

Allan Cairnie
Scottish Evacuee
Child
Duchess of York
August 1940



I had what was probably an unusual experience when I entered Canada through Pier 21 in August of 1940. I was coming as an evacuee from Scotland going to stay with distant relatives in Kingston, Ontario. I was seven years old and was sent over, on the Duchess of York I think, with a friend of a friend of my parents who was coming to Canada to get married in Toronto. She put me out of the train in Kingston when it stopped for a few minutes, but that was after our experience in Halifax.

After we disembarked at Halifax she had a problem convincing the immigration officer that she was who she said she was, and his suspicions were confirmed when he addressed her in Gaelic and she could not reply to him. Apparently he was from Cape Breton and could not accept that someone from Scotland did not have the language used in the garden of Eden. She was locked up overnight and I was put in the care of the Red Cross until the next day when she was able to get to her baggage and establish her identity!

That was my introduction to Canada.