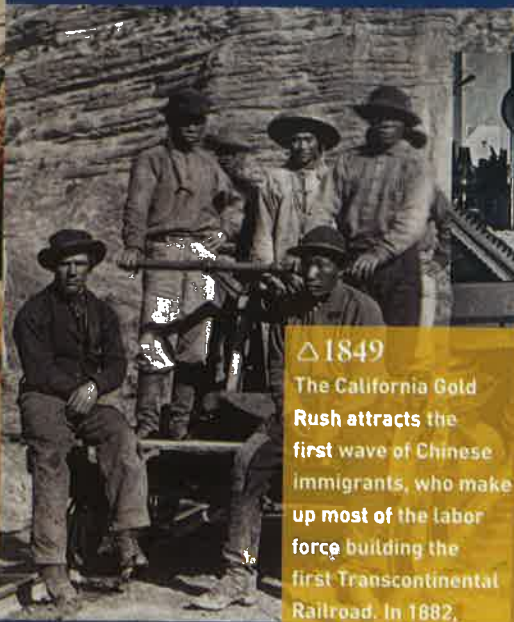




△ 1700–1776

Large numbers of Europeans arrive in the Colonies. Most are from Britain; German immigrants settle mainly in Pennsylvania.



△ 1849

The California Gold Rush attracts the first wave of Chinese immigrants, who make up most of the labor force building the first Transcontinental Railroad. In 1882, Congress passes the Chinese Exclusion Act, suspending the immigration of Chinese laborers.



△ 1860s–1880s

Economic conditions and religious discrimination in Eastern and Southern Europe spur an influx of Polish, Russian, Jewish, and Italian immigrants to the U.S.

△ 1892

Ellis Island opens in New York Harbor, the main entry point to the U.S. In 1907, more than a million immigrants pass through. It closed in 1954, and is now a museum.

1845 The Potato Famine in Ireland prompts a massive wave of emigration. Over the next 10 years, 2 million Irish arrive in the U.S.

IMMIGRATION TIMELINE

Germanize us instead of our Anglicizing them,” Franklin wrote.

When the first U.S. Census was taken in 1790, it counted nearly 4 million people, the majority of them of English, Welsh, or Scottish heritage; 757,000 blacks made up the next-largest group, followed by Germans.

POVERTY & PERSECUTION

A new wave of immigrants began to arrive in the 19th century, starting with the Irish and Italians, both mostly poor farmers and Catholic. In 1845, a potato famine in Ireland, caused by a fungus that destroyed the country’s most important food source, killed a million people and left millions more hungry. Within a decade, nearly 2 million Irish had emigrated to the U.S.

Italians followed, beginning in the 1860s, in response to economic and political turmoil at home. Many were long-term migrants. Like many Mexicans today, they went home when they had made enough money and came back to the U.S. when they needed to make more.

Jews also began to arrive in significant numbers in the 1860s, first from Germany and then later from Eastern Europe, including Russia, fleeing anti-Semitism and deadly pogroms (government-sponsored attacks on Jewish towns). Between 1880 and 1924, a third of Eastern Europe’s Jews left for the U.S., with most settling in overcrowded tenement neighborhoods like New York’s Lower East Side.

Before 1875, there were few restrictions on immigration to America. One reason was economics. The abolition of slavery and the Industrial Revolution had created a demand for cheap labor to work in factories and coal mines. Chinese workers were brought in to build railroads, including the Transcontinental route, which linked the east and west coasts in 1869.

But the surge in Irish and Italian immigrants to a mostly Protestant nation provoked a backlash. During the 1840s, the American Party, also known as the Know-Nothings, formed in opposition to immigration. Its members feared that immigrants would take away their jobs and that Catholics would take over the country. (Fears that immigrants will take American jobs has been a common theme throughout America’s history, including during today’s economic crisis. *See Opinion, p. 29*)

In the West, Chinese immigrants provoked protests, and in 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, barring immigration from China for the next 10 years. (The ban was later extended.)

Immigration from Europe continued unabated over the next four decades. In 1907, more than a million immigrants passed through Ellis Island in New York, while Angel Island in San Francisco served as the main entry point on the West Coast. The influx of Southern and Eastern Europeans—Italians, Poles, Russian Jews, Greeks, and others—generated concerns that immigrants would bring with them the leftist political views that