

Everyday Life:
IMMIGRATION

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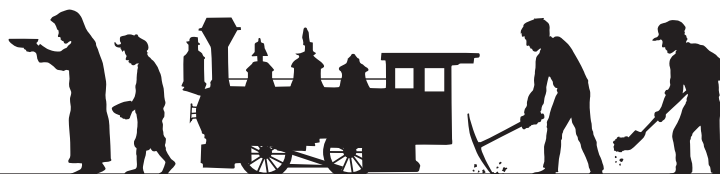




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Introduction

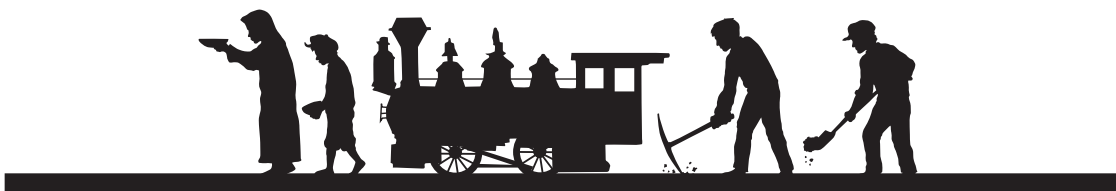
The story of immigration began during colonial times and continues today. It is the story of men, women, and children who risked and are continuing to risk everything to achieve the American Dream. Some have succeeded; many have not.

The story of immigration is really two stories. The first took place in the years before the Civil War, when the United States was still a young nation. During this time, workers were needed to build the roads, bridges, canals, railroads, and cities that made America what it is today. Immigrants who came primarily from northern and western Europe filled this need. Most—except for the Irish, who were discriminated against because of their religion—were welcome.

Attitudes toward immigration began to change drastically after 1880. Two factors brought about this change. First, jobs and land were no longer plentiful and so Americans found themselves in stiff competition with immigrants, whose numbers increased each year. Second, immigrants who came after 1880 were mostly from southern and eastern Europe. Most were poor, unskilled peasants and laborers who were misunderstood and resented by many Americans. They dressed differently, spoke different languages, and had different customs and religious beliefs. Because of these differences, they experienced more prejudice and discrimination than those who came before them.

In *Everyday Life: Immigration*, you will learn about immigrants who came during both these periods. You will share their hopes and disappointments and their successes and failures. Theirs is a story that is not altogether a happy one, but it is one you should find interesting.

Walter A. Hazen



Coming as Colonists: Why They Came

The first immigrants to arrive in America were people textbooks refer to as colonists. The majority came from England, but there were also a large number from France and Holland. Others came from Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Scotland, Spain, and what would in time become Germany. They represented every walk of life and practiced every religious faith. They included Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and even people who professed no religious beliefs at all. A few were well off, but most were poor or mistreated folk who had left their homelands in search of a better life in a new country.

Although the French and the Spanish were the first to establish settlements in America, it was primarily the English who colonized the region that in time became the thirteen colonies. The English settled along the Atlantic coast in a narrow stretch of land extending from Maine southward to where Spanish Florida began. At first, while land was plentiful, they were content to stay where they were. In fact, British law forbade settling beyond the Appalachian Mountains for fear of stirring up the Native Americans who lived there. But when all available land along the coast was taken, some settlers ignored the British king's law and started to push westward.

The English first attempted to establish a colony on Roanoke Island off the coast of North Carolina. They tried several times in the 1580s, and each attempt failed. The last group to occupy the small settlement disappeared without a trace around 1587. Because the word "Croatoan" was found carved on a tree at the site, some historians believe the settlers may have been taken away by an Indian tribe of that name.

The first permanent English settlement was established at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. It was founded by some 100 men, over half of whom were gentlemen, or landed gentry. Landed gentry were wealthy English landowners who belonged to a class just below the nobility. They came not for land or religious freedom but to search for gold. They brought only the clothes on their backs and would have starved to death were it not for the leadership of an able leader named John Smith. Although they found no gold or other riches, these early settlers eventually turned Virginia into a thriving colony based on the growing of tobacco.

The *Mayflower*, the ship that brought the Pilgrims to America in 1620. From a steel engraving.





Thirteen years after Jamestown was founded, a second English colony sprang up at Plymouth in Massachusetts. It was started by the Pilgrims, or Separatists. The Pilgrims were part of a group known as Puritans who wanted to “purify,” or make more simple, the teachings and practices of the Church of England. But the Pilgrims went farther than most Puritans in that they chose to separate themselves completely from the established church and worship as they pleased. For this reason they were persecuted and had to leave the country. That is how they came to be called Pilgrims, which means people who take long journeys for religious reasons.

At first the Pilgrims went to Holland. Holland was a tolerant nation that permitted people of every religious belief to live there. The Pilgrims stayed in Holland for twelve years, where they prospered and were well treated by the Dutch people. But they were not happy. Their children started imitating Dutch ways and dress and going to Dutch churches. Many of their sons when they grew up either joined the Dutch army or sailed away on Dutch ships. Elder Pilgrims began to worry that their group would lose its identity and their children would become more Dutch than English. For this reason the Pilgrims set sail for America and the Atlantic coast in 1620.

Sailing the Atlantic Ocean in the 1600s was a dangerous undertaking. Although all except two of the 102 passengers aboard the *Mayflower* (the Pilgrim’s ship) survived the long voyage, many of those who came on later voyages were not so lucky. Elderly passengers and young children often died during the crossing. One man who kept a diary aboard his ship recorded that thirty-two children died at sea and that their bodies were thrown overboard by their grieving parents. Many of those who lived through such terrible journeys suffered from seasickness, boils, scurvy, dysentery, lice, and other miseries. And, if these ailments were not enough, they had to eat biscuits that were full of worms and spiders’ nests!

In spite of the hardships of an Atlantic crossing, people continued to come by the thousands. In 1628 Puritans founded the colony of Massachusetts Bay on the site where Salem now stands. They too were dissatisfied with the Church of England and came to America to worship as they saw fit. King Charles I seemed more than happy to grant them a charter for land north of



Braving rough waters, a group of Puritans makes its way to a waiting ship that will take them to America. From an undated engraving.





To the jeers of English spectators, a Quaker is flogged. Quakers who settled among the Puritans in Massachusetts often met the same fate.

Pilgrims on their way to church in Plymouth. Note their guns, which they carried in the event of an Indian attack. From a painting by George Henry Boughton.



Plymouth, since many in their group were well-to-do gentry who were beginning to cause problems for the Crown.

About 400 men, women, and children crossed the Atlantic and established the Massachusetts Bay Colony. More ships came later, and within a few years the colony numbered more than 4,000 people. Unlike the settlers at Jamestown and Plymouth, the Puritans came well supplied and were better able to survive the hardships of those early years. They experienced no “starving time” during their first winter in the New World.

Although the Puritans came to America seeking religious freedom, they were not willing to grant this freedom to others who settled among them. Non-Puritan residents could not hold office and were required to pay taxes to support the Congregational Church, as the church of the Puritans came to be called. Some settlers, such as the peaceful Quakers, were flogged and even hanged.

Intolerance on the part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony caused some members to be either banished or compelled to leave on their own. The colonies of Rhode Island and Connecticut were founded in this manner. Roger Williams was a Puritan who believed that all people should be allowed to worship as they pleased. He was forced to leave Massachusetts and, as a result, went on to found the colony of Rhode Island. Thomas Hooker was a minister who thought everybody should be allowed to vote, whether they belonged to the Congregational Church or not. He too left Massachusetts Bay and founded the colony of Connecticut.

In time, settlers from England established other colonies along the Atlantic Coast. But there were also immigrants who came from other countries and started settlements of their own. Not the least of these were the Dutch, who settled in the area that later became New York. They called their colony

New Amsterdam, after the name of their capital city in The Netherlands. (The Netherlands, which means “low countries,” was sometimes called Holland. But to be accurate, Holland was the name that applied to only two of the provinces, or sections, of that country.)

The Dutch who migrated to the lower Hudson River area of New York came because of fertile land and the possibility of a rich fur trade. They founded New Amsterdam in 1623 and





controlled it until 1664, when it was seized by the English. The English changed the name of New Amsterdam to New York City, and that of New Netherlands, which the expanded Dutch colony was called, to New York.

The Quakers were another group to establish a settlement in the 1600s. Led by William Penn, the Quakers not only believed in religious freedom but complete equality as well. They founded Pennsylvania, meaning “Penn’s Woods,” in 1681. Because of liberal practices and fair treatment of the Indians, which resulted in few attacks on colonists, Pennsylvania grew quickly in population.

To this point you have learned that people came to America for a variety of reasons. Some came seeking gold or other riches. Many came for religious freedom or for the promise of fertile farmland. Still others came to escape political persecution. The latter was especially true of people of the Jewish faith, who were often the victims of planned pogroms (massacres) in their home countries.

During pogroms, police and soldiers often stood by while mobs attacked and killed whole communities of Jews. Sometimes the police and soldiers participated in the killings themselves. Pogroms had occurred in Europe for centuries and became particularly severe in the 1800s.

Not a few settlers came to America to escape spending their lives in prison. In England at the time, jails were full of people imprisoned for stealing food or being unable to pay off small debts. With no hope of ever being released, many accepted the English government’s offer of freedom in exchange for sailing to America. Georgia was founded in this way as a “debtor’s colony” by James Oglethorpe in 1732. Even after the colonies were well established, thousands of prisoners—some of them hardened criminals—continued to be sent to America.

The list of immigrants to America in the 1600s and 1700s goes on. Swedes settled in what later became Delaware and, before the area fell under Dutch rule, made a lasting contribution to the American frontier: the log cabin. There were also Finns, Scots, and Irish who came looking for a better way of life. Finally, there were the French, who came primarily because of the fur trade. They settled in the area of the Great Lakes, the Mississippi and Ohio Valleys, and Canada.



William Penn signs his first treaty with the Native Americans in 1682. Penn and the Quakers established friendly relations with the Indians of Pennsylvania.





Name _____ Date _____

Draw a Picture

Draw and color a picture of the *Mayflower*, the ship that brought the Pilgrims to America in 1620. You can find a picture of the *Mayflower* on page 2 and in most textbooks and encyclopedias, or in a book dealing with the founding of the English colonies.

