

Ellis Island, located in New York Harbor, served as a port of entry - between 1892-1954 - for millions of European immigrants hoping for a new life in America.

Archival footage allows us to see some of those individuals who left their own homes with whatever they could carry. Forging their way in a new land, they dreamed of opportunities.

Government records show that nearly 15 million people - principally from Southern and Eastern Europe - passed through Ellis Island. This clip includes footage of some of those immigrants as they explain why they wanted to come to the States.

The gateway of Ellis Island originally covered about 3.3 acres. Over the years, however, it expanded to 27.5 acres with the help of excess earth from the construction of New York City's subway (and other projects). The first immigration station, built of wood, opened in 1892 and was destroyed by fire in 1897. The second immigration station opened three years later.

Before it became an immigration-processing facility, Ellis Island was known for its abundant oyster beds. During the time that Dutch and English colonials occupied nearby territory, the place was known as "Oyster Island." Local Native-Americans called it "Kioshk" (Gull Island).

A man named Samuel Ellis took control of the island in the 1770s. Over the years, it would change from a sandy island (barely rising above the high-tide mark), to a place frequented by pirates, to a harbor fort (known as Gibson), to an immigration portal.

Ellis has been called both an "Island of Hope" and an "Island of Tears." The government reports that about two percent of people trying to get into America, through Ellis Island, were denied entry.

First opened to the public on a limited basis, in 1976, it has since undergone a major restoration (beginning in 1984). The main building - now known as the Ellis Island Immigration Museum - was open to the public on the 10th of September, 1990. About 2 million people visit Ellis Island every year.

### Credits:

"Island of Hope - Island of Tears," directed by Charles Guggenheim; National Park Service; AVA15996VNB1 1992 (1989).

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"Island of Hope - Island of Tears" is available online via a grant from Joseph McFadden, of Philadelphia, and was originally uploaded by Public.Resource.org under a joint venture with NTIS.

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