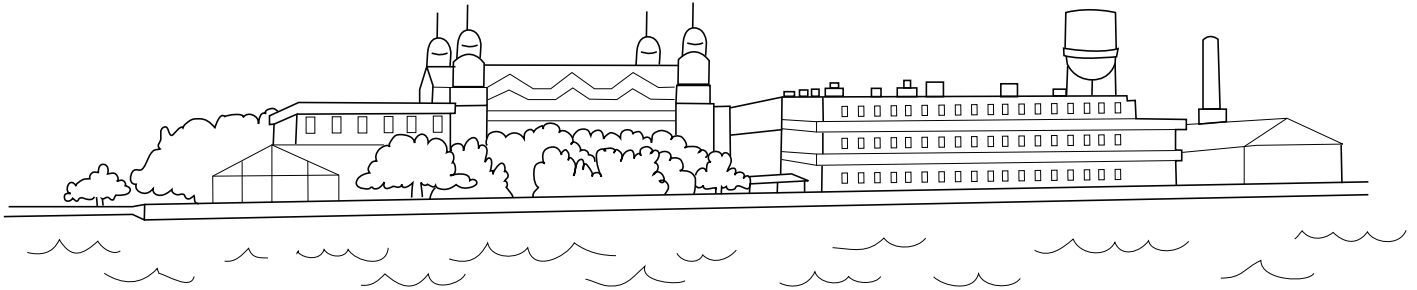


Ellis Island



Ellis Island was the immigration station in New York from 1892 to 1954. Over 12 million immigrants from all over the world entered the country through Ellis Island.

The island that is now Ellis Island was purchased by a local resident named Samuel Ellis in 1774. After he died, the state bought the island and began to build a military post on it. By 1808 it was a functioning federal arsenal.

Before Ellis Island became an immigration station, immigrants entering the country through New York were processed at Castle Garden in lower Manhattan, which was the property of New York State. When immigration became the responsibility of the federal government in the late 1800s, officials wanted a federal immigration station to be built on Ellis Island. The immigration station on Ellis Island was opened on January 1st, 1892. On its first day, 700 people were processed.

Around the same time Ellis Island opened, many world countries were experiencing hard times. Food shortages, widespread poverty and political persecution convinced scores of families to leave their home countries and start a new life in America. Many of the countries experiencing troubles were located in Europe, and the closest immigration station was Ellis Island. It quickly became the busiest immigration station in America, as vast numbers of Italian, German, Irish, Russian and other immigrants flooded through its doors. At its peak in 1907, Ellis Island processed over 1.25 million people.

Other ports of entry were feeling the effects of the immigration boom, too. In the 1920s, the government passed laws that made it harder for immigrants to enter the country. By the mid-1920s, deportations began to outnumber admissions at Ellis Island, and it became primarily a detention center for immigrants who were not being let in. The immigration station on the island closed in 1954.

Think about your family. Do you think it's possible that any of your relatives came through Ellis Island? Why or why not?

Why do immigrants come to America today? Are their reasons similar to the ones that Ellis Island immigrants had, or have new reasons emerged since the turn of the 20th century?
