

Steeple News

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The Magnet Called "America"

Think back when to perhaps the only sound in the area was the sound of wind blowing through the trees and the grass of the prairies, back when the waters of the rivers saw only teepees and open camps, and the rooftops of Manhattan and Chicago were lower than their trees. Then, and even then, in distant countries the word was whispered and rehearsed; the word, synonymous with hope; equivalent with liberty; more than a place - a shrine, a sanctuary for the hopes and dreams of men and women. Across the campfires and in the shops of Europe, behind closed doors and prison gates, with prayers and hymns, in various tongues and accents, again and again the word was expressed: "America", "America".

By the hundreds and thousands, they came. They were called "pioneers", "the adventurers" and sometimes "the rejected". Along with their hopes and dreams, they came with scant possessions, plows and seeds, lathes, and anvils, sewing needles and looms. More than this, they also brought traditions and creeds, hymnbooks, prayer books, sacred writings in a hundred varied languages. Think of that, the magnetism of a name, a single word which was "America". That was in the past, but it still continues. From rice paddies and distant forests, in boats and dinghies, swamping in the waves of hostile seas, pressing forward this distant land of hope. Look to the south, through the fences and along the waterways, for those - ever dreaming and always hoping - for the word still invites, "America".

This country, which is still drawing the discontented and disfranchised of humanity. On each heart and lip is rehearsed the American catechism of law and proverb: "We the people", "Liberty and justice for all", "In God we trust", "Help Wanted", "Innocent until proven guilty", and a hundred other phrases which represent a real and daily freedom. Not perfect, not complete, ever changing and repairing. Yet something still sustains the image, a basic substance, perhaps the essence of what is good in all Men. What we have in this great country is a collection of the best taken from other nations. And thus, may it be ever the haven of mankind and the home of the free.

Rev. Hans Lillejord

