

Eda Eveson  
English Immigrant  
Aquitania  
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In 1947 my husband Charles and his brother Ron decided to emigrate to Canada as the economy in Britain was still very bad following WWII and rationing was still in effect. They signed up under the DREW plan, a Canadian government program that made contracts with British men to come to Canada to work in the mines and other industries that required manpower. As my husband was a coal miner, he was being sent to work in the gold mines in Northern Ontario. They flew over in a cargo plane in December of that year. The plan was that myself and my daughter Christine who was 3 years old, along with my sister-in-law and her son would join them in March of 1948. This was a very difficult decision for me in spite of the hardships imposed by the long and frightening war. We lived in the midlands and were close enough to see and hear the bombing of Sheffield.

My husband and his brother were all that remained of their family, but I was leaving all my family behind. I knew my husband was doing his best to make a good life for us in Canada and so the decision was made.

My sister-in-law had her tickets, but my husband was working for the money to pay for my passage and would be wiring me the tickets. As time grew closer I went every day to the office to see if the tickets were in. We were to sail from South Hampton on the Aquatania on Sunday. By the Friday before I still had not received the tickets and was very upset and afraid. The agent told me that if the tickets came in later that evening he would personally deliver them and at 8:30 that is exactly what he did! Now I knew I was really going.

On Saturday my family and I travelled to South Hampton where we spent a sleepless night. The next morning my daughter and I boarded the ship. It was heart breaking and very traumatic saying goodbye as we did not know if we would ever see each other again. As it was, I did not return to England for 16 years to see my beloved father who was gravely ill.

My sister-in-law and her son were placed in a troop transporting area with about 60 beds but the purser informed me that they had no room for me and my daughter but he would try to work something out. I sat on my suitcase on the deck and cried. How much could one woman take.

I was several hours before the purser returned and said they had found some room for us. It turned out we were in the troop infirmary with just 6 beds and only myself, my daughter and a woman named Anne and her 13 year old daughter. It ended up being a very pleasant trip for me, particularly as I was not seasick. My sister-in-law was very seasick the entire trip, so during the day I would take the two children out on deck to play and get fresh air. I took them to meals, bathed them and tucked her son in with her for the night. In the evening my room mates' daughter would keep an eye on my daughter while Anne and I would go for a drink and some grown up talk about what lay ahead.

We did not know it at the time but this was the last time the Aquatania would carry passengers to Canada. Shortly after our trip, she was scrapped.

On reaching Pier 21 in Halifax Harbour it was very confusing and hectic. We were treated with much kindness and understanding and before we knew it we were landed immigrants!

From there we boarded a train and headed off to Timmins, in Northern Ontario to join my husband in our new life. It was very hard at times and we had to struggle to make ends meet, but all in all we have had a very good life in Canada and have always been proud to be Canadians.