

Olive Minnings
English War Bride
Letitia
December 13, 1946

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM
PIER 21



On December 13th 1946
my friend Kathy Coupal
and I arrived on Canadian Shores through Pier 21. We were part of
48,000 War Brides brought to Canada during and after World War Two,
most of whom entered through Pier 21 at Halifax. In a book written by
Ben Wicks published in 1992 titled 'Promise You Will take Care of My
Daughter', he calls the advent of these War Brides on Canadian Soil, as
one of the contingents of emigres to Canada ever.

We were said to be the last shipload of War Brides. Our ship, the Empire
Brent, had been renamed: it was previously the Letitia. Our first
boarding at Liverpool was Nov. 24th 46; although, in the early morning
our ship after leaving the dock ran into a Cattle boat in the River Mersey
and capsized it. Imagine the confusion when it was announced we would
be sent back home or to a hostel in London to wait repairs and would be
advised when to return. Newspapers reported War Brides hanging over
the sides of the boat crying out in horror, that was not entirely true
because at five a.m. when it happened, most of us were still in bed.

We left England again on Dec. 4th, the ship repaired, for a rough eight
day crossing of the Atlantic; three days more than the average fine
weather crossing of the time. Two of those days we held outside the
Halifax Harbour, because it was too rough to dock. We disembarked
amid temperatures well below any we had ever experienced; unprepared,
our light clothing was little comfort as we stood waiting for our luggage,
which in those days was sorted outside or in unheated sheds. The
special train to carry us to destinations across Canada was waiting at the
dock. We were boarded and situated comfortably in carriages arranged
in such a way they could be unhooked as Brides left the train at stations
across wintry Canada. Eventually the last one was attached to a regular
train at Calgary and I arrived in Vancouver Dec. 20th 1946. Kathy left
the left the train to travel to a small French speaking town in
Saskatchewan named Quinton which in those days was not even on the
map. She had married one of the Royal Canadian Navy Seamen from the
Gunnery Division. I came to Victoria where my husband's parents had
moved during the war from Lanigan Sask., the place my husband was
born. He served in the Regina Rifle Regiment.

Kathy and I had not kept in touch the first few months we were in Canada, but met by chance on a Victoria downtown street. She and her husband had come to Victoria for his demobilization and they decided to stay. Our friendship started on the ship that brought us to Pier 21. 51 years ago. We are still friends and still married to those same two Veterans. Our lives and families have intermingled and we are both active in the War Brides Association where we have met many others who entered Canada through that famous Pier, to become proud Canadians.