

City of Immigrants Timeline of Events

1600-1800—The first wave of immigrants who were not enslaved arrive in the American colonies. Initially, most immigrants are from England, although people came from other parts of Europe as well. By the Revolutionary War, there are approximately 2,800,000 colonists; of these, 400,000 were foreign born.

1790—The Naturalization Act of 1790 limits the ability to become a naturalized citizen to immigrants who are “free white persons of good character.” It is the first U.S. law that specifies how a person can become a naturalized citizen and excludes American Indians, indentured servants, the enslaved, free blacks, or Asians. The law requires two years of residency before a person can apply for citizenship.

1795—The Naturalization Act of 1795 increases the residency requirement to five years. In 1798, the residency requirement is extended to 14 years. In 1802, the residency requirement is revised back to five years.

1808—The Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves goes into effect. Approximately 375,000 enslaved Africans had been brought to the United States by this time. After 1808, some Africans are illegally imported as slaves. Slavery continues in the United States until 1865.

1820s—The second wave of immigration begins. Over the next fifty years, approximately seven million people will arrive in America. Most of the immigrants are from Northern and Western Europe, and most settle on the East Coast.

1836—Massachusetts becomes the first state to regulate child labor when it mandates that children under 15 working in factories must attend school for three months per year.

1835—Twenty thousand workers strike in Philadelphia, PA for increased pay and a ten-hour workday. It is the first general strike in North America in which workers from many different industries participate. As a result of the strike, the ten-hour work day becomes standard in Philadelphia.

1840—The population of New York City is 312,710. It will increase by more than 60% in just ten years.

1842-1852—Ireland’s Great Famine occurs after disease destroys the potato crop, which was the main source of food for most people there. Large numbers of people emigrate, with the U.S. as a popular destination.

1848—Many Germans begin to immigrate to the U.S. following the Revolution of 1848 in the German states.

Circa 1850—Many of the new immigrants from Ireland and Germany have settled in downtown Manhattan in the Five Points and *Kleindeutschland* (“Little Germany”) neighborhoods. These

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neighborhoods are filled with multi-family residences, or tenements, and become very densely populated. The area will later become known as the Lower East Side.

1850—The population of New York City is 515,547. It will increase by 58% over the next ten years.

1850s—Large numbers of Chinese workers immigrate to the United States. They work on the construction of railroads across the continent and in mines and factories.

1862—New York State fire safety law requires buildings to have fire escape doors between apartments, brick walls between buildings, and fire escapes.

1867—New York State law defines a tenement as a building housing two or more families. The law requires each tenement to have a fire ladder and one toilet for every 20 residents. In many tenements, the toilets are located behind the building and they are not always connected to a sewage system. The law is often ignored.

1879—New York State law requires tenements built after this date to provide every room with access to air. Air shafts in tenements are often polluted and filthy.

Circa 1880—The third wave of immigration begins. Over the next forty years, approximately 23 million immigrants will enter the United States. Although immigrants come from all over, the majority emigrate from southern and eastern Europe.

1882—Congress passes the Chinese Exclusion Act. The act suspends the immigration of Chinese laborers for 10 years. This is the first time in its history that the United States enacts a broad restriction on immigration and targets immigrants from a particular nation.

1889—Jane Addams establishes Hull House on Chicago's near west side. It brings together a community of educated, upper class women to provide social and educational opportunities for recent European immigrants and becomes a model for settlement houses in cities across the nation.

January 1, 1892—Ellis Island is opened as a federal immigration processing station; previously, states were responsible for regulating immigration. Ellis Island Immigration officially opens. Annie Moore, a 15 year old girl from County Cork, Ireland, is the first person to pass through Ellis Island. Nearly 450,000 immigrants enter the country through Ellis Island that year.

1893—Lillian Wald opens the Henry Street Settlement House to provide assistance to recent immigrants in New York's Lower East Side neighborhood.

1898—Progressive reformers in New York City establish the Outdoor Recreation League in order to build parks and playgrounds in crowded immigrant neighborhoods.

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1900—30 million people, or 30% of the U.S. population, live in urban areas.

1901— Leon Czolgosz (an anarchist) assassinates President William McKinley; shortly thereafter Congress enacts the Anarchist Exclusion Act, which denies entry into the U.S. to people judged to be anarchists and political extremists.

1901—New York State law requires that every tenement must have indoor plumbing and lighting. Older buildings must be renovated in order to comply. Many building have toilets in the hallway that are shared by all the residents.

1902—Congress renews the Chinese Exclusion Act, first passed in 1882, and makes it permanent. The law bans most Chinese from immigrating to the U.S. and prevents Chinese immigrants already in the country from becoming U.S. citizens.

1903—Luna Park, one of the first modern amusement parks, opens at Coney Island, New York, with spectacular rides and attractions.

1903—The Women's Trade Union League is founded by a coalition of working-class and elite women.

1905—First theater dedicated to moving pictures opens in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and charges customers five cents to watch "The Great Train Robbery." By 1910, twenty-six million Americans attend weekly shows at ten thousand nickelodeon movie theaters (named for their five cent admission price), many located in immigrant neighborhoods.

1906—The Naturalization Act of 1906 standardizes procedures for becoming a naturalized citizen, makes some knowledge of the English language a requirement for citizenship, and establishes the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization in the Commerce Department to oversee national immigration policy.

1907— 1,004,756 immigrants are processed in the busiest year at Ellis Island.

1907—Congress establishes the Dillingham Commission to investigate the effects of immigration on the United States.

1907—YMCA offers English language and temperance (anti-alcohol) lessons to immigrant workers.

1909—The Uprising of 20,000 begins when female textile workers in New York City go on strike demanding safer working conditions and the right to unionize. As a result, most factories become union shops and the workweek is limited to 52 hours.

1909— National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is established to fight for civil rights for African Americans.

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1910— Thousands of immigrant garment workers go on strike in New York and Chicago, leading to major union victories in the clothing industry.

1910— Angel Island Immigration Station opens on the west coast near San Francisco.

1910—40% of the population of New York City is foreign born.

1901-1910—8,795,386 immigrants arrive in the United States, five million more than arrived the previous decade.

March 25, 1911—A fire breaks out in the 8th, 9th, and 10th floors of the Triangle Waist Company factory in New York City. Rescue efforts are hindered by locked doors, fire department ladders that cannot reach above the 6th floor, and the collapse of a fire escape. Of the 500 workers employed at the factory, 146 workers perish in the fire. Most of the victims are young women between the ages of 14 and 23, many of whom are recent immigrants. Public outcry after the fire leads to factory safety and health reforms.

December 4, 1911—The trial of Max Blank and Isaac Harris, the owners of the Triangle Waist Company, begins. Blank and Harris are charged with manslaughter stemming from allegations that factory doors had been illegally locked during the fire on March 25, 1911. The jury finds both men innocent.

1914—World War I breaks out in Europe; immigration from Europe to U.S. slows dramatically.

1917—Congress enacts a literacy requirement for immigrants by overriding President Woodrow Wilson's veto. The law requires immigrants to be able to read 40 words in some language and bans immigration from Asia, except for Japan and the Philippines.

1911-1920—5,735,811 immigrants arrive in the United States, including 2 million Italians, during the peak of Italian immigration.

1920—More than 50% of the U.S. population lives in urban areas.

1920—Nineteenth amendment to the Constitution is ratified, giving women the right to vote.

1921—The Emergency Quota Act restricts the number of immigrants from any country to 3% of the number of residents from that country that were living in the U.S. during the 1910 census. Immigration decreases from around 800,000 in 1920 to around 310,000 in 1921-22.

1924—Immigration Act of 1924 modifies the Emergency Quota Act, decreasing the number of people admitted per year from any country to 2% of the number that were living in the U.S. in 1890. The law greatly restricts immigration of Southern Europeans, Eastern Europeans, and Jews as well as prohibiting immigration of Arabs and Asians.

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1924—The U.S. Border Patrol is created to combat smuggling and illegal immigration.

1929—New York State law requires that all residences built after this date must have a private toilet and bathtub in each apartment.

1934—New York State law requires all wooden stairs in tenements to be replaced by fireproof material such as stone or brick. Many owners board up their tenements instead of paying for costly renovations.

1938—The Fair Labor Standards Act prohibits most employment of minors, limits the workweek to 40 hours, and establishes a national minimum wage.

1965—The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 changes the quota system that had been in place since 1921. A person's skills and family relationships with people in the U.S. becomes more important in determining if they get a visa, although limits are still in place so that immigrants do not all come from the same country.

1970—Congress passes the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which is designed to make sure that work environments are free from known hazards. The Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), part of the Department of Labor, is formed to set and enforce workplace health and safety standards.