

Passing Through Ellis Island

Are You Healthy?

Once on the island, immigrants were released from the boat and a physician examined them. People were labeled according to any health issues they appeared to have. For instance, if an immigrant's eye looked infected, the physicians would mark an "e" on their clothing. Those that appeared to have physical or mental disabilities were marked in the same manner. Many of those marked for mental disabilities were given tests, and if they did not pass, they may have been sent back to their home country.



The Receiving Room - Immigrants are seated in group compartments waiting for inspection (E & F). At this point they have already passed through two medical inspections. Those that failed the medical inspections were sent to the detention room (H).

The Registry Room

After the medical exam, immigrants were moved to a registry room where they were evaluated for moral, social and financial status. Immigrants were required to show that they had money, and many were required to prove they had a sponsor already in the United States. If a man had come to America before his family, his wife and children were **detained** at Ellis Island until he was able to meet them and attest to their status. Single women were not permitted to leave with men that were not family members, and many times these women were married right at Ellis Island to the men that would officially bring them into the U.S.

Review Questions

1. Why did doctors label immigrants during the medical exams?
2. Why might an immigrant be sent back to their home country?
3. What do you think it means to be detained? Why were some immigrants detained at Ellis Island?