

Ellis Island History

CONSIDINE

Ellis Island was added to Statue of Liberty National Monument on May 11, 1965 by Presidential Proclamation.

Located 1,300 feet from Jersey shore, 2,300 feet from Liberty Island, one mile from Manhattan.

Original island was 3.3 acres but was added to until today its area is 27.5 acres. 35 buildings containing total floor space of approximately 513,000 square feet.

Used as Immigration Station from 1890 - 1954. Host to 70% (16 million) of immigrants between 1892 and 1954. Peak year was 1907 when almost one million were processed.

Capsule History Summary

- 1800 - First came into Federal possession as Fort Gibson, site of batteries erected by New York State.
- 1861 - Fort Gibson dismantled, naval magazine installed on island
- 1890 - Transferred to Federal Bureau of Immigration, area increased, ferry slip and sea wall added.
- 1892 - Frame depot buildings completed.
- 1897 - All buildings and records destroyed by fire.
- 1897 - Congressional Acts authorized construction of 3 brick, stone and ironwork structures.
- 1900 - Main Building completed in December.
- 1902 - Kitchen, Restaurant and Bathhouse extensions added; Power house and west Hospital unit completed.
- 1913 - Area increased with addition of islands #2 and #3, new Hospital buildings on these additions; Baggage and Dormitory spaces added north of Main Building.
- 1920 - Area increased with fill between #2 and #3 islands, extension on northeast corner.
- 1934 - Area increased to 27.54 acres with Ferry Building extension and fill on east corner.

After restrictive immigration legislation became effective in 1921, the importance of Ellis Island diminished. Immigrant clearance was increasingly handled by U.S. Consulates overseas and Ellis became a place of detention for deportees. The station was closed in 1954.