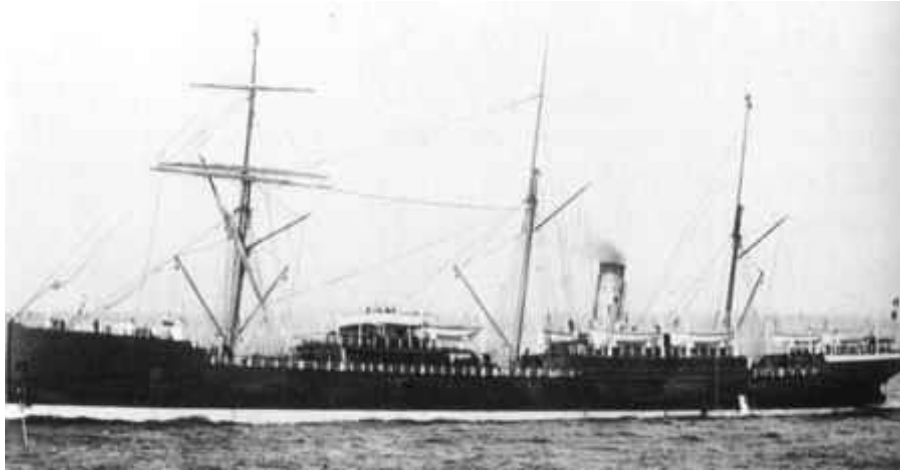


Anna Kirstin Jensen's experience as an immigrant

She traveled on the Hekla II, March 29-April 16, 1888



Hekla, of the Danish "Thingvalla Line"

The Hekla was actually the Hekla II, since the first ship of that name sunk in 1883 after less than a year of service. Part of the "Thingvalla Line", the steamer had quite a long life-span, launched from Christiania, Norway on Feb. 29, 1884, and beginning her maiden voyage to New York two weeks later from Copenhagen, Denmark with a full load of 990 passengers. Approximately half were Danish, the other half Norwegian, as was typical for most of the Hekla's trips, although the boat was not always filled to capacity. The Hekla suffered its share of mechanical problems, but was always repaired in due time and continued to serve the "Thingvalla Line" until the demise of that line in 1898, at which time the Hekla was sold to the "Scandinavian America Line", and after changing hands and also names a couple of times after that, was scrapped in 1910.



Scandinavian America Line westward route, departing Copenhagen for Kristiania (now Oslo) and then calling at Kristiansand before crossing the Atlantic. There were train connections from many other cities to the ports of departure

The main route was from Copenhagen to New York via Kristiania (Oslo) and Kristiansand. The great majority of the passengers were emigrants. The Thingvalla Line had been the only Scandinavian steamship line offering a regular service between Scandinavian ports and North America since it entered service in 1880. It was quite convenient for emigrants from the Northern parts of Denmark, southern parts of Sweden and Norway to travel directly, and it was considered to be a great advantage that the fares were slightly lower than the English and German lines, and not to forget - the crew and food was Scandinavian.

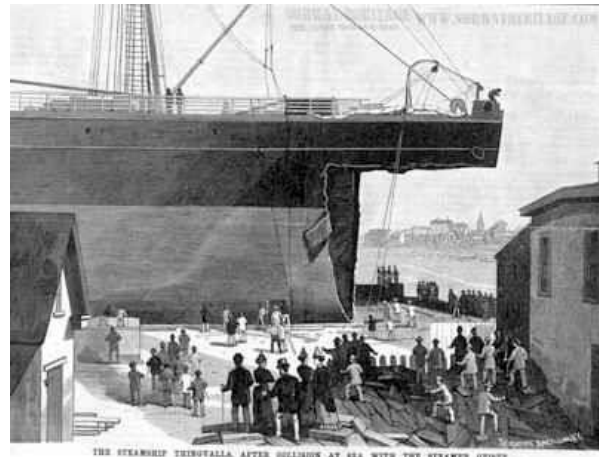
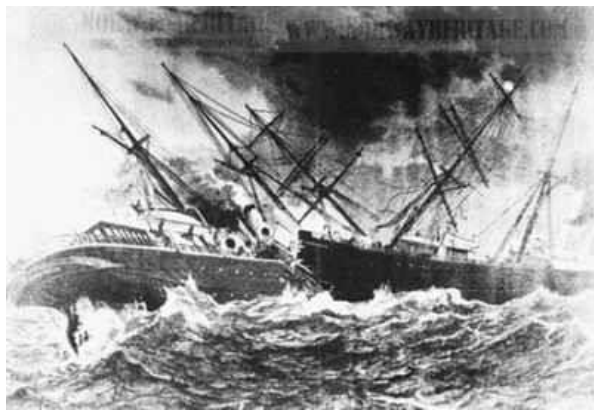


Feeding time between decks (steerage) in an emigrant ship 1873



Dancing on deck: This picture comes from an 1887 brochure issued by the Thingvalla Line

She was not on either of these ships:



Collision between The S/S Geiser and the S/S Thingvalla, August 1888

The marine disaster - collision between the Thingvalla and Geiser in 1888

<http://www.norwayheritage.com/articles/templates/great-disasters.asp?articleid=56&zoneid=1>

A first person account: The first day passed, and we had a wonderful evening with calm seas, and a beautiful sundown. A lot of whales were tumbling about near the ship. On deck, there was dancing to the tunes of an accordion. Everything was happiness and joy - because of the moment, and the thought of where we were heading. On board there were not less than 4 captains going home on leave, there were also some teachers, businessmen and farmers. As the evening got later, one by one they went to bed, full of joy and happiness over having had such a nice evening. Sadly, many of them would never again be able to enjoy these moments in their lives.

*At dawn, about four in the morning, we suddenly felt a strange blow to the ship. It was as if we had hit something that gave away. The alarm was sounded throughout the corridors: "**All men on deck!**" - As I felt that something serious was happening, I got into my pants and, grabbed my vest and shirt, not bothering with putting on my boots. I ran up on deck.*

The visibility was good, and not far away from us I saw another steamship. It was the old "Thingvalla"! - I came up a little aft of midships, and I understood that something very serious had happened, because the rail was smashed, and the water was pouring in over the deck. Geiser was now laying heavy in the water, not more than 3-4 feet from the deck to the waterline. It would not take very large seas before they would be over the deck. The sea was calm so that did not happen. I went further aft, to where the ship had been damaged. There, I stepped on some of the sharp iron splinters, and cut my foot. It is a wonder that I did not fall into the 12 foot hole where the bow of S/S Thingvalla had cut into the hull.

Just after I went aft, I was thrown on the deck by the increasing seas. As I struggled to get back on my feet, I had to let go of my shirt and vest, where I had all of my money. To search for it was useless....

An example of provisions served based on class of steerage:

Bill of Fare for Intermediate Passengers.

	BREAKFAST. 7.30 A.M.	DINNER. 12 NOON.	TEA. 5 P.M.
SUNDAY -	Coffee, Fresh Rolls and Butter, Beefsteak, and Irish Stew.	Soup, Roast Beef and Potatoes, Plum Pudding and Sauce.	Fresh Bread and Butter, and Cold Meats.
MONDAY -	Coffee, Fresh Rolls and Butter, Minced Collops, and Irish Stew.	Soup, Mutton—Roast or Boiled, and Potatoes, Bread and Butter Pudding.	
TUESDAY -	Coffee, Fresh Rolls and Butter, Porridge and Syrup, Curried Meat, and Rice.	Pea Soup, Corned Beef and Cabbage, Potatoes, Rice Pudding.	
WEDNESDAY	Coffee, Fresh Rolls and Butter, Hashed Meat, Boiled Potatoes.	Soup, Roast Beef and Potatoes, Plum Pudding and Sauce.	
THURSDAY -	Coffee, Fresh Rolls and Butter, Beefsteak, and Irish Stew.	Soup, Stewed Beef, and Vegetable Sauce, Bread and Butter Pudding.	
FRIDAY -	Coffee, Fresh Rolls and Butter, Porridge and Syrup, Lochfine Herrings, Potatoes.	Pea Soup, Ling Fish and Egg Sauce, Corned Pork, Cabbage, & Potatoes, Sago Pudding.	
SATURDAY -	Coffee, Fresh Rolls and Butter, Fried Ham or Bacon, Boiled Potatoes.	Soup, Roast Pork and Potatoes, Rice Pudding.	

GRUEL at Eight o'clock every night.

NOTE.—The Bill of Fare may be altered according to circumstances.

INTERMEDIATE PASSENGERS ARE PROVIDED WITH BEDS, BEDDING, AND ALL NECESSARY UTENSILS, WASH-BASINS, ETC.

The attention of Passengers is directed to the fact, that the Intermediate is only an improved Steerage, and that it in no way resembles a Cabin Passage. The Intermediate Passengers are subject to the same Rules and Regulations as the Steerage.

Below from Appletons' Dictionary of New York and Vicinity (with maps), Fifth Edition, New York: D Appleton & Co., 1883:

The European steamers that bring immigrants to this country land them at Castle Garden where they receive food and shelter until such time as they shall start for the interior or the far West, whither most of them are bound.

At one time the Garden was infested with immigrant runners, who preyed upon the strangers, often unable to speak a word of English; but this has been suppressed of late years, and the immigrant is protected, sheltered, fed, and transported with his worldly goods to the depot whence he takes his departure from the city.

At times from 500 to 1,000 immigrants are sheltered at Castle Garden, and the sight is well worth seeing. They rarely, however, remain there over 24 hours. The immigrants are transferred to this landing depot, where, after an examination of their luggage, they are received by officers of the Commission, who enter in registers kept for the purpose the necessary particulars for their future identification.

The names of such as have money, letters, or friends awaiting them, are called out, and they are put into immediate possession of their property, or committed to their friends, whose credentials have first been properly scrutinized. Such as desire can find clerks at hand to write letters for them in any European language, and a telegraph operator within the depot to forward the patches.

Here, also, the main trunk lines of railway have offices, at which the immigrant can buy tickets and have his luggage weighed and checked; brokers are admitted (under restrictions which make fraud

impossible) to exchange the foreign coin or paper of immigrants ; a restaurant supplies them with plain food at moderate prices ; a physician is in attendance for the sick ; a temporary hospital is ready to receive them until they can be conveyed to Ward's Island ; and those in search of employment are furnished it at the labor bureau connected with the establishment.

Such as desire to start at once for their destination are sent to the railway or steamboat; while. an3t who may choose to remain in the city are referred to boarding-house keepers admitted to the- depot, whose charges are regulated under special license, and whose houses are kept under constant and rigid supervision by the Commissioners.

These services are rendered without any fee or charge whatever to the immigrant. The present building at Castle Garden was erected at a coat of \$80,000 after the partial destruction by fire of the original structure in 1876.



Immigrants arriving at Castle Garden in 1890





Disembarking from the tender at Castle Garden



Emigrants in the Castle Garden waiting room, 1890

The scene at the Garden itself is a remarkably vivid and picturesque one. People of all nations seemed to have assembled within the spacious rotunda when the representative of THE ILLUSTRATED AMERICAN visited it, on a recent Sunday afternoon, and caught some photographs by flash-light of the strange scene. Slavs, the men in garb not essentially different from that of the Germans, but the women wearing short skirts that afforded an ample view of their top-boots worn to the knee; Italians, with black hair, lustrous eyes, swarthy skins - the women gay with colored kerchiefs; German and French peasants ; Russian serfs in long, woolly, grayish overcoats, apparently blizzard proof; Scotch lads and lassies with glowing, rosy cheeks and sturdy frames ; Emerald Islanders, with their soft brogue and humorous features ; stolid-looking Englishmen, gazing around as if in hope of securing some dropped aspirate; Polish Jews, black-browed and suspicious-all these and many natives of minor states and little known kingdoms, speaking, seemingly, myriad tongues, the concentrated essence of which wafted roofward seemed to make the rafters quiver with its incessant, discordant babel - were gathered together in the

old fort. Some were yet filing slowly through the narrow passage-way near the seaward entrance, where questions as to his age, nativity, occupation, companions, condition of health, and ability to provide for himself and companions are asked each immigrant. If the answers returned are not satisfactory, the applicant is turned aside and temporarily detained in a large pen, or cage, on the east side of the rotunda. If accepted, he is hurried on through a maze-like succession of barriers into the open space on the north. The outer gates are not opened until all the passengers have passed the scrutinizing barrier; and it was while the few last immigrants were undergoing examination that the photographs of the immigrants were taken.



Immigrants waiting to be processed through Castle Garden, 1890

From A New Life Danish Emigration Stilling and Olsen:

On board a steamship, 1873

The above accounts from the days of the sailing ships and the first paddle steamers have little in common with the following reports of Atlantic crossings by modern steamship. Crowds of well-wishers watched as the steamship *Ottens*, the first ship to carry emigrants directly from Copenhagen to America, sailed from Copenhagen on July 31, 1866. Throughout the following years, various American and German shipowners tried to maintain a direct route from Copenhagen. The most successful of these was the company *Baltischer Lloyd* which sailed to America from Stettin, on the German Baltic coast, via Copenhagen a total of 35 times from 1871 to 1874. As emigration slowed in the mid-1870s, profits fell, and the company went bankrupt in 1874.¹⁹

One of the last passengers to travel this route was a young governess, Natalie Bering from the East Jutland town of Fredericia. Her adventurous fiancé, a wealthy landowner's son from North Zealand, Johannes Jung, had emigrated to Nebraska in 1872. Having arrived safely in Omaha, Natalie described the trip to a close friend in Denmark on July 27, 1873:

...I was sick most of the time. There were only a few Danes. I traveled together with a Danish fellow from Skanderborg - a truly nice and agreeable person - do you not know him? He has worked in the bailiff's office in Tønderup. If I had not been engaged, he would have proposed. He courted me almost too much when I occasionally showed myself. Of course, we had some small adventures, but I shall tell you about those when we meet if I can remember them; for if we do not see each other here, perhaps we shall meet in Heaven....²⁰

From Bornholm to Chicago, 1882

The direct route from Copenhagen to New York was reorganized in 1879. The new company was financed by Danish capital and was called the Thingvalla Line. It maintained regular voyages to America until 1898. This joint-stock company enjoyed some good years during the Danish emigration boom in the 1880s. The number of emigrants peaked in 1882 when over 11,000 people left Denmark. Jens Lind, the 16-year-old son of a blacksmith from Runkær Parish on the island of Bornholm, was one of them. He was joined by a large group of other emigrants from the island, among these a cousin. He arrived in the United States in November 1882, and sent reports of the journey in two letters, one from Chicago and the other from Fayette in northwestern Michigan:

Dear Parents! Now that I have entered this country which has been the goal of our longing and aspirations, I will take up my pen and send a description of our journey to our dear home that after three weeks of continuous travel we have traveled so far from.

The trip from Rønne to Ystad...went very well. Here in Ystad a number of pigs and geese were taken on board, and it was quite comical to hear the harmony created by Swedish screams and the cries of the animals. We sailed at a quarter past 2 and arrived in Copenhagen at a quarter past 10. Upon our arrival in the harbor, a messenger from the emigration office immediately appeared and asked if the Lind brothers were on board, and so in great haste we got our papers in



Letterhead from a letter written by Carl Christian Jensen in 1865. (Søllerød Museum).

order and our bedclothes purchased; they cost us each 9 kroner and 25 øre.²¹ We then went on board the *Hekla* which sailed at 1 o'clock....

On 21st Oct. the northern tip of Scotland - the last point of Europe, disappeared from sight. 22nd Oct.: Celebrated with music and dancing. 23rd Oct.: Everyone had to go to the doctor's to get a certificate of vaccination.... 1st Nov.: Andreas Møller's youngest child, Kristian, died. 2nd Nov.: Another child died in third class. They were buried at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The doctor officiated at the service and gave the funeral oration, whereupon two specially clothed seamen lowered overboard. The ship had stopped, and the flag was immediately lowered to half mast. The hymn 'Hvo ved hvor nær mig er min Ende' [Who Knows How Near My End] was accompanied by a cornet player from Norway. 3rd Nov.: Pilot on board, land in sight....

Jens continued from Fayette:

...When we arrived at Castle Garden,²² a huge round building, we exchanged our railroad tickets. Here I changed my money for 41 and a half dollars. We stayed here for an hour and a half, and then a steamer took us to the railroad station. We left from there at 8 o'clock in the evening. We changed trains twice on the journey, where we do not know, as we were not told the name at the stations. On the last train we were all vaccinated even though we showed them our certificates from the Hekla. When we arrived in Chicago, a Danish agent came to meet us; he got us a driver who drove us to Union Street no. 202....

The words of the above hymn soon became the sad truth of Jens' own fate in the United States.²³

Travel instructions, 1886

We learned earlier (page 30) how millworker Peter Nielsen from Lundegård's mill near Præstø on East Zealand attempted to convince his brother Wilhelm to emigrate. With some lack of enthusiasm, Wilhelm gave in to his brother's constant urging early in 1886. A homebody by nature, Wilhelm did not look forward to a long and dangerous journey. On February 18, 1886, Peter made his last persuasive attempt to convince his wary brother of how simple the trip to Missouri would be:

Dear Brother! - I have received your letter and it pleases me that you have now decided to come over here. In answer to your questions, I can tell you the following: It makes little difference which steamship line you travel with. They are all about equally good. The Thingvalla Line is good where food is concerned, they get good food, but its ships are so small, and they roll much more than the others. For people who can stand the sea...that is the best line. The line I took was the new Hamburg or Edward Line. It was a very good line except for all the changing about.... I think it would be best to take the Thingvalla Line; there is no changing. As soon as you go on board, you can stay there until you get to New York, and that means you have no extra expenses. At sea you get free board.

It takes three or four days on the train to get here. As far as your papers are concerned, you need not worry about them, they are worthless.... The only thing you need to do is to buy a ticket all the way to the place I shall tell you of. A ticket costs 160 or 170 kroner.... It will be either for here, Gallatin, or St. Joseph, Missouri, so you can ask an emigration agent how much a ticket to these two places costs.... Do not bring any clothes or apparel with you. It is much cheaper here than in Denmark. If you have some clothes, then you must sell them before you leave. They would just be in your way on the journey. All you need is a carpet bag you can carry and take with you wherever you go. Above all, do not bring a suitcase with you; that will bring you more inconvenience than you can imagine. Now, if you will just do as I say, the journey will be just as easy for you as a trip to Copenhagen.¹⁵

When you get to New York and Chicago and other big towns, you must be very careful of your pockets and likewise be careful of your ticket, and do not let anyone see it; there are many rogues who will try to trick the tickets from newcomers. When you leave the steamship in New York, you will be taken to a big building called Castle Garden, and then you will get a train ticket. Then when you have got it, a steamboat will come to take you to the railroad station. There you can buy something to eat and to take with you on the trip.... I do not know which railroad line you will travel on. You will either pass St. Louis or Chicago, and there you will have to change trains, and perhaps some other places, but the conductor will tell you about that: every conductor is obliged to tell you when you are to get off. No newcomer in America need be afraid....

On board the steamship *Hekla*, 1886

A little less than a month after Wilhelm's departure, another Dane from East Zealand also boarded the Thingvalla Line's *Hekla*: Lars Pedersen from Hellested, one of a large group of emigrants from the Stevns area of East Zealand. Under



Ready to serve the soup on the S/S Norge's foredeck. c. 1895.
(Holger Munchaus Petersen).

the leadership of carpenter Niels Madsen, who had emigrated from Klippinge in 1869, a group of humble, hopeful people from the villages of Klippinge, Magleby, Hellested, Lyderslev, Karise and Jungshoved emigrated on May 12, 1886.¹⁶ Most had the newly cultivated prairie of Nebraska as their destination.

Fourteen days later, when Lars caught his first glimpse of the American coast, he wrote the following letter to his old home:

On board the steamship *Hekla*, May 26, 1886.

Dear Parents! - I think I would like to write a few words to you before we reach New York....

When the ship had sailed past Toldboden [Copenhagen's customhouse], we were called down to eat. We were given beef soup for dinner; two men went around to all the berths with a big bucket and a big ladle and everyone held out their plates, so they could fill them. It was water with a little cabbage in it; then two men brought potatoes. Every man got two to three big potatoes which we had to peel ourselves. Then a man brought meat, but I and my friend Lars Jørgensen from Lyderslev had eaten the potatoes with the soup, and we did not get bread with the meat, but Kristian Jensen from Karise had saved the potatoes. He insisted we were supposed to have the potatoes with the meat, but we did not believe that, so we had to eat the meat by itself.

Toward evening we passed Skagen and northernmost Jutland - and the Swedish coast on the other side, but it was far away, and all land disappeared from sight before we went to bed.

You went down there, Father, so you know how it looked down in the sleeping room. We three friends lie together. A young Swede lies beside us, a nice and very quiet fellow, he does not seek the company of the other Swedes. There are also four Danes lying next to us; they are from the Roskilde area. There are 112 men in the room.

May 13: As soon as we got up in the morning, we washed ourselves up on deck. It was calm, beautiful weather at 5 o'clock. When it was 8 o'clock, it started to get foggy. At half past 8 they were afraid to continue sailing because of the fog. The steam whistle blew every five minutes. The ship lay quiet; at 11 o'clock the fog lifted, the ship started again and soon we could see the Norwegian coast with the high mountains, these great masses of stone with the tiny pine trees. Here and there there was a village, now we sailed into Kristiania fjord, there was land on both sides.... We sailed 25 miles up into the fjord before we reached the town of Kristiania [Oslo] where we docked and took passengers on board. We were not allowed to go ashore, but there were many who ran down the gangplank anyway. There were many people down by the harbor just like in Copenhagen; there were parents saying their final farewells to their children and friends. It is touching to watch when you have done the same thing yourself....

We have seen only four ships since we entered the Atlantic Ocean; not until yesterday did we see more ships that came from New York.

I have not been very bored on board. I go down to Lars Petersen¹⁷ and play cards to pass the time every day, then I have coffee, sometimes twice a day. There have been no disagreements between Niels Madsen and Lars Petersen as I had thought there would be. They have both been very nice to me. You must excuse the handwriting as I have been lying in my berth to write....

An unpleasant voyage, 1893

As the 1800s drew to a close, many shipowners offered cheap passage to America. In addition to the direct route to America from Copenhagen, there were many other shipowners in sharp competition with one another to sell passage to Danish emigrants. An indirect route from Copenhagen took the emigrants to America via Liverpool. Many chose this route to the New World or had it chosen for them with the gift of a prepaid ticket sent from America. In the spring of 1893, Maren Lorensen, a working girl from Tulstrup in Mid-Jutland, received a prepaid ticket from her brother in Racine, Wisconsin. Shortly after her arrival in Racine, she described the journey in no uncertain terms to a friend back home. Her letter is dated April 21, 1893:

...It was really cold when I left. We nearly froze to death up on deck, but it would have been dreadful to stay down in the cabin the whole time. There was such a smell of vomit as we were all seasick. For my part, I was sick for almost the whole trip; but we had strong winds, and then, of course, it is worst, and we were treated like dogs on the ship as it was an English ship I was on, and they are not so nice as the Danish ones. But I had to travel with the English as brother Søren sent me a ticket for that line. We had our food just like the pigs in Denmark, and I doubt they would have eaten it. Yes, if you could just imagine what it is like to travel to America, especially when you receive such treatment; but neither you nor anyone can imagine, since you have not tried it. When the ship rolled from one side to the other, we and everything that was loose on the ship tumbled back and forth all mixed together, and most threw up and slid back and forth in that. Yes, I shudder at the thought; I would not make that trip again for anything. When we finally got to America, all our clothes were fumigated to disinfect them, yes, what a lot of fuss that was....¹⁸