



## Daily Life in Immigrant America, 1870–1920: How the Second Great Wave of Immigrants Made Their Way in America

By June Granatir Alexander

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The second "wave" of U.S. immigration, from 1870 to 1920, brought more than 26 million men, women, and children onto American shores. June Granatir Alexander's history of the period underscores the diversity of peoples who came to the United States in these years and emphasizes the important shifts in their geographic origins—from northern and western Europe to southern and eastern Europe—that led to the distinction between "old" and "new" immigrants.

Alexander offers an engrossing picture of the immigrants' daily lives, including the settlement patterns of individuals and families, the demographics and characteristics of each of the ethnic groups, and the pressures to "Americanize" that often made the adjustment to life in a new country so difficult. The approach, similar to David Kyvig's highly successful *Daily Life in the United States, 1920–1940* (published by Ivan R. Dee in 2004), presents history with an appealing immediacy, on a level that everyone can understand.

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## Daily Life in Immigrant America, 1870–1920: How the Second Great Wave of Immigrants Made Their Way in America By June Granatir Alexander Bibliography

- Rank: #1358919 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Ivan R. Dee
- Published on: 2009-07-16
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.53" h x 1.02" w x 5.62" l, 1.01 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 352 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The companion volume to James Bergquist's *Daily Life in Immigrant America, 1820-1870*, Alexander's book falls short of expectations. Exhaustive in its coverage and modest in its aims, the book brings together the latest scholarship about this classic period of immigration for general readers. It covers the shift of immigrants from northern, eastern and southern Europe as well as the opening of immigration from Asia, paying close attention to the anxieties and prejudices that their strangeness aroused. Alexander creates a tale of struggle, adaptation and success, but also of pain and loss. While Alexander claims to avoid an interpretive slant, she often portrays resident Americans in bad light, while laying strong and appropriate emphasis on the immigrants' geographic, occupational and economic mobility. Alexander carefully distinguishes between the customs and situations of the many nationalities that flooded the nation. Notably she examines the move to Western farms—a trend among some immigrants of avoiding cities. Although an overlooked aspect of immigrant history, Alexander often generalizes from the few particular stories she provides. However nicely written, the work lacks the color and life that it might otherwise have had. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

### Review

*Daily Life in Immigrant America, 1870–1920* is an ideal introduction to immigrant life during the crucial time when the United States changed from a predominantly rural nation to one with an urban majority which worked largely in industrial and commercial pursuits. Ms. Alexander tells her story by focusing on the lives of a wide variety of individuals, mostly from Europe but including some from Asia and the Western Hemisphere. Individual chapters provide a general overview of the period, a look at immigrant farmers in the west, the experience of factory workers, family life, ethnic communities, and the particular difficulties of many immigrants in wartime America. The author writes well and provides a number of student-friendly features: meaningful illustrations, a useful chronology, a glossary, and a structured reading list, divided general histories, personal documents, biographies and novels, works on immigrant groups, and a guide to relevant websites and media. (Roger Daniels, University of Cincinnati)

Alexander's richly detailed description of immigrant life on the farm and in the factory, in their shops, and their homes creates a sympathetic understanding of the 'lives of ordinary people' and the rigors and challenges they faced in a new land.

(John Bukowczyk)

June Granatir Alexander offers an insightful and well-written study of the multitude of immigrants who entered America between 1870 and 1920. Documenting the many ways immigrants drew on the cultural values of their homeland, Alexander demonstrates immigrant adjustment through religious, educational, entrepreneurial and ethnic community formation. Immigrant life comes alive with spirited discussions of ethnic celebrations, rituals, and leisure time as well as the health, diets, and living conditions of immigrants in rural and urban America. *Daily Life in Immigrant America* provides a gateway for understanding the day to day realities of immigrants and their families during a dynamic period in American immigration history.

(Diane Vecchio, professor of history, Furman University)

Brings together the latest scholarship about this classic period of immigration for general readers.  
(*Publishers Weekly*)

About the Author

**June Granatir Alexander** teaches Russian and East European studies at the University of Cincinnati. She has also written *Ethnic Pride*, *American Patriotism* and *The Immigrant Church and Community*. She lives in Cincinnati.

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