



Immigrant Groups & Their Contributions

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Italian Immigrants

- Came to US to escape poverty
- Italy could not support population & farmers have a difficult time
- Few factories in Italy for jobs
- Took cheap passage on “steerage”
 - Cramped, smelly, boring
- Immigration centers → medical exams
- Supported by “padrones” to help find jobs → many work in public works
- Many made \$ then returned home
- Created “Little Italy” neighborhood
- Family & culture important
- Not ALL gangsters!

Jewish Immigrants

- Wanted to escape anti-Jewish laws in Russia/attacks
- 1881-1924 = 2.4 million Jews to US
- Inspected/questioned at immigration center → examined
- Crowded together in NY → Lower East Side
- Arrived with wide range of skills
- School/education very important
- Faced prejudice/discrimination



Chinese Immigrants

- First came for gold then to build railroad
- Anti-Chinese feelings grew as whites wanted mining claims and afraid Chinese would take their jobs
- Laws banned Chinese from entering US/ becoming citizens
- After SF earthquake/fire 1906 → many could claim natural born and brought family over
- Inspected/questioned when “locked up” at immigration center (Angel Island)
- Had to find jobs → SF Chinatown
- Many immigrants male, then women/children



Mexican Immigrants

- Many immigrants fled rebellions and military conflict → Mexican Revolution
- Many walked across the border carrying all they owned
- Railroads provided transportation/jobs
- Welcomed in the US as railroad workers, farmers, laborers → replaced Chinese workers
- Most jobs as farm workers harvesting crops → paid very little
- Lived in camps near fields then moved to “barrios” on edge of cities
- Faced prejudice/discrimination
- Just wanted better life for family

Other Immigrants

- More immigrants from eastern/southern Europe; Asia, Canada, Mexico
- Refugees escaping violence/poverty
- Usually poor, less educated, no English, variety of religions
- Many wanted new immigrants to become “Americanized” – lots of prejudice, esp. with little “neighborhoods” → many did not adopt US ways
- Made vital contributions to society → skills/labor helped US grow
- Brought diversity to new land → rich culture/traditions
- Had to deal with nativism (anti-immigrant feelings) → competition for jobs/etc.
- Lots of laws banning different immigrants → quota system