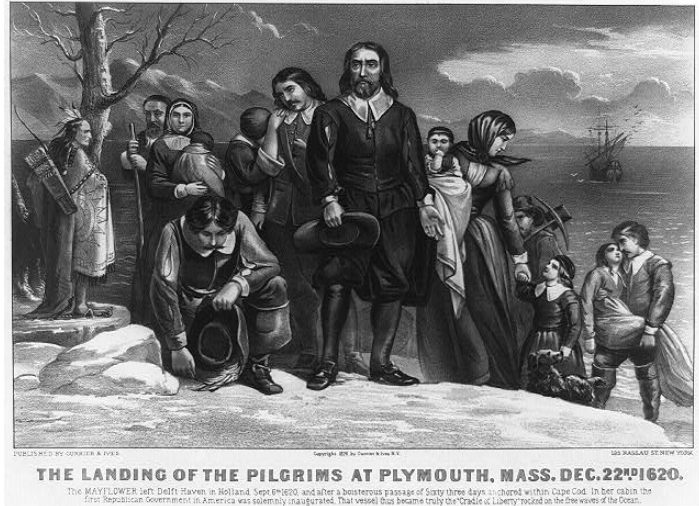
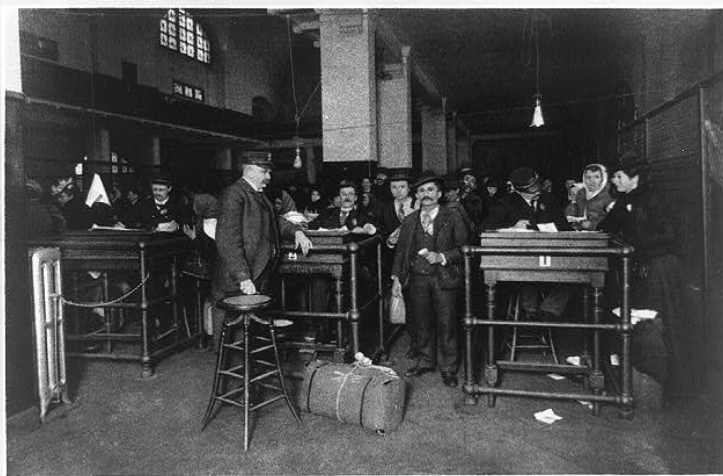


Immigration to America

From its beginnings, America has been a nation of immigrants. Europeans, led by the Spanish and French, began establishing settlements in the 1500's on land that would become the United States. In 1607, the English started the first permanent settlement in America at Jamestown, Virginia. In 1620, English pilgrims fled religious persecution and established a colony in Plymouth, Massachusetts. A larger group seeking religious freedom, the Puritans, who established the Massachusetts Bay Colony, followed them.



While some immigrants came to America in search of religious freedom, others arrived during the 19th century seeking economic opportunities. Many of these immigrants came from northern and western Europe, with large numbers coming from Ireland where they were experiencing a famine. By the 1840's almost half of America's immigrants were from Ireland. Usually these impoverished Irish immigrants settled near their point of arrival in cities along the east coast where jobs were available. Between 1820 and 1930, 4.5 million Irish migrated to the United States.



By the late 19th century, the majority of arrivals were from central, eastern and southern Europe. In the 1890s, 600,000 Italians migrated to America, and by 1920, more than four million had entered the United States. Jews from Eastern Europe fleeing religious persecution also arrived in large numbers. In 1907, the peak year for admission of new immigrants, approximately 1.3 million people entered the United States.

However, in the following century, immigration patterns shifted due to laws, war, and economic factors. With the outbreak of World War I, immigration to the US declined. By 1917, the government passed laws requiring immigrants over age 16 to pass a literacy test. In the 1920s immigration quotas, the number of people allowed in, were established. Again, immigration decreased during the age of the Great Depression of the 1930s and during World War II.

In 1965, Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act, which removed quotas. This act and subsequent legislation resulted in the nation experiencing a shift in immigration patterns. Today, the majority of U.S. immigrants come from Asia and Latin America rather than Europe.

Excerpted from: <http://www.history.com/topics/u-s-immigration-before-1965>

Photos from: www.loc.gov

General Immigration Timelines:

<http://www.annenbergclassroom.org/files/documents/immigration.pdf>

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/alt/timeline.html>