

# GovDocs to the Rescue!

## Debunking an Immigration Myth

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**Government Documents & Law**

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**Visual & Performing Arts Library**



**Kentucky  
Genealogical Society**

**2nd Saturday  
program**

**February 10, 2018**



# GENEALOGY



## *A Practical Guide for Librarians*

KATHERINE PENNAVARIA

Practical Guides for Librarians, No. 13

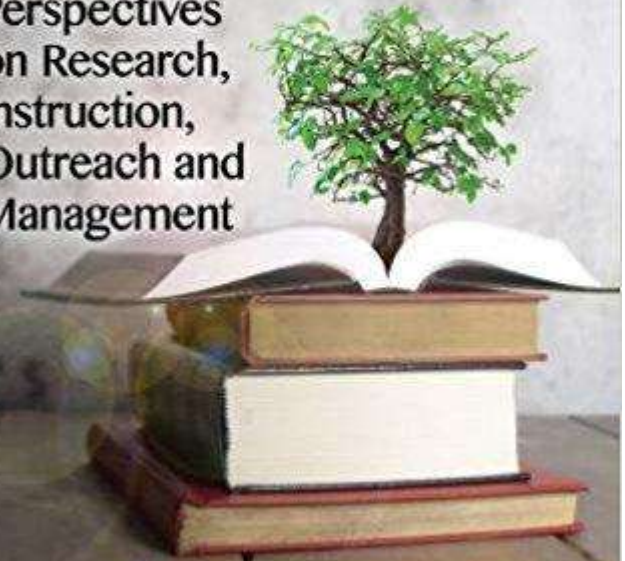
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# Genealogy and the Librarian

Perspectives  
on Research,  
Instruction,  
Outreach and  
Management



Carol Smallwood AND Vera Gubnitskaia  
FOREWORD BY D. Joshua Taylor

**(two chapters)**

**McFarland**

**June 30, 2018**

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# ELLIS ISLAND

Immigration Center, 1893—1954





# The Godfather



# CLIP FROM THE *GODFATHER II*, SHOWING THE ARRIVAL OF VITO ANDOLINI:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubT-Bm36L2U>

**This clip taught millions what the Ellis Island experience was like.**

**They absorbed the “facts” from a fictional creation as history.**

# THE MOVIES: TRUE

- 👤 **BARRIERS AND BENCHES**
- 👤 **LINES, NOISE AND CONFUSION**
- 👤 **OFFICIALS AND TRANSLATORS**
- 👤 **LARGE MANIFEST BOOKS ON DESKS**
- 👤 **TAGS ON CLOTHING**
- 👤 **MEDICAL EXAMS**
- 👤 **CHILD BEING PUT IN DETENTION**

# THE MOVIES: FALSE

Officials mistaking someone's point of origin for their name.

An unattached child being released to the mainland.

Officials writing people's names down.



**How do we determine  
the truth  
about the past?**

**EVIDENCE**

# WHAT IS GOOD EVIDENCE?

**RECORDS  
CREATED AT  
THE TIME**



**AND WHO HAS CREATED THE BEST  
IMMIGRATION-RELATED PAPER  
AND FILM RECORD COLLECTION?**

**THE U.S.  
GOVERNMENT**



# THE EVIDENCE TO EXAMINE:

1. federal laws relating to immigrants
2. ship manifests (i.e. passenger lists)
3. contemporary films + photographs

**THESE ARE BETTER SOURCES FOR THE TRUTH THAN A MOVIE IS.**

THE  
STATUTES AT LARGE

OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

FROM

DECEMBER, 1881, TO MARCH, 1883.

AND

RECENT TREATIES, POSTAL CONVENTIONS, AND EXECUTIVE PROCLAMATIONS.

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EDITED, PRINTED, AND PUBLISHED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF  
AN ACT OF CONGRESS, AND UNDER THE DIRECTION  
OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

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VOL. XXII.

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WASHINGTON:  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.  
1883.



# **INSTRUCTIONS TO SHIPPING COMPANIES:**

**“Report a list of all passengers taken on board, including name, sex, age, and occupation.”**

**(March 2, 1819)**

**“Immigrants shall be listed in convenient groups... and no [list] shall contain more than 30 names.”**

**(March 3, 1893)**

**“Give me your tired, your poor  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore”**

**Actually, it was a bit  
more complicated.**



# **FEDERAL LAWS REFUSED ENTRY TO:**

**AVOWED ANARCHISTS**

**KNOWN PROSTITUTES**

**CONTRACT LABORERS**

**ANYONE DISABLED IN ANY WAY**

**ALSO NOT WELCOME:**

**CHILDREN UNDER 16 TRAVELING  
WITHOUT A PARENT OR  
IMMEDIATE RELATIVE**

# LPC:

**“LIKELY TO BECOME A PUBLIC CHARGE”**



**Anyone in the categories listed above  
was sent home, and at shipping  
company expense.**



Over the number 5,  
the words say:

**“Manifest Sheet No.”**

That told the  
officials which line a  
person should be in.

**The captain was required by federal law to deliver an accurate list of every person who had been on the ship.**

# LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED STATES

Required by the regulations of the Secretary of Commerce and Labor of the United States, under Act of Congress approved February 20, 1907, to be delivered

S. S. *St. Paul* sailing from *Southampton* *October 1<sup>st</sup>* 1910

1 No. on List.	2 NAME IN FULL.		3 Age.	4 Sex.	5 Married or Single.	6 Calling or Occupation.	7 Able to Read, Write.	8 Nationality. (Country of which citizen or subject.)	9 Race or People.	10 Last Permanent Residence.		11 The name and complete address of nearest relative or friend in country whence alien came.	12 Final Destination.	
	Family Name.	Given Name.								Yrs. Mos.	Country.		City or Town.	State.
<del>1</del>	<del>...</del>	<del>...</del>	<del>...</del>	<del>...</del>	<del>...</del>	<del>...</del>	<del>...</del>	<del>...</del>	<del>...</del>	<del>...</del>	<del>...</del>	<del>...</del>	<del>...</del>	<del>...</del>
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UNITED  
UNITED  
UNITED

Kristoi  
Marriage

Carnel  
Marya }  
Nikolai }

Jan 57

12

200  
1/3 m  
1/5 m  
1/2 m  
2934  
Pile  
infant





12m	13	Kristoi, Carnel &	4	7	3	1p0
20f		Marnye, Marya				
3/12m		Miklo				

**"likely to become a public charge"**

MEALS.		
BREAKFAST.		
DINNER.		
SUPPER.		

12/5/12

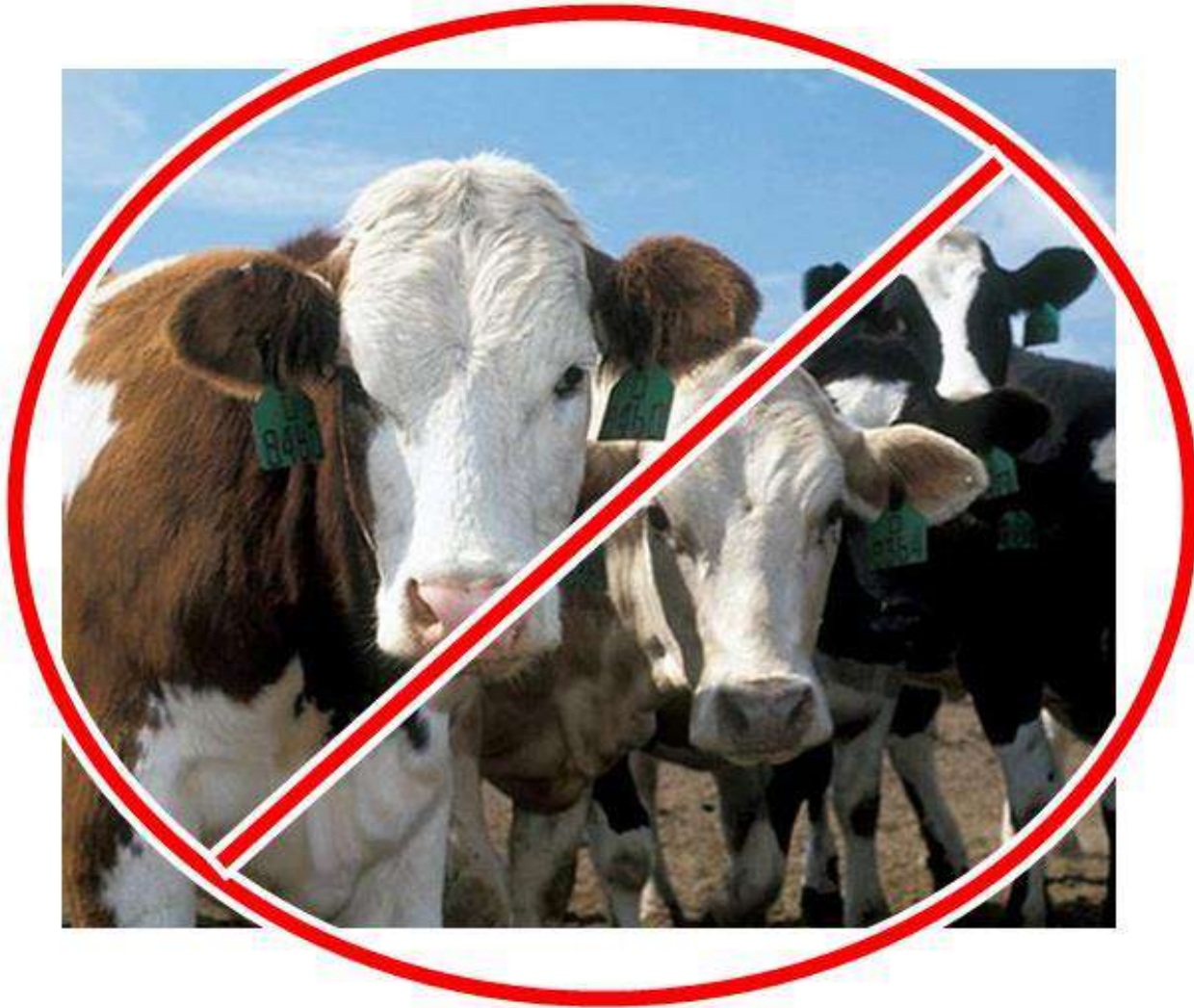
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another myth...





An advertisement from a shipping company, in Czech.

“Podnikatelství lodních výprav”  
*boat trips for entrepreneurs*



**“For the great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie (deliberate, contrived, and dishonest), but the myth: persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic.”**

**(JFK, from a commencement speech at Yale University, June 11, 1962)**



**“MY FAMILY’S SURNAME WAS  
CHANGED AT ELLIS ISLAND.”**

**HAVE YOU HEARD THAT ONE BEFORE?**

**Didn't happen.**

**HISTORIANS AND  
PROFESSIONAL  
GENEALOGISTS  
KNOW THIS IS A *MYTH*.**

**But it's a persistent myth...**

***STICKINESS:*** “The elusive quality that some ideas and concepts have—they catch on and don’t let go.”

Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point*



# ...IF YOUR NAME WAS CHANGED at Ellis Island

by Ellen Levine

illustrated by  
Wayne Parmenter

DATE DUE

--If your name was changed at Ellis Island  
JUV 325,10973 L5781  
80 p. : col. ill. ; 20 x 24 cm.  
BOWLING GREEN PUBLIC LIBRARY  
3 3583 00075 7084

# From the Internet...

## COMMENT:

“Some of my relatives' surnames were recorded incorrectly on arrival.”

## ASSUMPTION:

Immigrants' names were “recorded” upon arrival.

REALITY: Immigrants' names were recorded by the shipping company at the *point of origin*, when the tickets were purchased.

## COMMENT:

“The bastards at Ellis island decided [my ancestor’s] last name was too Irish and changed it.”

## ASSUMPTION:

Officials were of different ethnicities than the immigrants.

REALITY: Quite often the officials were hired precisely *because* they knew the languages of the immigrants.



# **FIGURE** **LA GUARDIA** **ELLIS ISLAND TRANSLATOR –AND--** **MAYOR OF NEW YORK**

**(spoke English, Yiddish, German, French, and Italian)**





COMMENT: “My family name was probably shortened from something Eastern European to something German, certainly at Ellis Island.”

COMMENT: “My great-grandfather came through and the name was shortened and changed by the worker.”

ASSUMPTION: Immigration officials had the *means* and *motivation* to change names.

REALITY: They had neither.

In the *Statutes at Large*, the U.S. government spelled out exactly how the immigrants were to be treated and documented.

The officials would have been breaking the law if they had altered the officially recorded names.

**They would have lost their jobs!**

# THE KEY QUESTIONS:

## MOTIVATION:

Why would the immigration officials change the names?

## METHOD:

How would the officials have achieved a permanent name change for the immigrants with whom they *briefly* interacted?

**If we assume, for a moment, that the myth is true... by what means did the immigrant carry away his or her “new” name?**

**Did the officials hand them a piece of paper with their new name?**



Form 106  
106

SALOON, CABIN, AND STEERAGE ALIENS MUST BE COMPLETELY MANIFESTED.

# LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED STATES

Required by the regulations of the Secretary of Commerce and Labor of the United States, under Act of Congress approved February 20, 1907, to be delivered

S. S. **PRINCIPE DI PIEMONTE** sailing from **GENOVA**

15<sup>th</sup> October, 1905

1 No. of List	2 NAME IN FULL Family Name	3 Age	4 Sex	5 *Calling Occupation	6 Alien to— Nationality (Country of which citizen or subject.)	7 Race or People	8 Last Permanent Residence		11 The name and complete address of nearest relative or friend in country whence alien came.	12 Final Destination		
							9 Country	10 City or Town		12 State	12 City or Town	
1	Cozzo — Vittorio	16	m	1 Carpenter	Italy	Italy	Italy	Moncalvo	Italy	Moncalvo	Italy	New York
2	Pubano — Alberto	22	m	1 Laborer	Italy	Italy	Italy	Lorvalunga	Italy	Lorvalunga	Italy	New York
3	Stantogni — Achille	40	m	1 Laborer	Italy	Italy	Italy	Portofino	Italy	Portofino	Italy	New York
4	Loddi — Giovanni Beniamino	23	m	1 Miner	Italy	Italy	Italy	Carloforte	Italy	Carloforte	Italy	New York
5	Giore — Salvatore Augusto	20	m	1 Mason	Italy	Italy	Italy	Trapani	Italy	Trapani	Italy	New York
6	Abotoni — Francesco	21	m	1 Laborer	Italy	Italy	Italy	Mauciano	Italy	Mauciano	Italy	Italy
7	<del>Barbieri — Carlo</del>	<del>19</del>	<del>m</del>	<del>1 Laborer</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Mauciano</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Mauciano</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>
8	<del>Baldelli — Nello</del>	<del>19</del>	<del>m</del>	<del>1 Laborer</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Mauciano</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Mauciano</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>
9	<del>Pellegrini — Luigi</del>	<del>24</del>	<del>m</del>	<del>1 Teacher</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>U.S.</del>	<del>Clifton</del>	<del>Clifton</del>	<del>U.S.</del>	<del>Clifton</del>	<del>U.S.</del>	<del>Clifton</del>
10	<del>Pellegrini — Antonia</del>	<del>21</del>	<del>f</del>	<del>1 Housewife</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>U.S.</del>	<del>Clifton</del>	<del>Clifton</del>	<del>U.S.</del>	<del>Clifton</del>	<del>U.S.</del>	<del>Clifton</del>
11	<del>Pellegrini — Margherita</del>	<del>3</del>	<del>f</del>	<del>1 Child</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>U.S.</del>	<del>Clifton</del>	<del>Clifton</del>	<del>U.S.</del>	<del>Clifton</del>	<del>U.S.</del>	<del>Clifton</del>
12	<del>Pellegrini — Giuseppe</del>	<del>3</del>	<del>f</del>	<del>1 Child</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>U.S.</del>	<del>Clifton</del>	<del>Clifton</del>	<del>U.S.</del>	<del>Clifton</del>	<del>U.S.</del>	<del>Clifton</del>
13	<del>Pellegrini — Isabella</del>	<del>3</del>	<del>f</del>	<del>1 Child</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>U.S.</del>	<del>Clifton</del>	<del>Clifton</del>	<del>U.S.</del>	<del>Clifton</del>	<del>U.S.</del>	<del>Clifton</del>
14	<del>Mabellini — Leticia</del>	<del>27</del>	<del>m</del>	<del>1 Miner</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Precechi</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Precechi</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>
15	<del>Zucchi — Albino</del>	<del>35</del>	<del>m</del>	<del>1 Mason</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Dreunghi</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Dreunghi</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>New York</del>
16	<del>Lamberti — William</del>	<del>67</del>	<del>m</del>	<del>1 Pensioner</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Dreunghi</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Dreunghi</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>New York</del>
17	<del>Pradelli — Enrico</del>	<del>41</del>	<del>m</del>	<del>1 Pensioner</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Dreunghi</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Dreunghi</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>New York</del>
18	<del>Pradelli — Albino</del>	<del>41</del>	<del>m</del>	<del>1 Pensioner</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Dreunghi</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Dreunghi</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>New York</del>
19	<del>Pella — Tommaso</del>	<del>41</del>	<del>m</del>	<del>1 Mason</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Genova</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Genova</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Chicago</del>
20	<del>Pella — Nicola</del>	<del>17</del>	<del>m</del>	<del>1 Laborer</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Genova</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Genova</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Chicago</del>
21	<del>Shroter — Mart</del>	<del>17</del>	<del>m</del>	<del>1 Mason</del>	<del>Austria</del>	<del>Austria</del>	<del>Austria</del>	<del>Dreunghi</del>	<del>Austria</del>	<del>Dreunghi</del>	<del>Austria</del>	<del>Chicago</del>
22	<del>Genovesi — Adèle</del>	<del>20</del>	<del>f</del>	<del>1 Sailor</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Portofino</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Portofino</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>New York</del>
23	<del>Cerrina — Speranza</del>	<del>27</del>	<del>f</del>	<del>1 Housewife</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Portofino</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Portofino</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>New York</del>
24	<del>Stradella — Loris</del>	<del>4</del>	<del>m</del>	<del>1 Child</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Portofino</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Portofino</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>New York</del>
25	<del>Palocchi — Giovanni</del>	<del>26</del>	<del>m</del>	<del>1 Pensioner</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Messa</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Messa</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>
26	<del>Orosini — Felice</del>	<del>24</del>	<del>m</del>	<del>1 Housewife</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Messa</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Messa</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>
27	<del>Orosini — Lina</del>	<del>12</del>	<del>f</del>	<del>1 Child</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Messa</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Messa</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>
28	<del>Orosini — Salvatore</del>	<del>26</del>	<del>m</del>	<del>1 Housewife</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Messa</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Messa</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>
29	<del>Orosini — Antonio</del>	<del>41</del>	<del>m</del>	<del>1 Laborer</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Portofino</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>Portofino</del>	<del>Italy</del>	<del>New York</del>

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\*Instead of showing occupation of seamen and aliens in transit, state in column 5 whether they are "immigrants" or "in transit."  
†"Race or People" is to be determined by the stock from which aliens appear and the language they speak. List of races will be found on back of this sheet.

***Island of Hope, Island of Tears***  
**(1989 documentary)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qh5CWbTDsuQ>

**WATCH 24:00 – 24:16**



The blank manifest books were designed and printed by the **US government** with intention of getting records that would remain their property.

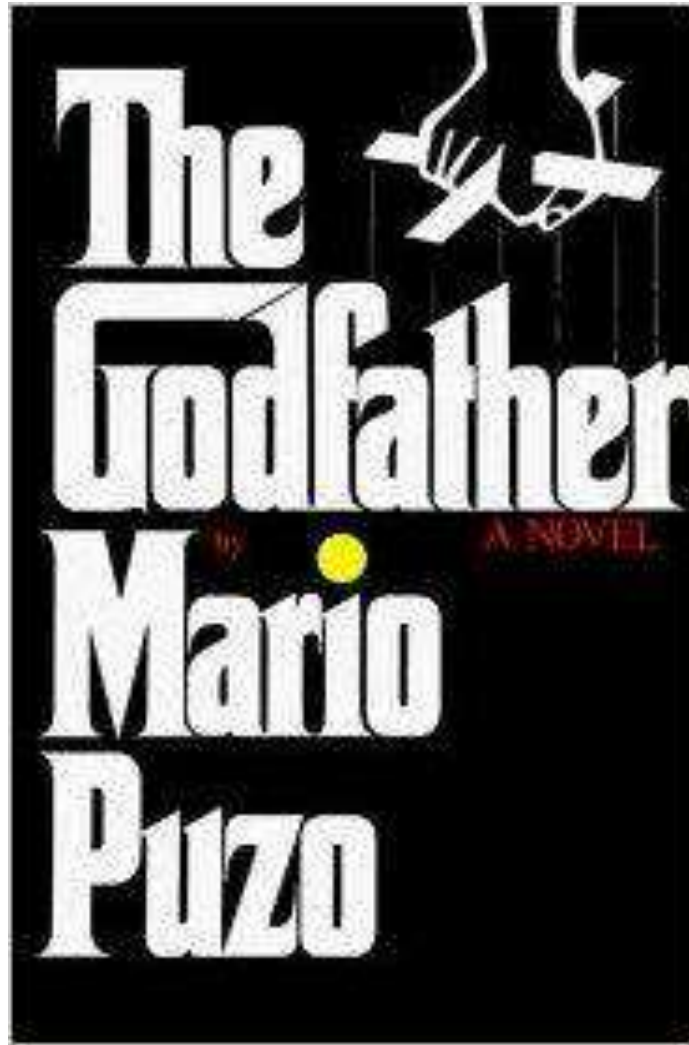


**The officials had no authority to  
alter names on the manifests.**



Many names definitely were  
changed... later.

**BY THE IMMIGRANTS THEMSELVES.**



**THE BOOK GETS IT RIGHT.**

## Here's what the book says:

“The Don was a real man at the age of twelve. Short, dark, slender, living in the strange Moorish-looking village of Corleone in Sicily, he had been born Vito Andolini, but when strange men came to kill the son of the man they had murdered, his mother sent the young boy to America to stay with friends. And in the new land **he changed his name to Corleone** to preserve some tie with his native village.”

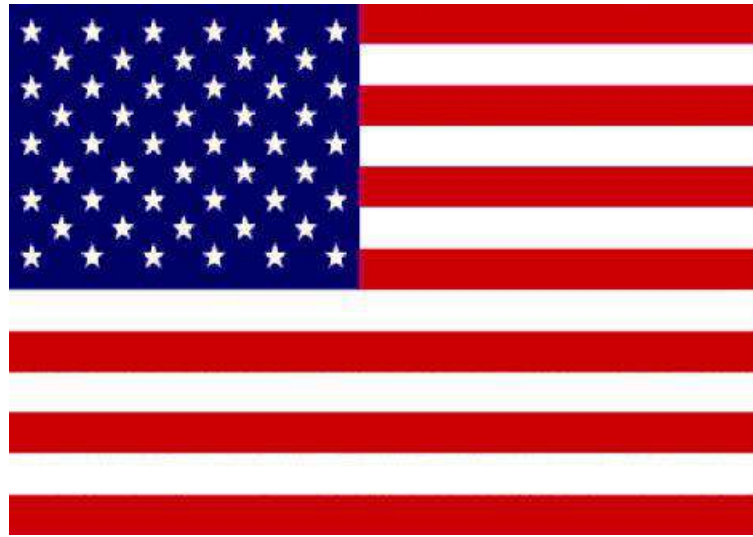
# BOTTOM LINE:

There is **NO**  
evidence for the  
“name changed at  
Ellis Island” idea.

*But there is **LOTS**  
of evidence that it  
did not happen.*

**“GOOD ENOUGH FOR GOVERNMENT WORK”?**

**At Ellis Island, that work was done  
exceptionally well!**



# HISTORY MATTERS.

## EVIDENCE MATTERS.



***THANK YOU!***