

Forgotten Ellis Island

From Lorie Conway, producer and author of *Forgotten Ellis Island* – 9/15/2008:

“I write to let you know about a new book and film on Ellis Island with the thought you might want to include it on your organizational website or newsletter. Many of your organization's members had relatives who entered the United States through Ellis Island and underwent the experiences described in the book and film.”

The final chapter in the Ellis Island story has at last been told. Lorie Conway's film and companion book, *Forgotten Ellis Island*, are the first to examine the extraordinary immigrant hospital on Ellis Island.

As immigrants from Italy and other countries in Europe came to America's shores a century ago, they underwent a medical examination that determined whether they would be allowed to stay. Those judged to be too ill or infirm to enter were sent to the Ellis Island hospital. In its day, it was America's largest public health hospital, consisting of 22 buildings adjacent to the Great Hall and within sight of the Statue of Liberty. Massive and modern, the hospital was America's first line of defense against contagious, often virulent disease. It was also a place where tens of thousands of immigrants were nursed to health and allowed to pursue their dream of becoming American citizens.

Although it was the world's premier infectious disease hospital, and a place where the diagnosis of mental health was pioneered, it was closed abruptly 30 years after opening due to anti-immigrant legislation. It was then abandoned, left to decay from neglect and the salty air of New York's harbor. Only in the past few years have efforts begun to restore the historical site. Once the restoration is complete, the complex will include an immigration institute and public health museum.

Funded by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the film and book were produced by Lorie Conway. The film is narrated by Eliot Gould and premiered recently at Ellis Island. For more information, please visit www.forgottenellisland.com