

The Jan and Antje  
Werkman Family  
Dutch Immigrants  
Beaverbrae  
March 28, 1950



The Jan and Antje Werkman Family  
(as told by Antje) Antje Werkman

In order to immigrate we had to undergo a medical examination. The



whole family traveled to The Hague (Netherlands except baby Harry. He was allowed to stay overnight with my parents.

It took a long time before we were on the ship. But finally we were informed that we could sail for Canada on the BEAVERBRAE on March 17th, 1950. We packed what we could take along but only what was most needed. Someone, whose

brother lived in Canada already, offered us money for the passage fare.

At four o'clock in the morning we boarded the bus from Groningen, after first saying goodbye to our family. The bus took us to Rotterdam. My husband Jan was already half sick from traveling but felt better when we arrived in Rotterdam. There they asked him, "How did you get all that money?" "Well", said Jan, "with my hands!"

We could board the ship. Our eyes popped open when we saw the ship. That was something else - quite different from the barges that transported peat on the canal in those days. As soon as we were aboard the ship my daughter Rita needed a washroom. I asked a man where the washrooms were and he answered, "I speak English".

Our place was at the back of the ship. The first evening I was walking on the deck with my son Menno and said, "it would be ridiculous to become

seasick now". We were not going full speed yet! Within half a day, my stomach turned upside down and that's how it stayed. I could not get up. Finally I had no choice, I simply had to get up. My daughter Annetta made sure that in the morning there was a chair ready for me on deck.



We also had a storm. A wave swept over the deck. Rita and Pieter were up on the deck and Pieter lost one of his wooden shoes. Rita grabbed Pieter by the arm and pulled him down the stairs. If it wasn't for Rita's quick thinking, Pieter would not be here today.

The food was very different from what we were used to. In the morning we could get cornflakes which we had never heard of, let alone tasted it. I also recall that we got a big piece of fish that was so salty that we couldn't eat it. That was a disappointment since we never had fish. It was as if they just caught the fish out of the sea. Anyway, that was not for us. I don't remember much else of what we ate during the day. One day a ship passed us. We were all on deck and started waving with our hands. There was nothing else to see but the sky and water for eleven long days.

At last we arrived in Halifax on March 28th, 1950. We were cordially welcomed with coffee, etc. They also gave us clothes.

Afterwards, we boarded the train heading towards Edmonton, Alberta. The train was our home for four days and three nights. We arrived in Edmonton at the CP train station on April 1, 1950. Relatives were waiting for us and so were the Journal reporters to take our pictures.

We lived in Neerlandia, Alberta for three weeks. We had food but no work. We then moved to Coaldale, Alberta for two years working in the sugar beets. Jan had enough of that - the pay was poor and he had 10 mouths to feed.



We then moved to Edmonton, Alberta where Jan worked for the city. Our children, Betty, Menno, Klaas and John - all worked in the University of Alberta Hospital. The rest of the children went to school. After two years we bought a farm in Bloomsbury, Alberta - just nine miles south from Neerlandia (which was a Dutch community of farmers).

Jan retired in 1968 and sold the farm to Pieter Werkman, our second youngest son.

We moved to Edmonton and lived in a seniors' home. Jan passed away in December 1983 at the age of 79 years. I stayed in the home till 1991 when I moved in with my daughter Annetta and her family.

Today is March 3, 1992. Here ends Antje's story