Artist's line drawing: Interior of the Norway Building under construction: Chicago Daily Tribune, Thursday, May 18, 1893.
State Historical Society of Wisconsin microfilm archives.
After its public review, the Norway Building was meticulously disassembled and all parts crated for its journey across the Atlantic. The building was loaded, along with the Danish pavilion, on board the *Hekla*, a passenger steamship operated by the Danish Thingvalla Line. On March 15th, 1893, the ship left Christiansand enroute to New York. Already late for the February Fair site construction deadline, the building was to encounter even more delays. On March 24th, the *Hekla’s* axle broke. The engine stopped and the ship headed into the wind. Approximately 775 passengers, including crew and servants, were stranded at sea. The *Hekla* finally reached port two weeks behind schedule, at midnight the 8th of April. In New York the crates containing the Norway Building were loaded on a train heading for Chicago. Further delays resulted in the building’s materials arriving at the Fair site after the middle of April.

Although acquainted with the cause for delay, the Exposition’s Director of Works registered a protest regarding the erection of the pavilion so late. With the Fair scheduled to open on May 1st, he stated “night work must be permitted in order that all possible speed be made with the task of getting the obstruction out of the way.” This night work included a 50 percent overtime pay for the workers involved in the building, resulting in higher costs for the erection of the pavilion than previously planned. Nevertheless, the building was well into construction on its site at the north end of the Exposition grounds by May 17th, and fully opened by the middle of June.

The delays in construction also resulted in furnishing the interior of the building with American instead of Norwegian furniture. The office of
the Norwegian Commissioner took up about a third of the building’s interior, and was separated by a partition from the public part which stood open for visitors. There were no exhibits in the building, only a large map of Norway, and a few banners and pictures.

NORWAY AT THE FAIR
The First National Day

Norway was given the honor of holding the first National Day at the Fair. The 17th of May was set aside for their celebration. This was Norway’s Syttende Mai, commemorating the signing of the Norwegian Constitution in 1814. A parade group, consisting of Norse bands, fraternal organizations, workers’ unions, and carriages containing invited guests began forming at 10:00 a.m. at Chicago’s Scandia Hall, located at Milwaukee Avenue and Ohio Streets. The parade wound its way through Chicago’s streets enroute to the Exposition grounds. Thousands of persons of Norwegian descent looked on, while hundreds more were filling Festival Hall, the planned destination of the entourage.
The Norway Building at the Chicago World's Fair.
Photo by C.D. Arnold—1893. The Art Institute of Chicago Collection.
Ground Floor Plan of the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building. Notice Norway's location in the lower right-hand corner.
From Rand McNally & Co.'s Handbook of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893.
The parade participants marched past the Norway Building. A Chicago Daily Tribune journalist made these remarks about the structure:

Although the Norway Building has been in process of erection but ten days, it was already in such shape that its appearance when completed could easily be imagined. Built throughout of Norway Pine on the model of an old Norse church, it is already a striking feature on the landscape. From its many gabled roofs curiously carved dragons project, and about its entrances there is a store of old Norse carving.

When the parade reached its destination, Festival Hall, nearly 7,000 Norse countrymen had assembled there. The speaker's platform was decorated with American and Norwegian flags. Added to these were the many colorful banners carried by the parade participants. Patriotic songs were played and sung. Among the orators for the day were Professors Julius E. Olsen and Rasmus B. Anderson of the University of Wisconsin, the Honorable Nils P. Haugen of Wisconsin, and the Honorable Knute Nelson, Governor of Minnesota.

The day's events were concluded with a speech by Ingolf K. Boyeson, whose subject was "America and the Exposition." As a native Norwegian he spoke to his countrymen of the making of the Exposition and what it symbolized. He complimented Norway upon the "splendid showing it made in every department." The Fair grounds were kept open until 11:00 p.m. in honor of Norway's day.

Norway could be proud of its representation at the World's Fair. Its pavilion building, though scaled down from the original plans, won the hearts of many reporters and writers who toured the fairgrounds throughout the duration of the Fair, describing the structure as "quaint," "unique," "conspicuous," "enchanting," and "picturesque."

Norway's additional entries of manufactured and artistic goods were included in the many divisions of the Fair. An industrial display was located in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building. A writer for Shepp's World's Fair Photographed states of Norway's industrial exhibits, "no display is more thoroughly characteristic and enjoyable." There were exhibits as well in the Women's Building, including colorful examples of native costume. In the Arts Building, forty-five Norwegian artists were represented.
A view of Norway's display in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building. The partition is also the work of M. Thams & Co. The display case and much of its contents are the work of Magnus Dagesdahl. From Shepp's World's Fair Photographe, Chicago, 1893.
The ship Viking, an exact copy of a buried vessel found in Gogstad, Norway in 1880, was sailed from Norway to the Fair site by a crew of Norwegian seamen. Today the ship remains in a Chicago Park.
Little Norway Collection.

by one hundred and fifty paintings. Sizable entries in the Fisheries Building were among the other strongly represented areas. The Viking, a model of a Viking ship, was sailed from Norway to the Exposition site. Its arrival made a notable impact as well. A total of $36,000.00 was spent by the Norwegian Government on its exhibits at the Fair.

2. Chicago Daily Tribune, Thursday, May 18, 1893, "First the Norsemen: Exiles from Norway's Fiords Celebrate Their Natal Day."
3. Ibid.