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IMMIGRATION TO AMERICA

America has often been called the “melting pot.” The name is derived from America’s rich tradition of opening its doors to immigrants from all over the world. These immigrants came to the United States looking for something better. Most of them did not possess wealth or power in their home countries. Most were not highly educated. Other than these few commonalities of what they didn’t possess, their backgrounds were vastly different. The thread, however, that bound these immigrants together was their vision of improving their current situation.

Emma Lazarus, in a poem entitled “The New Colossus,” which is inscribed on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty, tells of the invitation extended to those wanting to make America their home. “. . . ‘Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,’ . . .” (*Encyclopedia Americana*, 2001, Vol. 25, 637).

Immigration Before 1780

Many have accepted the invitation to make America their home. Most of the immigrants before 1780 were from Europe.

The “melting pot” concept can be better understood by the following quote. “I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose four sons have wives of different nations” (Luedtke, 1992, 3).

Recent Immigration

Recent immigration patterns have changed; the reasons have not. Individuals and families still come to the United States with a vision of improving their lives. The backgrounds of today’s immigrants expand beyond the European borders. Today they come from all over the world. At a 1984 oath-taking ceremony in Los Angeles, there were nearly a thousand individuals from the Philippines, 890 from Mexico, 704 from Vietnam, 110 from Lebanon, 126 from the United Kingdom, and 62 from Israel. Although not as large a number, there were also individuals from Lithuania, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania (Luedtke, 1992, 3).

REFERENCES

Encyclopedia Americana, Vol. 25. "Statue of Liberty." Danbury, CT: Grolier Incorporated, 2001.

Luedtke, Luther S., ed. *Making America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.