

David Mauk, *The Colony that Rose From the Sea: Norwegian Maritime Migration and Community in Brooklyn, 1850-1910*. Northfield, Minnesota: Norwegian-American Historical Association/Illinois University Press, 1997. 272 pp, illustrations, tables, index; ISBN: 0-252-02400-1; hardcover; \$44.95

One does not often think of Norwegian Americans as an urban group. Indeed, of the nearly three million immigrants who came to the US from the Nordic countries, the Norwegians were the least likely to settle in urban areas. In addition, much of the scholarship in Norwegian-American studies has focused on the rural experiences of the Norwegian American community, primarily in the Midwest. Undoubtedly, the magnificent novels by Ole Rølvaag about the lives of Norwegian immigrants on the North Dakota prairies have also contributed to this image.

In recent years, however, a new emphasis on the urban aspects of Norwegian-American history can be discerned. In 1984 a conference at St. Olaf College examined a variety of aspects of Scandinavian-American urban life, and in 1988 a major study of the history of Norwegian-Americans in Chicago appeared.<sup>1</sup> The present book by David Mauk, a study of Norwegians and the Norwegian-American community in Brooklyn, New York, between 1850 and 1910, can be seen as a continuation of this trend. The handsome and richly illustrated book is also important in two other ways. It focuses on the East Coast experiences of Norwegian immigrants, rather than the traditional emphasis on the Midwest, and takes its starting point in a previously little studied type of migration from Scandinavia to the US, that of sailors and seamen.

Norway is a country with strong maritime traditions, and Norwegian sailors' habits to leave their ships in New York to seek other employment provided the basis for the Norwegian colony in Brooklyn. The colony began to grow in earnest in the 1870s, and by 1890 some 5,000 Norwegians lived in Brooklyn and surrounding areas, making it the sixth-largest concentration of Norwegians in the US. While first placing the colony in a larger New York context, Mauk also provides a detailed analysis of its settlement patterns, family and neighborhood structures, and social composition. By the turn of the century the settlement was changing. The maritime colony was transient in nature, with a high

<sup>1</sup> Odd Lovoll, ed. *Scandinavian and Other Immigrants in Urban America. The Proceedings of A Research Conference, October 26-27, 1984* (Northfield, Minn.: St. Olaf College, 1984); Odd Lovoll, *A Century of Urban Life: The Norwegians in Chicago before 1930* (Northfield, Minn.: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1988).

population turn-over, which Mauk convincingly illustrates by using a variety of sources. After 1900, however, a more stable Norwegian-American immigrant community began to develop. With a population of 15,000 in 1910, the maritime colony had become Little Norway. Here, such familiar ethnic institutions as churches, voluntary associations, and newspapers, as well as celebrations of the 17th of May and Leif Ericsson, played an important role in the creation of a sense of a Norwegian-American distinctiveness. This transition was not always an easy one, which can be seen in the tensions that organizations originally designed to assist sojourning sailors and seamen experienced.

In addition to such standard sources in immigration history as census records and other official statistics, Mauk has painstakingly located and used a great variety of other materials, including letters, diaries, newspaper accounts, archival materials and interviews. These sources greatly contribute in providing a rich picture of the life and history of the Norwegians in Brooklyn. *The Colony that Rose from the Sea* is an important contribution to Norwegian-American historiography, breaking new ground in its analysis of Norwegian maritime migration to the US, and in its exploration of Norwegian urbanites in Brooklyn. However, the results of this careful and well written study will also appeal to a larger community of scholars, and should be on the bookshelf of anyone interested in both trans Atlantic and American immigration history.