

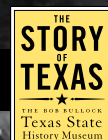
The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum

# FORGOTTEN GATEWAY

COMING TO AMERICA THROUGH  
GALVESTON ISLAND

Guide for Educators  
& Communities

Tools and Resources for Discussing Immigration, suggested for grades 4-12, families, and communities



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**FORGOTTEN GATEWAY**  
COMING TO AMERICA THROUGH  
GALVESTON ISLAND

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Welcome!

This Educator and Community Guide is the product of four years of exhibition development and community projects at the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, culminating with the *Forgotten Gateway: Coming to America Through Galveston Island* traveling exhibit. These initiatives have been generously supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities for all four years as a *We The People* Grant. The exhibit and community projects from which this educator's guide are derived use historic issues of immigration as a lens to view contemporary immigration issues.

We have written and designed this guide to be easily adapted to the diverse needs of students and community groups. This interdisciplinary guide is divided into four sections (*Difficult Journeys; Immigration as Big Business; Answer the Question; and The Rules Have Changed*) and each section has a set of four activities. Look for these activities within each of the sections:



How to Read Artifacts



How to Read Primary Documents



How to Read Historic Maps



How to Engage With Your Community

You can use these activities as designed, or you can use them as a springboard to develop your own creative immigration-related projects that are specific to your classroom or community. They can be used independently or paired with other activities from the guide. All activities are aligned with National Standards and the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge Skills) and are listed in the glossary.

## Museum Visit

To complement any of these activities, we recommend you visit the *Forgotten Gateway: Coming to America Through Galveston Island* exhibit. It will be on view at the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum from February 21 - October 11, 2009. Check our website for the exhibit's travel schedule: [www.forgottengateway.com](http://www.forgottengateway.com).

## Feedback

We are interested in receiving your feedback about this guide. What works? What doesn't work? What did your students learn? Your comments will help us improve our future guides. Send us an email at [education@thetoryoftexas.com](mailto:education@thetoryoftexas.com) and please put in the subject line: "Immigration Resource Guide feedback." We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Catherine Kenyon  
Head of Education  
The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum

*Forgotten Gateway: Coming to America Through Galveston Island*

The nationally traveling museum exhibit upon which this guide is based first came to life on a ferry boat trip to Ellis Island in the spring of 2002. It was here that a Texas 10th-grader on a school trip to New York City said to me, his chaperone: “I don’t know why I came all the way to Ellis Island to find my roots. My family came to America through Galveston.”

Why indeed? Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty symbolize immigration to America, but what about the other gateways? What about Galveston? I was intrigued to learn more about this seemingly forgotten national gateway in my home state.

But it was his next comment that set me on this journey: “At least it was safe to come to America back then. Now the immigrants might be terrorists.” It was exactly six months after the 9/11 attacks on America. Our children were reflecting our fear. That fear had again affected how we see strangers amongst us, especially new immigrants, and how wide we are willing to hold open the gateway to our nation.

I returned to Texas determined to create a venue to continue this conversation with our children, with our nation’s latest newcomers, and with the descendants of those who arrived in the US generations ago. The result is an exhibit designed to accomplish two goals:

1. To raise awareness of the role of Galveston Island as a major—yet forgotten—transoceanic gateway for over 150,000 newcomers to America in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
2. To use this slice of immigrant history as a lens through which to explore recurring issues that have defined the immigrant experience throughout our country’s history as a “nation of immigrants.”

Through recreated scenes, visitor interactives, personal stories, artifacts, and oral history audio clips, the exhibit chronicles the dramatic changes in Galveston’s history from a sleepy “frontier” sailing port to a bustling commercial metropolis, to a nearly abandoned federal immigration station after WWI — all in the space of 75 years. At each point in the telling, visitors are invited to engage with the exhibit by sharing their own stories or commenting on the overarching themes illustrated in each section. The four pages that follow will introduce you to each of the four main sections of the exhibit, and the themes of immigration that resonate in each: difficult journeys, immigration as big business, confronting prejudice, and closing the gates.

We hope that this thin slice of the history of American immigration can help us understand our nation’s struggle with recurring questions: Who should be allowed to be an American? Who decides? This educators’ and community guide is designed to extend the conversation by bringing the exhibit into your own classrooms, community centers, and homes where you too can engage in the questions. We thus invite you now to join the conversation.

Suzanne Seriff, Ph.D.  
Curator

## **FORGOTTEN GATEWAY EXHIBIT-SECTION I**

### **Difficult Journeys (1845-1865)**

*"We hurried toward the sinking sun, the magic West beckoning as we wondered what the future held in store." Otilie Fuchs Goeth, ca. 1840s*

For the first major wave of migrants to Texas and America through Galveston's gates, the trip took six weeks to six months. Most immigrants came from northern or western Europe. Immigrants who came voluntarily from Europe were drawn by the promise of land, freedom, and opportunity.

There were four important aspects of migration to Texas before the Civil War: factors influencing immigrants' decisions to risk everything to come to a new land; the dangers of the journey; the conflict between newcomers and long time residents over who owns the land; and the forced migration of thousands of Africans who were forced to migrate to Texas against their will.

Galveston was one of the state's top slave auction sites before the Civil War. Enslaved peoples who were forced to come to Texas before the Civil War were treated more like "things" than like "people."

Upon arrival, many newcomers seeking home and land faced conflict with those who were already here over who belongs and who has a right to resources. Immigration laws at the time allowed entry of almost all immigrants.

## **FORGOTTEN GATEWAY EXHIBIT-SECTION I** **Difficult Journeys (1845-1865)**

Did you know?

**Newcomers had to get their feet wet.**

In the 1840s, Galveston was just a narrow spit of land with a sandbar that prevented ships from anchoring close to shore. Immigrants had to wade in, walk on unsteady planks, or be ferried on small boats called “lighters.”

Did you Know?

**Texas was not the only gateway to the nation.**

Texas became part of the United States in 1845. For the next twenty years, thousands of Europeans came through Galveston to the United States, while New York City received most of the nation’s four million immigrants. In 1855, New York established Castle Garden in lower Manhattan, the nation’s first official immigrant landing and processing station.

Did you Know?

**Galveston was an immigrant gateway before the United States was a country.**

The first Europeans arrived as early as 1528, when the survivors of a Spanish expedition led by Cabeza de Vaca washed up onto the beach and were met by the Karankawas on the island. Among the castaways was the first African to come to Texas—a Moroccan named Esteban.

Did you Know?

**Cotton was King.**

Galveston was the wealthiest city in Texas for most of the nineteenth century—and most of its success was tied to its shipping, not passenger, business. Cotton was king and Galveston was one of the largest cotton exporters in the country.

Did you Know?

**Galveston had a gateway rival.**

In the mid-1800s, Galveston had a rival immigrant gateway on the Texas Gulf Coast, Indianola. But Indianola never had the wealth, infrastructure, or population of Galveston, and by the 1870s it succumbed to hurricanes, disease, and isolation.

## **FORGOTTEN GATEWAY EXHIBIT-SECTION II** **Immigration is Big Business (1865-1900)**

*"If not for yourselves, for your children, Come to Texas!"*  
Promotional Brochure, 1860s

After the Civil War, Texas was a product to be sold, and making money depended on people—lots of people—to settle in Texas. Cheap land, low fares, good jobs, and other factors lured immigrants to Texas in the late nineteenth century. This was the second wave of immigration through Galveston, when immigration was big business for Texas and the nation. There was money to be made from the recruitment of millions of newcomers to the state. There were a number of key “stakeholders” in the business of bringing newcomers to Texas. There was deal making practiced by and between each stakeholder including the railroad magnates, the shipping tycoons, land agents, contract laborers, railroad workers, dock laborers, plantation owners, and government representatives. Texas actively recruited immigrants from selected parts of Europe to fill jobs and to settle land. Dedicated rail and shipping lines streamlined the transportation of Europeans to Galveston and inland throughout Texas and the American Midwest.

Emancipation in Texas provided new jobs and opportunities for some recently freed African Americans, while many faced ongoing prejudice and racism as their work on plantations and railroads was actively replaced by specially recruited European immigrants.

Beginning in 1875, unrestricted immigration became a thing of the past. The first state and federal laws restricting who could enter America were enacted, including laws against immigrant contract labor, as well as laws prohibiting certain groups such as “coolies” (Chinese laborers) as seen in the Chinese Exclusion Act, as well as certain classes of individuals such as prostitutes, criminals, and those “likely to become a public charge.” Laws restricting other classes of aliens deemed “undesirable” soon followed.

## **FORGOTTEN GATEWAY EXHIBIT-SECTION II** **Immigration is Big Business (1865-1900)**

### Did you Know?

**There was no “Ellis Island” for most of the 1800s.**

Ellis Island did not open as a federal immigrant processing port until 1892. When it closed in 1954, over 12 million immigrants had been inspected there. Another six million who came by sea were processed in over a dozen other port cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Miami, New Orleans, San Francisco, Los Angeles... and of course Galveston.

### Did you Know?

**Not all immigrants came by sea.**

Immigrants came to Texas from Southern and Northern states, as well as Europe and Mexico. They came by wagon, by train, and on foot. Texas grew from a small frontier state in 1846 to more than a million and a half residents by 1880 and over three million by 1900. To Texans, all newcomers arriving voluntarily—even if only from neighboring states—were considered “immigrants.”

### Did you Know?

**Galveston was known as “The Wall Street of Texas.”**

By the late 1800s, Galveston’s main commercial street—The Strand—was lined with Victorian buildings which housed commercial, financial, and legal businesses. Each of these businesses catered to Galveston’s thriving port economy. Galveston was one of the richest cities in the world, per capita, and the financial heart of much of the Southwest.

### Did you Know?

**Juneteenth began in Galveston.**

On June 19, 1865—almost three years after Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation—slaves in Galveston officially learned of their freedom when Union General Gordon Granger read the proclamation to a gathered crowd. Soon, the news spread to over 250,000 slaves throughout Texas. Juneteenth is the holiday that commemorates the announcement of the abolition of slavery in the United States. Also known as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day, it is an official annual holiday in 29 states.

### Did you Know?

**Emancipation and Immigration were related in Texas.**

After the Civil War, some African Americans filled jobs formerly given to immigrants—as workers on the Galveston docks, for example—but others lost their livelihoods to immigrants who were brought to replace them as plantation and railroad workers.

### Did you Know?

**Beginning in 1875, unrestricted immigration became a thing of the past.**

In 1875, the federal government passed the first legislation restricting immigration. The law barred convicts, prostitutes, and “coolies” (Chinese laborers). Laws restricting other classes of aliens deemed “undesirable” soon followed.

## **FORGOTTEN GATEWAY EXHIBIT-SECTION III**

### **Answer the Question! (1900-1915)**

*“Restrict all immigration!: Protect Yourself and Your Children against the Ruins of Labor and Business Competition.”* National Restrictionist Brochure, 1885

Beginning in the 1880s, our nation’s generous attitude toward “foreigners” began to shift as more and more immigrants flooded the cities and industries each day, and long-time residents found themselves competing with immigrants for limited jobs, housing, and social service funds. An increasing xenophobia toward these “alien foreigners” was reflected in popular media and in legal debates over immigrant rights to own land, seek work, and receive the full benefits of “natural born” citizens. This was especially true of a new wave of southern and eastern European immigrants (predominantly from Italy, Greece, Russia, Poland, and the Mediterranean) whose “swarthy” physical characteristics and Catholic and Jewish religious affiliations set them apart from the dominant northern European Protestant groups already settled into American culture. Immigrants at the nation’s gateways experienced this changing climate firsthand, as they were confronted with stricter and more invasive medical examinations, tougher rules and regulations, and an increasingly long battery of questions by uniformed inspectors.

Federal authorities took over Galveston’s immigration station for the first time during this period, and medical examiners and inspection agents were sent from the nation’s capital to the newly opened federal immigration station on Pelican Island in Galveston. Federal inspections at Galveston’s port of entry became increasingly strict, resulting in a greater percentage of immigrants deported from Galveston than other national ports of entry.

## **FORGOTTEN GATEWAY EXHIBIT-SECTION III**

### **Answer the Question! (1900-1915)**

Did you Know?

**1900-1910 was a peak decade for immigration, despite increased restrictions.**

From 1900-1910, some 8.8 million immigrants came to America, primarily from southern and eastern Europe. In one year, 1907, more people immigrated to the United States than ever before. Approximately 1.25 million were processed in Ellis Island. Galveston was projected to receive over 20,000 that same year.

Did you Know?

**Galveston became one of the nation's top ten stations.**

The federal government took over responsibility for immigration from the states in 1890 and opened stations in several major ports of entry. Galveston won the bid to host a new federal station in 1906. It was going to be second only to Ellis Island in its size and features. Unfortunately, the fancy new station took years to build and thousands of immigrants were processed in a converted cotton warehouse across from Pier 29. The new station finally opened in 1913 on Pelican Island and operated for only three years before it closed for good during World War I.

Did you Know?

**Galveston's history changed in a single afternoon.**

In 1900, a hurricane hit Galveston, killing more than 6,000 people. It is still considered the deadliest natural disaster in American history. In the aftermath, Galveston's reign as the state's premier commercial port city was over. In its place, the more stable mainland gateway of Houston rose to prominence.

Did you Know?

**A greater percentage of the American population was foreign-born a hundred years ago than it is today.**

America has twice the number of immigrants living here today than in 1910, but as a percentage of the US population, immigration peaked in 1910.

## FORGOTTEN GATEWAY EXHIBIT-SECTION IV

### The Rules Have Changed (1915-1924)

*"We were afraid of foreigners; we distrusted them; we didn't like them. Under this act only some one hundred and fifty odd thousands would be permitted to enter the United States. If you were of Anglo-Saxon origin, you could have over two-thirds of the quota numbers allotted to your people. If you were Japanese, you could not come in at all. That, of course, had been true of the Chinese since 1880. If you were southern or eastern European, you could dribble in and remain on sufferance." Emanuel Celler, You Never Leave Brooklyn, ca. 1953*

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the immigration pattern throughout our nation was marked by a dramatic shift from an open to a closed-door policy. Anti-immigrant sentiment in America led to changing laws that would affect who could immigrate to our country for years to come, severely limiting the number and nationality of immigrants who could enter our borders. It also corresponded with changes in the flow of immigrants brought on by geopolitical events such as World War I and the Mexican Revolution, which stimulated a shift in immigrant flow from Europe to Mexico, and from steamship to pedestrian passage. While the largest immigration stations—such as Ellis Island—remained open during this time, most federal stations around the country—including Galveston—effectively closed their doors to transatlantic ocean passage of immigrants from Europe. Galveston's hurricanes and devastating floods of this time, the ravages of war in Europe, and the surge of refugees at the Texas Mexico border set the scene for this section. Each factor changed the course of immigrant history into Texas at this time.

#### Major Legislation

1917 Immigration Act of 1917 Congress enacts a literacy requirement for immigrants over the age of 16. They must be able to read 40 words in some language.

1921 Quota Act limits European immigration to three percent of the number of a nationality group in the United States in 1910.

1924 Johnson-Reed Act limits European immigration to two percent of the number of a nationality group in the United States in 1890.

## **FORGOTTEN GATEWAY EXHIBIT-SECTION IV** **The Rules Have Changed (1915-1924)**

### Did you Know?

**Texas actually had two active international gateways.**

In the early 1900s, tens of thousands of people came by sea through the gateway of Galveston. Just about the time that Texas was shuttering its Gulf coast doors because of World War I, it was opening another door to tens of thousands of others through its second international gateway: the Texas-Mexico border. It was here—in El Paso, Brownsville, and Laredo—that Texas became an entry point, once again, for newcomers from Mexico—many of whom were escaping the ravages of the Mexican Revolution.

### Did You Know?

**The fear of foreigners has a name.**

In 1900, a new word appeared in the dictionary for the first time to describe the unreasonable fear or hatred of foreigners that had infected the nation: xenophobia. Xenophobia derives from the Greek “xenos” meaning strange and “phobos” meaning fear.

### Did you Know?

**War and migration don't mix.**

When World War I erupted, immigration dropped 73 percent from 1914 to 1915. Screening stations were opened overseas and receiving stations like Ellis Island and Galveston were no longer central to US immigration strategy. Ellis Island was used more as a detention center than an inspection center. After the Pelican Island station closed in 1916, Galveston did not open a new federal immigration station until 1933.

### Did you know?

**Benjamin Franklin was a “nativist.”**

“Nativism” is the belief that native-born Americans, especially of Anglo-Saxon extraction, have superior rights to the “foreign-born.” This idea has run through American history ever since Benjamin Franklin’s tirades against German immigrants. In the 1920s, one of the best-known nativist organizations was the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.