The Brown Quarterly

Quarterly Newsletter for Classroom Teachers

Volume 4 No. 1 | Ellis Island/Immigration Issue | Fall 2000

The Story of Immigration in the U. S.

Ellis Island

From 1892 to 1954, over 12 million immigrants entered the United States from Ellis Island, a small island in New York Harbor located just off the New Jersey coast, within the shadow of the Statue of Liberty. Through the years, this gateway was enlarged from its original 3.3 acres to 27.5 acres, mostly by landfill obtained from ship ballast and possibly excess earth from the construction of the New York City subway system.

Originally called "Kioshk" or Gull Island by local Indian tribes, the island's last private owner was Samuel Ellis in the 1770s. From a sandy island that barely rose above high tide, it developed into a hanging site for pirates, a harbor fort, ammunition depot and finally into an immigration station in 1890.

Because the British naval fleet was able to sail directly into New York Harbor during the Revolutionary War, the U.S. government decided to buy the island from New York in 1808 and built a series of coastal fortifications in the harbor before the War of 1812.

Italian immigrant family, circa 1905
Photo by Lewis Wickes Hine

Prior to 1890, the individual states regulated immigration into the United States. Castle Garden served as New York state immigration station from 1855 to 1890. Throughout the 1800s, political instability, restrictive religious laws and deteriorating economic conditions in Europe began to fuel the largest mass human migration in the history of the world. Castle Garden was ill-equipped to handle the growing number of immigrants.

The U.S. government intervened and constructed a new federal immigration station on Ellis Island that opened in 1892. A 15 year-old from Ireland named Annie Moore and her two brothers were the first immigrants to be processed at Ellis Island. Millions more were to follow.

In 1897, a fire on Ellis Island burned the immigration station to the ground. Although no lives were lost, many years of federal and state immigration records burned along with the pine buildings. The U.S. Treasury quickly ordered the facility rebuilt under one important condition. All future structures on Ellis Island had to be fireproof. In December of 1900, the new Main Building was opened and 2,251 immigrants were received that day.

While most immigrants entered through New York Harbor, the most popular destination of steamship companies, others sailed into ports such as Boston, San Francisco and Savannah. First and second class passengers who arrived in New York were not required to undergo the inspection process unless they were sick or had legal problems. These passengers underwent a cursory inspection aboard ship, the theory being

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European Immigrants Leave Mark on Continent

Though most Americans view the United States as a white European nation, the result of continuous European migration since the 17th century, we now understand that European immigration was only one stage in the peopling of the American continent. From the 1820s through the 1990s, two-thirds of the nearly 65 million immigrants to the United States came from Europe. By 1965, however, less than half of the immigrants came from Europe; by the 1990s, it was less than 10 percent.

During the period when European immigration dominated, the source of immigrants changed. In the first two-thirds of the 19th century, most immigrants came from Ireland, Germany and Great Britain. In the 1880s a permanent shift occurred. In 1882, the peak year of the "old immigration," 87 percent of the immigrants came from Ireland, Germany, Great Britain, Scandinavia, Switzerland and Holland. In 1907, the peak year of the "new immigrants," 81 percent of immigrants came from Italy, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Greece, Rumania and Turkey. From the 1820s to World War II, Germany provided 16 percent of immigrants, Ireland 12 percent, Italy 12 percent, Austria-Hungary 12 percent, Great Britain 11 percent, Russia 10 percent, and Scandinavia 5 percent.

European conditions influenced the stream of migrants. Poor harvests and famine sent millions of Irish, Swedes and some Germans to the United States in the 1830s and after. In the 1840s, political upheaval sent more Germans across the ocean, and a steady flow of religious dissenters came at all times. Limited economic opportunities in Europe sent tens of millions of peasants, small farmers, craftsmen and unskilled workers, men and women alike, both as individuals and families, to America. Ethnic and religious minorities including Jews from Eastern Europe, Poles and Germans from Russia, Macedonians from the Balkans, Czechs and Bohemians from Austria-Hungary found freedom in the United States. All founded settlements in Kansas.

European immigrants have left both negative and positive legacies. From their first appearance in the New World, European immigrants had little respect for the environment and less respect for the indigenous inhabitants, Native Americans. Europeans left on this land the stain of slavery. They also brought European ethnic and racial ideas and conflict and religious intolerance. Yet they have left a more positive mark as well. The English gave us their language, the Irish personalized politics, the Germans gave our cities a cosmopolitan air. Later, the new immigrants built and transformed an industrial, modern country, and made it into a polyglot, multicultural nation.

Resources for Teachers

by
David M. Katzman
Guest Columnist
American Studies
The University of Kansas

Brown Quarterly Wins KPW and NFPW Contest Awards

The editor of the **Brown Quarterly, Grace L. Wilson,** earned first place (newsletters) in the **Kansas Press Women** "Communications Contest 2000" and second place in the **National Press Women** contest in Anchorage, Alaska in September. The state judge commented: "This entry includes three absolutely wonderful issues...which should be essential reading for all students...[it] is an excellent example of why and how multicultural issues can be brought to life in classrooms across the United States."

For information on African, Hispanic, Asian, Native American history, see past issues of the Brown Quarterly on our website at:

brownvboard.org

Thank you to Ellis Island/Statue of Liberty NPS websites for photos and material for this issue.

The Brown Foundation is pleased to publish this newsletter for classroom teachers through which we will share resources available from national parks and museums. Established to maintain the legacy of the *Brown* decision, our organization plays an exciting role as a park partner. In 1990 we were instrumental in developing *Brown v. Board of Education* National Historic Site in Topeka, Kansas. We hope you enjoy the *Brown Quarterly* and we eagerly anticipate your comments.

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History of Immigration in Kansas

In May of 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed and signed by President Franklin Pierce. It opened the country to transcontinental railways and the Kansas Territory for settlement. The Kansas Territory included eastern Colorado, west to the Continental Divide. The only white people residing within this area were those at military posts, Indian traders, missionaries and a few men who had married into different tribes.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act led to "Bleeding Kansas." Popular sovereignty made the territory's residents (not the Federal government) responsible for the question of slavery. The proximity of Kansas to slave-owning Missouri and the lack of any natural border between the two prompted an influx of proponents of slavery into Kansas Territory.

The New England Emigrant Aid Society in Boston was interested in settling the frontier with people who were against slavery. Lawrence, Kansas, founded by this company and named after an Emigrant abolitionist, became the center of Free-State activities.

The Homestead Act in 1862 helped expand the country after the Civil War. It gave 160 acres of federal land to any citizen or any person declaring an intent to become a citizen. All they had to do was pay a filing fee of ten dollars and live upon and improve the land for five years. The land for the Homestead Act came from railroads that had been granted an enormous amount of federal and state land in Kansas. The railroads also purchased acreage for a song from the Indians. This Act was intended to dispose of these holdings to settlers.

Saint Fidelis Church
"The Cathedral of the Plains"
Victoria, Kansas

YEAR	NATIONALITY	COUNTY
1854	Swiss	Allen, Nemaha, Pottawatomie near present-day Bern
1857	German	Allen, Leavenworth, Nemaha, Shawnee, Wabaunsee, Wyandotte
1860	French	Cloud
1865	Canadian	Neosho
1867-71	Swedish	Lyon, Morris, Osage, Republic, Pottawatomie, Riley
1869	Norwegian	Republic
1870	English/Dutch	Jewell
1871	Italian	Crawford, Cherokee

***1871**-Russian Czar institutes universal military service.*

1874 German Russian Mennonite Harvey, Marion, McPherson

1876 Volga German Catholic Ellis, Rush (Victoria)

1876 Volga German Lutheran Russell

***1876**-Middle-class English gentleman emigrate to Victoria, to engage in farming. Called remittance men, they were not successful and left.*

1876 English Clay, Ellis, Harper

1876 Bohemian/Czech Ellsworth, Marion, Rawlins

1876-79 Irish Anderson, Franklin, Jewell

***1877**-30,000 Blacks called **"Exodusters"** migrate from the South.*

1877	African (Nicodemus)	Graham
1878	Danish	Lincoln
1877-81	Austrian	Brown
1878-79	German Mennonite	Dickinson
	German Hungarian	Rawlins
1881	Dutch	Smith
1885-86	Swedish	Gove
1886-87	German	Ellis
1860s on	German	Anderson, Bourbon, Brown, Butler Comanche, Decatur, Douglas, Hamilton, Lyon, Elk, Ford, Jewell, Marshall, Norton, Pawnee, Phillips, Pottawatomie, Republic, Osage, Saline, Sedgwick, Riley, Washington, Wichita.

For more information, see the website maintained by Stephen Chinn at www.cc.ukans.edu/heritage/old_west/counter/owk-visit.html

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Midwest Research Institute. *The Capper/MRI Quick-Fact Book of Kansas.* Capper Press. 1990.

Rydjord, John. *Kansas Place-Names.* University of Okla. Press. 1972.

Shortridge, James. *Peopling the Plains, Who Settled Where in Kansas.* University Press of Kansas, 1995.

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The Story of Immigration in the U.S.

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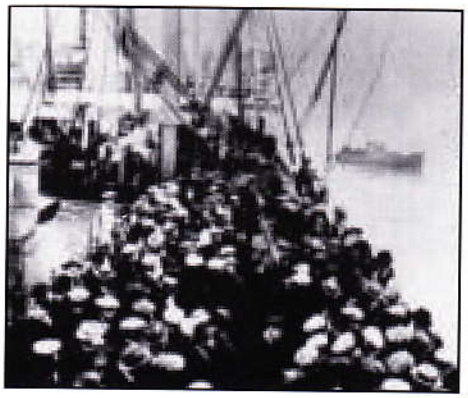
that if people could afford to purchase a first or second class ticket, they were less likely to become a public charge. The government felt that more affluent passengers would not end up in institutions, hospitals or become a burden to the state.

This scenario was far different for "steerage" or third class passengers. These immigrants traveled in crowded and often unsanitary conditions near the bottom of steamships with few amenities, often spending up to two weeks seasick in their bunks during rough Atlantic crossings. Upon arrival in New York City, first and second class passengers would disembark, pass through Customs and were free to enter the United States. The steerage and third class passengers were transported from the pier by ferry or barge to Ellis Island where everyone would undergo a medical and legal inspection.

If the immigrants' papers were in order and they were in reasonably good health, the Ellis Island inspection process would last approximately three to five hours. The inspections took place in the Registry Room, where doctors would briefly scan every immigrant for obvious physical ailments. Doctors at Ellis Island soon became very adept at conducting these "six second physicals." By 1916, it was said that a doctor could identify numerous medical conditions (ranging from anemia to goiter to varicose veins) just by glancing at an immigrant. The ship's manifest log contained the immigrant's name and his/her answers to twenty-nine questions. This document was



Madonna
Photo by Lewis Wickes Hine

used by the legal inspectors at Ellis Island to cross examine the immigrant during the legal inspection. The two agencies responsible for processing immigrants at Ellis Island were the United States Public Health Service and the United States Bureau of Immigration (now known as the Immigration and Naturalization Service - INS).

Despite the island's reputation as an "Island of Tears," the vast majority of immigrants were treated courteously and respectfully and were free to begin their new lives in America after a few short hours on Ellis Island. Only two percent of the arriving immigrants were excluded from entry, usually if a doctor diagnosed a contagious disease that would endanger the public health or if a legal inspector thought the immigrant was likely to become a public charge or an illegal contract laborer.

Most immigrants could not vote, hold government office or be employed by the state. They had no voice in determining their future.

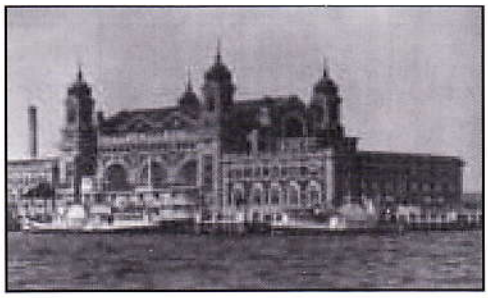
During the early 1900s, immigration was on the rise and in 1907, approximately 1.25 million immigrants were processed at Ellis Island. Hospital buildings, dormitories, disease wards and kitchens were all feverishly constructed

between 1900 and 1915 in a constant struggle to meet this greater than anticipated influx.

As the United States entered World War I, immigration to the United States decreased. Suspected enemy aliens in the United States were brought to Ellis Island under custody. In 1918 and 1919, detained suspected enemy aliens were transferred from Ellis Island to other locations in order for the U. S. Navy and the Army Medical Department to take over the complex for the duration of the war. During this time, inspection of arriving immigrants was conducted on board ship or at the docks. At the end of World War I, a big "Red Scare" spread across the country and thousands of suspected alien radicals were interred at Ellis Island. Hundreds were later deported based upon guilt by association with any organization advocating revolution against the government.

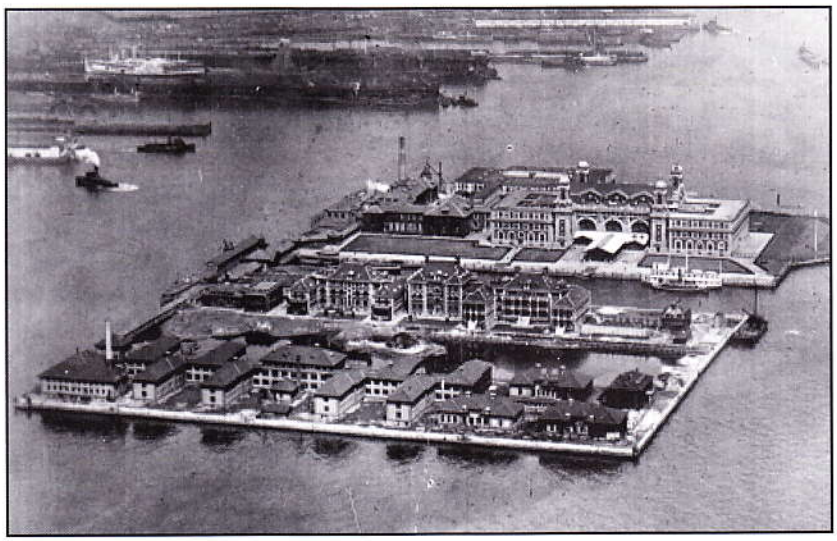
The experience of immigrants was characterized by adversity, hard work and hope for the future.

In 1920 Ellis Island reopened as an immigration station and 225,206 immigrants were processed that year. From the beginning of the mass migration from 1880 to 1924, an increasingly vociferous group of politicians and nativists demanded increased restrictions on immigration. Laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act, Alien Contract Labor Law and the institution of a literacy test barely stemmed the flood tide of new immigrants. The death knell for Ellis Island immigration began between with the passage of Quota Laws in 1921 and the passage of the National Origins Act in 1924. These restrictions were based upon a percentage system according to the number of ethnic groups already living in the United States as per the 1890 and 1910 Census.



Main building, Ellis Island, circa 1900

After World War I, prospective immigrants began applying for their visas at American consulates in their countries of origin. The necessary paperwork and a medical inspection were conducted there. After 1924 the only people detained at Ellis Island were those who had problems with their paperwork, as well as war refugees and displaced persons. During World War II, enemy merchant seamen were detained. The U.S. Coast Guard also trained about 60,000 servicemen there. In 1954 the last detainee, a Norwegian merchant seaman named Arne Peterssen was released, and Ellis Island closed.



Ellis Island
Courtesy of Ellis Island/Statue of Liberty National Park

In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson declared Ellis Island part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument. It was opened to the public on a limited basis from 1976 to 1984. Starting in 1984 Ellis Island underwent a major restoration. The $162 million dollar project was funded by donations made to the *Statue of Liberty - Ellis Island Foundation, Inc.* in partnership with the *National Park Service*. The Main Building was reopened to the public in 1990 as the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. Today, the museum receives almost 2 million visitors annually.

USING THE INTERNET

Is the Internet available at your school or public library?

Check out these sites on immigration:

•http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/descrip.html
Teaching Historic Places
These 60 lessons, using historic locations to examine developments in U.S. history, have photos, maps and graphs. They can be posted online or ordered free of charge from the National Park Service.

•http://nara.gov/education/historyday/migrate/migrate.html
Migration in History
The national Archives and Record Administration's collection of migration-related documents supports the 1998 History Day competition theme: "Migrations in History: Peoples, Ideas, Culture."

•http://www.popespo.net/english.html
Social Studies School Service Immigration and Migration Links
From the National Museum of Natural History in Paris focusing on the growth of the world's population.

•http://www.capital.net/~alta/index.html
Virtual Ellis Island Tour
Created by students and teachers at Queensbury Middle School in New York, this tour combines primary documents and photography to simulate an immigrant's experience upon arrival at Ellis Island.

•http://www.wallofhonor.com
The Wall of Honor
This website where students can search for names of family ancestors was created by the Ellis Island Foundation .

Statue of Liberty Statistics

Height (base to torch)	151 feet
Ground to tip of torch	305 feet
Heel to top of head	111 feet
Index finger	8 feet
Width of the eye	2+ feet
Length of nose	4+ feet
Thickness of arm	12 feet
Width of mouth	3 feet

Copper-62,000 pounds (31 tons)

Steel -250,000 pounds (125 tons)

Concrete-54 million pounds (27,000 tons)

http://www.nps.gov/stli/prod02.htm

"Park in a Pack" Traveling Kit

http://www.nps.gov/stli/serv02.htm#Ellis

"Park in a Pack" is recommended for grades 4-8. This curriculum-based traveling educational kit is available to educators for **two weeks on loan** for use in the classroom. It is free of charge except for return postage. A security deposit is required to obtain the kit. It contains a teaching guide, 4 videos and many educational activities about the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island for your students to enjoy. Please write to **Attn:** Education Specialist at National Park Service, Statue of Liberty National Monument, Liberty Island, New York, NY, 10004, or call (212) 363-3200.
Ellis Island Medical Exam: Video explains medical inspection process at Ellis Island. Students can compare current trends and concerns about health, diseases and public safety.
Legal Inspection: Video allows students to identify reasons why immigrants were inspected before being granted permission to enter. Describes document used for inspection and how used in tracing ancestry.
Moving Overseas: Students think about moving to a new home, what to bring and why.
Discussion of what is alike and different in our cultures and what we think is important to us.
Citizenship: Students can take a portion of the citizenship test.
Family Tree: Students can use forms to start a family tree or conduct an oral history.
E. Pluribus Unum: Learn our national "motto" and discuss the balance of freedom and democracy.
Materials include: Teacher Guide, Ellis Island videos, Ship manifest & manifest tag.

Teaching Guide for grades 3-6. Heightens understanding of the concept of liberty and the role it played in the history of the United States. Call Statue of Liberty/Ellis Foundation at (212) 883-1986, ext. 742.
Teaching Guide for grades 5-8. Heightens understanding of immigration and provides information about the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. To receive a free copy, call (212) 363-3200.

Teacher Talk

The Ellis Island Oral History Project

The Ellis Island Oral History Project is dedicated to preserving the first-hand recollections of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island from 1892-1954. Begun in 1973 by NPS employee Margo Nash, the project has grown to include more than 1500 interviews. Each interview includes family history, an examination of everyday life in the country of origin, reasons for emigrating, experiences on the ship, processing at Ellis Island and adjustment to living in the United States.

The full-time and volunteer staff adds more than 100 interviews each year to the collection. All interviews are available as tapes and transcripts to researchers and the public. The museum exhibits rely heavily on quoted oral history material, as does the museum's Charles Guggenheim film. Interviews from the Oral History Project have been used for television and film documentaries, radio broadcasts, books, creative artworks and theatrical presentations.

People are chosen by the project staff from an "Oral History Form," a 2-page questionnaire mailed to those interested. The form asks for an abbreviated immigration history and any interesting stories or anecdotes. Upon receiving the completed form, the staff decides whether to interview the person. The person has the option of coming to the Ellis Island Immigration Museum to be interviewed at the recording studio or to have a project staffer visit their home with portable recording equipment. Most interviews last about one hour. Each person interviewed is given their own copy of the interview on audio cassette. The interviews are eventually transcribed and are now added to a computer database that can be accessed at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum Library.

Interviews include former Ellis Island immigrants and Statue of Liberty employees, people stationed in the military on the islands and former island residents who were children when a family member was an employee in some capacity. Most presently live in most states in the continental United States as well as several foreign countries. Most interviewees are in their late eighties, the oldest to date being 106 and the youngest being 46.

For further information about the Ellis Island Oral History Project, please write to: Oral History Project, Ellis Island Immigration Museum, New York City, New York, 10004, call (212) 363-3200, ext. 156, or fax (212) 363-6302.

BOOK NOOK

Yang the Youngest and His Terrible Ear

by Lensey Namioka. Little-Brown and Dell. 1992 **4th-6th grade level.**

This warm, funny immigrant story shows what it is like to be an outsider in a new homeland. Yang and his family have immigrated from China to Seattle, where his father plays in the Seattle Symphony. Yang's story captures the bewilderment of the immigrant experience and the confusion about customs and language. There are also some poignant moments—the ache for home in China, the sting of prejudice, the wish to have musical talent. Unwillingly to let his father down, Yang and his new friend Matthew, concoct a scheme to save the family's face at an upcoming violin recital. Self-acceptance triumphs as Yingtao realizes that his baseball skills make up for having a terrible ear for music.

A growing friendship between Yang and Matthew helps the reader to explore cultural differences and the problems of adjustment to a new society. Yang invites his first American friend to his home after school where they discover fish in Yang's bathtub. Yang discovers some other differences including the order of names, how tea is brewed, talk about money, respect for elders, eating and talking. Black-and-white sketches illuminate each character. This multicultural story will have a broad appeal for young readers and would be great to read aloud in class.

Other Books About Immigrant Experiences

Carris, Joan. Hedgehogs in the Closet
Chang, Heidi. Elaine, Mary Lewis, and the Frogs
Chin, Fran. Donald Duk
Crew, Linda. Children of the River
Fritz, Jean. Homesick
Howard, Ellen. Her Own Song
Hurwitz, Johanna. Aldo Applesauce
Kidd, Ronald. Second Fiddle: A Sizzle and Splat Mystery
Lord, Bette Bao. In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson
MacLachlan, Patricia. The Facts and Fictions of Minna Pratt
Regan, Dian Curtis. The Curse of the Trouble Dolls
Slote, Alfred. Finding Buck McHenry
Uchida, Yoshiko. A Jar of Dreams

Statue of Liberty:
Symbol of Immigrant Dreams

France gave the Statue of Liberty to the people of the United States more than 100 years ago as a gesture of friendship after the American Revolution. Frederic Auguste Bartholdi designed the sculpture to commemorate the centennial of American Independence. The American people were to build the pedestal. Funds were a problem for both countries. In France, public fees, entertainments and a lottery were used to raise funds. In the United States, it was theatrical events, art exhibitions, auctions and prize fights. Joseph Pulitzer wrote editorials in his newspaper criticizing both wealthy and middle class Americans for not supporting the fund raising effort.

Bartholdi needed an engineer for such a colossal copper sculpture. Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, designer of the Eiffel Tower, designed the framework allowing the copper skin to move independently yet stand upright. Completed in France in 1884, the Statue arrived in New York Harbor in June of 1885 in 350 pieces packed in 214 crates on board a French frigate. The Statue was reassembled in four months. In 1886 thousands of spectators witnessed the dedication of the Statue of Liberty.

The Statue's granite pedestal was placed in the courtyard of the star-shaped walls of Fort Wood. In 1901 it was placed under the War Department. Fort Wood and the Statue of Liberty became a National Monument in 1924 and was transferred to the National Park Service in 1933. In 1937 it was enlarged to encompass Bedloe's Island, renamed Liberty Island in 1956. Ellis Island was transferred to the National Park Service and became part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument in 1965. In 1982 President Ronald Reagan appointed Lee Iacocca to head up a private effort to restore the Statue of Liberty. Fundraising began for the $87 million restoration under a public/private partnership. In 1984 the United Nations designated the Statue of Liberty as a *World Heritage Site*. On July 5, 1986 the newly restored Statue reopened to the public during Liberty Weekend, celebrating her centennial.

Visitors climb 354 steps to reach the crown or 192 steps to the top of the pedestal. The seven rays of the crown represent the seven seas and continents of the world. There are 25 windows in the crown. Winds of 50 miles per hour cause the torch to sway five inches.

For information on African, Hispanic, Asian, Native American history, see past issues of the Brown Quarterly on our website at:

brownvboard.org

E-Mail: brownfound@juno.com Web: http://brownvboard.org

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