

# “The Fool Pied Piper”

*Puck*

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This cartoon entitled “The Fool Pied Piper,” that was published in *Puck* Magazine June 2, 1909 shows American distaste for immigration to the United States. It portrays Uncle Sam as the Pied Piper, leading rats across the ocean toward the Statue of Liberty with a pipe that is labeled “Lax Immigration Laws.” The rats are labeled “Murderer,” “Thief”, “Kidnapper,” and “Assassin.” Some rats are carrying papers that say “The Black Hand.” Meanwhile, leaders and citizens of the countries the rats are leaving are cheering the rats’ departure.

This cartoon depicts American views about the U.S. government’s immigration policies at that time. The rats signify immigrants to the U.S. from countries such as France, Russia, Germany, Italy, and Greece. These were not average citizens, but were quite literally the “rats” of these countries. The Black Hand referred to an extortion racket established by Italian immigrants in several U.S. cities in the 1880’s. Americans greatly feared this group that later became known as the Mafia. Many Americans thought the United States immigration laws were too lax and that the government should not be letting all of these “degenerate” people in for fear of them damaging the American way of life.

