

Genealogy Rocks!

Early Castle Garden NY Passenger Records

If your ancestors arrived in America during the second half of the 19th century, chances are their first stop in America was Castle Garden. Opened in 1855, Castle Garden, located on the southern tip of Manhattan Island, was America's first Immigration Station. Over eight million immigrants passed through Castle Garden before it was closed in 1890 and was superseded by Ellis Island.

Before the opening of Castle Garden, no formal processing of immigrants to America occurred. Immigrants disembarked from immigrant ships and dispersed with no further ado. This led to claims that immigrants with contagious illnesses had spread infections and that many immigrants were the "dregs of Europe" and would become a burden on local communities. From the opposite perspective, immigrants were often victimized by scam artists who



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pretended to help them change money or buy railroad tickets for onward journeys. Castle Garden addressed these issues and eventually had medical facilities to examine and treat immigrants, banks for changing currency, an employment bureau to help immigrants find jobs and interpreters to help them with language difficulties.

Since approximately one in six native-born Americans today has ancestors who passed through Castle Garden, many genealogists are interested in finding their Castle Garden ancestors. The free website www.castlegarden.org is a great starting point. Immigrants can be searched for by name, time period and ship's name. The website does not contain images of original ships' passenger lists, but those images can be found on www.ancestry.com at "New York Passenger Lists, 1851-1891."

❖ *Carol Stetser is a researcher, instructor, library volunteer, and speaker for the Larimer County Genealogical Society. Please visit our society website at www.lcgsc.org or our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/lcgsc for more information and our monthly events.*