



Do you remember why you came?

Celebrate your heritage with the stories and memories of the Red Star Line



“Often, to achieve our maximum potential, and sometimes to save our lives, we have to go forth from our birthplaces to strange and foreign countries. It is a wrench to leave the country of your birth and the feeling of dislocation never leaves you... To be an immigrant is to constantly reflect on who you are, where you come from, and how you are different from those around you.”

Excerpt from the story of immigrant Sonia Pressman.

Dear Belgian in America,

Whether you arrived in America a couple of years ago, have lived here for a decade or whether you were born here and heard the story of the Red Star Line directly from your (great)grandparents, you are part of **a story about remembering beginnings that changed your life.**

Anywhere between 1873 and 1935, the **RED STAR LINE** brought people from all over Europe to the Promised Land. The voyage was not without danger, tension and uncertainty but that didn't stop nearly 3 million European emigrants from leaving Antwerp on a 2 week trip of major discomfort to America.

Among them were farmers, vagabonds, paupers as well as known families like those of Albert Einstein and the legendary composer Irving Berlin. Their primary concern wasn't about 'the rising crime rate' or 'poor education for the kids' – but about things like 'failing crops', 'avoiding cholera' or 'massive unemployment'.



Theirs was a story of survival, desperation and hope.

For many the seed of that hope was planted on the little Island ('t Eilandje) in Antwerp, which was their last port of call: the gateway through which passage to the New World became reality.

The cost of a ticket was often not enough to guarantee passage.

Before embarking one of the 70 Red Star Line steamboat ships, the emigrants were submitted to severe medical exams and administrative controls. They may not have been as rigorous as the ones on Ellis Island, but were often heart wrenching nonetheless in case you didn't 'pass'.

Today the **3 original Red Star Line buildings** where medical control, 'disinfection' and admission took place, still exist on the Montevideostraat and the Rijnkaai in Antwerp's South quarter.



But they have been empty for a long time.

Just like our collective memory of that significant historical period. That's why the city of Antwerp has purchased these buildings:

- To **fill our collective memory with stories** of human emotion and physical trials from the largest emigration wave in Belgian history.
- To **celebrate the hopeful turning point** in the lives of nearly 3 million people, including the Jews from Eastern Europe and Russia who were not only driven by poverty but also by continuing oppression and persecutions.
- And finally **to honor** these stories in a contemporary context so that they can become a source of inspiration for us all.

With that in mind the city of Antwerp has chosen Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners LLP from New York to **restore the Red Star Line buildings into their historical significance**. These architects of the Ellis Island Immigration Museum and Grand Central Station will bring their particular experience to **transform the buildings into a place of reflection and remembrance**.

BUT IT TAKES TIME AND MONEY TO BRING A MEMORY TO LIFE.

The renovation of the Red Star Line buildings will take pretty much what it takes to renovate a house: planning, concept development, design, then the brickwork, roofing, carpentry, plumbing, electricity. And a whole team of specialists and workmen to complete it successfully.

This is expensive.

In 1982 the American people contributed generously to the repair and restoration of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. Similarly, we have to raise a substantial part of the estimated 8.5 MILLION DOLLARS needed to realize this project, from private individuals – people like you.

It would make us very happy to count you among our supporters.

Just like we are very happy that we have a professional partnership with the Ellis Island Immigration Museum in New York for the scientific and genealogical research of this endeavor.

The RED STAR LINE & ELLIS ISLAND

With the Red Star Line buildings restored, you and a million other visitors will be able to experience the missing piece in the puzzle of European emigration to the States. It will finally be possible to experience the journey from the beginning to the end.

As the Statue of Liberty stands as the icon of the free world on the arrival side, the Red Star Line will stand as the gateway of hope on the departure side.

Thus the memory of the immigrants finally comes full circle.

“The Red Star Line stands as one of the greatest symbols of mass migration to the New World and, as such, it is deeply associated with the history of America’s legendary immigrant receiving stations, Ellis Island and Castle Garden.” – Barry Moreno, Ellis Island Immigration Museum.

Please join us in our efforts to celebrate your historic legacy from its beginning and share it with the world. **We ask you to write us a check for \$100 or more and you will receive the following:**

- A special selection of Red Star Line postcards for a \$100 donation
- A poster of the many vessels in the Red Star Line fleet for a \$250 donation
- The newly published book on the Red Star Line for a \$500 donation



And of course your gift is **maximum tax deductible**, thanks to our partnership with KBFUS, a public charity affiliated with the Brussels-based King Baudouin Foundation.

Write your check to KBFUS/RSL and \$96 of every \$100 will go directly to the Red Star Line for the restoration of the buildings.

Return your check with the attached form and reserve your place of recognition in history.

Your name will be gratefully mentioned on the Red Star Line website (www.redstarline.be) as well as in the catalogue of the Red Star Line exhibition. If you prefer to remain anonymous you can mention so on the enclosed reply card.

Since September 1990, people from all over the world have been able to visit Ellis Island in New York to recall the trials of the immigrants before admission to America. And soon, with your help, people will also celebrate the stories of the Red Star Line: a vessel of hope for some, a journey of danger for others, but definitely a rite of passage for all.

The first 100 givers will ALSO get a FREE TICKET to the Red Star Line Exhibition which opens April 2006 in the South Street Seaport Museum in New York.

So don't wait and send your check now!

With warmest regards and thanks from the City of Antwerp,

Philip Heylen
Vice-Mayor for Culture, Libraries
and Monument Conservation

Ludo Van Campenhout
Vice-Mayor for Urban Planning
Urban Development, Public Works,
Economy and Tourism

**HURRY ! THE FIRST 100 WILL RECEIVE FREE TICKETS
FOR THE EXHIBITION IN NEW YORK IN 2006**

YES! I want to celebrate the legacy of the RED STAR LINE and give people a chance to experience the Belgian role in the emigration of nearly 3 million people to the United States. By doing so I contribute to creating a place of reflection that will inspire me to remember and reevaluate my own or my family's reasons of coming here.

- I enclose a check of **\$100**
and will receive **A SPECIAL SELECTION OF RED STAR LINE POSTCARDS.**
- I enclose a check of **\$250**
and will receive **A POSTER OF THE MANY VESSELS IN THE RED STAR LINE FLEET.**
- I enclose a check of **\$500**
and will receive **THE NEWLY PUBLISHED BOOK ON THE RED STAR LINE.**
- Other: I enclose a check in the amount of **\$**
and will receive the bonus presents according to the above scale
(for instance if I give \$750, I will receive the book AND a poster).

Because KBFUS is a 501(c)(3) public charity, I can claim the maximum tax benefits for my contribution.

Regardless of the amount I give, my contribution will be acknowledged on the Red Star Line website as well as in the catalogue of the Red Star Line exhibition - unless I tick the box below.

- Tick this box if you wish your gift to remain anonymous.

My name :

Phone : Email :

Address : City :

State : Zip Code :

Make your check payable to KBFUS/RSL, complete this form and return to
KBFUS, 10 Rockefeller Plaza, 16th Floor, New York, NY 10020 - Questions? Contact (212) 713 7660,
info@kbfus.org