



Foundation Document Overview

Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island

New Jersey and New York



Contact Information

For more information about the *Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island Foundation Document*, contact: stli_superintendent@nps.gov or (212) 363-3200 or write to:
Superintendent, Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island, Liberty Island, New York, NY 10004

Purpose



The purpose of STATUE OF LIBERTY NATIONAL MONUMENT AND ELLIS ISLAND is to preserve, protect, and interpret these national and international symbols of freedom and migration and to promote understanding, reflection, and discussion about the meanings of liberty and opportunity.

Significance

Significance statements express why Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The statue “Liberty Enlightening the World” is one of the world’s most recognized icons. She endures as a highly potent symbol inspiring contemplation of such ideas as liberty, freedom for all people, human rights, democracy, and opportunity. As a gift from the people of France to the people of the United States, the Statue commemorates friendship, democratic government, and the abolition of slavery. Her design, an important technological achievement of its time, continues to represent a bridge between art and engineering.
- Ellis Island is the preeminent example of a government immigration and public health operation, the busiest and largest of its time. The “island of hope, island of tears” now symbolizes the American story of immigration, the cultural richness of the United States, and the contribution of immigrants to U.S. society.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Statue of Liberty and Liberty Island**
- **Ellis Island**
- **Collections, Archives, and Oral Histories**
- **The Immigrant's Experience at the Gateway to America**
- **Views and Vistas**
- **Opportunity for Dialogue**
- **Symbolism of the Statue of Liberty**
- **Continuing Connections between Immigrant Families and Ellis Island**

Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Archeological Resources**
- **Liberty Island Administration Building and Concession Buildings**



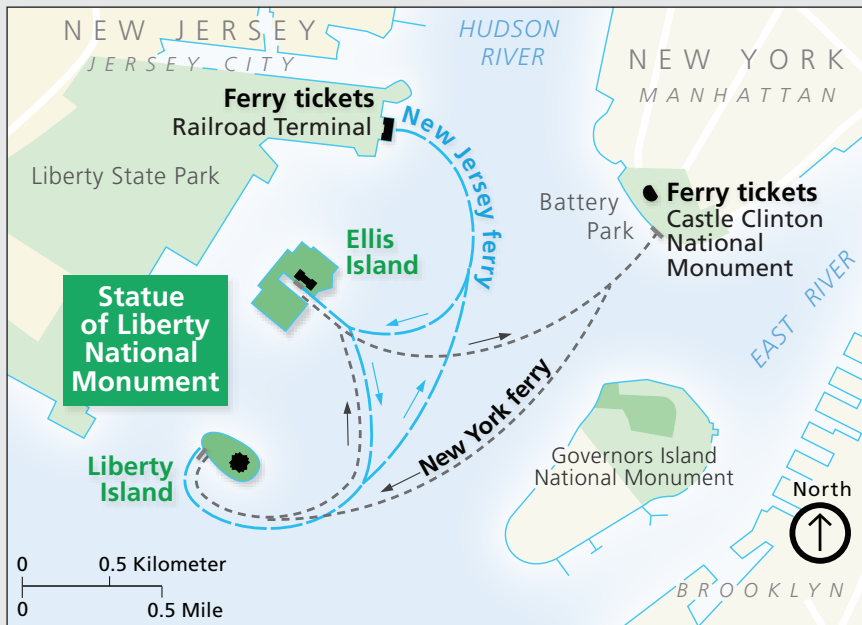
Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Symbol and Reality.** The Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island represent ideals of liberty, freedom, economic opportunity, and national identity, but there is inherent tension between this symbolism and the reality of applying those ideals in a democratic society.
- **Engineering and Architecture.** The Statue of Liberty represents high achievement in fine art and engineering; Ellis Island's buildings illustrate some of the most sophisticated styles of their time, meant to impress and awe while providing state-of-the-art facilities for immigrant processing and public health.
- **Immigration.** The Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island together speak to the global stories of human migration, the American history of immigration, and the role of immigration in building the United States.



Description



Ellis Island

Purchased by the federal government in 1808, Ellis Island was approved as a site for fortifications, making the island part of the harbor defense system that included Castle Clinton at Battery Park in Lower Manhattan, Castle Williams and Fort Jay on Governors Island, Fort Wood on Bedloe's Island (now Liberty Island), and two earthworks forts at the entrance to New York Harbor at the Verrazano Narrows. The War Department established a 20-gun battery, magazine, and barracks at the island and named it Fort Gibson. In 1861, Fort Gibson was dismantled and a naval magazine and supply depot was set up in its place.

In 1890, Ellis Island was selected as the site for the new federally operated immigration station for the Port of New York. The facility opened on January 1, 1892.

Statue of Liberty National Monument

Located on Liberty Island in New York Harbor, the Statue of Liberty (Statue) was presented to the American people in 1886 by the Franco-American Union to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the independence of the United States. The brainchild of French scholar Édouard de Laboulaye, the Statue's principal designers were French sculptor Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi and French engineer Alexandre-Gustave Eiffel. American architect Richard Morris Hunt designed the pedestal. In 1877, Congress authorized acceptance of the sculpture as a commemorative monument of art, and President Ulysses S. Grant designated Bedloe's Island (now Liberty Island) as the permanent site for the Statue. Its design and construction were recognized at the time as one of the greatest technical achievements of the 19th century and hailed as a bridge between art and engineering.

The Statue was completed in France in July 1884 and arrived in 350 pieces in New York in June 1885 on board the French frigate *Isère*. Construction of the granite pedestal within Fort Wood on Bedloe's Island was completed in April 1886. The Statue was reassembled on her new pedestal in four months and dedicated on October 28, 1886, in front of thousands of spectators. Administration of the Statue fell under the United States Lighthouse Board from 1886 until 1902, when it was transferred to the U.S. Army. President Calvin Coolidge declared the Statue of Liberty and its pedestal a national monument in 1924. The National Park Service took over the administration of the monument in 1933 and the remainder of the island in 1937.

In June 1897, the original immigration facilities were consumed by fire and new structures were constructed. The facility opened on December 17, 1900. The original 3.5-acre island was increased to 10 acres from 1890 to 1892. Island Two, containing hospital wards and an administration building, was developed to 3 acres in 1898. A third island (Island Three) comprising 5 acres was added between 1905 and 1906 with additional hospital facilities for patients requiring contagious disease isolation.

During World War I, the island served as an internment center. The hospital was used by the War Department for wounded servicemen. During World War II, the facility again served as a detention center and as a U.S. Coast Guard training site. Changing immigration policies following the war reduced the number of immigrants and the need for the immigration center. In total, from 1892 to 1954, the U.S. Immigration Service examined approximately 12 million immigrants before allowing them into the United States.

In 1965, Ellis Island was declared part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument.