

American Immigrants

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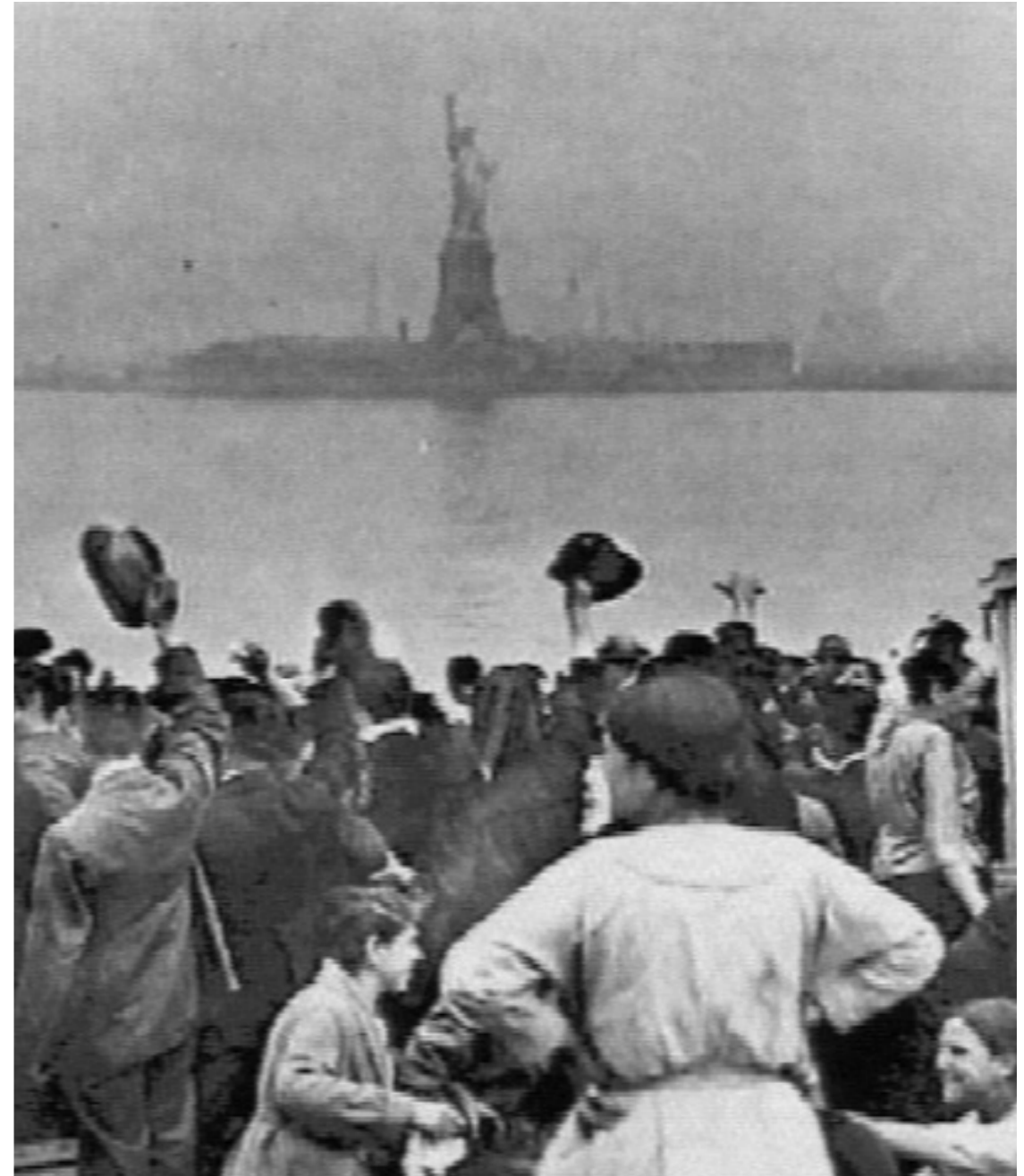
1st Stop: The Passage

- Most of the immigrants who came to America were from eastern and Southern Europe.
- These immigrants came to America because they wanted to escape the poverty and religious intolerance that existed in small towns in their countries.
- They took a trip on steamships. This trip across the Atlantic Ocean lasted about one to two weeks.
- About 3,000 people were on these boats.
- *DID YOU KNOW* Before the invention of steamships, people took sailing ships to come to America. The trip could take anywhere from one to six months! On steamships, tickets were less expensive and the trip was shorter, which helped prevent diseases from spreading onboard. So many more people decided to make the trip.



2nd Stop: The Arrival

- The trip across the Atlantic Ocean was rough. The ships were crowded and dirty.
- One of the first things they saw was the Statue of Liberty, many wept of joy and men threw their hats.
- Health officers would board the ship in the harbor and look for signs of diseases.
- If the ship passed their inspection, doctors then would check the health of first- and second-class passengers on the ship.
- Third-class passengers often would wait for hours or days until a smaller ferryboat took them to Ellis Island for immigration processing.
- *Did you know* About three-quarters of a ship's passengers were typically taken to Ellis Island. The others were cleared immediately for entrance into the United States and went through customs in New York City. And the first person to go through immigration processing at the Ellis Island station was a 15-year-old girl named Annie Moore.



3rd Stop: The Ellis Island Baggage Room

- Officers shouted and motioned to the passengers to walk down the gangplank to the main building.
- The people who did not speak English were often unsure what the officers were saying.
- Men, women, and children struggled off the boat carrying trunks, cloth sacks, and suitcases.
- The immigrants entered the Baggage Room on the building's ground floor wearing identity tags.
- Next, the immigrants went up stairs to the Registry Room. That is where the medical and legal inspections took place.
- *Did you know* there was a concession stand, which sold sandwiches and drinks, in the Baggage Room. The menu was written in many languages.



4th Stop: The Stairs to the Registry Room

- The immigration process began on the winding stairs that led to the Registry Room.
- Doctors stood on the second floor and watched each person.
- These doctors looked for people who had trouble walking or breathing or showed signs of other health problems.
- *Did you know* when the Ellis Island station was built, officials thought no more than half a million immigrants would pass through in a year. In 1907, more than a million arrived. The highest number for a single day was 11,747 people.



5th Stop: The Registry Room

- The Registry Room was nicknamed the Great Hall because it is so big. The large rectangular room is 200 feet long and 102 feet wide.
- Officers in the Great Hall decided whether each person could enter the country right away or needed more required views.
- Doctors used a tool called a buttonhook to lift a person's eyelid to look for any diseases.
- People with a disease called trachoma were often sent back to their home countries.
- *Did you know* Women were not allowed to enter America alone until after World War II. Ellis Island officials would detain them because they were afraid the women would be unable to find relatives in America and be unable to support themselves. And, after 1907, children under 16 had to be traveling with a parent. If they weren't, they would be sent back to their home country.



6th Stop: The Medical Exam

- The doctors at Ellis Island figured out a way to identify people any medical condition.
- The doctor noted whether the immigrants limped or were short of breath, if their eyes were red, if they acted disturbed or seemed otherwise weird
- If someone was considered a risk to the public health, his or her clothes were marked by a piece of chalk with an identifying letter. An "X" denoted insanity. A "P" denoted pulmonary (lung) problems. Immigrants who were marked were taken out of the line and kept for further examination.
- *Did you know* that 120,000 people with diseases or disabilities were sent back to their home countries.

X	Suspected mental defect	F	Face	P	Physical and Lungs
⊗	Definite signs of mental disease observed	F+	Feet	Pj	Pregnancy
B	Back	G	Goiter	Sc	Scalp (Favus)
C	Conjunctivitis	H	Heart	S	Senility
CT	Trachoma	K	Hernia		
E	Eyes	L	Lameness		
		N	Neck		

7th Stop: The Legal inspection

- All passengers were called to speak with an official about themselves.
- Twenty-nine questions were asked of every immigrant. Some of the questions that were asked were: *Where were you born? Are you married? What is your occupation? Have you ever been convicted of a crime? How much money do you have? What is your destination?*
- An immigrant could be detained for further inquiry if his or her answers differed from the answers listed on the manifest.
- *Did you know for 30 years, Ellis Island was a detention center only.*



8th Stop: Detainees

- For most people, Ellis Island was the "Isle of Hope." But for the unfortunate few who failed the health or legal inspections, it was the "Isle of Tears."
- People who were detained for medical reasons were cared for at the island's hospital or kept in quarantine.
- Hundreds of people worked on Ellis Island. They cared for many immigrants.
- People rested in dormitories on Ellis Island. They might be detained for weeks or months.
- *Did you know* 355 babies were born on Ellis Island.



9th Stop: The Stairs of Separation

- After the medical and legal inspections, the immigrants arrived at the top of another staircase at the other end of the Great Hall.
- At the bottom of the stairs was a post office, a ticketing office for the railways, and social workers to help the immigrants who needed assistance.
- Exchange rates for currencies around the world were posted each day on the blackboard.
- Immigrants who were being detained were often brought down the center aisle. People who were traveling west or south walked down the right side of the staircase. Those going to New York City or to the north walked down the left side.
- *Did you know* until World War I, passports weren't required, and more than 30 languages were spoken at Ellis Island.



10th Stop: The Kissing Post

- The "Kissing Post" got that nickname because it is where family and friends waited for their loved ones.
- After months or years apart, they kissed and hugged and shouted with joy and relief.
- For the immigrants, the long journey was finally over.
- *Did you know* hundreds of people worked at Ellis Island.



Summary

- Immigrants have had a long journey through Ellis Island. They have gone through hours and months of separation and a bunch of inspections. Some make it through these inspections and get to come into America while some are sent home due to diseases. They rode many ships which lasted from one to two weeks. These boats were crowded. They were filled with about 3,000 people! Their long and hard journey ended when they finally reached America. Many cried as they saw the Statue of Liberty and men threw their hats. They knew they had reached America.