

**IF  
YOUR**

# Name Was Changed at Ellis Island

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**NEW and  
UPDATED!**



 **SCHOLASTIC**

### *What was Ellis Island?*

Ellis Island was an immigration center located in New York Harbor. Millions of newcomers passed through its gates and were examined by doctors and legal inspectors. Some were allowed to enter the United States right away, some were detained (held for a while), and some were deported (rejected and sent back).

Before Ellis Island opened, immigrants had been examined at Castle Garden at the tip of Manhattan Island. At one time Castle Garden had been a fort, then a concert hall. In 1855 it was turned into an immigration center. Thirty-five years later, it was no longer big enough to handle the thousands of new immigrants arriving daily.

The U.S. government then decided to use a small piece of land in New York Harbor known as Ellis Island for a new immigration center. The Ellis Island station opened in 1892. During the next thirty years, more people came to America than at any other time. At least 12 million of them passed through Ellis Island.



*Did all immigrants come through Ellis Island?*

Most immigrants to America came through Ellis Island, but not all. Some entered through other east coast ports in Boston, Philadelphia, or Baltimore; southern or southwestern ports like New Orleans and Galveston; or west coast cities like San Francisco. In 1907, the year when more immigrants came to the United States than at any other time, there were seventy immigration stations. But ninety percent of all the newcomers at that time passed through Ellis Island.

Not all immigrants who arrived in New York had to go through Ellis Island. If you had the most expensive tickets on the ship — first or second class — immigration inspectors examined you while you were aboard the ship in the harbor. If you passed the inspection, you were free to enter the country when the boat docked in New York. Only the poor who traveled in third class or steerage — the cheapest way to travel — were taken to Ellis Island.

## **A different time ... a different place ... What if you were there?**

If your name was changed at Ellis Island

- Would everyone in your family have traveled together?
- How long would you have stayed at Ellis Island?
- Would you have to be able to speak English?

This book tells you what it was like when Ellis Island was opened in 1892 as a center for immigrants coming to live in America.

Look for other books in this unique series that take you to important times in history.