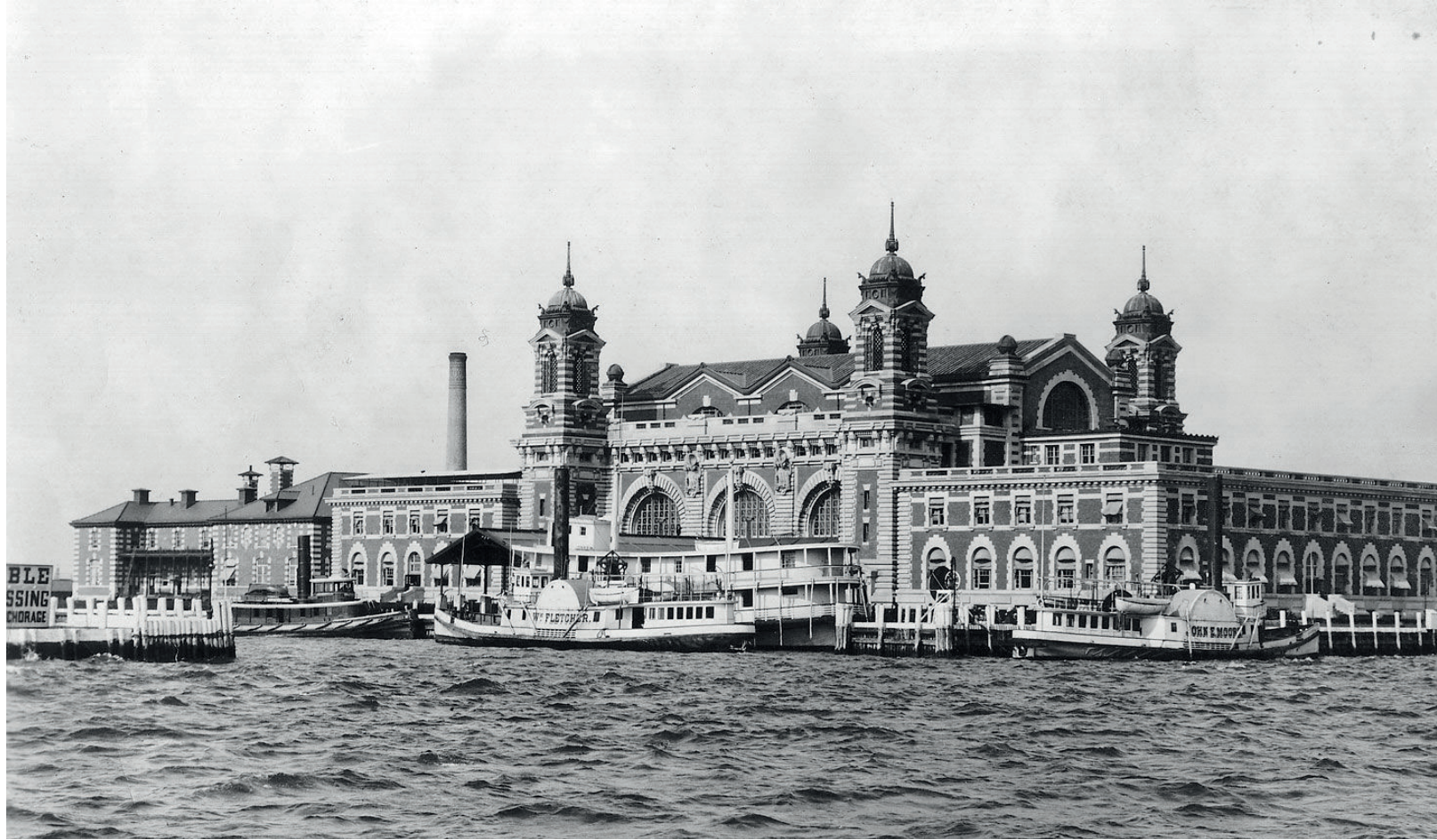


# ELLIS: ISLE OF JOY OR DESPAIR?

## 1900, BORING AND TILTON, NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

NOAH FOX, NEW YORK CITY, US



View of Ellis Island from afar



Immigrant family looking at New York City from Ellis Island



Stairs of Separation



Great Hall with movable screens to filter people through the immigration process

**The Ellis Island we see today was an immigration station from 1900-1954. For many this place was a symbol of hope and freedom but for others it was a symbol of rejection and gloom. A series of tests were administered on the island and if you can't pass them, you are deported or sent to the hospital where you may not come back. The sick were not the only ones that were deported but if it seemed like you would become a public charge, you would also have to leave. Others however went through the process pretty quickly. So what is Ellis Island? An Isle of Joy or an Isle of Despair?**

### ISLE OF JOY

Ellis Island was built in a way where people could easily identify it from afar. Boring and Tilton used a style of architecture from the French Renaissance. They used brick that was trimmed with limestone and granite giving it a unique look when compared to other architecture in America at that time. The contrasting colors of the building made it easy to spot from the Manhattan coastline. The triple-arch entrances and windows also made Ellis Island easy to identify. The way this building looked from the outside was very extravagant and instilled hope into the immigrants that have arrived in America. Ellis Island didn't always look so exquisite. Before being built by Boring and Tilton, it was used as a base for the Union during the

Civil War. The government then decided to turn it into an immigration station in 1892 but it burnt down in 1897 resulting in the attractive building it is today being finished in 1900. The government chose this location for an immigration station because they knew it would give immigrants a feeling of hope. As the immigrants were coming in by ship to the United States, they not only saw the ornate Ellis Island, but they had views of New York City's skyline as well as the Statue of Liberty. The Statue of Liberty was known to be the symbol of freedom throughout the United States so when the immigrants saw this, they saw their dreams becoming a reality, or so they thought...

### ISLE OF DESPAIR

The interior architecture of Ellis Island shows that it was built for the testing of immigrants. After steerage passengers were initially checked on the boat and administered to go to Ellis Island for further testing, the first test was climbing up a set of stairs. The design of the stairs was to administer a second test for the passengers. There was a doctor waiting at the top looking for signs of lameness or heavy breathing that may indicate heart problems. If they showed signs, they would be marked before entering the Great Hall. The Great Hall was also built in a way where many people could be processed quickly. There were movable screens within the Great Hall that were used to filter people through the immigration process. The windows within the hall were designed to stay open to decrease the risk of spreading disease. If the

immigrant was deemed okay to enter the United States, they would then take a ship to New York City. If the immigrant was deemed unfit for immigration, they would either be held longer at the hospital for further examination or sent back to their home country. The problem with the immigration process is that some were marked "likely to become a public charge" which they had no way of telling based off the tests. Most of the people that were marked this came from Eastern Europe and were marked this way due to discrimination. So Ellis Island is an Isle of Joy for first class and second class passengers as well as white western Europeans but it was an Isle of Despair for Eastern Europeans and others that were frequently discriminated against in history.