

Steve (Siebe)
Wiersma
Netherlands
Kota Inten
April 18, 1948

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM
PIER 21



FROM FRIESLAND, THE NEDERLANDS TO CANADA
By: Steve (Siebe) Wiersma Simcoe Ontario 01/29/06
Arrival Pier 21, April 18, 1948

(ONE CLASS) *OT. IV B B*

IMMIGRATION IDENTIFICATION CARD
THIS CARD MUST BE SHOWN TO THE EXAMINING OFFICER AT PORT OF ARRIVAL

Name of passenger *Steve Siebe Wiersma*

Name of ship *KOTA INTEN*

Name appears on Return, sheet *18* line *4*

Medical Examination Stamp

Civil Examination Stamp

LANDED IMMIGRANT

CANADA

APR 18 1948

HALIFAX, N.S.

5000-B-47 (See back)

Let me premise with a current-day thought. Once I became a father (of two sons) and more recently a grandfather (of a granddaughter), I realize how daunting it must have been for my grandparents to stand at the dock to watch their daughter, son-in-law (my Mom and Dad) and two grandsons sail to another

world AND 5 months later watch the same thing happen again to a son, daughter-in-law and two more grandsons! - now to my memories.

Just before we left, I can remember having a photo taken behind my Pake's (Grandpa) blacksmith shop . They were my brother, Pake, my Dad, my cousin, Beppe (Grandma) and myself. I don't remember too much of the goodbyes as I was only nine years old. Uncle Jacob took us by truck to Rotterdam, as it had a great big cab for many people. At the dock there stood the Kota Inten- if I knew then what I know now, I would have thought twice about getting on it!

After we left Holland, we hit some rough weather- I think my Mom, my brother and I were all a bit seasick. Dad was not from what I remember them talking about the crossing to other people after we got here. Speaking of rough weather, for about a day and half we were told we had to stay inside the ship. I do not know whose idea that was- the parents or the Captains! The cold weather did not bother us as we had woolen underwear and sweaters that Mom had knit from yarn which she spun on her own spinning wheel. I refinished that spinning wheel and still have it today.

Sleeping arrangements were in a great big room on hammocks stacked 4 or 5 high. Mothers and young children were amid ship and fathers and older sons were in the front of the ship. That's the way it was in my family. I was amid ship and in the top hammock. Mom used to tie a belt around me so that I would not fall out in the night if the weather got rough or if I rolled around or if someone tipped you out. About midway through the crossing, my brother and I switched and I went to the front of the ship with my Dad. There was more noise from the waves hitting the front of the ship. It did not take too long into the crossing that I noticed that some people would loosen the knots on the hammock ropes so that when you first got in everything was okay but with the rocking of the ship, the knot would become untied and start to slip out of the eye. If you did not wake up in time , you would "visit" the person below you.

At first we went down to the galley to eat but after a couple of days some people got seasick in there. The smell got so bad that Dad used to go down, get our plates and we would eat on the deck or other place away from the smell.

Daytime activities included Hide and Seek, Tag and exploring the boat and watching the dolphins in front of the bow of the ship. When we were not allowed on deck, Mom had a checker board and dominoes in her suitcase. There was one time the men had a "tug of war" with Friesland on the one side and Hollander on the other side. It was on the front part of the ship and there were many people all around. Dad was at the end of the rope for the Friesland. When they were just about to start, Dad took the end of the rope and tied it to the handrail of the step. When people standing near him noticed what he was doing, they jumped right in to block the view so that the other side couldn't see what he had done. Then the pull started! I am not going to get into who the winners were but some people were sick from laughter at the Friesland end. There was another time someone hollered "land" and was pointing yonder. There was no land to be seen anywhere but he kept his hand up pointing. After awhile he said " Doesn't anybody see?" Some said no, then he said -"Here under my fingernail"-poor idea standing so close to the hand railing!!

Finally as we were getting closer to Halifax, there were a lot of people on the front of the ship and Dad picked us up to look over everybody's head so we could see the shore line from far away. It was cold. We came ashore April 18/1948.

At Pier 21, I remember one man that brought a small crate of ours over to where we were standing and dropped it a little hard off the dolly. Mom pointed at herself to let him know that it was ours . He came over and gave my brother and I a stick of gum. He gave the rest of the package to Mom and I think that lasted us all the way to Hamilton, Ontario on the

train-a half a stick each in the morning, a half each in the afternoon! During the train ride, some people would get off for some "hard water" or whatever else when the train stopped. Once, when the train started again, a few were left behind and had to find somebody to give them a ride to catch the train again- good thing the road ran alongside the train tracks. Mostly we had sandwiches and fruit on the train. We were told by Mom and Dad that we had to stay in "our car" so we still had our checkers and dominoes to pass the time . Sometimes we would watch out windows at the trees and rocks some small towns and some wild life. Some of the older people became "quite quiet" when they looked out. All that Dad said was "nice for hunting" as he had done some of that before and after the war.

Upon arriving in Ontario, the farmer that sponsored us was at the train station to pick us up. He was a big man with broad shoulders. We got everything we had with us at the time in his car and away we went west out of Hamilton, down Highway 2 to the Jerseyville Road , where his farm was located- on the north east corner of # 2 Highway and Jerseyville Road. We lived with them in their house with their two kids about our age. Our crates with our furniture caught up to us, we moved to another house to the north about half mile. This was a big house but older and more rundown. There was no plumbing, or hydro and the well was about 200 feet from the house with a hand pump on it. There was no lawn - nothing but weeds - but Mom made it "home". I don't remember if we had a garden the first year but we did the second year.

Our first Canadian school was hard because we did not understand the language and the other kids took every advantage there. I remember the sound of our wooden shoes on the schools' hardwood floor - as if we didn't already stand out as different! We learned to play baseball for the first time at this school.

There was a big hill behind the house that ran to the flats where the water froze in the winter . Dad took us ice skating with our Dutch skates that Pake had made for us at his blacksmith shop back in Koudum. Dad had raced in 11 state tours back in Friesland and had done some speed skating so we made quite the picture for the locals again. At first the other kids skated alongside us but then my brother and I got in behind Dad and he started with his long strides that we could also do but local kids fell back and just stopped to watch us. If we followed the flats, we could skate about half a mile along them.

After five months, my uncle (Mom's brother) and his family arrived. They were supposed to go to B.C. but ended up staying in Ontario so now we had "family" here . They stayed with us until their furniture caught up to them. Uncle got a farm job in the general area. We stayed in Jerseyville

for two years. From stories told, we had a good employer. Dad got \$90.00 a month+ milk+ wood for heating the first year then he got \$100.00 a month+ milk+wood + a half day in the winter to go hunting. He did some of that before the war and after. The farmer gave Dad a gun and we ate all the wildlife that he shot.

From Jerseyville, we moved to the Simcoe area and eventually purchased a farm at RR # 5 Simcoe Dad passed away in 1992 and Mom in 1993. I still live in the area. (with my wife Shirley)

Fast forward in Sept. 2005- Halifax Harbour - Pier 21

I had the opportunity, along with my wife and another couple, to visit Pier 21. I found the visit most rewarding-in that it refreshed some memories of the original time of immigration and the displays provided many visuals of the event. I had my landed immigrant card scanned for archives and also purchased a plaque for the memory wall there. My hope is that someday my kids will have the opportunity AND the interest to visit Pier 21, to better understand their roots!