

8 Famous Ellis Island Immigrants

Over 14 million people came to America through Ellis Island. It's one of America's most historical and prominent landmarks. Almost half of the United States population would not exist today were it not for the island and its immigrants.



1. Bob Hope

Bob Hope arrived in New York on March 30, 1908 from Bristol, England. He came over with his family of seven. They arrived in New York, but moved to Cleveland, Ohio. Once arriving in America, he later went on to become a star of Broadway, vaudeville, television and radio in a career that spanned over 60 years. Due to his commitment to entertaining military personnel, the U.S. Congress declared him the “first and only honorary veteran of the U.S. armed forces” in 1997. Hope represented the story of many immigrants who entered America to become successful. In commemoration of his achievements and his life story, the Ellis Island library was given a new title: the Bob Hope Memorial Library.

2. Irving Berlin

Most famously known for the holiday single “White Christmas” and the anthem “God Bless America”, Irving Berlin was Russian Jewish Immigrant who passed through Ellis Island as a child. In his lifetime he composed 1,500 songs, 19 Broadway Shows and 18 Hollywood movies. By the end of his life in 1989, he was known as one of the greatest songwriters in America. He emigrated through Ellis Island on September 14, 1893 under the name Israel Beilin. His ship, the Rhymland, departed from the city of Antwerp, Belgium. Berlin was only 5 years old at the time. He remained in America, living in New York City, until his death at age 101.





3. Chef Boyardee

You may not have even realized that the face of canned pasta was a real person. But he most certainly was, and he immigrated through Ellis Island at the age of 16. Ettore Boiardi came from his home town of Piacenza, Italy to join his brother, a waiter at New York's Plaza Hotel at the time. He arrived May 9th, 1914. Ettore joined his brother at the Plaza, eventually being promoted to head chef. The inspiration for his line of canned Italian foods came in Cleveland. In 1928, he opened a factory for producing packaged Italian foods after realizing the demand for "take out" by many customers. The product was specifically sold under the name "Boy-Ar-Dee" so that Americans would correctly pronounce his last name.

4. Mother Cabrini

You may not recognize her name, but Mother Cabrini was one of the most influential immigrants ever to pass through the doors of Ellis Island. She arrived on September 24, 1894, at 43 years old. The passenger manifest lists her as Frances Xavier Cabrini. Cabrini was sent from her birthplace in Italy to New York by Pope Leo XIII. Her mission was to help poor Italian immigrants in America. She very much succeeded in her task, establishing orphanages, schools and hospitals in Italian neighborhoods all across the country. Pope Pius XII declared her a saint in 1946- making her the first naturalized citizen of the United States to be canonized by the Roman Catholic Church. She was later named Patroness of Immigrants in 1950.



5. Annie Moore

Annie isn't so famous for her life, but rather for her timing. As she was the very first immigrant ever to be processed in Ellis Island on January 1, 1892. Annie was an Irish teenager coming into America with her two brothers, Anthony and Phillip. The three were joining their parents who had come to the United States in 1888. She departed for America from Country Cork, Ireland aboard the steamship *Nevada*. The boat carried a total of 148 steerage passengers, who would be led by Annie toward their new destination. It was revealed that Annie never left New York, but tragically died of heart failure at age 50 in 1924. In her life she gave birth to a total of 11 children.



6. Johnny Weissmueller

Johnny was best known for both his acting and athletic skills. He had one of the best competitive swimming records of the 20th century and famously played Tarzan in the films of the 1930s and 1940s. His exact birthplace is not certain, but the manifest at Ellis Island lists Párdány, Kingdom of Hungary. The ship left Rotterdam in January of 1905 and arrived in New York on January 26. Johnny was only seven months old at the time, being carried by his parents into the new world. He went on to win 5 Olympic gold medals for swimming and set more than 50 world records. After retiring from swimming, he went on to play Tarzan in a total of 12 films. To this day his distinctive Tarzan yell is often used in other movies.

7. Claudette Colbert

Claudette Colbert was born Émilie Chauchoin in Saint-Mande, France and sailed with her family to the United States on the S.S. Chicago on September 30, 1911. They landed in New York on October 9, 1911. Her career began in 1923 on Broadway with a minor part in *The Wild Westcots*. She used the name "Claudette" after her father's middle name Claude and "Colbert" from her maternal grandmother's maiden name. She went on to perform in a series of successful plays on Broadway and in London's West End. In 1927 the theatrical producer Leland Hayward proposed Colbert for a part in the silent film *For the Love of Mike* (1927). For her performance in *It Happened One Night* (1934) she won the Academy Award for Best Actress. Altogether, Colbert made 65 films that included *The Sign Of The Cross* (1932), *Cleopatra* (1934), *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* (1938), *Midnight* (1939), *The Palm Beach Story* (1942), *Tomorrow Is Forever* (1946), *The Egg and I* (1947) and *Three Came Home* (1950). Colbert was recognized by the Kennedy Center Honors for lifetime achievement in 1989.



8. Felix Frankfurter

United States Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter was born in Vienna, Austria in 1882. Frankfurter left Europe with his mother, three brothers and a sister aboard the S.S. Suevia. They arrived at Ellis Island in August 1894. His family settled in NYC where he encountered the ideas of trade unionism and socialism as he grew older. Frankfurter graduated from New York City College in 1902 and entered Harvard Law School. He finished Harvard having achieved one of their best academic records. He joined a law firm, and later began teaching law at Harvard in 1914. Frankfurter acquired a reputation for holding progressive political views and helped found the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). He criticized the Tennessee Anti-Evolution Law and advocated for a new trial for Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian immigrants sentenced to death for murder in a controversial and public trial in the 1920s. After serving as an advisor to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Frankfurter was appointed by Roosevelt to the Supreme Court in 1939. He served until August 28, 1962 when he retired due to ill health.

