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German Immigrant  
Anna Salen  
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I was seven years old when I made the voyage from Germany with my parents, my sister, and my grandmother. We were seven days at sea.

The embarkation in Bremerhaven, seemed like an endless wait to go through whatever processing was required. We had medical exams, inoculations, and a lot of things I don't remember because my parents dealt with them. It seemed like it took weeks even though it probably wasn't more than a few days.

The trip across the Atlantic was exciting. I remember everything in white and gray. The ship was white, the ocean and the sky gray. There were huge waves, it was cold and windy. I have the impression we made the trip in winter, even though it was late spring. My sister and grandmother were seasick most of the trip. There were swings for children on one of the weather decks. My father wondered how I could withstand the motion of the swings added to the motion of the ship without getting sick.

We passed England at night. Some of the people went on deck to look at the lights on shore. I did too, but couldn't see anything.

The ship seemed huge. Men and women stayed in separate compartments. I stayed with my father in a men's compartment. It was a large space, furnished with double bunks, and nothing else, that I remember. We shared the compartment with many other men and boys. The bunks had a bracket near the head which was fitted with a waxed cardboard carton, like Chinese restaurant take-out boxes, for use if one were overcome with sea sickness while in bed. I thought it was a chamber pot, which we had used in some of the rural houses we'd lived in.

My father told me that if the ship's whistle sounded five or more blasts, it meant the ship is in trouble and I should report to a life boat station. He didn't tell me that there would be life boat drills. The ship's whistle sounded, as my father told me, everyone rushed to their life boat station. I was separated from my parents for some reason and thought the ship was sinking. The effect was enhanced when I saw water rushing down

the ladder. One of the deck hands was washing down the deck above with a fire hose.

Seven days at sea is a long time for a child, I looked forward to our arrival in Halifax. My father told me everything would be very different in Canada from what it had been in Germany. I was disappointed. Halifax looked very similar to Bremerhaven, both sea ports. The houses had windows, doors, and roofs just like in Germany.

I remember sitting on the long wooden benches waiting to process through immigration, not much else. The ship arrived on Friday June 1, 1951 (according to the records at the Pier 21 Society's Resource Center) and we cleared immigration on June 4, 1951 the following Monday. I don't remember whether we stayed aboard the ship or stayed someplace ashore over the weekend. We boarded a train near the pier and left for Alberta. The trip seemed endless. It took seven days. The train must have stopped frequently. Alberta is a long distance from Halifax, but not that far. My sister and grandmother were train sick much of the way.

We went to live on a farm near Coaldale, where my parents worked in the sugar beet fields. My father was right about Canada being different from Germany. There was the obvious size and language difference, but the food was strange, some good, some it took years to get used to. Velveta cheese, margarine with little vials of yellow food coloring, salted butter, peanut butter were among the strange things I remember. Passage to Canada had been paid for through a loan from the Mennonite Farm Family Program. Later we moved to Winnipeg and then emigrated to the United States.