

Reading

Immigrants' Experience at Angel Island (1910-1940)

The following provides a snapshot of a typical immigrants' experience at Angel Island. Note that the process varied considerably based on the immigrants' gender, race, class, nationality, health, and ability status. While the majority of immigrants processed at Angel Island were from Asia, there were also immigrants who arrived from all over the world, including Australia, Russia, Mexico, and many other nations.

Step 1: Arrive at Angel Island.

Step 2: Undergo medical examinations of teeth, skin, nails, and organs. Personal belongings were searched and/or confiscated.

Step 3: Wait for interrogation with an immigration inspector. Immigrants were often detained for weeks awaiting their interrogations. They slept in dormitories and on bunk beds at Angel Island.

Step 4: Interview with an immigration inspector. A typical interrogation lasted four hours and involved hundreds of questions. Some lasted days.

Step 5: Await a decision while detained at Angel Island. If the immigrant was rejected, they could appeal the decision in Washington, DC, but they had to be detained in the meantime. Appeals could result in a years-long detention at the island. 33% of immigrants arriving through Angel Island were denied entry to the United States.