

Ellis Island Immigration - Handout  
February 2, 2019 - Linking Generations Program

Today we have a dramatic recreation of the immigration of two people from Lithuania to Lynn, MA. We will watch them make arrangements for their trip, travel across Europe, board their ship, transit the Atlantic, be processed at Ellis Island, and take the train to their destination.

Immigration during the primary Ellis Island period (1892-1922) is an exciting period for genealogists. Over 10 million people came through Ellis Island during this period, and virtually all of us can trace one of our direct ancestors to Ellis Island.

The Ellis Island phenomena is misunderstood. Here are some facts:

- \*It was a major business enterprise - linking the steamship companies (primarily German) with the growing needs of industry in the United States for healthy workers.
- \*No one's name was changed at Ellis Island - the manifests were written at the departure port in Europe - the Ellis Island inspector simply verified the information on the manifest.
- \*98% of those who arrived at Ellis Island were admitted to the United States. Many immigrants were rejected at the German border or by the steamship companies.
- \*Many immigrants returned to their home country - they came to the US to earn money.
- \*Most immigrants had their way paid - usually by someone already in the United States - and left their home country with a through ticket - a ticket that covered the cost of their steamship fare and their railroad trip from Ellis Island to their final destination.

If you'd like to learn more about the immigration process, here are some references.

First, and perhaps most important to the genealogist, is how to access copies of the manifests. They are posted on the Ellis Island website: <https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/> as well as familysearch. To find an individual, however, you want to use the wonderful Steve Morse website, which can handle the likely problems in spelling! It's at [www.stevemorse.org](http://www.stevemorse.org). You do need to create a free sign-in for the Ellis Island website, since what the Steve Morse website does is send you to the right page that's posted there.

The Ellis Island website mentioned above is also a good place to start to just get a history.

Videos of Ellis Island. Here are links:

[Forgotten Ellis Island](#) is the best video online. It focuses on the hospital, but is broad in content. [Arrival of Immigrants](#) and [Immigrants Landing](#) are other fascinating videos.

Books on immigration:

*American Passage: The History of Ellis Island* by Vincent J. Cannato

*The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe* by Tara Zahra

*Round-trip to America: The Immigrants Return to Europe* by Mark Wyman