

Small Number – Big Impact

Special exhibition at the Swiss National Museum, Zürich

From March 2nd until October 28th 2007

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«Small Number – Big Impact»

Special exhibition on Swiss immigration to the USA

2 March to 28 October 2007 at the Swiss National Museum in Zurich

Since the beginning of the 18th century hundreds of thousands of Swiss people have emigrated to the USA, many of them leaving a lasting legacy in their chosen field.

Currently some 1.2 million US citizens have Swiss roots. An exhibition organised by the Migration Museum Association in collaboration with the Swiss National Museum shows Swiss influence in the USA through the eyes of celebrities as well as the unsung heroes and heroines.

What do country singer Jewel, racing driver Louis Chevrolet, film actress Renée Zellweger and painter Gottardo Piazzoni have in common? Swiss roots of course! They are all descended from Swiss emigrants who left their homeland to seek their fortunes in the USA.

Success stories

By means of mementos, documents, listening points and slide projections, the «Small Number – Big Impact» exhibition recounts the success stories of past and present emigrants. Covering the areas of culture, music, politics, science and business, there are portraits of the leading characters, Marc Forster (film director), Adolph Rickenbacker («Father of the Electric Guitar»), Albert Gallatin (Secretary of the Treasury under President Thomas Jefferson), Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (researcher on death and dying) and Louis Chevrolet (racing driver and car designer) and other famous names such as Robert Frank (photographer), Mari Sandoz (author), Gottardo Piazzoni (painter), Steve Ballmer (CEO of Microsoft) or

Othmar H. Ammann (bridge designer). Conversely, a number of American expatriates such as the painter Linda Graedel or the business manager David Bancroft from Schaffhausen talk in video interviews about their life in Switzerland.

«Big Number – Small Impact»

Not all emigrants left such visible traces. The «Big Number – Small Impact» migrant exhibition sponsored by Presence Switzerland and which was held at the Immigration Museum on Ellis Island, New York in the summer of 2006 is being supplemented by the Swiss National Museum in Zurich to include a presentation of the historical importance of Swiss mass emigration. It will focus on the cantons of Glarus and Ticino which, along with the canton of Schaffhausen, recorded in the 19th century the highest waves of emigration in the whole of Switzerland. The reasons for emigrating, which varied from place to place, and the «typical» destinations and integration processes in the USA for each different group of immigrants are also discussed. Listening points with descriptions of the hazardous conditions during the four to eight-week crossing taken from letters written by ordinary people paint a graphic picture of the differing fortunes of the emigrants.

Fringe events and catalogue

The Sunday matinees at the Swiss National Museum entitled «Going West – US folk music, made in Switzerland» are presented by Hans Peter Treichler on the first Sunday of each month from April to September. A lecture by Leo Schelbert, specialist for the history of migration, is scheduled in March while the «Filmpodium Zurich» presents throughout September a series of films under the title «Swiss Dreams – American Realities».

A lavishly illustrated 170-page catalogue in German and English to accompany the exhibition has been published by the Neue Zürcher Zeitung. Its title «Small Number – Big Impact» was in fact chosen by the US curators of the Migration Museum on Ellis Island:

Small Number – Big Impact: Swiss immigration to the US. Published by the Migration Museum Association, Bruno Abegg and Barbara Lüthi. Zurich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung publishers, 2006. ISBN 978-3-03823-259-9. CHF 68, EUR 46

Opening hours: Tuesdays to Sundays, 10 am to 5 pm

Entrance fee Adults CHF 5/reduced fee CHF 3 (incl. permanent exhibition),
children of 16 and under free of charge

Further information on www.smallnumber.ch

The press conference will be held Thursday, 1st March 2007, at 10 a.m., at the Swiss National Museum, Museumstrasse 2, 8001 Zurich.

Press articles and a selection of press photographs can be downloaded from www.musee-suisse.ch under Media. Please note that press pictures may be used solely in connection with a report on the «Small Number – Big Impact» exhibition in the Swiss National Museum and must carry credits. More images are available at Keystone or Ringier Zürich.

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