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LEGISLATION AND ADMINISTRATION*

The first legislation by the National Government regarding immigration was enacted in 1882. Previous to this time the matter of regulation and inspection of immigrants arriving at our ports rested entirely with the individual States.

The history of legislation relative to immigration by both State and National Governments may be divided into four periods: (1) from colonial times until 1835; (2) the "Native American" and "Know-Nothing" period, lasting from 1835 to 1860; (3) end of State control, 1861-1882; (4) the period of National control, 1882 down to the present time.

During the first of the above-mentioned periods, the States alone interested themselves with the question of immigration. The only legislation enacted, and practically all that was proposed, by the Federal Government was the law of 1819 which aimed to secure some degree of comfort and convenience for steerage passengers en route to this country. This law, also, for the first time provided that statistics and records regarding immigration to the United States should be kept.

* This chapter in large part is based upon the monograph entitled, "Federal Immigration Legislation," which was prepared for the former United States Immigration Commission by Special Agent Frank L. Shaw (see Reports of The Immigration Commission, Volume 39). Mr. Shaw's treatment of the subject up to the year 1910 is elaborate and accurate. The abstract of his report, which appears in Volume 2 of the Reports of The Immigration Commission is so satisfactory that the authors of the present book felt that nothing better could be written for their purposes, and, as a consequence, have transcribed a considerable part of this digest, some of which has been edited or set forth in a different order from that in which it originally appears.