



At times, Ellis Island had a staff of as many as 850 people. Services and housing were available for patients, families, doctors, nurses, orderlies, cooks, clerical personnel, as well as laundry and maintenance staff. The facility also had an eight-body mortuary. Ellis Island displayed some of the finest hospital conditions in the world with the capability to house, clean, disinfect, provide care, perform surgery, deliver babies, and do autopsies.



Patients and families could meet with immigration officials, translators, and immigrant aid societies. Occupational therapy, entertainment, and a recreation program were offered as well, all on 27.5 acres of land.



There was a library that had newspapers in 26 languages, and offices that educated and introduced millions to the ways of America.



There were well-baby clinics with classes in parenting, and a school for the children, complete with a playground.

SAVE ELLIS ISLAND

Save Ellis Island is the designated not-for-profit National Park Service partner responsible for the restoration, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the 29 buildings on Ellis Island's south side. We support the mission to preserve and protect this priceless monument for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.

To make a donation or for more information visit:

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Telling Ellis Island's Other Story

More than 12 million newcomers passed through the Ellis Island Immigration Station between 1892 and 1954 on the way to new lives in America. Across the ferry slip, a lesser-known story waits to be told: the story of more than a million immigrants who came to America needing medical care before they were allowed into the country.



SAVE ELLIS ISLAND



“Over a million immigrants arrived at the port of New York in 1914, a total about equal to the populations of Boston and Washington combined. Take any week in the year and imagine that, during this week, all the people who were sick and needed treatment in these two cities were to be sent to one hospital. Assume, also, that this hospital was a real general hospital, in the fullest sense of the word, and that it accepted not only ordinary patients but also the insane and those suffering from contagious diseases. Let us further suppose that all [those arriving] were inspected and that all those who were suspected of having latent disorders, like tuberculosis or syphilis, were also sent to this general hospital for examination and treatment. Grant all of these conditions, and you will have a pretty fair idea of the total amount of work, performed by the hospital at Ellis Island last year.”

~ Dr. Milton Foster

U.S. Public Health Services (1914)

On Ellis Island’s south side stand the buildings of the nation’s largest Public Health Service hospital, where caring doctors, nurses and support staff treated 1.2 million newcomers for conditions that would prevent them from working or endanger public health. Indeed, if the Ellis Island Hospital had not existed, many Americans would not be here today.

The entire complex is historically significant not only from an immigration point of view but also from a medical standpoint. At the time it opened, the hospital facility design was cutting edge and received international recognition. In terms of medical training and technologically, Ellis Island’s hospitals were among the finest in the world.



The authorities on Ellis Island had the responsibility to ensure everyone arriving was healthy and fit for joining the workforce in an up-and-coming industrialized nation. Supporting the immigrant’s dreams of becoming an American citizen included doctors who physically inspected each person as they arrived at Ellis Island. If migrants were found to have any of number of conditions including general illness, pregnancy, broken bones, tuberculous, measles, diphtheria, eye disease, mental defects, and other conditions, they were sent to the south side of the island for further evaluation and treatment.

Its Infectious Disease Wards provided learning opportunities for those studying contagious diseases such as tuberculosis and measles. Its design was based on the 1876 germ theory, including the use of isolation, air and sunlight to treat infection. Admissions at the hospital averaged about 100 new patients per day. It was a busy place and doctors could expect anything. The average hospital stay was two weeks but could last up to eighteen months.



Now standing vacant and mostly unrestored, the hospital is a priceless reminder of the need to preserve and protect our shared history before it disappears. Wards and operating rooms, mortuary and autopsy theater, staff housing and kitchens all stand waiting to be saved and appreciated for their place in America’s story. These are the rooms and corridors where our immigrant ancestors received excellent care from some of the nation’s best doctors.



The dining hall facilities could feed as many as 2,000 people a day, including a full kosher kitchen.

Our aim is to tell Ellis Island’s lesser-known history through these iconic buildings, honoring our immigrant ancestors and the caring medical staff members who brought them back to health. Some of the structures will be restored with exhibits for public visitation, while others will be maintained in their current state of decay to show the effects of neglect on our shared heritage.

Please join us in our pledge to preserve these important, historic buildings, and the stories they tell.

The south side of Ellis Island was developed with state-of-the-art medical facilities from 1900-1937. The hospital complex of Ellis Island played a major role in hundreds of thousands of immigrants’ ability to remain in the United States. Nearly ten percent of Ellis Island Immigrants spent time in the hospitals.