

# “MANIFEST DESTINY”: NAMES AT ELLIS ISLAND

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Welcome to Ellis Island, IAn JGSky. I hope your voyage in steerage was adequate, and you didn't get too seasick. I will stamp your inspection card, which shows you had been vaccinated and disinfested at Hamburg, and now you are at the Port of New York. Your name on the card is quite readable. That name should match your name on the landing tag you were asked to wear with the “21 9” numbers that

show your location on the President Grant's manifest for this voyage. The inspection card and manifest were made at Hamburg before your ship departed. We inspectors need to see and compare those in case of fraud. You may have heard that we regularly “Americanize” names during the immigration process at Ellis Island. You heard wrong! Why would we do that? We know your name... it's on multiple documents (even if you are illiterate) and anyway, we have enough to do. Translators will also help you get through the process. We don't care what name you use after you leave our Station! There is no U.S. law that requires you to use the name you came into this country with.

This immigration station opened in 1892 but five years later burned to the ground. The present building opened in 1900, and was built to be fireproof. We apologize for the overcrowding. It was designed for at most 5,000 immigrants a day, and today, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1907, we processed 11,747 people. Sorry we could only spend an average of 34 seconds on you today during the immigration process when we looked at your answers on the ship manifest. Certainly on our part, there isn't enough time, inclination, or any official forms to “Americanize” your name, JGSky, even if we wanted to. You will probably do that yourself for a variety of reasons after arrival, although I'm sure your descendants will blame it on us at Ellis Island (and no other Immigration Station!). However, it's a good thing, IAn, you came this year. If you decided to come in 1924, U.S. quota laws restricted immigration from your area of southern and eastern Europe.

It's amazing that in 1990 this building with its great hall, renovated with private funds, was rededicated to the public. It's part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument.

Millions of tourists each year will walk where you walked. What do you think about your name on the Wall of Honor? Pretty neat!! Considering that the U.S. government tried twice to sell Ellis Island after it was completely closed in 1954, by a bidding process (but no bid came close to what they were looking for), we have come a long way in appreciating this island as a national landmark.

I notice you have chalk marks (including an "X") on your shoulder. (Genealogy is a disease). You are going to have to undergo some medical tests. But don't worry, only 2% of immigrants to this Station were deported. What's that? It's called a buttonhook. Ellis Island didn't earn the name "Island of Tears" for nothing. If you are a female you aren't going to be released unless (usually) some relative is going to pick you up. And if you don't have funds or pre-paid tickets to get to your final destination, you are going to be held until you telegraph your U.S. friends or relatives for travel money or ask the Hebrew Aid Society for money. In fact, 12% of you are going to be found on these detention pages showing why you are being held and the resolution of your plight.

Who paid for your steamship ticket? You paid for it yourself Ian? That's unlikely! What job prospects do you have here. Do you have a support system in place? I think you will have to go before our Board of Special Inquiry. They will determine if you are a "LPC"... Likely Public Charge, the number one reason for deportation. And if you have a pre-existing contract to work, then you will be deported as a "CL", Contract Laborer. About 6% of immigrants went through the BSI and 1/3 of them were deported. Those BSI summary pages will be available for future researchers.

Eventually, a number of people are going to try to find your immigration record to document your voyage to America. But they may not know that 30% of immigrants during your time period entered through other ports. You did become a citizen? Starting 1906 your application should show the ship, date, and port of entry to help your descendants find your ship manifest. You did participate on the U.S. Censuses? The forms asked in 1900 through 1930 when you came to the U.S. That should give them some hints as to where to look. And of course there is the "Family Lore" that you left behind that will guide future researchers. They don't know you have a warped sense of humor!! So misguided, that I'm changing your chalked "X" to an "X" within a circle.

You might be interested in how people are going to find your immigrant records in 2016. And I will be spending some time with them going through four different strategies and data sets. That includes two name indexes (Ellis Island/EIDB and Ancestry.com) put online in the 2000s, and two different film set approaches once only used at the National Archives that either now are online, or are being put online. The film sets include what are called "Book Lists" and "Soundex Cards", Mr. "J000", and can help find

people whose names, because of damage to the manifest sheets, don't appear on the manifest scans. Most of the damage to the manifest pages, I believe, occurred in late 1939 to 1941. Sorry about that. I will be helping those people understand the problems of those methods. For instance, do you know that over 200,000 immigrant names on the EIDB have "..." as part of their name on the EIDB data set, JG...ky?

**TALK OUTLINE**  
**Short History of Station**  
**Wall of Honor**  
**Name Change Myths**  
**Manifest Information**  
**Detention Process**  
**Names Indexes**

**General References:**

Bolino, A. C. 1985. The Ellis Island Source Book. Kensington Historical Press.  
Brownstone, D. M., I. M. Franck & D Brownstone. 2000. Island of Hope, Island of Tears. MetroBooks.  
Cannato, V. J. 2009. American Passage, The History of Ellis Island. Harper Press.  
Carmack, S. D. 2005. Guide to Finding Your Ellis Island Ancestors. Family Tree Books.  
Colleta, J.P. 1993. They Came In Ships. Ancestry.  
Pitkin, T. M. 1975. Keepers of the Gate, A History of Ellis Island. NY University Press.

**Other Websites Used:**

<http://tinyurl.com/q5ybqpw> Avotaynu Online Manifest Creation (may need to be registered)  
<http://tinyurl.com/4t8tkqx> History of Ellis Island  
<http://tinyurl.com/krdxaex> NY Public Library Why Names Not Changed  
<http://tinyurl.com/nmhfqnm> Immigration Timeline  
<http://tinyurl.com/qd88z5j> Immigration Timeline  
Weintraub, J. 2015. Submitted JewishGen InfoFile on Name Changes <http://tinyurl.com/j3duma4>

**Website Utilities:**

<http://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/genealogy/genealogy-notebook/researching-deportation-records>  
[familysearch.org/search/catalog/341057?availability=Family History Library](http://familysearch.org/search/catalog/341057?availability=Family+History+Library)  
<http://libertyellisfoundation.org/about-the-wall-of-honor>  
[http://www.capitalareagenealogy.org/page\\_18j.htm](http://www.capitalareagenealogy.org/page_18j.htm) (extraction forms for manifest)  
<http://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/Manifests/> how to interpret markings on the manifest  
[stevemorse.org](http://stevemorse.org) (Ellis Island Name Search, Soundex Generator, other utilities)  
[www.ellislandrecords.org](http://www.ellislandrecords.org)  
<http://tinyurl.com/kwrf62w> T612 book lists on familysearch.org  
<http://familysearch.org/search/catalog/341057> soundex films and manifest images  
T621 help aid to get to T715 <http://stevemorse.org/ellis/boat.html>