

Time Machine (1892): The first immigrants arrive at Ellis Island

By New York Times, adapted by Newsela staff on 06.15.16

Word Count **651**

Level **870L**



Immigrants landing at Ellis Island in 1900. BELOW: Immigrants being inspected in 1904, courtesy of Library of Congress. Brown Brothers, Department of the Treasury

This article was first published in the Jan. 2, 1892 edition of the New York Times. Ellis Island officially opened the day before. The article tells the story of the first passenger processed through the immigration station, an Irish girl named Annie Moore.

NEW YORK, Jan. 2, 1892 — The new buildings on Ellis Island were constructed for the use of the Immigration Bureau. They officially opened yesterday. Immigration workers reported at an early hour. Each was shown to his place by Immigration Superintendent John B. Weber or his helper. Weber was on the island at 8 a.m. He inspected everything to make sure the island was ready to receive the first boatload of immigrants. They are coming to America from a foreign land.

Three big steamships were waiting in the harbor to land their passengers. The newcomers were anxious to be the first to arrive at the new station. The honor went to a little rosy-cheeked Irish girl named Annie Moore, 15 years of age. Yesterday, she became one of the 148 passengers with low-cost tickets to land from the steamship Nevada. Her name is now famous for being the first registered at Ellis Island.

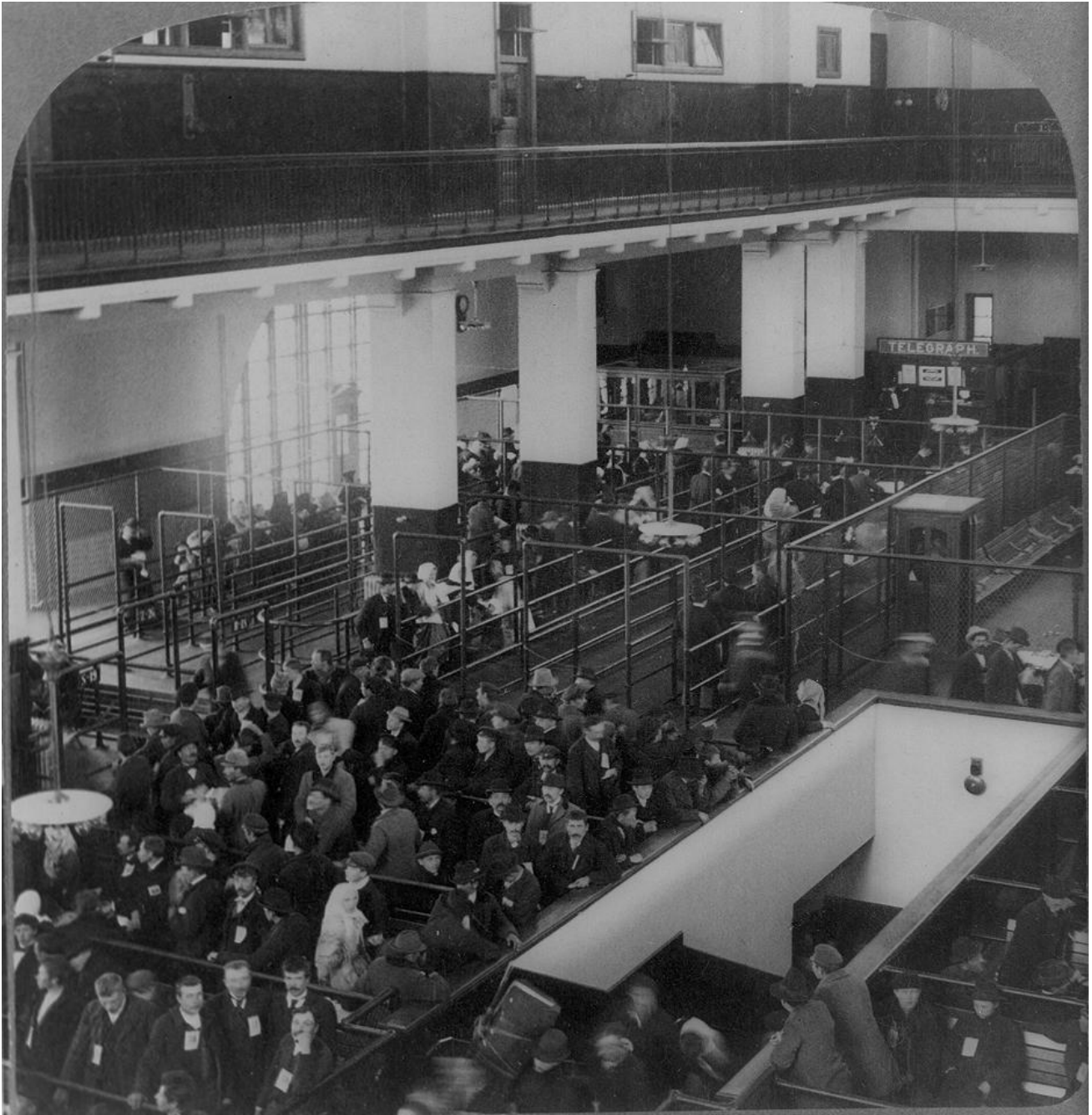
Greeted By Flags, Whistles And Bells

The steamship that brought Annie from Ireland arrived late Thursday night. Early yesterday morning the passengers of that vessel were placed on board an immigrant transfer boat. The craft was decorated with flags and lined up alongside the wharf on Ellis Island. Bells and whistles sounded nearby.

As soon as she got off the boat, Annie was hurried into the big building that almost covers the entire island. When the little voyager had been registered, Weber presented her with a \$10 gold piece and congratulated and welcomed her. It was the first United States coin she had ever seen and the largest sum of money she had ever possessed. She said she will never part with it but will always keep it to remember the occasion. She was accompanied by her two younger brothers. The children came to join their parents, who already live in Manhattan.

700 New Immigrants Handled Quickly

Besides those of the Nevada, passengers from the City of Paris and of the steamship Victoria were also honored at the new station. They numbered 700 in all. They were rapidly registered and sent on to the various places they were headed. The many conveniences in this huge building helped ease their arrival.



The workers of the Immigration Bureau said they were pleased with the spacious new building on the island. It was better than the cramped quarters at the Barge Office in Manhattan. The railroad people were the only ones who complained. They said the building is so large, they have to do quite a bit of running to get their various passengers together. Once they find them, they take the passengers by boat to the train station in Manhattan.

"We can easily handle 7,000 immigrants in one day here," Weber said. "We could not handle half that number at the Barge Office."

Able To Handle Passengers From Two Boats At One Time

Immigrants from two vessels can land on Ellis Island at the same time. Then the passengers are shown up a stairway to enter the building. They pass through 10 aisles, where clerks register them. After being registered, some immigrants have to be detained in a wire-screened enclosure. The more fortunate ones pass on to a similar compartment. From there, those going to the West are separated from those bound for New England or local destinations.

There is an information office in the building to help those seeking friends or relatives among the immigrants. There are also telegraph and railroad ticket offices and a money changer's office.

Except for a doctor, no officials will live on the island. The doctor occupies living quarters that were used by a gunner when Ellis Island stored Navy equipment.