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07/07/2011 - Key dates

The start of the 20th century: emigration from Eastern Europe.

The start of the 20th century was marked by a massive exodus of Eastern Europeans which only stopped with the First World War. However, Eastern European emigrants were still arriving in the United States after the war, many Jews in particular but also those trying to escape the economic crisis. This wave of emigration was soon slowed down by the implementation of a quota policy in 1921.

During the first waves of emigrant movement, migrants were desperate to escape Europe and were given no comfort by the maritime companies (*Red Star Line*, *Royal Mail Line* etc) with whom they travelled, whether whilst waiting to board or during the crossing.



Emigrants in Cherbourg

From the *Red Star Line* to the *Royal Mail Line*, the companies take action

Fortunately, an increase in the number of maritime companies ? and therefore the level of competition ?, the surge of emigrants as well as the sanitary conditions and quotas imposed by the American government, forced companies to offer more comfortable crossings and to set up infrastructures in Cherbourg for accommodating and carrying out checks on emigrants.

The first initiative was created in 1920 by the companies *Cunard*, *White Star Line* and *Red Star Line*, who brought the old liner *Royal Georges* to Cherbourg. This liner come hotel was able to lodge 1,500 people but was soon to prove insufficient in

absorbing the growing number of arriving migrants, even when combined with the *Royal Mail Line's Hotel New York*, built with help from the municipality and able to house 15,000 potential migrants a year, all hoping to reach South America.



Emigrants, Ellis Island, New York **Post 1920: migrants from countries around the world**

Between 1920 and 1932, more than half a million migrants came through Cherbourg. Proof of this is the number of consulates present in the town at the time: England, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Argentina, Spain, the United States, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Holland, Denmark, Portugal, Saint Dominica, the Republic of Panama, Sweden, Uruguay and Venezuela.

A few key dates in the history of emigration in Cherbourg:

- 1925: 877 stopovers, 173,405 passengers of which 59,291 were emigrants

- 30th May 1929 ? a historical day on which 8 liners called into the harbour, including the majestic *LEVIATHAN* and *REPUBLIC* from *United States Lines*, *White Star Line's MAJESTIC*, *ALBANIA* from *Cunard Line*, *ALAMANZONA* from *Royal Mail Line* and the *Norddeutscher Lloyd's COLOMBUS*.

- 1929 ? record number of passengers: 190,500

- 1930 ? record number of stop-overs: 948

- 1931- record number of mail bags: 534,178