# America’s Melting Pot

Lesson Plan  
Grades 4 through 12

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Curriculum Correlations
Students will look at the what, why, when, where and how of the immigrant experience focusing on standards and benchmarks appropriate for their particular grade level.

Benchmarks While this lesson and its activities focus on 1820-1924, there are many ways to discuss the continuity and change (benchmark X.3) as well as making a claim or advancing an argument (benchmark X.4) to a contemporary immigration issue or story. These benchmarks can easily be met but will vary based on your student personal histories, discussion prompts, and how in-depth you choose to go into the activities.

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Program Specifics
This program can take as little or as much time as you desire – one hour, one day, a few days in the week, or over the course of a month. You can do it as a stand-alone lesson with just your classroom or as a grade level program with other teachers. It is up to you how much time you wish to concentrate on this topic. Feel free to phone Shawnee Town’s Education staff with questions and for suggestions at (913) 248-2360 or email Museum Interpreter Jenny Johnson at jjohnson@cityofshawnee.org.

The immigration content is broken down into the following categories. Please see the Content section of the notebook for the in-depth details and use this as a guideline.

- Who is an immigrant?
- Who lived in America before the large waves of immigrants came in the 19th and 20th centuries?
- Who immigrated to America in the large waves?
  - Before 1880’s “old” immigrants
  - After 1880’s through 1924 the “new” immigrants
- Mitigating factors for moving to another country
- The journey to America – ways immigrants traveled to America
- Ports of Arrival in America
  - Castle Garden (1855-1891)
  - Ellis Island Immigration Station in New York Harbor (1892-1965)
  - Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco Bay (1910-1940)
  - New York and San Francisco were not the only immigration ports of arrival. For an extensive list which includes border crossing sites in Canada and Mexico, see https://www.genesearch.com/ports.html.

Please note that the activities may contain offensive historical material, please ensure it is suitable for your particular students before you begin. The material is a product of the times and should be viewed as such.
Student Learning Objectives

- Students will learn why America is the “Melting Pot” of the world.
- Through analysis of primary and secondary sources (texts, photographs, political cartoons, worksheets, and artifacts) students will use their critical thinking skills to analyze immigration to the U. S. in its ever-evolving forms.
- Students will learn about the choices (or lack of choice) immigrants made and the ramifications of those choices.
- They will compare and contrast present immigration policies with those during the peak immigration years in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of US history.
- Students will explore and identify common immigration time periods, the different types of migration/immigration in America’s past and present.
- With completing the Ancestry Interview Worksheet students will be able to describe their own family’s immigration connection (or that of a family friend or acquaintance).
- Students will demonstrate communication skills to present their family story to the class and share the experiences early or present family members had in coming to America.
- Students will explore and identify how specific artifacts and themes help tell the immigration stories on a local and national level.

Pre-Program Activity Suggestions

- **Definitions** – Have the students define immigrant, emigrant, migrant, and refugee and give examples of each.
- **Melting Pot USA** - Discuss why the United States is a “Melting Pot.” Are we still a Melting Pot? Have the students research what nationalities came to this country and when. Where do their ancestors fit in?
  
  *Webster’s Dictionary* defines “Melting Pot” as
  1. **a**: a place where a variety of races, cultures, or individuals assimilate into a cohesive whole
  2. **b**: the population of such a place
  2. A process of blending that often results in invigoration or novelty
- **My Own Family History** – Have your students fill out the Ancestry Interview Worksheet. See details below.
Post-Program Activity Suggestions

- **Life in the Day of an Immigrant** - Have students record what they do for a typical day from the moment they get up until the moment they turn out the lights. Have them include what they wear, eat, “do” with their time, play, who they interact with, etc. Discuss their day’s entries in class in light of what a day in the life of an immigrant might be like using the information provided about immigrant experiences in this program.

- **Immigration Journey “in School”** - Use the gym or other large open area at your school to set up stations to represent an immigrant’s journey from their homeland to America. It might be fun to involve other classes or have the students portray various people such as:
  - A family member staying behind in the homeland
  - Immigrant or family leaving their homeland. Give them an identity – the homeland country, names, ages, reason for leaving, how much money they have for the journey, a bag filled with the items they’re taking to America. It might be good to have 4-5 immigrants of varying sizes, ages, ethnicities, etc.
  - Guards at country borders through which the immigrants are passing
  - Border or Ellis Island money exchanger
  - Kind stranger supplying food or a place to sleep
  - Hostile stranger wanting the immigrants out of his/her country
  - Very persuasive, wily thief
  - Ship steward - Don’t forget to name your ship!
  - First or Second class passenger on the ship. Your immigrants can be First, Second, or Steerage passengers.
  - Workers at Ellis Island (medical, legal, literacy) – Some helpful, some hostile/prejudice
  - Immigrant too ill to enter the U. S.
  - Inspector telling them they either must quarantine on the island or that they don’t “pass” and have to return to their homeland
  - Finally, the loved one greeting them!
Student Activities

Ancestry Interview Worksheet

*This worksheet asks each student to interview a relative, friend or family acquaintance and bring the completed worksheet to class.*

- Not all students will complete the form. Use what you receive and see the suggestions below.
  - **Students who don’t know anything about their ancestors** – Can they interview a family friend or acquaintance such as a shop owner of a store their family frequents who they’ve heard talk about the original country they came from and their experiences in coming to America? This is such a great bonding activity with a family member, neighbor or friend. Alternatively, the student can partner with someone in class and answer your questions using the partner’s worksheet. You can encourage them to check out various websites to start their own search. Depending upon what their last names are, you can talk to the class about how last names can sometimes tell a lot about their past and the professions their ancestors practiced (Ex: Carpenter, Tanner, Chandler, etc.).
  - **Students with enslaved ancestors** – Some students will be able to complete or fill in part of their worksheets. Increasingly, genealogy websites are able to track enslaved families and pinpoint what country their ancestors came from. For the purposes of this activity, there is basic information about their forced journey to this country.
  - **Native Americans students** – Often, students know which Native American tribe they and their ancestors belong to. If they know the tribe, ask them to identify where in the US that tribe originated or have them research it themselves.
  - **Adopted students** – Ask them to fill in the information for either their biological parent/s or their adoptive parents as much as possible. You can also have them follow the instructions listed above for students who don’t know anything about their family’s ancestors.

- We highly encourage you to have your students fill out the *Ancestry Interview* worksheet supplied before you begin going through the content so each student will become personally involved in an immigration experience. You can decide not to use the worksheet, but this lesson becomes much more meaningful to the students if you do.
- For purposes of inclusion and participation for all of your students during the *Ancestry Interview* worksheet and *Map Activity*, the immigration content provided in the Historical Content section covers immigration highlights before and after the lesson’s focused time period of 1820-1924.
Ancestry Interview Worksheet

Who’s in Your Family’s Melting Pot?

Talk to your family and pick out one relative (or ask an acquaintance) to collect any known information about their immigration story. Fill in this worksheet as much as possible.

Name of relative who immigrated to this country ________________________________

What country/ies did he/she come from? _________________________________________

What year (approximately if you don’t know the exact year) ________________________

What did he/she bring with them? ________________________________________________

Do you have a story to tell about when he/she came here? ___________________________

Possible questions to ask your relative: What did your relative bring to America? (Ex: a favorite toy, a prayer book, a shawl or quilt, a tool used in his/her profession like a carpenter’s favorite tool, seeds a farmer would plant, fabric a seamstress would sew, etc.). Did your relative come to America by boat or plane or by walking across a border? (Ex: Canada or Mexico). Did something happen on the journey that they remember? What American city or state did they arrive in first? Where did they live when they first arrived? Did they stay there or did they move somewhere else in the US). Is your relative Native American so he or she was one of the original Americans? If so, what tribe and what area of the country did that relative live in?
Map Activity

*Map each student’s ethnic origins on a world map.*

- Using the completed *Ancestry Interview Worksheets* which your students have filled out, ask them where their ancestors came from before they immigrated to the United States. On a world map, use a pushpin (flag pins are especially nice) to identify each country as they tell you, or use a map online, such as mapcustomizer.com.
  - Note: Europe or Mexico may have numerous pins. That’s okay! It gives your students a sense of where their classmates are from ethnically and culturally.
  - If there are adults present (para, parents, etc.), don’t forget to ask them for their ancestry information and to include your own. It usually adds to the number of countries represented on the map. The more ethnically diverse your class, the more interesting the world map!
  - *Suggestion:* Invite the principal or another school staff member to come to the class and share their own ancestries.
- Go a step farther! Keep this map up in your classroom as you start going through the historical content of this lesson and add more pins as you come across specific people.
  - *Did you know:* According to the 1930 United States Census, five people who lived in Shawnee, KS were born at sea while their parents were immigrating to the United States! Imagine what the total number of births at sea would be for each immigration year if five were born at sea from just one small Kansas farming community. For fun, add some pins in the middle of the ocean to remind students that babies were born at sea on the immigration journey. Also, remind your students that people died at sea as well.

Suitcase Activity

*Ask your students what each of them would bring on their journey if they were sharing a suitcase with their entire family and could only bring one item. It had to fit in their parents’ suitcase. Challenge: they are not allowed to bring pets or technology (cell phones, gaming systems, laptops, etc.).*

- **Inside the trunk:** Read *The Matchbox Diary* (and/or *El Diario de las Cajas de Fósforos*) in the trunk for examples and ideas (and it’s a great story).
- **Anyone know what their ancestors brought with them? Is that item a keepsake in your family today?**
  - As students determine what is important to them, compare with what you have learned immigrants brought with them. Answer questions such as, what’s necessary? What’s most important to them that they couldn’t do without? What did they bring that may not work in the country to which they’re immigrating?
Ship Manifest Activity

Please use the 11x17 blank Ship Manifest page in the front of this binder—feel free to make copies for each student or use one for entire class. Students can fill it out for members of their family (they may need to take it home) or you can have each student add their information to a line and collect a class manifest. An example of what the activity sheet looks like is below.

Please note that this activity may contain offensive material, please ensure it is suitable for your particular students. The material is a product of the times and should be viewed as such.

1 Shawnee Town 1929 Blank Ship Manifest Activity, America’s Melting Pot
Ship Manifest - Historical Figure Example: Charlie Chaplin was an English comic actor, filmmaker, and composer who rose to fame in the silent era. He went to the USA where he was scouted for the film industry, and began appearing in 1914 for Keystone Studios. He soon developed the Tramp persona and formed a large fan base. Chaplin directed his own films from an early stage, and continued to hone his craft. By 1918, he was one of the best known figures in the film industry. Born on April 16, 1889 in London, Chaplin is considered one of the most important figures in the history of the film industry.  

[Image of Ship Manifest]

[Image of Charlie Chaplin]

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3 Ship Manifest featuring Charles Chaplin, on the S. S. Oceanic, October 10, 1912

4 Charlie Chaplin and his most famous and recognizable persona, "The Tramp"; Credit: DKN.tv
The Many Ethnic Faces of Ellis Island Activity

Show these images to the students and have them research what traditional costume they would have worn from the countries their ancestors would have emigrated from in the 1920’s.

The following images of people wearing their folk costumes were taken by amateur photographer Augustus Sherman (pictured left) who worked as the Chief Registry Clerk on Ellis Island from 1892 until 1925. The people in the photographs were most likely detainees who were waiting for money, travel tickets or someone to come and collect them from the island. In 1907, the photographs were published in National Geographic, and they were also hung on the walls of the lower Manhattan headquarters of the Federal Immigration Service.

The year 1907 was the busiest year for Ellis Island, with an all-time high of 11,747 immigrants arriving in April alone! Approved immigrants spent between 3-5 hours on the island where they underwent medical examinations and were asked questions regarding their occupation and the money they owned, it being preferable for them to have a starting sum when they arrived in the country. Two percent of the immigrants were denied admission on the grounds of suffering from contagious diseases or insanity, or alternatively by virtue of having a criminal background. In the 1920s, restrictions were placed on the percentage of immigrants arriving from various countries or ethnic backgrounds, as immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe were seen [at this time] as inferior to the earlier immigrants from Northern and Western Europe. ^5

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^5 Augustus Sherman, Chief Clerk of Ellis Island National Park Service, Statue of Liberty National Monument

German stowaway who was sent back to Germany, original is pre-1907, this is a later printing from 1911. Photographer: Augustus Sherman. The Public Domain Review, www.publicdomainreview.org.
Slovakian woman and children, pre-1907. Photographer: Augustus Sherman. The Public Domain Review
www.publicdomainreview.org
14 Ruthenian woman, pre-1907. Photographer: Augustus Sherman, The Public Domain Review, www.publicdomainreview.org (Note: Ruthenia is a territory between Central and Eastern Europe on the slopes of the Carpathian Mountains in parts of Ukraine, Poland, and Slovakia.)
Political Cartoons on Immigration Activity

Divide your students into small groups of 2-3 and give each group one of the following cartoons. You can also introduce others – either historical or current. Use the prompt questions below to help them examine the images.

Please note that this activity may contain offensive material, please ensure it is suitable for your particular students. The material is a product of the times and should be viewed as such.

Throughout United States history, political cartoons have conveyed the subtle and not-so-subtle attitudes and bias towards immigrants and the every-changing policies of the government. They are an excellent source of information and analyzing them provides a different approach to learning immigration history. Use the cartoons provided or have your students go online to the Library of Congress and search “political cartoons”.

1. Have the students study the cartoon:
   a. Describe it
   b. What is the action?
   c. What people are in the cartoon - anyone notable or recognizable? Why are they there?
   d. Record the captions, and any words or phrases

2. Ask them to describe:
   a. Symbols
   b. Stereotypes
   c. Exaggerated features on people or gestures

3. Ask them to tell you the main message in the cartoon
   a. What ethnic group/s, religion, class, etc. are represented? Are they a fair representation? Do you see any biases?
   b. Are any of your students a member of any of the group/s pictured? How would each of them feel if their nationality/country of origin was denigrated?
   c. Are they offended or embarrassed for themselves or others by what they see in the cartoon?
   d. What is their overall feeling about this message?
The High Tide of Immigration — A National Menace, 1903  Riff Raff Immigration
https://neletters.wordpress.com/2008/08/15/watch-out-or-immigrants-will-stick-their-fingers-in-your-butter/
16 Come Unto Me, Ye Opprest! European anarchists coming to America. Alley, Literary Digest, Originally from the Memphis Commercial Appeal, July 5 1919, image from: http://newman.baruch.cuny.edu/digital/redscare/htmlcode/CHRON/RS017.HTM
17 The Only Way to Handle It, 1921
A 1921 political cartoon portrays America’s new immigration quotas, influenced by popular anti-immigrant and nativist sentiment stemming from World War I conflict. [https://quicktake.wordpress.com/category/europe/britain/]
Welcome to all! One of very few pro-immigration political cartoons. Puck magazine, 1880
Summary: Uncle Sam on “U.S. Ark of Refuge” welcoming immigrants, with cloud “War” over them. Description from: http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002719044/
The Immigrant: The Stranger at Our Gate, 1899  Uncle Sam holding his nose to a prospective Jewish immigrant who brings with him disease, poverty, anarchy, and Sabbath desecration.
"Every Dog (No Distinction of Color) Has His Day."

Red Gentleman to Yellow Gentleman: "Pale face 'fraid you crowd him out, as you did me."

20 Every Dog (No Distinction of Color) Has His Day – Red Gentleman to Yellow Gentleman, "Pale face 'fraid you crowd him out, as you did me." by Thomas Nast, Harpers Magazine, February 8, 1879.
http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/chinese-nativism.htm
29 Questions Asked of Every Immigrant Activity

Ask students to fill out these questions to gain a personal understanding of what was asked of immigrants. The results do not need to be shared.

Please note that this activity may contain offensive material, please ensure it is suitable for your particular students. The material is a product of the times and should be viewed as such.

1. Your manifest number (from your ship)
2. What is your full name?
3. How old are you?
4. Are you male or female?
5. Are you married, single, widowed, or divorced?
6. What is your occupation?
7. Are you able to read and write? (yes or no)
8. What country are you from?
9. What is your race? (note: no question was asked about religion)
10. What was your last permanent place of residence? (city and country)
11. What is the name and US address of a relative from your native country?
12. What is your final destination in America? (city and country)
13. Your number on the immigration list?
14. Do you have a ticket to your final destination? (yes or no)
15. Who paid for your passage?
16. How much money do you have? (at least the equivalent of $50 was needed)
17. Have you been to America before? If so when, where and how long?
18. Are you meeting a relative here in America? If so, who and their address?
19. Have you been in a prison, charity almshouse, or insane asylum?
20. Are you a polygamist? (yes or no)
21. Are you an anarchist? (A real anarchist would have been a fool to say yes!)
22. Are you coming to America for a job? What and where will you work?
23. What is the condition of your health?
24. Are you deformed or cripple?
25. How tall are you?
26. What is your skin color?
27. What color are your eyes and hair? (much like on today’s driver’s license)
28. Do you have any identifying marks? (scars, birthmarks, or tattoos)
29. Where were you born? (city and country)

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Source: U. S. Department of Labor, Immigration Service [https://www.nps.gov/elis/index.htm%5D
Ellis Island Immigrants, Workers, and Shawnee, KS Immigration Stories

Story Card Activity

Printed and laminated versions of each of the following stories are available in the beginning of this notebook. There are two activity options for these story cards:

1. Ask for student volunteers to take a story card and read it out loud to the class. Discuss the experiences found in these examples and compare as more stories are read aloud. Ask for students to volunteer an immigration story of their relative and again compare it to the experiences in these cards.

2. Storytelling: Divide students into groups and give each group one of these immigration stories. Have students read and discuss their card among their group. Ask students to walk around and find another student (or two or three) and tell their card’s story from memory. After a few minutes, reassemble the students and ask for volunteers to tell their story from memory and then to read their actual story card, compare. Discuss the stories and experiences, how accurate their memory of the story was, how we remember and make our own memories, etc.

Legal Immigration through Ellis Island

“The Ellis Island immigration process was not easy for those who traveled to the United States. Immigrants often spent several days or weeks at sea before getting to the island, and were exhausted and hungry when they arrived. And countless people went through this grueling ritual from January 1, 1892...through the 1930s.

The Ellis Island inspection process took several hours, and did not guarantee that an individual or their family would pass. Immigrants endured medical inspections and hours of legal questioning before they were allowed to step on American soil. Many were detained because they were sick. On July 19, 1884, then President Chester Arthur issued a proclamation allowing the government to quarantine people entering the United States to prevent the spread of pestilence due to mounting concerns over tuberculosis. Other times, immigrants were detained because they didn't have immediate family members to meet them or didn't have the financial means to settle in the

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22 Passages to America by Emmy E. Werner


24 Shawnee Town 1929 Collections

25 Talmon, Noelle, “The 12 Grueling Steps to Legal Immigration through Ellis Island.” www.ranker.com/list/ellis-island-immigration-requirements/nicky-benson
United States. Only a very small percentage were deported due to health problems or other issues.

Immigration through Ellis Island may have been a challenge for many, but it was their chance to make a new life for themselves. For scores of determined immigrants, the brutal questions and inspections were merely the price of admission to America.”

**Workers of Ellis Island**

On a typical day at the Ellis Island Immigration Station, immigrants came face to face with inspectors, interpreters, nurses, doctors, social workers, and many others. As a large federal facility employing approximately five hundred employees at a time, Ellis Island was a well-organized workforce.

**Inspectors** The United States Immigrant Inspector's job was to conduct face to face interviews with all immigrants in a crucial proceeding known as immigrant inspection. Every single foreigner that entered the Port of New York was questioned - either on board ship or at Ellis Island itself. Sitting at a high "rostrum desk" in Ellis Island's Registry Room, the inspector consulted the official list of a ship's passengers called a *Manifest of Alien Passengers*.

In questioning the newcomer, the Immigrant Inspector verified the immigrant's answers given by checking them against what had been originally recorded on the ship's passenger manifest at the port of departure. Since he was only allowed to admit persons who were "clearly and beyond a doubt entitled to enter the United States," he had to be absolutely certain the person he was examining was not a member of one of the classes of persons barred from entering the country under the various US immigration laws, such as contract laborers, polygamists, paupers, convicted criminals, anarchists or anyone "likely to become a public charge."

**Interpreters** translated for immigrants who could not communicate in English. Interpreters not only needed strong linguistic skills in one or more foreign languages, but they also needed to understand the most common dialects in a given language. Many interpreters at Ellis Island were either immigrants themselves or the children of immigrants.

The common languages spoken at Ellis Island included: Italian, Polish, Ukrainian, Slovak, German, Yiddish, French, Greek, Hungarian, Russian, Ukrainian, Serbo-Croatian, Romanian, Swedish, Portuguese, Bulgarian, Czech, Spanish, Armenian, Arabic, Dutch, Norwegian and Chinese.

26 [https://www.nps.gov/elis/learn/historyculture/people.htm](https://www.nps.gov/elis/learn/historyculture/people.htm)
Immigrant Aid Worker Throughout the years, numerous organizations offered aid to immigrants at Ellis Island. Many of these immigrant aid societies maintained permanent representatives on Ellis Island. Known under several titles, including missionary, chaplain, agent, port worker, matron, and social worker, the dedicated men and women of these organizations provided many things, from counseling, guidance, information, translation, money, food, clothing, reading material, gifts, and religious instruction and services.

Organizations assisting immigrants on the island included the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), the Salvation Army, and the Traveler's Aid Society. Additionally there were culturally specific needs met by ethnic Italian, German, Polish, Lithuanian and Spanish branches of the Roman Catholic church's St. Raphael's Society, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and National Council of Jewish Women, the White Rose Mission, specifically for Caribbean women, and various other societies exclusively for Belgians, Bulgarians, Dutch, Greeks, Italians, Hungarians, Poles and Russians.

Nurses at Ellis Island were employed by the United States Public Health Service (USPHS). Ellis Island's nurses were assigned to the general hospital wards and the contagious disease wards. In 1913, there were more than 25 nurses employed in the hospitals and wards. They worked under the supervision of the doctors, as well as their own hierarchy of chief and head nurses. Both female and male nurses were required to live on the island.

Doctors of Ellis Island were commissioned officers of the U.S. Public Health Service. Officially known as surgeons, they were in charge of the Ellis Island Hospital and the medical examination of immigrants in a routine procedure called the line inspection. As long lines of immigrants slowly entered Ellis Island's Registry Room, they were examined swiftly and expertly by the doctors for any sign of disease or signs of physical or mental weakness.

Ellis Island doctors were particularly watching for signs of contagious diseases like trachoma [a very contagious eye disease], tuberculosis, diphtheria, and other states of health such as poor physique, pregnancy and mental disability. Any immigrant suspected of being in questionable health was chalk-marked with a letter of the alphabet ("B" for back problems, "F" for face, "H" for heart) and taken out of line and moved to a physical or mental examination room. Those with definite illnesses were sent to the Ellis Island Hospital.

The role of the doctors on Ellis Island was confined to the medical examination, diagnosis, and treatment of the immigrants. Doctors played no role in deciding the fitness of a person to enter the country. This decision was left exclusively in the hands of the U.S. Immigrant Inspectors. Ellis Island's doctors were not involved with quarantine - this operation took place on Hoffman and Swinburne Islands, two isolated islands off the coast of Staten Island.
Clerks Given the enormous amount of paperwork that needed to be done at Ellis Island, it comes as no surprise that dozens and dozens of clerks and stenographers were employed there. The clerks - both male and female - kept a running tabulation of the number of immigrants flowing to the island for inspection each day, the disposal of their cases and their subsequent departures. Clerks stored away the steamship passenger manifests, completed detention and deportation cards, wrote reports and dossiers, and filed away and retrieved warrant case records. Meanwhile, the island's stenographers - each of them an expert in writing shorthand script and using the typewriter - were essential participants during immigration hearings of the various Boards of Special Inquiry.

Gabriel Tarriño from Spain, 1920

Gabriel Tarriño left Spain and arrived at Ellis Island in August 1920. He likened his stay on Ellis Island to being in prison. He wrote in his diary that he was very lonely after being separated from his wife, daughter and son:

Why is this? Staying with people that I don’t understand and they don’t understand me? If I get a fever who is going to care for me. I do not know, therefore a deep sadness envelopes me and wonder where it’s going to stop, if I could only speak with these guards but when I try they dispel me and almost use their hands on me.

He also noted that people would fight over the cots:

In the dormitories there are so many fights for the sleeping cots, that we tremble with fear, because if two persons get to the cot at the same time, one says this is mine and the other one no it’s mine until they start beating each other. In the salons the same thing happens. I was sitting on a bench one day and two of these morons and they took it off of me and two Spaniards when they saw what was happening they came to my assistance. I saw that the others were going to hit them so I told the Spaniards forget it, let them have it, because anyone could lose their life or be maimed by such animals, without a conscience!

Tarriño added that the dining halls were very loud and people were rude. It was difficult communicating with immigrants from all over the world, including France, Italy, Peru and Japan, he said:

They cause such a ruckus that even God cannot understand.
Josephine Garzieri from Italy, n.d.

Doctors known as "eye men" examined immigrants for trachoma, which not only caused blindness – it could kill. Around 50 percent of the people who were detained on Ellis Island had this disease, and they were usually deported.

Josephine Garzieri was 15 when she traveled from Italy to the United States with her father and brother. She had trachoma. Since it was highly contagious, she was quarantined in the medical wing until deportation. When her father found out he needed a $1,000 bond for her treatment or else she would be deported, he took action, asking strangers for a loan. Fortunately, he was able to raise enough money to pay for her treatment.

Garzieri was placed in a special section of the hospital for people who had trachoma and spent 11 and-a-half months there, as she later recalled:

They just take you there and take your clothes off and give you clothes that belong to the hospital. So, you have identification, you can't run away. So, nobody tried to run away. We got nowhere to go. We had a guard with a gun, in the front of the building and in the back of the building. So, we made no attempts of running away.

She received daily treatments and was not allowed to walk, because that would have created too much heat on her eyelids and stall the healing process.

Josephine DeJaegher Wiley, Shawnee, Kansas

My ancestors came from Belgium. My mother came with her family when she was just a child. My father came when he was 23 years old in January on his 23rd birthday.

I don’t know what ship they came on, but they came into Pennsylvania, not New York. They had to ride the train to Kansas City, because when you came to this country they had to have a sponsor and a place to go. They just couldn’t let anyone wander around. My mother said she thought this was the most desolate country in the world.

They came into Kansas City and immediately my father got a job. There was more work in this country than people, so that was why they were so anxious to have the immigrants come over. They had to be here two years before they could apply for citizenship. He did apply for citizenship and then he and his entire family were citizens. All they had to know was the Pledge of Allegiance. They would put their hand up and swear and say the Pledge of Allegiance and that made them a citizen. My mother was a citizen from about the time she was 13 or 14.
Wilhelm from Germany, 1910

A boy named Wilhelm was 16 years old when he traveled to the United States from Germany in 1910. He struggled on the trip, battling seasickness and vomiting for days. He remembered entering Ellis Island and lining up for a medical exam.

People were marked on their lapels with chalk, indicating whether or not they were fit to enter America. Immigrants without any mental problems were marked with an "X" on their right shoulder. A circle with an "X" meant there was a problem. A "B" indicated back problems, "Pg" equaled pregnancy, "Sc" meant there was a scalp infection, and so on. Those who had issues received additional exams in another room.

Wilhelm explained the scene:

So, they let us through a big hall and we had to strip naked in a small room. And we met two fellas. They were doctors with stethoscopes. I didn’t know what a stethoscope was – I learned that after. They tapped us on the chest and on the back and then I had to run around. I was the only one they examined that way. All of a sudden, one doctor yelled and raised his fist. He was gonna knock the other fella down, the other doctor. I didn’t know what it meant. I was told afterward. One said I had consumption, and the other doctor said there was nothing wrong with me – all I needed was a bellyful of food for a couple of months. I was undernourished.

Wilhelm eventually passed and was met by his cousin, who took him to Brooklyn to live with their relatives.

Approximately 20 percent of immigrants were held for medical treatment or for a legal hearing. Only two percent were denied entry.
Seymour Rechtzeit from Poland, 1920

In 1920, eight-year-old Seymour Rechtzeit traveled from Poland with his father to the United States. They planned on making some money in America before sending for the rest of the family. Rechtzeit recalled how he was separated from his father when they arrived on Ellis Island because he had a cold:

At Ellis Island, my father, who was not sick, stood in long lines as part of the entry process. Officials asked him lots of questions about where he came from, what he did for a living back in Poland, and what his plans were in America. All immigrants had to answer these questions. Only then could the newcomers leave Ellis Island and take a ferry to New York – and finally set foot in America.

When the doctor examined me, he discovered I had a cold. He said I could not go with my father, though I cried and begged. I was terrified to be all alone in this strange place. I stayed on Ellis Island for a few days, until I was feeling better. I had no toys with me. I didn't know of such things. But there were other sick boys to keep me company. Some of them spoke Yiddish, my language. We ate in a huge dining room. The food was different – it was American style. But it was good, especially the milk.

There was a long gate that led to the boats that took people off the island, across New York Harbor, to the city. Every day, we boys would walk to the gate and look out over the water. We wanted to see America. It was like being in a jail. We felt sad and wondered if we would ever get through that gate and onto a boat for that final journey to our new country, the United States.

When Rechtzeit recovered, he and his father were able to leave Ellis Island.

Harry Singer from Ukraine, 1920

Harry’s father came to America in 1911 and sent for Harry, his mother and two sisters. Harry described the journey from their small town in Ukraine.

We had wagons. When we reached the Polish border, the border guards started shooting at us, but my uncle had some money with him, so he bought them off. And the following day we arrived in Poland and took the train to Warsaw. I was amazed that they could have trains going without being pulled by horses! From there (after we got a visa) we went to Germany, and from Germany we went to Belgium, and from Belgium we took a boat to Liverpool (England). And from Liverpool we sailed on the *Aquitania* [a ship] to Ellis Island.

It was a voyage of about two weeks, and we used to go on the deck to watch the whales. The crewmen would give us oranges and other kinds of fruit. I’d never tasted oranges before. When we came into New York Harbor, we saw the Statue of Liberty. Everybody was on deck and everybody was happy.
Ludmila Foxlee (1885-1971) Social Worker

Mrs. Ludmila Kuchar Foxlee was one of the best-known social workers on Ellis Island. Hired by the Y.W.C.A. following the end of the First World War, she was employed at the station from 1920 to 1937. Foxlee made her mark by helping thousands of detained European immigrants of the Christian faith - Protestants, Eastern Orthodox and Catholics. Being a Czech immigrant herself (1890 at the age of 4), Ludmila Kuchar Foxlee understood and appreciated the cultural values, customs and traditions of these newcomers.

Foxlee kept meticulous records and handled an extraordinary number of cases. In the mid 1920's, she caught the attention of the press by posing with newly arrived immigrants in colorful folk costumes and then immediately afterward in stylish American clothes. In this way, she demonstrated the first step many immigrants took to assimilate to their new country. A lively singer and entertainer, she also helped to organize and run the Ellis Island Annual Christmas parties and other festivities set up for detainees and deportees.

YMCA social welfare worker Ludmila Foxlee with an immigrant girl on Ellis Island c. 1920s. Foxlee is dressed in peasant garb. National Park Service, Statue of Liberty NM
Harvey Snider (1870-1937) U.S. Immigrant Inspector

Harvey E. Snider was born in Butler County, Ohio in 1870. In 1894, he came to New York in search of work; with him were his wife Emma Jane and their small children. Snider was soon hired as a gatekeeper at Ellis Island. For the next seven years, he worked as a watchman and guard and helped out in other ways too, including occasionally carrying immigrants' bags. In 1902, he got an office job as a clerk at $1,000 a year.

Clerks did an enormous amount of paperwork each week: making notations on and filing passenger manifests, keeping up to date immigrant files and dossiers, and maintaining detention and deporting records. Snider was good at his job and rose steadily through the ranks. In 1907, he was promoted to U.S. Immigrant Inspector and around 1910, became chief inspector of the Night Division. As chief inspector of the Night Division, Snider supervised the night crew of workers on the island including: U.S. immigrant inspectors, doctors, nurses, watchmen, matrons, orderlies, laborers, charwomen and ferrymen.

In 1934, after forty years at Ellis Island, Harvey Snider retired. After his retirement, he took his grandsons on a visit to Ellis Island, to the New York Aquarium at Castle Garden and to the newly built Empire State Building. He died in Los Angeles in 1937.

Harvey Ebert Snider c. 1900. National Park Service, Statue of Liberty NM
Antonio Frabasilis (1854-1927) Greek Interpreter

Antonio Frabasilis, a native of Italy, studied classical Greek and Latin at the Universities of Naples and Athens and became a respected Greek scholar. He also studied numerous modern languages, including Turkish, Russian, Armenian, Arabic, Spanish, French, and English, among others.

In 1899, Frabasilis immigrated to the United States where he hoped to expand his knowledge of languages and their dialects. After becoming a naturalized citizen in 1906, he was appointed as an interpreter of Greek at Ellis Island in 1908.

Frabasilis' linguistic genius helped him handle many difficult cases. One of his greatest triumphs was the translation of a letter intentionally designed to deceive the police by combining different languages. After having been in police hands for 22 months, during which time the police had sought the help of several university and college professors, the letter was sent to Ellis Island. It was given to Antonio Frabasilis who deciphered it in ninety minutes. The letter had been written in an odd mixture of Armenian, Turkish, Polish and three dialects of Russian. Frabasilis's translation enabled authorities to arrest importers who were violating U.S. customs laws.
Nurse Jennie Colligan (born 1872)

Nurse Jennie Colligan, the daughter of Irish immigrants Barney and Mary Colligan, worked at the Ellis Island Hospital from 1900 to the 1920's. Recalled as a kind-hearted woman, she was called "Mother" by her co-workers. Nurse Colligan spent most of her time on Ellis Island working day and night shifts in the Women's Wards and Children's Wards of the hospital. She finished her career as senior nurse at the United States Veteran's Hospital in Franklin County, New York in the Depression years of the 1930's.

Lorene DeBrabander Rieke, Shawnee, Kansas

My dad [Leon Joseph DeBrabander] came to Shawnee in 1920. He was sponsored by the John Deere Company in East Moline, Illinois. He worked there until the plant shut down. Then he had a friend here in Kansas City, Kansas who told him to come here and work on the farm with him.

The only thing that my dad brought with him [when he immigrated] was a trunk. The trunk was a large one with a hump lid. He brought his accordion with him. He got it from German soldiers [during the Great War] who used to stay in the basement of their home. They took over their home because his mother ran a combination saloon.
Dr. Carl Ramus (1872-1963) Physician and Surgeon

Doctor Carl Ramus was posted to Ellis Island on and off over a span of twenty years (1902-1922). The Chicago native was educated at Rush Medical College and joined the Marine Hospital Service in 1899. Like other doctors, Ramus became adept at detecting contagious diseases such as trachoma, favus, diphtheria, measles, tuberculosis and hookworm. Between his postings at Ellis Island, Dr. Ramus worked at the Public Health Service’s quarantine station in Honolulu, serving as chief of the station from c. 1910 to 1912.

After gaining public recognition as an author on health topics in the early 1920s, Dr. Ramus resigned from the Public Health Service and set up his own private practice as a psychiatrist. His books included Marriage and Efficiency (1922), Outwitting Middle Age (1926) and Behind the Scenes with Ourselves (1931).

In the 1930's and 1940's, Dr. Ramus worked as a doctor on board United Fruit Company ships. This new job gave him the chance to travel regularly between the port of New York and destinations such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Honduras, Guatemala, and the Panama Canal Zone. Aside from his writings, the doctor played the viola and enjoyed classical music. After retiring as a physician, he and his wife, Anna, settled in Alexandria, Virginia. He lived to be 91.

Dr. Carl Ramus, ca. 1901. National Library of Medicine
Augustus F. Sherman (1865-1925) Chief Clerk

Known for the striking photographs he took of detained immigrants, the talented amateur photographer Augustus Sherman also occupied the highly responsible post of Chief Clerk of Ellis Island. A native of northeastern Pennsylvania, Augustus joined his elder brother in New York City in 1889. By the 1890s, the brothers were both working as clerks at Ellis Island. After his brother quit to become a lawyer, Augustus climbed up the clerical ranks at the station, eventually becoming chief clerk.

Among Sherman's duties, was the handling of appeals to the Ellis Island Commissioner of Immigration made by immigrants that had been barred from entering the country by one of the Boards of Special Inquiry. These boards heard the cases of detained immigrants and rendered a decision about the immigrants' right to enter the United States.

Because of his involvement in this process, Sherman was able to photograph any willing detainee. This, as well as his technical perfectionism, made Sherman quite selective in choosing his subjects. Often, Sherman asked the immigrants to pose in their native costumes. Although his bureaucratic career is largely forgotten, Sherman's legacy comes to us through the body of photographic work he left behind. Through the cold lens of the camera, his artistic eye and deft hands preserved a world of elaborately costumed immigrants that otherwise might have been lost.

and Augustus Sherman, Chief Clerk of Ellis Island National Park Service, Statue of Liberty NM
Joseph Boutte, Shawnee, Kansas

Joseph Boutte’s family on both sides came from Belgium.

A lot of people left [Belgium] if they were from big families because it was tradition that the oldest son got the farm and the rest [of the siblings] had to go out and work for themselves. I think that was the motivator for a lot of people to leave [Belgium].

Dad was born in 1905 and then his family went back to Belgium and they stayed there until he finished third grade so he was about 8 or 9 years old. Then they came back here [to Kansas]. His parents bought a property in Turner, [Kansas]. It is interesting that the couple they bought it from went back to Belgium after they sold the property.

There is a story that my grandfather left Belgium the last time because the game warden caught him poaching and he coldcocked him and he ran. [Coldcock – to knock someone unconscious.] [A game warden watched over the lands of the local lord and kept anyone from shooting or stealing game which belonged to the lord.]

The only thing that I have that probably goes back to the time [they came here from Belgium] is a box of funeral cards that go back to the late 1800s.

Karl Ernst Rieke, Shawnee, Kansas

Was born in Rossla, Prussia in December, 1844. He was the eldest son of a family who had been the carpenters or joiners in the town for 100 years. He served in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and when he returned home both his father and grandfather had died and another craftsman in the town had taken over their trade while Karl was at war. With worsening economic conditions and no land to call their own, he and his wife [Elise] decided to immigrate to America. They both learned English in preparation for the trip. They heard rumors about life in the American “wild west” so Elise’s mother embroidered monograms of their initial on each item of clothing. They sewed Karl’s money in the lining of his vest.

Karl and Elise left Bremen, Germany, and took a two week voyage arriving in Baltimore, October 3, 1871. They traveled by train to Kansas City, where Karl had heard that “jobs were abundant and land was cheap.” To Americanize themselves, Karl began calling himself Charles and Elise called herself Elizabeth.