

Name _____



Ellis Island's Final Days

For more than 60 years, Ellis Island was the main entry point for millions of immigrants coming to the United States. However, by 1954, it officially closed as an immigration processing center. Why did this once-busy gateway shut down? The answer lies in changes to immigration laws, new processing methods, and a decline in the number of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island.

New Immigration Laws

In the early 1900s, most immigrants had to pass through Ellis Island before they could enter the U.S. But in 1924, the U.S. government passed the Immigration Act, which limited the number of people who could immigrate each year. This new law also allowed many immigrants to be processed in their home countries instead of at Ellis Island. Because of this, fewer people needed to go through Ellis Island, and the station became much less busy.

Processing in U.S. Embassies

Before the Immigration Act of 1924, Ellis Island was necessary because officers needed to check immigrants' health and legal status before they entered the country. But as new laws were passed, immigrants had to get visas from U.S. embassies in their own countries before they traveled to America. This meant they no longer needed to stop at Ellis Island when they arrived.

World War II and a New Purpose

During World War II (1939-1945), Ellis Island was no longer mainly used for immigration. Instead, it became a detention center for people from countries that were at war with the U.S. After the war, the U.S. helped some refugees, including Holocaust survivors, enter the country, but immigration numbers remained low.

The Final Years and Closure

By the early 1950s, Ellis Island was almost empty. In 1954, it officially closed as an immigration station, marking the end of an era. The number of immigrants arriving by ship had dropped, and airports had become the new main entry points.

Today, Ellis Island is a national museum, where visitors can learn about the millions of people who once passed through its doors, hoping for a new life in America.