

John (Hans) Thiessen
Ukrainian Displaced
Person
General Harry Taylor
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I can well remember at 9 years of age, after spending more than 2 years in a refugee camp in Germany, being sent to Bremen Hafen, to begin our long voyage to Canada. As we boarded the ship, (General Harry Taylor) I can recall being awestruck by the bigness of it. I remember the severe storm and huge waves during our crossing when passengers were not allowed on the outside deck, and many people including me got seasick, but I also remember nice days and calm seas and clear blue skies when whales and dolphins put on a show for us.

When the ship arrived at Halifax we were anchored in the harbor for several hours before tying up at Pier 21. At Pier 21 we were processed, interviewed, we were given destination tags to put on to the front of our coats (because none of us could speak or understand any English) and made ready to be sent on our final destination in this new land of milk and honey.

The next day we boarded the train for a 2-day journey to Hamilton, Ontario. From Hamilton we were picked up by my uncle, in a brand new 1950 Pontiac (which as a 9 year old boy impressed me very much). Our next destination was Port Rowan, Ontario, a small village on the shore of lake Erie, to begin a new life as refugees in a new country. For me as a 9 year old, I picked up the language fairly quickly and for the most part it was an adventure. But I can recall very clearly some of the hardships of my older siblings and especially for my mother. For her not knowing the language was a particular problem, when shopping for certain items, or at work, or when taking a bus. But times were not always bad. As time went on there were more good times than bad times and this country became our home almost immediately. As the years went by this great land has been good to my family and me and it has given much more to us than we have given to it. I thank the Lord for this blessing.