

American Passage: The History of Ellis Island

By Vincent J. Cannato

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"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.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal
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
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Review
“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 ‘usable 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 setimentalize 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*)

From the Back Cover

For most of New York's early history, Ellis Island had been an obscure little island that barely held itself above high tide. Today the small island stands alongside Plymouth Rock in our nation's founding mythology as the place where many of our ancestors first touched American soil.

American Passage captures a time and a place unparalleled in American immigration and history, and articulates the dramatic and bittersweet accounts of the immigrants, officials, interpreters, and social reformers who all played an important role in Ellis Island's chronicle. In this sweeping, often heart-wrenching epic, Vincent J. Cannato reveals that the history of Ellis Island is ultimately the story of what it means to be an American.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christina Epp:

People live in this new time of lifestyle always aim to and must have the free time or they will get great deal of stress from both way of life and work. So , once we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not just a robot. Then we consult again, what kind of activity do you possess when the spare time coming to a person of course your answer can unlimited right. Then do you ever try this one, reading textbooks. It can be your alternative throughout spending your spare time, the particular book you have read is usually American Passage: The History of Ellis Island.

Roberto Reyes:

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Barbara Fontenot:

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Rona Foret:

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