

U.S. History Live!

SAILING THE ATLANTIC AND CARIBBEAN

Ellis Island

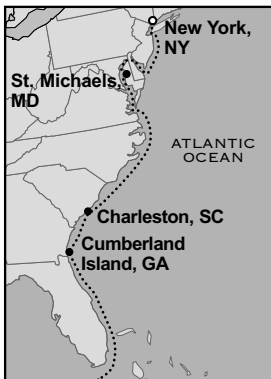


by **Nisa Kontje**

Ellis Island is a place of names. Here, mil-

lions of immigrants proudly called out theirs—long names, names that would twist the tongue—before stepping onto American soil for the first time. For most, Ellis Island was an isle of hope: a brief stopping place on the way to a better life.

The U.S. War Department purchased Ellis Island in 1808 for use as a munitions dump. Not until 1890 did Congress adopt legislation to clear



the island of munitions and improve its facilities for federal immigration purposes. On Mother's Day in 1892, 15-year-old Annie Moore, from County Cork, Ireland, became the first immigrant to call out her name in Ellis Island's new immigration station.

In 1897, the Ellis Island station burned to the ground. However, a new fireproof station opened at the same site three years later, on December 17, 1900. On the first day of operation, 2,251 immigrants were inspected. The number of hopeful Americans went from 389,000 in 1901 to just over one million in 1907, America's peak immigration year. The wave of immigrants diminished in the 1920s due to new heightened requirements for entry.

Ellis Island was closed down as an immigration station in 1954. Today it is a museum where people can walk the halls, trying to get a glimpse of an ancestor's name on the memorial wall.

Nisa Kontje is a student aboard the sailing vessel Spirit of Massachusetts.



Q. Do you have to eat fish for breakfast?

A. No, we don't have to eat fish for breakfast. Pauly, the ship's cook, makes good breakfast foods, with all sorts of choices for everyone. We eat very well. In fact, we have all gained weight over the last four months.

For breakfast, we eat things such as hot cereal, cold cereal, pancakes, eggs, bacon, coffee cake, fruit salad, French toast, and crepes. The only time we have fish (and it's optional) is when we have smoked salmon to put on bagels, which we sometimes get while in port.

We provision while in port, and start out with all sorts of great food. After a few days, we're more limited in what we can eat. Bread is one thing we run out of quickly, but fortunately, Pauly makes excellent bread.

Answered by Eliza Appert, a student aboard the sailing vessel Spirit of Massachusetts.

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