

Timeline

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1620s

- * Finding oyster beds near the future Ellis Island, Dutch settlers name it "Oyster Island."
- * Salem is founded on Massachusetts Bay by fifty colonists.
- * Bubonic Plague kills half the population of Lyons, France, later ravaging much of northern Italy.

1760s

- * After the execution of pirates on the island, including one named Anderson, it is known as "Gibbet Island."

1765

- * The Stamp Act is passed by British Parliament in 1765 to defray the costs of troops stationed in the colonies. Independence is won in the American Revolution, 1775-1783.

1785

- * Samuel Ellis, owner of the island, tries unsuccessfully to sell the property, although New York will buy it, after his death, in 1807.
- * The dollar is declared the official currency of the United States.

1808

- * The United States Government buys Ellis Island from New York for \$10,000.
- * Congress outlaws importation of slaves, although trade continues illegally.
- * Napoleon invades Spain, starting the Peninsular War (1808-1814).

1813

- * Ellis Island houses Fort Gibson (named after the Battle of Lake Erie hero), housing large amounts of ammunition.
- * The term "Uncle Sam" is coined, in an editorial in the Troy (New York) Post on September 7.
- * Napoleon defeated at the Battle of Leipzig by combined allied armies.

1847

- * Ellis Island is first proposed as a depot to house thousands of Irish immigrants, although Castle Garden is chosen, and serves as depot until 1890.
- * The United States receives the First Wave of immigrants fleeing troubles in Europe (the Second Wave lasts from 1890 1924.)
- * Ireland is in the grip of the Potato Famine; over one million die.

1861

- * Fort Gibson is dismantled and Ellis Island becomes the island's official name.
- * America's Civil War begins at Fort Sumter.
- * Tsar Alexander II of Russia emancipates the serfs, yet their condition remains desperate.

1890

- * The Federal government establishes the Bureau of Immigration and selects Ellis Island as the site for construction of a new Federal immigration station for the port of New York.
- * The Battle of Wounded Knee in South Dakota results in the massacre of hundreds of American Indian men, women, and children.
- * In London, the first electric underground railway is put into service, costing two pence a journey.

1892

- * The immigration station on Ellis Island is opened on January 1.
- * Financier J.P. Morgan organizes the creation of the General Electric Company.

1897

- * Fire destroys the original wooden buildings on Ellis Island.
- * The Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York, largest hotel in the world, is opened By John Jacob Astor IV.

1900

- * The Ellis Island Immigration Center reopens in its present Beaux-Arts style, designed by the architectural firm of Boring and Tilton.
- * U.S. Troops help to suppress the Boxer Rebellion in China.
- * The Trans-Siberian Railway opens, connecting Moscow with Irkutsk.

1907

- * In a single day, 11,747 immigrants pass through Ellis Island.
- * Women in Norway are granted suffrage. (American women are granted the Right to vote in 1920.)

1924

- * The tide of immigrants through Ellis Island begins to wane.
- * Congress passes a law making all American Indians U.S. citizens.
- * Lenin dies in Russia, succeeded by a triumvirate that includes Josef Stalin.

1943

- * Ellis Island is used as a detention center for enemy aliens.
- * Allied forces invade southern Italy after taking Sicily.

1954

- * Ellis Island is officially closed and offered for bid. More than 12 million immigrants have passed through Ellis Island since 1892.
- * The U.S. Supreme Court declares racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional.
- * French Foreign Legion troops and pro-French Vietnamese are defeated

at Dien Bien Phu by the forces of Ho Chih Minh.

1965

- * Ellis Island becomes part of the National Park Service.
- * President Lyndon B. Johnson unveils his "Great Society" program to end poverty in the U.S.
- * The People's Republic of China is gripped by the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," instituted by Mao Tse-tung.

1974

- * The Restore Ellis Island Committee is formed to raise funds for renovation.
- * President Richard Nixon resigns and is replaced by Gerald Ford.
- * Famine induced by severe droughts threatens millions of Africans.

1983

- * Restoration of the main building on Ellis Island is begun.
- * Sally Ride becomes the first American woman in space, on the Space Shuttle Challenger.
- * Lech Walesa, head of the Polish labor union Solidarity, is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

1990

- * The Ellis Island Immigration Museum opens on September 10.
- * United States forces are sent to the Persian Gulf as part of Operation Desert Shield.
- * Communism collapses in Eastern Europe, and the "Cold War" ends.

1992

- * Ellis Island celebrates its centennial.

1998

- * Landmark Supreme Court decision in dispute over Ellis Island ownership between New York and New Jersey.