

American Veterinary Medical History Society

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Clifton (Passaic), New Jersey

U.S. Animal Quarantine Station

NRHP Ref #81000397

Added October 9, 1981



Clifton Avenue, Clifton, New Jersey

Located 10 miles west of New York City, the U. S. Animal Quarantine Station is a large 26-acre complex of buildings constructed between 1900 and 1907 in a uniform grid pattern by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Opened in 1903, its purpose was to provide facilities to confine animals, mostly sheep and cattle, entering this country in order to prevent the importation of infectious and foreign animal diseases.

According to Fagan, “Clifton was home to the “Ellis Island for animals” from 1900 to 1979.

Muskoxen, giraffes, circus animals and lots of cattle and sheep roamed the United States Animal Quarantine Station, the only one on the East Coast.

Over the years the station lost its usefulness, and the federal government began to sell off the property. In 1953, the city bought the tract that now houses Clifton High School.

In 1962, Clifton obtained the deed to the property. Seventeen years later it was abandoned as a quarantine station. A new station was opened at Stewart Airport, near Newburgh, New York.

Some of the barns have been converted to usable community space, such as the Clifton Arts Center, fire headquarters, and Senior Center. “There are about 15 buildings with conditions ranging from poor to dire, officials said.”

What remains of the former “Ellis Island for animals” are 27 structures that include red-brick cattle barns, a clapboard house and a pump house — many in terrible shape.

“A newly formed group — Clifton Historic Quarantine Station Preservation Foundation — wants to save the historic structures not already repurposed.”

MORE INFORMATION:

Clifton Historic Quarantine Station Preservation Foundation. Preservation New Jersey.

<https://www.preservationnj.org/listings/us-animal-quarantine-station/>

Prial, Frank J. US Animal Center to move from Clifton. *New York Times*. 1975 Aug 9, p. 49.

Fagan, Matt. Clifton groups forms to save quarantine barns once known as “Ellis Island for Animals.” Northjersey.com. March 2, 2019; updated March 3, 2019. Includes a 22 photographic slide show of buildings in the complex.

<https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/passaic/clifton/2019/03/02/clifton-nj-group-forms-to-preserve-historic-animal-quarantine-barns/2951861002/>

Nomination form. National Register of Historic Places. August 28, 1981.

<https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/22fcbcf8-c869-462b-845b-a7e3445c5394>

Updated January 10, 2022