

The New York Times

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2008

Peeking at the Peopling of America

By DAVID W. DUNLAP

Watching a dozen new citizens take their oath of allegiance in the majestic Registry Room at the Ellis Island National Monument on Tuesday — a moment to stir even an old reporter's heart — it was easy to lose sight of the fact that the ceremony's principal purpose was to introduce the new Peopling of America® Center. The exhibition rooms in the \$20 million center, which is to open in 2011, will broaden the scope of the immigrant story told at the museum.

During the ceremony, Edwin Schlossberg, the principal designer of the Peopling of America® Center, showed what the exhibition halls would look like. These renderings can be seen on the Web site of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, which is overseeing the new center with the National Park Service.

The organizers of Tuesday's event made sure that every references to the Peopling of America® Center was accompanied by the registered trademark symbol—even in e-mail messages. This seemed a bit excessive, or at least a truer representation of America® than the organizers had perhaps intended.

But Stephen A. Briganti, the president and chief executive of the foundation, said that past experience with the statue and the island suggested the legal necessity of doing so.

“You have to protect everything these days,” he said. “What we discovered was that if we didn't protect things people would use them who didn't contribute.”



Dirk Kempthorne, United States secretary of the interior, announcing the expansion of the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. (Photo: Chang W. Lee/The New York Times)