

Severino, Andolfatto
Italian Immigrant
Olympia
April 22, 1957

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM
PIER 21



I landed in Halifax on April 22, 1957 at 9:15 in the

morning. I remember it was Easter Monday; we were all there on deck watching the boat "Olympia" being docked by hand; gangs of men pulling huge ropes, just like a tug-of-war game. Nobody spoke a word, each one deep in their own thoughts. To be on a new land, new continent, a new life, there are no words for. We were corralled into a big building and after immigration controls loaded into a train for our destination. I wanted to send a postcard home saying that I had arrived safe but I couldn't find out where to buy a stamp.

Looking at the line of itinerary I traced on the Canadian map, all kinds of recollections come back to my mind. The seven days at sea on the Olympia were beautiful, full of games and good food. The coach of the train from Halifax to Montreal had wooden benches and was very cold, but I did not care. I was seated with the new friends I had made on the ship and we all were fascinated by the new land, the ever changing beautiful landscape going by outside the train windows. In Montreal we gathered again and marked with a ribbon; some red and others green, according to the colour, made to board different train, CPR or CNR. It was hard to be separated from friends, we had promised to help each other. I was now alone left to fend for myself. I boarded the CPR train and soon made new friends. In Montreal we were given a small bag containing a booklet with health tips (VD), some chocolate bars and a small box of cornflakes that nobody knew what to do with...

The new coach was very nice, comfortable, and had a cold water fountain. We were all immigrants in the coach and we spent the days playing cards, admiring the always new landscape and dreaming about the future. We ate lots of roasted peanuts and candy bars from the vendor; he was a very funny and nice man, we even found out that the cornflakes were good to eat. I had a pocket size Italian-English dictionary and that made me an interpreter among the guys. At one of the train stops they sent me to buy something to eat, while in line I heard the person in front say "cheese sand". I too, with my hand, indicated five "cheese sand" What a surprise when we opened the wrappings: soft bread, yellow cheese, certainly not like the Italian panini but we were hungry and ate them. On April 24 it was my twentieth birthday. Looking at the map we were still in Ontario. I did not tell

anyone, I did not celebrate or maybe it was the day I ate the "cheese sand".

On April 27, after five days and five nights we reached Vancouver. I was lucky, I had friends waiting for me. I started to work, landscaping, the very next day. Looking back it was a hard beginning but I never regretted it, that is probably the reason always liked Canada like the saying "the harder the battle, the sweeter the victory". Now I am proud to be Canadian-Italian.