

William and
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Dutch Immigrants
Skaubryn
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Our journey to Canada began with a dream of opportunity and space to raise a large family. The prospect of immigrating to a new county proved to be both exciting and frightening as well as a lot of work.

At the time we had six children, all of whom were housed with relatives for at least two months while preparations were made for immigration. Our furniture was put into a large wooden crates under the watchful eye of immigration officials. The box was required to be full to prevent the load from shifting so the officials cut our couch in half to make a tight fit! Before we left all of us had to make a pilgrimage to Den Hague for check ups and shots.

Our last week in Holland was spent at my parent's house with all the kids sleeping on the floor. On the morning of September 21, 1956 a bus arrived to pick us up. The entire street showed up to say goodbye, with hankies waving and tears flowing, as we left to begin our new life.

We arrived in Rotterdam in a bus with eager immigrants. Before we were allowed to board the ship, we were made to stand in lines. There, the doctors gave us a quick once over and the bottoms of our shoes were scrubbed with disinfectant. This was done to prevent a current outbreak of a terrible cow disease from spreading to other countries.

Once on board, some of the immigrants were delegated to sleep in large wards. We were fortunate to get a cabin with three double bunk beds and a crib. Our first meal on ship was marvelous, however that night most of us were seasick. Only the oldest child and the youngest were not.

Our journey was not without incident, as you can imagine with six children. For example, we had four year old twin boys that had to be plucked off the ship's railings. After a few hair raising incidents a daycare was finally opened. Of course there was illness to deal with also. One of our daughters had to be put in the ship's hospital while another had to put on medication. There were storms to endure as well. At one point I was sleeping on the top bunk and woke up soaked in seawater, the porthole had leaked. We were required to practice evacuation drills by putting on life jackets and taking the whole family to our designated

spot on deck. Having a six month old baby along was not easy either. I had brought forty brand new diapers on board, all of which were lost through the laundry service and in return I received old rags. Activities on the ship included Sunday church services, movies, games, exercise classes and story readings. The trip last five days in all.

The first glimpse of land and city lights filled everybody with excitement and nobody was seasick anymore. We sat in port for two hours before we could disembark. We went ashore at Pier twenty-one in Halifax. There we entered a large hall where we were greeted by Red Cross Volunteers, Canadian officials and Dutch representatives. We were all given samples of things like coffee and tea by different companies. The kids were given toys and small babies received Pablum and were checked and weighed. Each family was allotted fifty dollars and the men were all taken to grocery stores to buy food. We were now ready to embark on the next leg of our journey.

The rest of the trip was done by train. In Halifax the authorities escorted us to an awaiting train that would take us as far as Montreal. That train was very old and had wooden benches. Nobody liked that. The next train however was more modern and our remaining journey across Canada was beautiful. It certainly showed us how big our new home was. The only drawback was our sleeping arrangements which consisted of blankets spread over suitcases between the seats. There were many stops at small towns along the way to buy more groceries. We finally arrived in Vancouver after five days of train travel on October 1, 1956.

We were met in Vancouver by people from the Bethel Christian Reform Church. We arrived with six family [members] in all. We were all taken to an Immigration house on Water Street where each family was given a suite. The Dutch fieldman, Mr. Laninga took all the men out to find jobs. All the children were entered into Dutch private school to learn English. Within one week of arriving in Vancouver we were in our first home in an area of New Westminster called Mailardville.

From 1956 to now Canada has been a good home. We raised eight children in all. My husband worked for the Post Office and I as a nurse. We also opened a group home and housed foster children for twenty years. Our children all grew up to be happy, healthy, respectable citizens. One has gone on to be a Member of Parliament, another runs a group home, the oldest is almost ready to retire from the mill and the list goes on. We now have twenty-two grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren...life is good! To document all our experience in Canada would require a book, but I hope this is a good beginning.

