

A tour of the Oberalben Emigration Museum



The linen weaver's room (around 1850)

The profession of linen weaver was a typical emigrant occupation in the 19th century. Two inventions destroyed the linen weaver's livelihood:

- the mechanical loom (developed in 1778)
- the improved steam engine

Added to this was the advent of cotton around 1800, which increasingly replaced linen.

- By 1800, most large factories were already equipped with steam-powered looms.
- In 1820, there were five linen weavers working in the canton of Lauterecken and four in the canton of Wolfstein.
- In 1833, 291 master linen weavers with 15 journeymen and one bleacher worked in the Kusel district. Five rope makers worked with hemp and flax.
- In 1834, raw cotton imports began at a rate of 1,000 to 2,000 tons per year.



Interior view of a loom



Linen weaving room

The situation for hand weavers was getting worse and worse. Flax processing was almost completely taken over by industry, and cheaper cotton replaced linen yarn.

- By 1875, the situation for linen weavers had become hopeless, and many were forced to emigrate.
- In 1880, only 20,000 tons of flax were harvested, while 350,000 tons of cotton were imported per year.
- In 1900, flax cultivation came to an end in the Palatinate, as well as in the Hunsrück and Eifel regions.
- In 1914, cotton imports rose to 600,000 tons per year.

Between 1816 and 1865, 43 linen weavers from the Kusel district submitted applications to emigrate. Three of them emigrated to Poland, seven to Brazil, one to Prussia, and 32 to America. The linen weaver Nikolaus Klein from Oberalben emigrated to America with his family in 1844.

The tween deck of the "Hermine"

Probably the biggest attraction of the Emigration Museum is the faithful reconstruction of a steerage deck. Following the instructions of historian Dr. Ulrich Wagner and museologist Stefan Knobloch from Bremerhaven, the steerage deck of the emigrant ship "Hermine" was expertly reconstructed by Günther Weingarth and Jürgen Penkwitt in collaboration with Konrad Rucks from Bremerhaven.

The tween deck shows the conditions under which people emigrated to America in the last century. Around the tween deck, we learn about the catastrophic conditions that prevailed on board: minimal food rations and unbearable hygienic conditions. The sound of the sea and the cries of seagulls at the touch of a button lend the whole thing a realistic atmosphere.



The Conestoga wagon

This sturdy wagon was used to open up the American West. The basic design of the Conestoga wagon, which was mainly built in Pennsylvania, developed from the Franconian-Palatinate farm wagon.

The Conestoga wagon offered little comfort—the only luxury was the tarp that provided protection from heat and storms—but it could carry loads of up to 1,200 kg. Since the wagon had no suspension, people walked alongside it whenever possible. Every day, the wagon, pulled by teams of oxen, covered 20 to 30 km. The journey took about 18 hours a day, from 4:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.



Display boards in the Museum

Panel 1:

German overseas emigration from 1932

1. Graphical representation of German overseas emigration from 1932

Panel 2:

Emigration via German ports

2. World map showing migration flows and statistical data on immigration to the main destination countries

Panel 3:

Situation in the 19th century – embarkation

3. Waiting room of Norddeutscher Lloyd in Bremerhaven
4. Group of German emigrants before their departure at the port
5. Group of emigrants on the Rhine, transport by ship
6. Emigrants boarding ship near Hamburg

Panel 4:

Situation in the 19th century – steerage and shipwrecks

7. Dormitory on the steerage deck of the "Samuel Hop"
8. Tween deck of an emigrant ship
9. On the cross deck of a Hamburg emigrant ship
10. Fire on the emigrant steamer "Austria"

Panel 5:

Situation in the 19th century – "The business of emigration"

11. Advertising poster by Norddeutscher Lloyd for the Bremen–New York steamship line
12. Sailboat "Deutschland," first ship of the Hapag
13. "House and pocket library for emigrants to America – useful travel book for America"
14. "National Emigrant House A.D.Wolinski, Hamburg"
15. In an emigration agency, around 1870
16. "Travel opportunity via Hamburg to North America"
17. "For emigrants – the English interpreter. Practical guidebook"
18. "Ship opportunities for passengers and emigrants from Hamburg to New York"

Plate 6:

Situation in the 19th century – Emigration in caricature

19. The illusionist and the disappointed
20. "A pedestrian traveler from Krähwinkel follows wise advice and takes a signpost with him"
21. Emigration to America via Liverpool
22. Drawing from the flying leaves, around 1847
23. Reasons for emigration
24. Reasons for emigration
25. The emigrants, or the wonderful journeys and adventures of Barnabas Wühlhuber and Casimir Heulmaier in America

Plate 7:

Protective measures taken by the states – Bremen

26. "Regulation concerning emigrants traveling on local or foreign ships"; October 1, 1832
27. Information from the "Emigration Registration Office" in Bremen; February 1851
28. Publication by the Registration Office with lists of the names and addresses of licensed ship brokers and brokers
29. Publication by the Registration Office with rates for lodging and meals
30. Information sheet on the Registration Office
31. Leaflet from the Registration Office for Emigrants

Plate 8:

Protective measures taken by the federal states – Hamburg

And much more...

In addition to the permanent exhibition on emigration in general, other exhibitions, lectures, and events on the subject of emigration are also offered.

The museum also hosts events that are not related to this topic. For example, every year there is a pre-Christmas arts and crafts market, and once a year the Emigration Museum in Oberalben hosts an almost traditional jazz brunch with the internationally renowned local musician Rolf-Dieter Schnapka.

Art exhibitions and other concerts are also offered throughout the year.

Visit us at:

www.auswanderermuseum.de