

Castle Garden

The establishment of Castle Garden as a landing depot for immigrants afforded more protection to the newcomers. Castle Garden, first called The West Battery, later renamed Castle Clinton, was built between 1807 and 1811 by the Federal Government. It served first as a fort but was later used for band concerts, as a theater and a resort. The New York State Legislature authorized its use as a processing center for immigrants on April 13, 1855, opening it on August 1 of the same year. All immigrants would be led directly from the ship to Castle Garden usually remaining there for only a few hours before journeying to other points. In this time the immigrants could meet relatives, change money and speak with the American officials about the best places to find jobs, buy travel tickets and secure lodging.

An estimated 8 million immigrants from all nations passed through Battery Park from 1855 to 1890. (See Figure 15)

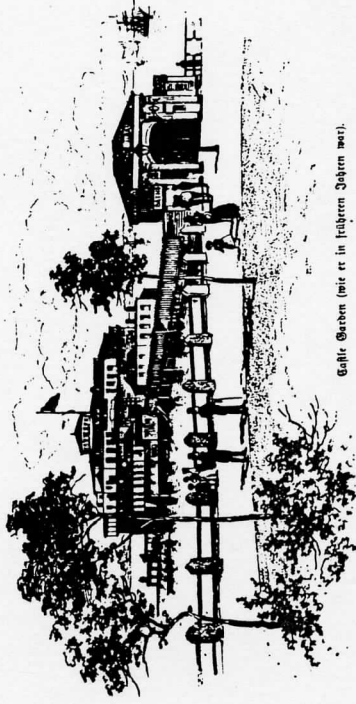


(Figure 15)

Emigrant-landing in New York (State Historical Society of Wisconsin) WHi (X3) 13381. From *Harper's Weekly*, 26 June, 1858, p. 405.

In 1864 Castle Garden became a recruiting quarters for the Union Army. Many German and Irish immigrants, enticed by the lure of the \$600 substitute bounty offered at the time, signed up for service immediately after arriving in New York.

Fire destroyed most of the structure of Castle Garden in 1876 but service to the immigrants continued. The last group passed through Castle Garden in April, 1890. (See Figure 16)



Castle Garden (sic) in früheren Jahren (sic).

(Figure 16)

Early View of Castle Garden (Originally published in *Harper's Weekly*, [Harper & Brothers] 1891. Later in *Illustrierte Welt, Deutsches Familienbuch*, 47 JG, Stuttgart & Leipzig, 1899, p. 335).

During its years of service, Castle Garden's registration process provided order where previously there was chaos and free for all at the docks. In 1950 it was declared a national monument.

Ellis Island

Confronted with the fact that most immigrants to America were landing in New York, a decision was made to build a new federal immigration station on Ellis Island.

Ellis Island was a small muddy flat located near the New Jersey shore. Before being assigned a new function, the site had been utilized as a fort, an ammunition depot and as a place where public executions occurred. In 1884 the Statue of Liberty, a gift from the school children of France, was erected in New York harbor.

In 1892 Ellis Island was opened, destined to take the burden of the immigrant wave. Upon arrival immigrants were given two minutes to answer 25 questions, among them were: Full name, age, married or single, occupation; can you read? can you write? national origin? to where do you travel? where did you land? do you have railroad tickets? have you paid your passage? how much money is in your possession? where do your relatives live? name and address of your nearest relative, have you ever been in the poorhouse? do you have a labor contract? how is your health? what religion are you? have you paid your taxes? settled your debts? done your military service? are you deserting your family or are you a criminal or political offender? Many were denied entry into the United States based upon their answers. (See Figure 17)

Ellis Island officials processed on the average 5,000 persons a day, seven days a week and was designed to handle even more if necessary. Two passenger vessels could be unloaded and processed at the same time. The complex consisted of a large Registry Hall, several Examination Rooms where ailing and diseased passengers were examined and detained, and ticket offices with money changing areas.

Ellis Island was in service from 1892 to 1954. When it was closed, 16 million immigrants from all nations had passed through its facilities. The poorly constructed original buildings, burned on the evening of June 14, 1897. A new facility was constructed to replace the burned ruins by 1900, the same year that it was "discovered" that corruption was rampant throughout the Halls. In 1901,



Registrar, Ellis Island (Originally published in *Harpers Weekly*, [Harper Brothers] 1891. Later in *Illustrirte Welt*, *Deutsches Familienbuch*, 47 JG, Stuttgart & Leipzig, 1899, p. 337.)

(Figure 17)

President Theodore Roosevelt appointed a new Commissioner of Emigration with the hope of getting rid of the corruption and this caused the situation to improve.

Another great fire ravaged the Island in the 1970's and an era was ended. (See Figure 18)

Major U.S. Immigration Laws

A short review of the contents of some of the major laws affecting the process of immigration into the United States may provide insight into the process itself.

IMMIGRATION ACT OF 1819: Required improvements in conditions of vessels bringing immigrants to the United States. Ship captains were required to provide customs officials with a list of immigrants describing age, sex, occupation, where they came from, and where they were going. Passengers ill with contagious diseases had to be quarantined. States carried out provisions of this law.

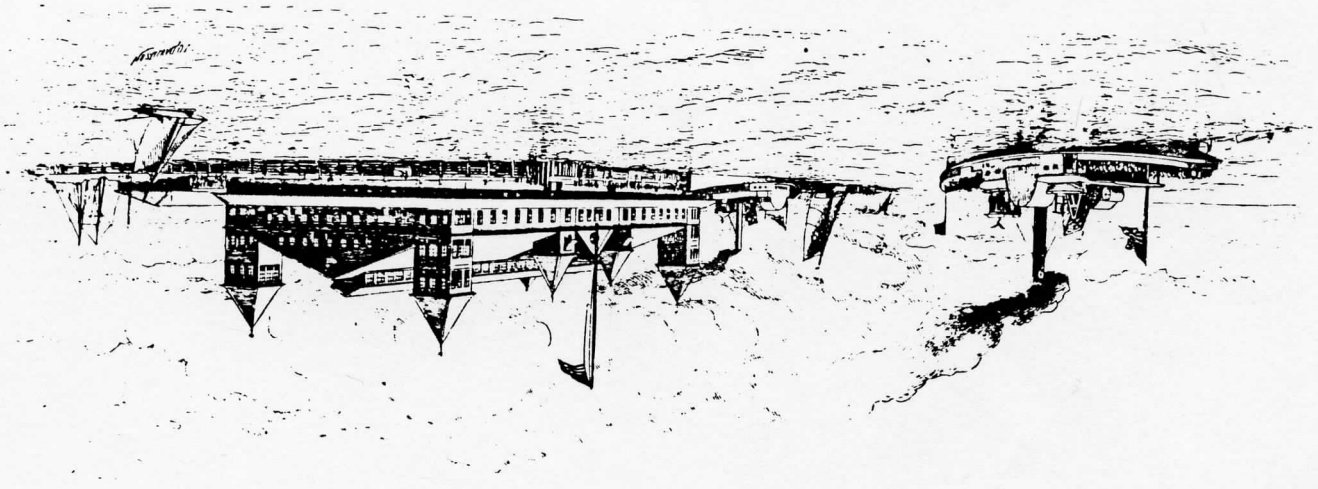
IMMIGRATION ACT OF 1875: Provided for inspection of vessels by state officials. The law barred the admission of ex-convicts as well as Chinese and Japanese who had been brought to the U.S. against their will.

CONTRACT LABOR LAW OF 1885: This law was designed to end the practice of signing up foreign laborers to work in America for low wages. No immigrant could have a job or a promise of a job before landing.

IMMIGRATION ACT OF 1891: The job of processing immigrants was totally taken over by the federal government. Federal inspectors examined immigrants on arrival. All immigrants had to pass a medical exam and answer questions about their background and intentions in America. Shipping lines were forbidden to solicit immigrants in foreign countries. The law also barred from admission persons suffering from "loathesome or dangerous diseases", those convicted of crimes involving "moral turpitude", polygamists, and those whose passage was paid for by others. Those rejected for immigration were deported at the expense of the shipping companies which had transported them to the United States.

Ellis Island (Originally published in Harper's Weekly, [Harper & Brothers] 1891. Later in *Illustrirte Welt, Deutsches Familienbuch*, 47 JG, Stuttgart & Leipzig, 1899, p. 335.)

(Figure 18)



States made similar attempts on their own to control and define the immigration process, as the American government left the control of immigration up to the state until 1875. In one example, the State of New York passed a law on July 11, 1851, prohibiting the landing of immigrants having less than \$20 in their possession. The Federal Government controlled the admission of immigrants from 1882, the year the first national immigration law applied to all ports of entry.

After the passage of legislation restricting immigration of paupers to the United States, attention in Germany was directed to other countries, i.e. Brazil, Algeria, the la Plata states (South America) and Australia. Great advantages were promised by emigrant companies and the governments of these countries which caused considerable immigration, mostly of poor people. However, this diversion and the legislation did not seem to deter large numbers from coming to America. In 1854, a total of 258,000 arrived from Germany, as many as came in the 18th century alone. According to official U.S. customs statistics, one and one half million immigrants came to America between 1800 and 1860.

Immigration Lists

The Federal government of the United States began keeping records on immigration in the second decade of the 19th century.

From 1820 to 1900 approximately five million Germans entered the United States. As illustrated on the following chart, the number of immigrants stating Germany as their place of origin increased substantially in the 1840's with the totals peaking in the decade of the '80's. A comparison of the figures reported by the German states, and later of the German Empire with U.S. statistics will show a substantial disagreement in total numbers. (See Tables C & D)

TABLE E

| Decade | German Immigration |
|---------|--------------------|
| 1820-29 | 5,753 |
| 1830-39 | 124,726 |
| 1840-49 | 385,434 |
| 1850-59 | 976,072 |
| 1860-69 | 723,734 |
| 1870-79 | 751,769 |
| 1880-89 | 1,445,181 |
| 1890-99 | 579,072 |

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *HISTORICAL STATISTICS OF THE UNITED STATES: COLONIAL TIMES TO 1970*. Washington, DC, 1975, p. 105

Each individual arriving in an American port was to be included on a ship's passenger list, giving the name and place of origin.

The National Archives has inbound Federal ship passenger arrival records dating back to 1820 for most East Coast and Gulf Coast ports and a few lists dating back to 1800 for Philadelphia. These ship passenger lists are not complete. Fire, dampness or other causes destroyed many records in the 19th century before the creating agencies transferred them to the National Archives. Lists for Pacific Coast ports, if they exist, are not in the custody of the National Archives. During the 19th century, no law required passenger arrival records to be kept for persons entering the United States by land from Canada or Mexico. No law required the keeping of outbound passenger lists.

Staff at the National Archives will undertake a limited search of those passenger lists which are indexed.

Microfilms of the extant passenger lists are available for sale through the National Archives Trust Fund Board, U.S. General Services Administration or may be viewed through inter-library loan facilities around the country.

Whether searching the lists in person, contacting the staff at the National Archives or hiring a professional researcher, it is strongly suggested that before expending extra amounts of time, energy and money one should know the following specifics: 1) port of entry, 2) name of the vessel, 3) approximate date of arrival, 4)

name of passenger, 5) approximate ages of immigrants, and 6) names and ages of accompanying passengers.

If one desires to order copies of ship passenger arrival records from the National Archives he must first obtain NATF Form (81) and submit the completed form to:

Reference Services Branch (NNIR)
National Archives and Records Service
8th and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20408

A catalog describing National Archives microfilm publications and containing detailed descriptions of the records and roll-by-roll listings for each port, is available from the National Archives Trust Fund Board (NIJ), National Archives, Washington, D.C. 20408. Titled IMMIGRANT AND PASSENGER ARRIVALS: A Select Catalog of National Archives Microfilm Publications, Washington, D.C., 1983.

The original passenger arrival lists for the port of New York have recently been transferred to the Balch Institute, 18 South 7th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106. The lists are currently being indexed by computer.

New York was probably the most frequent destination of the Germans who emigrated. Of the most frequently used ports, Table F will show the availability and time period of some passenger lists and indexes.

TABLE F

| PORT | CUSTOMS PASSENGER LISTS | IMMIGRATION PASSENGER LISTS | INDEXES |
|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Baltimore | 1820-1891 | 1891-1909 | 1820-1952 |
| Boston | 1820-1874 | | |
| | 1883-1899 | 1891-1943 | 1848-1891 1902-1920 |
| New Orleans | 1820-1903 | 1903-1945 | 1853-1952 |
| New York | 1820-1897 | 1897-1943 | 1820-1846 1897-1942 |
| Philadelphia | 1800-1899 | 1883-1948 | 1800-1948 |

Source: National Archives and Records Service. *GUIDE TO GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES*, Washington, D.C.: 1982, p. 48-56.

In the past few years many individuals have published works which incorporate genealogically valuable data found on the original ship lists. These titles are offered as a representative sampling of the type of material which has been published and is by no means intended to be a complete bibliography of source material pertaining to the subject. Most titles are readily available in most libraries in the United States:

Boyer, Carl, 3rd. *SHIP PASSENGER LISTS: PENNSYLVANIA AND DELAWARE (1641-1825)*. California, 1980.

-includes about 6,000 immigrants, primarily of German origin.

Filby, P. William and Mary K. Meyer. *PASSENGER AND IMMIGRATION LISTS INDEX*. Detroit, 1981 - First Edition 1983 Supplement, 1984.

Library of Congress Card Catalog No. 80-15404, ISBN 0-8103-1099-6.

The first three volume set, brings together in one alphabetical list the names of passengers who came to North America or the West Indies during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. The work includes approximately 300,000 passengers extracted from hundreds of lists. The immigrant's place and date of arrival are also given.

The First Edition 1983 supplement lists more than 200,000 citations from over 185 published passenger and naturalization lists.

Geue, Chester W. and Ethel H. *A NEW LAND BECKONED, GERMAN IMMIGRATION TO TEXAS, 1844-1847*. Waco, 1972.

-based on original source material on the settlement of Germans in Texas, this edition has an enlarged list of ships from Germany and the U.S. that brought the emigrants, totaling over 4,000 names.

Geue, Ethel H. *NEW HOMES IN A NEW LAND, GERMAN IMMIGRATION TO TEXAS, 1847-1867*. n.p. 1970.

-this work, a supplement of the above title, is based on 105 ship passenger lists which includes about 5,000 immigrants.

Nimmo, Sylvia Lee. *PASSENGER LISTS: TRANSCRIPTIONS FROM NATIONAL ARCHIVES COPIES MADE BY*

Summary

In dealing with nineteenth century emigration from the German states we must keep three conditions in mind. First, the ancient systems, in some areas still in practice, in others still undergoing the processess of reform, whereby inheritances had to be divided equally among all living children. This practice resulted in the fragmentation of agricultural lands into unprofitable, small holdings which could not support the families living on them. The alternative means of providing extra income, such as the manufacture of items for sale in the home and the conversion to potatoes as a staple crop collapsed when both enterprises failed later in the century.

Secondly, overpopulation caused a burden on the already strained lands to produce enough to support them, and coupled with the reoccurring crop failures and resulting famines early in the century provided another reason for leaving for "greener pastures".

Thirdly, presumably a majority of the German emigrants left their homeland because causes there prodded them on to find a new location. Fewer were driven by a distant, more nebulous goal such as democracy. Conditions in America for most of the nineteenth century favored immigration. The enactment of the Homestead Act of 1862, for example, undoubtedly played no small part in attracting emigrants to America.

The numbers of emigrants from Germany fluctuated during certain years due to increased political activity (including wars) between the German states and in America, but it is doubtful that the total number was as greatly affected by this cause as believed by some.

The freedom to emigrate from one German state to another granted by the Act of Confederation (*Bundesakt*) of 1815 did not mention anything about emigration to foreign countries. The lack of guidance concerning this issue left German officials on their own to deal with emigrants to America, causing a great disparity of opinion and documentation for three or four decades following the *Bundesakt*. Eventually communities, districts and finally the German Empire recognized the emigration phenomenon.

Improved transportation systems in Europe and America provided an additional impetus to emigration from Germany. Experience in handling emigrant traffic made Bremen and Hamburg important port cities and increased their reputations as trade centers. The volume of police records, passport rolls, ship passenger lists and other papers relating to the movement of German citizens increased as the century progressed and the emigrant numbers continued to rise.

In the beginning, America accepted the immigrants without restriction. Other countries, such as Russia, controlled the quality of immigrants and limited immigration.

Federal reaction to immigration in the United States seems, to the casual observer, to have been slower and less organized in contrast to the Germans in their handling of emigration. Many more complete records were kept of emigrants than of immigrants, with respect to names, ages, occupations and origins.

In the second half of the nineteenth century almost 90 percent of Germans emigrating overseas chose the United States.

America provided the emigrant with work when jobs were sought, provided emigrants with the opportunity to own land when no hope was held in the Fatherland. Space was available on the American frontier for those who escaped from overpopulated areas. There were no oppressive rulers, dues or high taxes to pay in the New Land.

The words of the German poet, Goethe, "*Amerika, du hast es besser*", (America, you have it better), portrayed the view that many German immigrants had of America. For most, there were opportunities for a better life in America. For whatever the reason, the journey to America was the fulfillment of a dream for several million German-born citizens, our ancestors.