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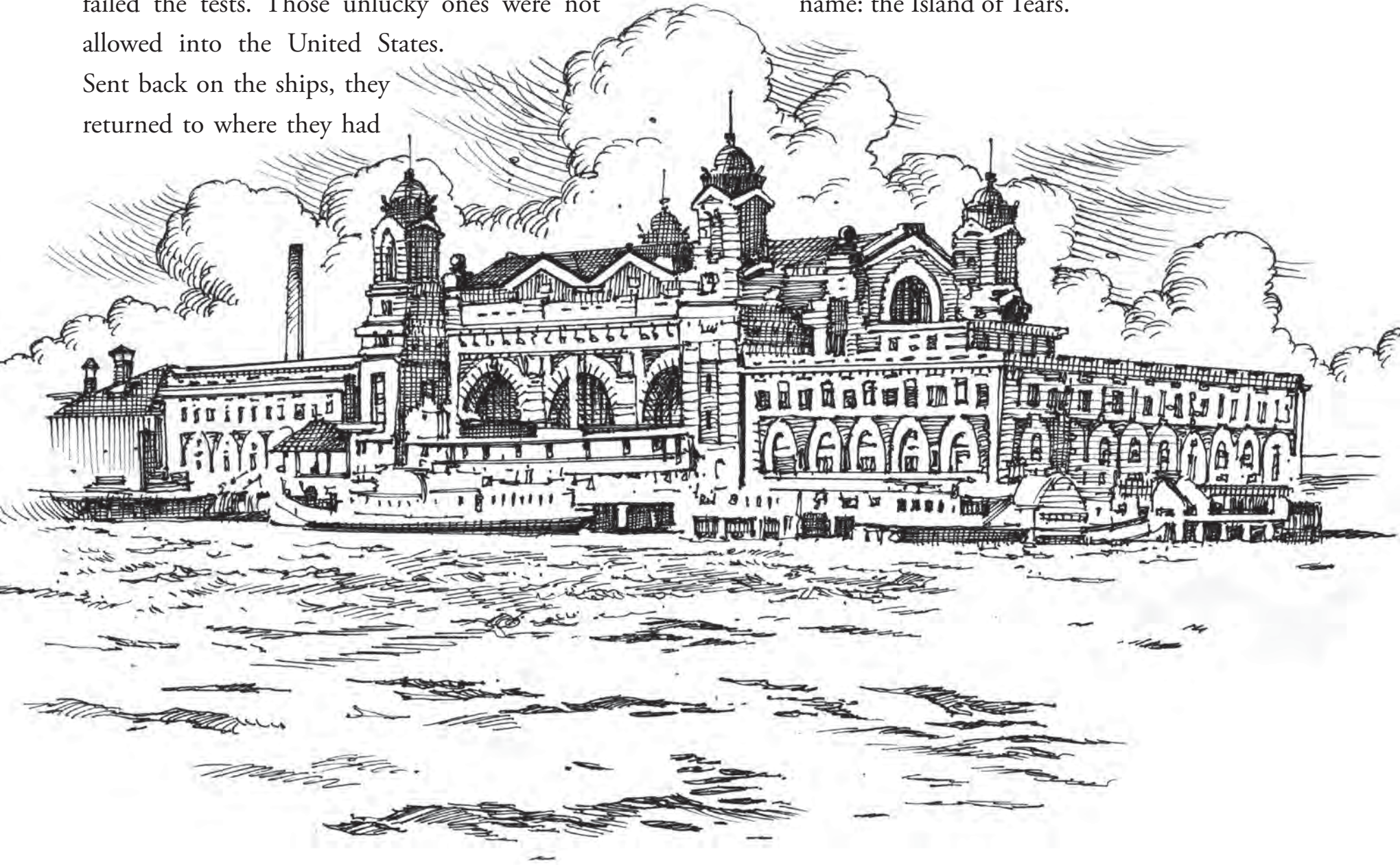
What Was Ellis Island?



by Patricia Brennan Demuth

But over the years, at least 250,000 immigrants failed the tests. Those unlucky ones were not allowed into the United States. Sent back on the ships, they returned to where they had

come from. This earned Ellis Island its other name: the Island of Tears.

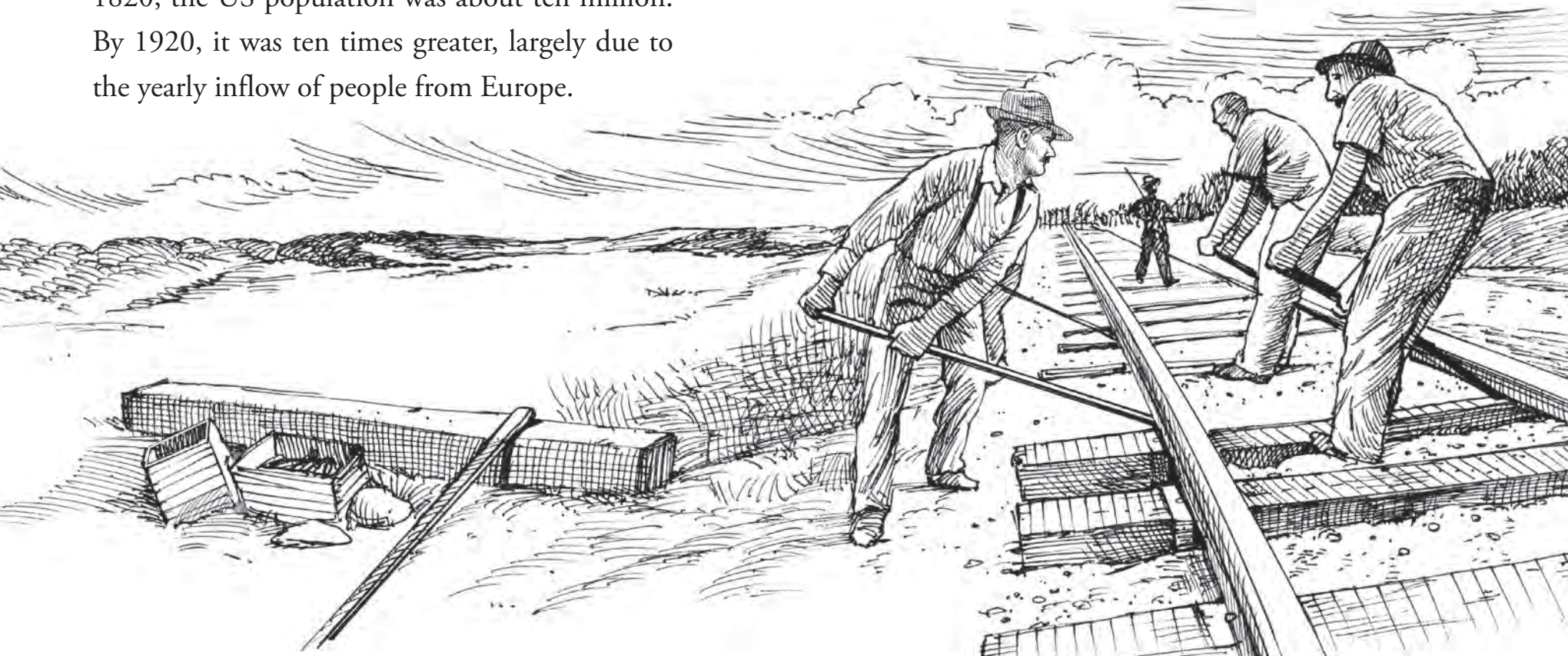


CHAPTER 5

New Lives

When they left Ellis Island, immigrants fanned out across America to start new lives. Their huge numbers transformed the face of the nation. In 1820, the US population was about ten million. By 1920, it was ten times greater, largely due to the yearly inflow of people from Europe.

Millions of immigrants moved to the vast plains out west. In the late 1800s, the government gave away land to homesteaders who agreed to farm it. When the free land ran out, railroad companies sold millions more acres at very low prices. They wanted towns to be built along their rail lines. And immigrants were eager to build them.





The Park Service set about clearing away the junk on the island. Forty thousand tons of garbage were removed. Repairs were made on the Main Building so it was safe for visitors.

In 1976, Ellis Island was opened again to the public for one-hour tours. But the island still

looked shabby. *New York Times* writer Sidney H. Schanberg reported on the “slow rot” of the Main Building. “Windows are out, and in one room moss and small trees are growing, and pigeons have settled in.”

