE AND THE BREAKING UP OF RURAL AREAS

The vast emigration also had to do with two revolutions - the demographic and the industrial. Particularly from around 1800-1875 the population rose due to a high birth rate combined with a lowering death rate.



At the outskirts of Rebild Bakker, you can see the sculpture “The Family”. On the small tiles surrounding the sculpture, the names of Mormons who emigrated to America are inscribed.

THE EMIGRATION IN NUMBERS

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In the years from 1840 to 1914, approximately 300,000 people emigrated from Denmark. Nine out of ten went to the USA, and many of the emigrants were from Northern Jutland.

The first high point of the emigration was in 1872, where 6,000 emigrated. The number peaked in the 80s, more specifically in 1882 where 11,400 emigrated. Out of every 100 emigrants that sailed to America, 65 were men and 35 were women. This had consequences for the gender distribution in Denmark all the way up to 1950, where women were in majority by more than one would expect.

A vast part of the emigrants came from Aalborg and Hjørring counties. At the demographic census in 1901, 13 per cent of the Danish population lived in Northern Jutland. 17.2 per cent of the Danes emigrating from 1868 to 1900 came from Northern Jutland.



At the outskirts of Rebild Bakker national park, you can see the Friendship Lawn with sculptures by the artist Dennis Smith, who is a descendant of emigrants. One of them is "The Family", another is the bust of Victor Borge who was a keynote speaker at the Rebild Festival several times.



REBILDPORTEN

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