

# National Park Service

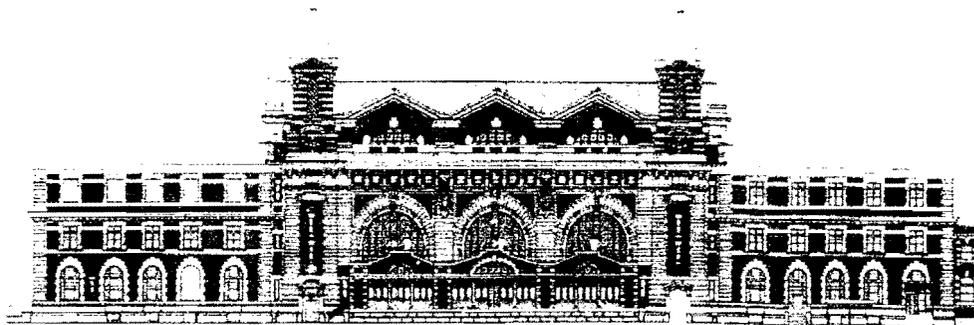
## Statue of Liberty National Monument

### Ellis Island Immigration Museum

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## Ellis Island Chronology Timeline

(1674-2001)



Important Dates in Ellis Island History

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7	7	8	8	8	8	8	9	9	9	9	9	9	0
7	9	0	0	1	9	9	0	0	2	5	6	9	0
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- ca. 1674-79: Sir Edmund Andros, The English colonial governor of New York, grants "Little Oyster Island" to Captain William Dyre, the collector of customs. Dyre was a resident of New York City, and was mayor, 1680-1682.
- April 23, 1686  
October 1, 1691 Captain Dyre sells the island, known as Dyre's, to Thomas and Patience Lloyd. The New York Legislature passes an Act establishing the boundaries of New York County and includes the three oyster islands as a part of it.
- 1730 The English colonial governor of New York, John Montgomerie, grants a Charter to New York City and includes Dyre's Island within the city's boundaries under the new name of "Bucking Island."
- 1757 New York officials examine Bucking Island as the possible site of a city Pest House.
- 1765 The notorious pirate Anderson is hanged on the island. Other pirates were hanged there over the years, thus the isle became known as Anderson's and, especially, as "Gibbet" Island.
- November 18, 1774 Samuel Ellis, of 1 Greenwich Street, Manhattan, purchases the island.
- January 20, 1785 Ellis advertises the island for sale in "Loudon's New York Packet."
- 1794 Samuel Ellis dies. In his will he bequeathed the island to his daughter Catherine's child with the proviso that the child must be a boy and bear the name of Samuel Ellis. His daughter dutifully bore a son and named him Samuel Ellis, but he died in infancy and so the island reverted to the mother, Catherine Ellis Westervelt. In the same year, New York City deeds Ellis Island to New York State for purposes of constructing fortifications. Earthworks were done on the island for this purpose by French engineer Charles Vincent.
- 1798 Ebenezer Stevens supervises further fortification work on Ellis Island for the U.S. War Department. Observing that the island was still in private hands (The Ellis family), he recommended that it be purchased by New York State ceded to the Federal government.
- February 15, 1800 The state of New York passes an Act which cedes the jurisdiction of Governor's, Bedloe's and Ellis Islands to the United States Government.
- 1806 Samuel Ellis' grandson by another daughter, a certain Samuel Ellis Ryerson, deeds the island to John A. Berry.
- June 30, 1808 The United States gains ownership of Ellis Island by condemnation procedures carried out by New York Governor Daniel D. Tompkins. The Governor purchased the island on behalf of the state of New York from the owners and conveyed it to the Federal government at a cost of \$10,000.
- 1811 Colonel Jonathan Williams finishes construction of the land battery at Ellis Island for defense of the harbor.
- 1812 A Magazine and barracks presumably completed. A small garrison of troops is stationed on Ellis Island during the War with Great Britain. The garrison saw no action.

- 1813 Governor Tompkins of New York takes command of the battery at Ellis Island and names it Fort Gibson, in memory of Colonel James Gibson who was fatally wounded in the Battle of Fort Erie.
- 1833 The commissioners of New York and New Jersey met in Manhattan and entered into an inter-state compact to resolve a boundary dispute over New York Harbor and the Hudson River.
- 1834 The Compact is ratified by the two state's legislatures and approved by act of Congress. The Compact established the harbor boundary between the two states and confirmed that both Bedloe's and Ellis Islands were apart of the state of New York.
- 1835 The U.S. Navy gains jurisdiction and uses the island as a powder magazine.
- June 22, 1839 Cornelius Wilhelms, a pirate and a murderer, is hanged on the island.
- 1841 Full jurisdiction returned to the U.S. Army, however the Navy is permitted to retain its powder magazine on the island.
- 1842 The Army re-arms Fort Gibson.
- 1847 The New York State Commissions of Emigration asked the War Department for permission to use Ellis Island for the convalescence of emigrants. The request is denied.
- ca 1865 Battery Gibson (Fort Gibson) dismantled. Army withdraws from Ellis Island. The Navy adds more magazines and remains sole possessor.
- 1868 First local complaints about the danger of the Navy's powder magazine on Ellis Island appear in the journal, "Harper's Weekly."
- 1876 The New York "Sun" Newspaper published alarming reports about the Navy's explosives on Ellis Island.
- 1889 Further stories about the danger to the city and to New Jersey appear in the New York "World" Newspaper.
- 1890 Congress passes a Resolution ordering the removal of the U.S. Navy's powder magazine on Ellis Island. An amendment was attached appropriating \$75,000 to enable the Secretary of the Treasury to improve the island for immigration purposes. The Resolution was signed into law by President Benjamin Harrison on April 11. On May 24, by order of Congress, the powder is removed by Navy personnel to Fort Wadsworth.
- 1891 Congress passes an Immigration Act creating the office of Superintendent of Immigration within the Treasury Department and created the Bureau of Immigration within the department to take effect July 12 of the same year. A commissioner was installed at each major port. Colonel John B. Weber of Buffalo was the first commissioner of immigration of Ellis Island, New York.

- 1892 The U.S. Immigration Station at Ellis Island formally opened. Annie Moore of Ireland was the first alien to be processed. By the end of the fiscal year, over 400,000 immigrants had been processed at the new station.
- 1893 Administrative procedures improve at Ellis Island; Colonel Weber requires all steamship companies to add more questions to their manifests. President Grover Cleveland appoints Dr. Joseph Senner to succeed Colonel Weber at Ellis Island.
- 1897 Thomas Fitchie appointed commissioner by President William McKinley.  
June 14 Fire destroys the wooden buildings on Ellis Island; immigrants and staff evacuated; processing of immigrants temporarily transferred to the Barge Office in Battery Park, Manhattan.
- Dec. 17, 1900 Newly constructed fire-proof main building opens Alien processing resumes.  
2,251 immigrants examined on this day.
- 1901 The Kitchen, Bathhouse, Laundry and Power House constructed on Island 1.
- 1902 President Theodore Roosevelt launches a reform campaign to end the mistreatment of aliens and corruption of bureaucrats at Ellis Island by appointing Wall Street lawyer William Williams as the new commissioner.  
  
Hospital building and laundry built on Island 2.
- 1903 Department of Commerce and Labor takes over responsibility of immigration from the Treasury Department.
- 1904 Railroad Ticket Office added to the Main Building.
- 1905 William Williams resigns as commissioner; President Roosevelt appoints career immigration official Robert Watchorn to succeed him.
- 1905-06 Landfill creates Island 3 (five acres) from New York City Subway excavations in Brooklyn.
- 1907 Peak year of immigration to the United States. 1.2 million aliens examined at Ellis Island.
- 1909 President William Howard Taft re-appoints William Williams commissioner at Ellis Island. Contagious Disease Wards completed on Island 3.
- 1913 Congress creates a separate Department of Labor and assigns it responsibility of immigration.
- 1913-15 Bakery, Greenhouse and Carpenter's Shop built on Island 1.
- 1914 President Woodrow Wilson appoints the noted municipal reformer Dr. Frederic Howe commissioner. During his term, Dr. Howe ameliorated the conditions of detained aliens.
- 1914-18 The Great European War causes a sharp decline in immigration.

1916	German saboteurs destroy a munitions depot at Black Tom Wharf, New Jersey. Tremendous explosion shatters windows at Ellis Island. Island briefly evacuated; no injuries.
1917-18	The United States enters the war on the side of France and Great Britain. Island used as a navy way station and the hospitals are used for wounded servicemen. Enemy aliens detained at Ellis Island.
December 1919	Anarchist and Bolshevik aliens arrested during the Palmer raids and deported to Russia via Ellis Island.
1920	Doctor Howe resigns as commissioner; President Wilson appoints former New York City deputy police commissioner Frederick A. Wallis as his successor.
1921	President Warren G. Harding replaces Commissioner Wallis with banker and philanthropist Robert E. Todd. Quota system introduced.
1923	Todd resigns; President Harding appoints former Manhattan Borough president Henry H. Curran Commissioner of Immigration, New York District (Ellis Island).
1924	National Origins Act passed. Immigrants now required to obtain visas in American consulates before embarking for America. Quotas for nations dramatically reduces immigration.
1929	National Origins Act fully in force.
1929-37	Most severe years of the Great Depression.
1931	President Herbert Hoover appoints New York social welfare leader Edward Corsi Ellis Island's new commissioner, succeeding Henry Curran.
1933	Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins appoints a non-partisan committee to investigate conditions at Ellis Island.
1934	The Ellis Island Committee submits its report to Secretary Perkins. It contained many recommendations including the construction of better facilities for immigrants. The Roosevelt Administration acted on many of the recommendations. Area of island increase to its present size of 27.5 acres. Commissioner Corsi resigns; President Franklin D. Roosevelt replaces him with Rudolph Reimer.
1939	Coast Guard training station opens on Ellis Island.
April 11, 1940	Commissioner Reimer presides over fiftieth anniversary ceremonies marking Ellis Island's designation as a federal alien receiving station. On June 14 <sup>th</sup> , the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) is shifted to the Justice Department, after having been under the Secretary of Labor for 27 years.
May 1942	Approximately 1,000 German, Italian and Japanese enemy aliens were held at Ellis Island.
1943	All INS functions except for detention moves from Ellis Island to the WPA Headquarters Building at 70 Columbus Circle, Manhattan.
1948	Displaced Persons Act allows a total of 400,000 refugees to enter the country.

- 1949 President Harry Truman appoints Edward J. Shaughnessy INS district director from New York to succeed Rudolph Reimer. Hearings for detained aliens returned to Ellis Island.
- 1950 The passage by Congress of the Internal Security Act over President Truman's veto causes a flurry of alien detentions at Ellis Island.
- 1951 The U.S. Public Health Service closes the hospital at Ellis Island. U.S. Coast Guard temporarily takes over the buildings.
- 1953 On a visit to Ellis Island, District Director Shaughnessy observes that there are only 237 detainees on the island and that there was a staff of 250 to handle them.
- November 12, 1954 The Immigration and Naturalization Service removes last detained aliens from Ellis Island.
- November 29, 1954 The ferryboat " Ellis Island" makes its last run. Island is vacated.
- March 4, 1955 Ellis Island is determined to be surplus government property, and returns to obscurity. The General Services Administration assumes jurisdiction.
- May 11, 1965 President Lyndon Johnson, invoking the Antiquities Act of 1906, proclaims Ellis Island as a part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument and is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.
- 1973-75 Ellis Island clean up campaign inaugurated by Dr. Peter Sammartino of Fairlie Dickenson University.
- May 1976 – Sept. 1984 Ellis Island opened for public tours.
- May 1982 In a White House press conference, President Ronald Reagan announces plans for the restoration of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.
- 1986-1990 Ellis Island restoration project, total cost: 156 million dollars.
- September 10, 1990 Ellis Island opens to the public a day after opening ceremonies presided over by J. Danforth Quayle, Vice President of the United States, and Mr. Lee Iacocca, Chairman of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation.
- 1998 Following a lawsuit initiated by the State of New Jersey, the U.S. Supreme Court votes 6-3 to the divide sovereignty of Ellis Island between New York and New Jersey. New York retains the original 3.3 acres and New Jersey wins the other 24 landfilled acres of the island.
- 1999 National Park Service begins planning for the stabilization of the decaying buildings on the south side (islands 2 & 3) of Ellis Island.
- Spring 2001 Opening of the American Family Immigration History Center. (AFIHC)
- 2001 - ?

(Compiled by Barry Moreno, Ellis Island Library, 1994. Revised 2001)