



Titanic

The Titanic was a disaster that could have been prevented. Built in Ireland, the steam ship was huge: 882 feet long, 92 feet high, 3 strong engines powered by 29 boilers. Because of the rise in tourism, it was made to be spacious, fast and very elegant. Everyone thought it to be the safest ship afloat.

Reflecting the time, there were separate accommodations for first class, second class, and third class passengers. The first class passengers were pampered with luxurious, soft rooms (some with fireplaces), a swimming pool, beautiful lounges, a gymnasium with exercise equipment, a fancy restaurant, and a Turkish bath.

Although the second and third class passengers were kept separate, their accommodations were also quite nice.

This ship also boasted four elevators, a darkroom for passengers to develop their film, a barber shop, and a hospital for emergencies.

The Titanic set out on April 10, 1912, for her maiden voyage. It was to be the last trip for Captain Smith, who would be retiring after this assignment on the Titanic. Captain Smith was chosen because of his years of experience and his excellent safety record.

The trip began with 337 first class passengers (including a number of millionaires), 271 second class passengers, 712 third class passengers, and 907 crew members, for a total of 2,227 people on board.

On Friday, April 12, the Titanic began receiving iceberg warnings from other ships in the area. Again on the evening of Sunday, April 14, the Titanic received more warnings about icebergs. But Captain Smith did not slow down. If he had slowed the ship down, it is quite possible disaster could have been avoided.

At 11:40 p.m., the Titanic hit an iceberg. Six compartments were ruptured. S.O.S. distress signals were sent out, and people calmly began putting on life vests. Women and children were put into life boats. Seven hundred and five people survived, and 1,522 people died. The Titanic sank 10,000 feet to the ocean floor.

Inquiries were held in both England and the United States to determine what went wrong. The disaster of the Titanic shocked the world, and several improvements in safety were made to prevent another tragedy.



Immigration

The United States from the beginning has been considered a land of opportunity. People have come to America to seek fortune and freedom. These are the reasons the colonists came and these are the reasons people still come. But the early 1900's brought a tremendous wave of people. Many people left their homelands to escape poverty, starvation, or to achieve political or religious freedom.

France gave the Statue of Liberty to the United States as a memorial to American independence and as a symbol of friendship. The Statue of Liberty became an icon of freedom to those arriving in America. In the early 1900's, millions of people emigrated from Europe.

The immigrants needed to pass through medical examinations at the immigration office. Most then settled into large cities, clustering together in ethnic neighborhoods. Emma Lazarus, a young Jewish girl, wrote a poem entitled "The New Colossus". The purpose of the poem was to help raise money to build the platform for the statue. This poem was added to the Statue of Liberty in 1903.

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glowes world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

The New Colossus by Emma Lazarus

Over the years, the United States has passed many laws restricting the flow of immigrants. Preference is given to refugees escaping war and those with relatives who are U.S. citizens.



Family History

When you study the twentieth century, it is appropriate to study your own family history. Studying about immigration has given you a peek at why some people chose to come to America. Find out where your roots are. When did your ancestors come to America and why? This is a good time to introduce a "family tree."

Your family tree can be simple or quite involved. You may wish to list just names, or you may choose to include: birth dates and places; marriage dates and places; death dates and places; siblings and other public records information, such as military records.

The family tree can be interesting to construct, but the real fun comes with hearing all the stories. Take some time to interview your grandparents, great uncles, great-grandparents, or anyone who is available and willing. You may wish to tape record your talks so that the conversation can flow freely.

Ask questions that spark memories, such as:

What was your childhood like?

How did your family celebrate birthdays and holidays?

Did you have a favorite toy or pet when you were growing up?

What was your house like?

What was school like?

Who was first in the family to come to America? Where from?

Did you or your siblings have a military record? From which wars? Were they injured?

These interviews can be a fun way to learn more about your family's past, and often are fun for your family member to reminisce about the past.

Take photos to add to your timeline and ask if they have any old photos you could see. Don't be concerned if you can't fill in all the blanks in your family tree. Be considerate to change the subject if a topic becomes too personal or if they are getting frustrated by not being able to remember clearly.