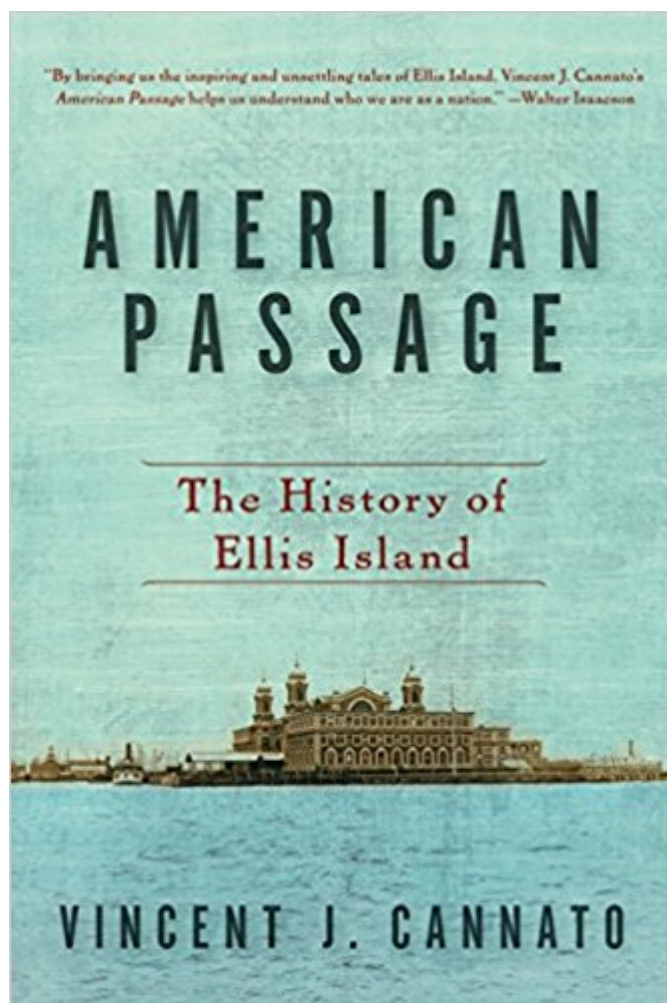


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# American Passage: The History Of Ellis Island



## Synopsis

"By bringing us the inspiring and sometimes unsettling tales of Ellis Island, Vincent Cannato's *American Passage* helps us understand who we are as a nation." —Walter Isaacson  
"Never before has Ellis Island been written about with such scholarly care and historical wisdom. Highly recommended!" —Douglas Brinkley, bestselling author of *The Wilderness Warrior*  
The remarkable saga of America's landmark port of entry, from immigration post to deportation center to mythical icon.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Using a variety of primary sources, Cannato (*The Ungovernable City*) describes Ellis Island as a place and as an experience for the approximately 12 million immigrants who passed through it from 1892 to 1924. He follows its reincarnation as a detention center for wartime aliens and as a monument and museum, which he admits may celebrate uncritically "ethnic triumphalism" and upward mobility. Cannato writes that understaffing resulted in only perfunctory screening for mental, physical, and moral traits that might have made newcomers public charges, and he disabuses readers of the fallacy that examiners, rather than steamship officials or immigrants bent on assimilation, changed entrants' last names. With a focus on how "actual people created, interpreted, and executed immigration laws," Cannato maintains that regulation, which sometimes degraded into restriction, formed part of Progressive era reform and growing federal involvement to safeguard what was deemed the public interest. This measured book helps to place

in perspective discussions – sure to matter to genealogists and those engaged in political discourse – of Ellis Island and the idea of immigration as a privilege rather than a right. Essential reading. – Frederick J. Augustyn Jr., Library of Congress Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

– “Mr. Cannato’s writing is vivid and accessible, and his approach is admirably even-handed. – (The Wall Street Journal) – “Historian Vincent Cannato appears to have overlooked nothing in telling the tale of the historic island, now a national monument. . . . Cannato is not only a meticulous researcher and historian, he’s also a lively storyteller. A rare combination. – (USA Today) – “Cannato does a masterful job of weaving together a slew of singular immigrant stories with the larger issues that surrounded newcomers. He gives us the politics, the health scares and epidemics, the crowding, the corruption and the public policy. – (The New York Post) – “Cannato navigates the crosscurrents of immigration since the 1700s, illustrating his tale generously with odd facts and highly readable stories. – (Associated Press) – “The story of America is one of immigration. By bringing us the inspiring and sometimes unsettling tales of Ellis Island, Vincent Cannato’s American Passage helps us understand who we are as a nation. – (Walter Isaacson, author of Einstein) – “Reading Vincent Cannato’s American Passage was an amazing journey into our nation’s immigrant past. Never before has Ellis Island been written about with such scholarly care and historical wisdom. Highly recommended! – (Douglas Brinkley, author of The Great Deluge) – “Immigration has long been a critical slice of the American narrative, and here, in American Passage, Vincent Cannato tells its story with great brio. From landing point to national Monument, from immigrants to interpreters, we see the veritable Babel of Ellis Island play out across the years. – (Jay Winik, author of The Great Upheaval and April 1865) – “To his great credit Cannato does not pretend to answer our tough questions about immigration, nor to find a reusable past in the history of Ellis Island. He just tells one heck of a story that oozes with relevance. – (Walter A. McDougall, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and author of Throes of Democracy) – “Although Ellis Island is about immigrants from far-away places, it is in fact as American as Thanksgiving and apple pie. This amazing story is recounted beautifully in Vincent Cannato’s well-written and evocative book, which will bring pleasure and profit to readers. – (Kenneth T. Jackson, editor in chief, Encyclopedia of New York City) – “Cannato resists the temptation to sentimentalize Ellis Island. He understands that, now

as then, immigration is an issue that leaves Americans uncomfortable and contentious, even as it continues to bring new blood and energy into the country. — (Jonathan Yardley, The Washington Post)

We recently took the grand tour of the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island and the recently opened Hard Hat tour of the abandoned hospital on the southern, New Jersey side of Ellis Island. We had an absolutely splendid volunteer guide whose father had passed through Ellis Island when he was 18, and Doug gives the tours in memory of his father. He said that all of the volunteer and paid guides on Ellis Island consider this book required reading, and re-reading -- it is perhaps heavy on officials and a little light on individual histories. But that history is essential to understand how so many people were processed so quickly. On statistic: over 98% of the immigrants passed through to either New York or New Jersey; the great majority who were detained and sometimes returned to Europe were denied entry for health reasons. An average of seven seconds per immigrant, but they "cheated". After the baggage hall, and immigrants rarely gave up their worldly possessions for a slip of paper and a promise, the immigrants had to climb three flights of stairs. Doctors closely watched the flow and marked people who were laboring with chalk on their coats -- "TB", "PG", etc. The marked people were then examined more closely. And, if an immigrant was returned to Europe, the steamship company was forced to pay for the return journey -- so there was careful screening by the shippers in Europe before the ships sailed. An essential book for anyone planning a visit or for anyone to read after their return from this fascinating place so crucial to American history. Robert C. Ross  
September 2015

All my life I had believed, as our whole family believed, that being from Philadelphia, we must have arrived through that city. As a result although I've always been mildly interested in Ellis as a historical landmark, I never thought that we had a connection to it. That all changed in December 2012 when I found my mother's parents' Ellis Island manifests, along with those of other members of our family. We did indeed come into this country through Ellis, and I'll never forget the way the skin on my neck crawled as I recognized my grandfather -- "tailor, scar on forehead" -- or saw the handwritten names of my great-grandparents and grandmother, entering together as a family with others from their town. I've since printed the manifests and mailed them to my mother, and I continue to search for others of my family who also came through Ellis, Castle Garden, and the barge office during the "gap year" of 1891. The treatment of their experiences and the motivations behind the creation of a central location for immigrant processing is incredibly detailed, sympathetic,

sensible, and beautifully put in this book. I can't imagine a better history of this iconic landmark and what it symbolizes for today's America. Cannato delves into the history of the place and its precursor station Castle Garden, perfectly prepared to acknowledge all sides of the thorny topic of immigration up to the present day. I've already recommended to my mom that she buy the kindle version. I also want to recommend to anyone who suspects that their ancestors came through Ellis to visit [EllisIsland.org](http://EllisIsland.org) where they will find a searchable database of immigration records, including scanned copies of the actual ship manifests of the day. Finding the name of an ancestor in a computer database is one thing, but seeing the actual documents will give you a feeling like no other.

I am so glad I purchased this book, I'm looking into my where my family came from, very interesting. So far my dad's father came through Ellis Island from Norway. I know my mother's family is English, Irish and Scottish. How and when they got here I'm not sure of yet. But this book gives you an idea of what these poor people went through to become Americans. Good reading

Since I take groups of students here occasionally on field trips I thought it wouldn't hurt to learn a little more about Ellis Island, plus my wife's family came through there around 1900. When I thought I would learn a little I was very wrong, I learned a LOT! The author really has done their research from the very beginning of Ellis Island when it was just a swampy spot in the Hudson River until early this century, and also covers the problems/concerns/failures/successes of the immigration policies we have over the years. I never fully realized how important immigration had been until I read this. I very highly recommend this book to any US History or genealogy buffs out there, great book but be warned that it is rather lengthy.

It arrived in good time, packaged well, and I have read the entire book which is very long. I really learned a lot about the immigration issue in our country which is very pertinent at this time

Great price

This is a fantastic book that goes into serious depth about Ellis Island. As I'm teaching a class about Ellis Island soon at a family history doing, I found all my questions answered in this book! Yes, it is heavy reading, and delves deeply into the political aspects, but it is so well written that it's okay.

Mr. Cannato is an excellent writer. He keeps the reader interested at all times. If I am interested in the topic I would definitely buy any book (that I am interested in) immediately. Thank you for asking.

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