

I recently heard a lecture by Rebekka Geitner, Historian, BallinStadt Emigration Museum. Since so many of our relatives emigrated through Hamburg I thought this might be of interest. Two things especially interested me. I had always heard the rumours about the Hamburg records being burned. No, except for a part of one year, the records are all at BallinStadt and available to study. Also, it was the less affluent who passed through BallinStadt.

Ms. Geitner kindly provided the following information in the form of BallinStadt press releases.

B. Krbechek

BallinStadt – The Emigration Museum:

An exhibition concept linking past, present and future

The history of emigration from Hamburg is also the history of Europe – one of hopes, dreams and fears that are as relevant today as they were in past centuries. The BallinStadt Emigration Museum is a site where visitors can relive history and explore the connections between past, present and future.

“We don't want to look at emigration simply as a list of historical facts and figures, but as an ongoing and complex issue to which everyone can relate“, explains Volker Reimers, executive director of the BallinStadt. Therefore, the main exhibition focuses on the stories and destinies of more than five million European emigrants, allowing visitors to learn about their hopes, dreams and desires.

Our guests come face to face with the fate of individual emigrants. The combination of interactive elements with historical documents and exhibits is deeply moving for everyone.

Original letters and photographs taken from family albums provide a deep personal insight into historical events. The BallinStadt has always met the challenge of reducing the distance between visitor and exhibit and therefore designed alternative ways of depiction, e.g. historical photographs brought back to life as living pictures. Talking figures, whose biographies are based on historically documented lives, tell visitors about their personal emigration experience. Standing behind Albert Ballin's enormous desk, the legendary ship-owner appears to be nearby. In the hull of a ship visitors experience the different travel conditions of a first-, second- and third- class crossing to the New World about a hundred years ago.

There are special ways for children to explore the days of emigration: dolls talk about their emigration experiences, certain passages and buttons are at eye level with children and they can find information about the passage in a tunnel on a reproduction of a ship.

The “Historical Pavilion” in house no. 3 focuses on the everyday life of emigrants staying in the historical Emigration Halls and also presents other ways in which the site has been used up to the present day.

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