

Chapter 26: Immigration

1. Europe

Pattern of Change

Originally, most immigrants came to the United States from northern and western Europe. People came from England, Scotland, Germany, and Ireland. Most people were white, Protestant, and spoke English. They blended into society fairly well.

By the 1880s, **immigration** patterns began to change. Immigrants began arriving from southern and eastern Europe. They came from places like Italy, Greece, Russia, and Poland. These people wanted to escape from poverty, persecution, and war. This group of immigrants differed from previous groups. Many were Jews and Catholics and spoke languages other than English. As a result of these differences, they had more difficulty blending into American society and often met with **discrimination**.

2. Arriving in America

Checking In

In 1892, the federal government opened up Ellis Island, an immigration station that sat at the opening of the Hudson River near New York and New Jersey. Government officials checked immigrants for disease, criminal backgrounds, or anything that might make someone undesirable or a burden to society. Most people went through the process in a few hours before being allowed to enter the United States. The government rejected about two percent of the immigrants who arrived.



Immigrants arriving at Ellis Island usually spent a couple of hours going through the admission process to enter the United States. With thousands of people arriving a day, government officials had to move quickly because they had little room to detain people for any great length of time. Source: *Ellis Island*. George Grantham Bain Collection. No date. Photo. Library of Congress.

The Cities

After the Civil War, the American economy boomed. Businesses needed cheap labor to fill job openings. So immigrants arrived and settled in mostly big cities to work in factories and do manual labor.

Immigrants tended to group together with people similar to themselves. In cities, there were Polish neighborhoods, Russian neighborhoods, Chinese neighborhoods, Jewish neighborhoods, and so forth. In these neighborhoods, people spoke the same language, went to the same places of worship, and ate the same food. They published newspapers in their native language and exchanged information about America and their home country.

Since many immigrants had little money, some lived in **tenement** buildings. These were apartments that housed ten or fifteen people in a single unit. They frequently had no electricity, plumbing, or bathrooms. Living conditions were horrible.

3. Statue of Liberty

Symbol of Freedom

To celebrate the friendship between France and the United States and America's one hundredth anniversary of independence and freedom, the French built a statue of a woman holding a torch in one hand and a book titled *July 4, 1776* in the other. Funding issues delayed the construction of the statue for many years.



French artist in charge of the sculpture, Frederic Auguste Bartholdi, supposedly used his mother's face as the model for the face of Liberty. The official name of the statue is Liberty Enlightening the World. Source: Fernique, Albert. *Head of Statue of Liberty on Display in Park in Paris*. 1883. Photo. Library of Congress.

In 1885, the statue arrived in New York in several pieces. America agreed to design and build the pedestal for the statue but funds ran out in 1884. Joseph Pulitzer urged the readers of his newspaper *New York World* to donate money to complete the project. In six months, he raised over \$100,000.

On October 28, 1886, President Grover Cleveland led the ceremony for dedicating the Statue of Liberty in front of thousands of people.

4. Nativists

Opposition to Immigration

As the number of immigrants entering the country grew, many Americans began to oppose immigration policies. Unions complained that immigrants working cheaply reduced wages for union workers and took away jobs. Americans disliked the growing number of Catholics and followers of other non-Protestant religions. People blamed rising crime, illiteracy, and **urban** problems on immigrants.

Nativists, those who protect the interests of long-term citizens over immigrants, wanted laws passed to reduce or eliminate immigration. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act reduced the number of Chinese allowed into the United States. The Immigration Act of 1917 required immigrants to be able to read and write in a language. The Immigration Act of 1924 greatly reduced the number of immigrants into the United States for the next four decades.