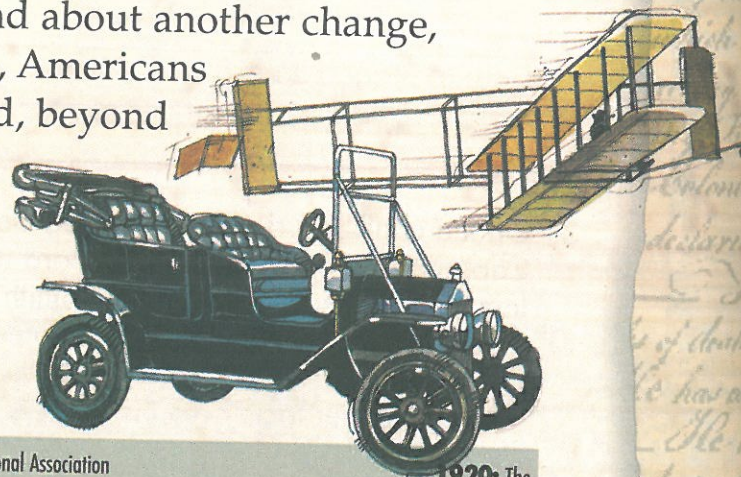


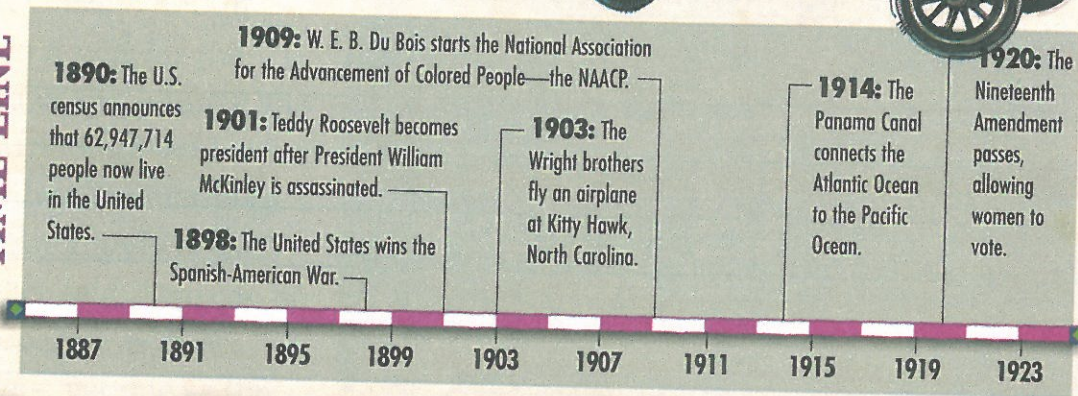
UNIT 8 1890–1920 A TIME OF CHANGE

In this unit, you're going to read about some remarkable changes for the United States. For example, you will read about how the makeup of the American people changed, as immigrants by the millions poured into America. You'll also read about how transportation changed with the invention of the automobile and the airplane.

You're going to read about another change, too. For the first time, Americans begin to look outward, beyond the shores of their own continent, for other lands to claim.



TIME LINE



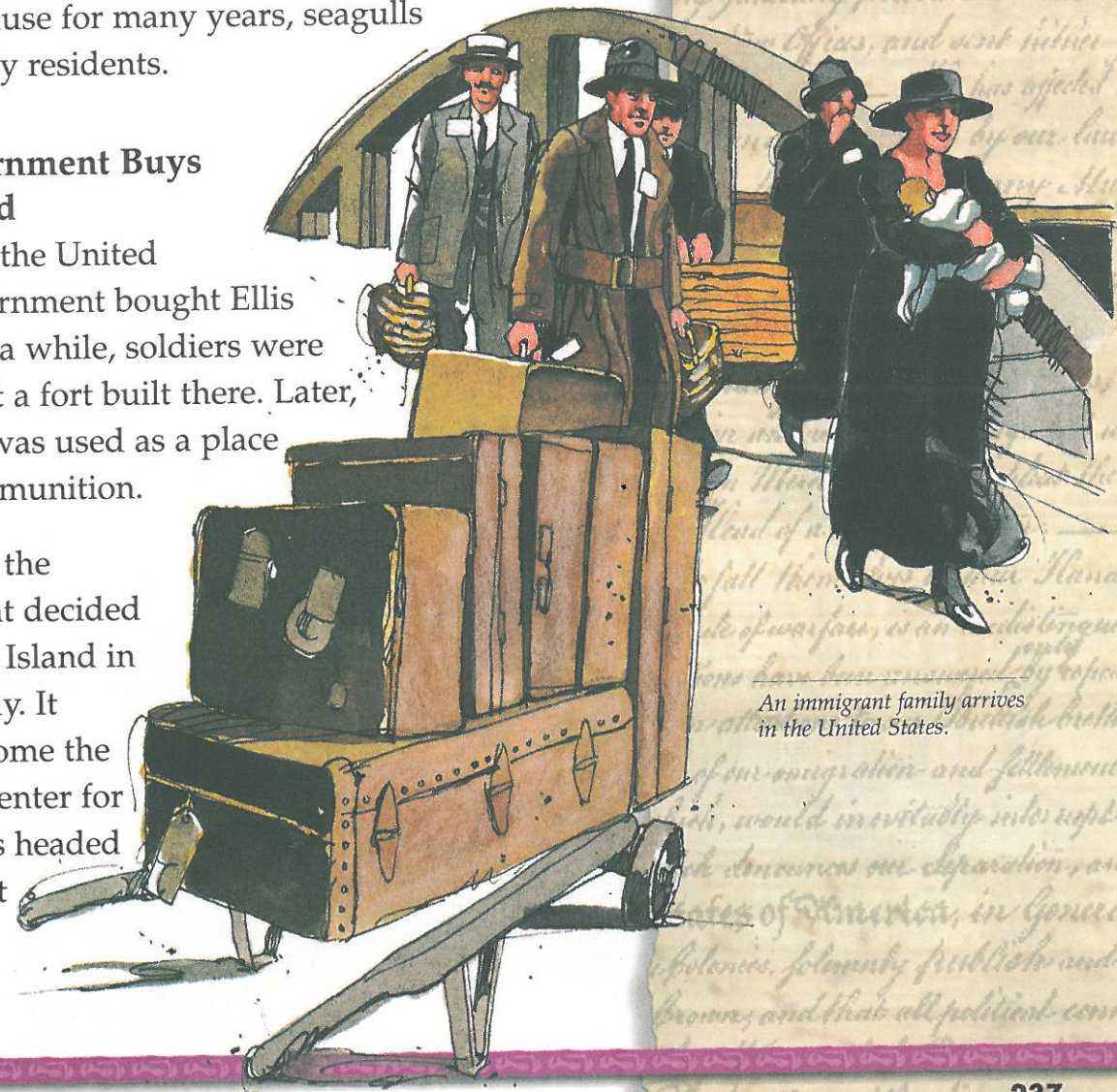
ELLIS ISLAND WELCOMES NEWCOMERS

Ellis Island is located in New York Harbor. It sits close to the New Jersey shore. Ellis Island got its name from the farmer, Samuel Ellis, who owned the island long ago. Before that, it was called Oyster Island, because of the beds of delicious oysters found there. And, before that, it was called by its Indian name—Kioshk, or Gull Island, because for many years, seagulls were its only residents.

The Government Buys Ellis Island

In 1808, the United States government bought Ellis Island. For a while, soldiers were stationed at a fort built there. Later, the island was used as a place to store ammunition.

In 1890, the government decided to use Ellis Island in another way. It would become the receiving center for immigrants headed for the port at New York City.



An immigrant family arrives in the United States.

Immediately, the government began its work. The new main building housed receiving rooms and baggage rooms. It also had places where newcomers could exchange their money for American money or buy railroad tickets. Other buildings offered services that immigrants might need. For example, there was a laundry and a dormitory. Those came in handy for immigrants who had to stay overnight. There also was a restaurant and a kitchen. There was even a hospital for immigrants who were sick when they arrived.

The government not only built buildings on Ellis Island, it also built up the island itself. The original Ellis Island was only a little more than three acres.

For many immigrants, the huge main building on Ellis Island was their most enduring memory of the trip to America.



However, it grew as workers added thousands of tons of soil to it. Much of this dirt came from New York when its subway system was built. Eventually, the island measured over 27 acres.

Ellis Island Opens for Business

On January 1, 1892, 15-year-old Annie Moore of Cork, Ireland, became the first immigrant to be processed through Ellis Island. Her two brothers were second and third. For the rest of that year, and for many years to come, Ellis Island was overwhelmed with immigrants from all over the world. Every day, seven days a week, an almost unbelievable number of people passed through Ellis Island. On some days, the number of people reached over 5,000!

There actually were over 70 other places where people could be processed into the country. San Francisco, New Orleans, Boston, and Savannah were among those ports where immigrants landed. Yet, for the next 60 years or so, three of every four newcomers to the United States came through the gates of Ellis Island.

Processing Millions of Immigrants

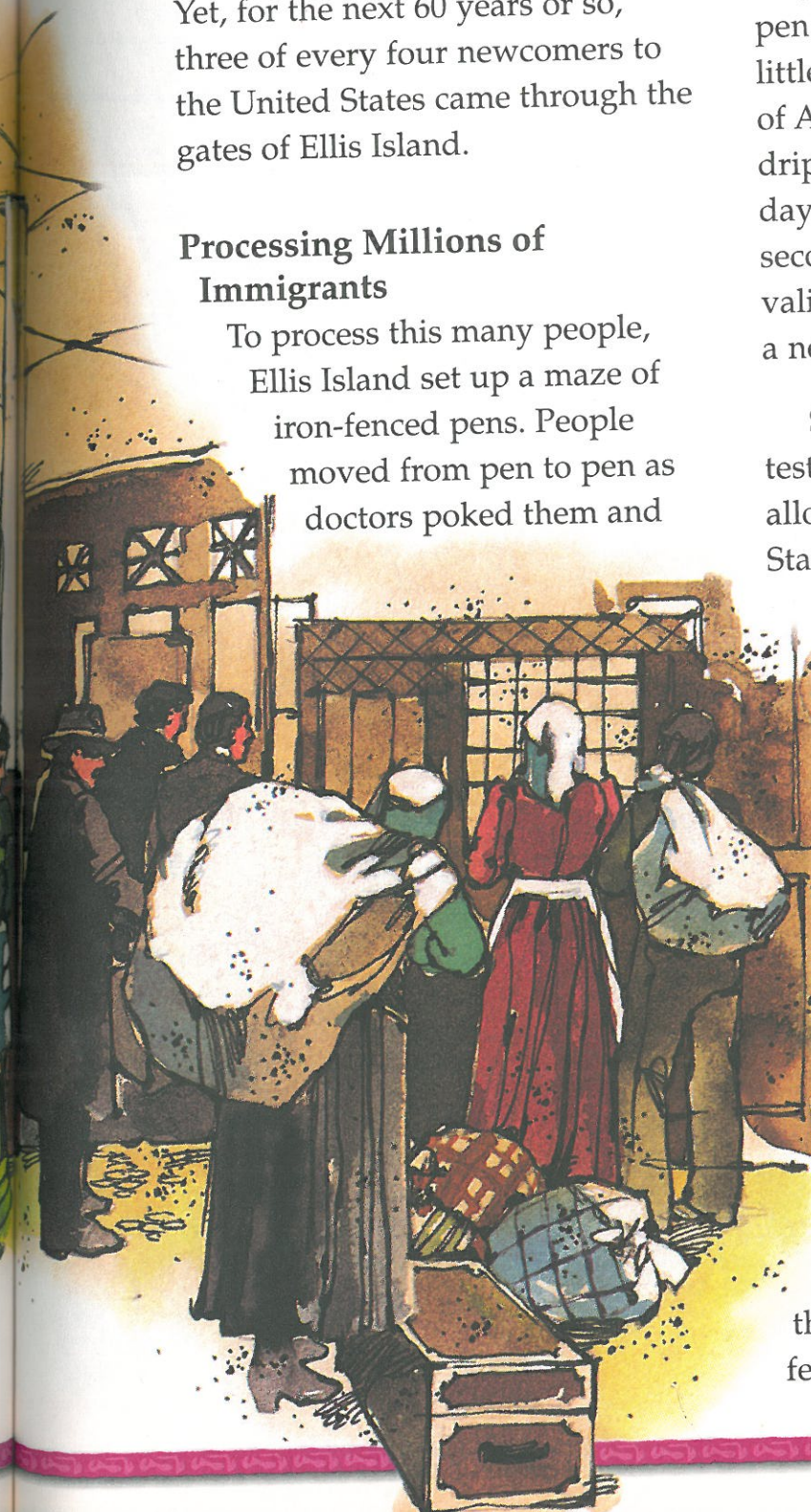
To process this many people, Ellis Island set up a maze of iron-fenced pens. People moved from pen to pen as doctors poked them and

prodded them and officials asked them questions.

Here is how author H. G. Wells described what he saw when he visited Ellis Island in 1905. "On they [the immigrants] go, from this pen to that, pen by pen, towards a little metal wicket [gate]—the Gate of America. Through this wicket drips the immigration stream—all day long, every two or three seconds an immigrant, with a valise [suitcase] or bundle . . . into a new world."

Some immigrants failed the tests at Ellis Island. They were not allowed to come into the United States. This happened if someone was sick with something others could catch. It also happened if the person was a criminal. Mentally ill people were not allowed into the country, either. People who failed the tests usually were sent back to their homelands.

Most immigrants—four of every five—passed all the tests they were given at Ellis Island. Officials supplied them with a landing card. That was the important paper that allowed them to settle in this country. Then, they took a ferry to the mainland.



About one-third of the immigrants who passed through Ellis Island stayed in the New York City area. The other two-thirds spread out to help populate every region and every corner of the nation.

The Statue of Liberty

Ellis Island sits in the shadow of another famous American landmark, the Statue of Liberty. Often, the first sign that told immigrants they had reached America was the Statue of Liberty, standing watch over New York Harbor. Here is how one immigrant remembered how some people reacted when the Statue of Liberty came into view: "Many older persons among us, burdened with a thousand memories of what they were leaving behind, had been openly

weeping ever since we entered the narrower waters on our final approach toward the unknown. Now somehow steadied, I suppose, by the concreteness of the symbol of America's freedom, they dried their tears."

In 1903, a plaque was added to the base on which the Statue of Liberty stands. On the plaque is a poem by an



American woman named Emma Lazarus. In the poem's last lines, Emma tells what she thinks the statue would say if it could speak to other countries:

*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.*

Ellis Island Closes Its Doors

By 1924, the number of immigrants coming through Ellis Island's processing center had dwindled. Still, its doors didn't officially close for another 30 years, in 1954. In all, over 15 million immigrants had started their American lives by passing through the gates of Ellis Island.

Show What You Know

You have read about the welcome that is added to the base of the Statue of Liberty. Imagine that you are helping to design the wire pens that will help Ellis Island process thousands of people a day. On each pen, you decide to put a different phrase or sentence that will help the immigrants feel welcomed to the United States. For example, you might decide to have one sign read, "Welcome, New Friends!" Another sign might read, "Have a Great Life in America!"

Think of something you might write on a welcoming sign on an Ellis Island gate. Then, write it in the space below. (You may write it in any language you wish.)
