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Polish Immigrant  
Anna Salen  
December 29, 1951



My father, mother, and two sisters emigrated from Poland on the "Anna Salen" from Bremerhaven Germany in December 1951. For me, since I was 5 years old at the time, one of the most memorable parts of coming to Canada was this voyage. I would welcome any information that others may have regarding this particular trip, or the ship in general.

My sister remembers watching "Count of Monte Cristo" in English during the voyage. She also went to watch a dance, and helped people care for those that were seasick (she was the only member of our family who wasn't sick). She remembers lots of alarms going off during the night and everyone needing to put on life jackets under emergency lights only and with lots of commotion and panic. Dad had told me about going through a very bad storm where some of our engines blew out for a period of time and we had to proceed at reduced power until they were repaired.

The women and children stayed in one particular area (the centre) of the ship, and the men were separated in a completely different area (the bow). It was much rougher in the bow since all the up and down movement was felt there. The centre of the ship was more "balanced".

During the voyage, when many were sick, the crew kept trying to get people to go outside their cabins onto the deck for fresh air so they will feel better. One particular time, a crewmember came into our cabin and told my mother to get my sister out of her bunk. Being told she was too sick to get up, he didn't believe it and went to get her down from the upper bunk at which point she got sick all over him. He left her alone after that.

On Christmas day, people were singing songs under a very sad atmosphere. My sister doesn't remember seeing a Christmas tree anywhere during the trip. However, she remembers lots of nuts being given out on ship during this "festive" time.

I remember one particular meal where we had hot dogs and mashed potatoes. The potatoes were whipped and creamy. The hot dogs were exceptionally delicious and Mom or Dad tried to get me another helping but did not succeed. I also remember loving to stand at the ship's rail and looking down to watch the water rush by, and the huge wake that

was left behind us. Mom stayed huddled in warm clothing against the ship's wall behind me. When we were towing the ship (see next paragraph), I remember running from one side of the ship to the other watching as the ship slowly swung behind us from side to side. On one particular day I remember looking out onto the sea during a snowstorm, and watching these huge waves and troughs undulating in slow motion all around us .. I imagine that was the stuff that made for excellent seasickness!

I received some information regarding this voyage a few years ago from a Swedish gentleman who works for the shipping company that used to own the Anna Salen. He provided the following account:

On the December 1951 voyage, Sten Sundberg was a second purser and Sven Lantz was the master on board (captain). After taking on passengers in Bremerhaven and Le Havre, and after passing Bishop Rocks, the loxodrom was set for a course to Cape Race, Newfoundland. In the Atlantic, a weather report with hurricane warning was received so the ship changed course to go around it.

On the day after Christmas the ship's position was about 130 nautical miles east north east of Cape Race. The weather was fine but thick snow was falling. At 1400 hours, the third officer reported that he had been observing an echo on the radar screen for some time and now he was now able to see the vessel about 3 nautical miles away. It was an "engine-aft" coaster of 200 tons with "dead engine" slowly rolling in the sea with a distress signal hoisted.

The master on board wanted to be towed to Halifax but our captain agreed to take him as far as St. John's Newfoundland. The vessel was called the "Mayfall" from Montreal and had encountered bad weather, run out of bunker, and been adrift for 6 days. The Anna Salen towed her to the entrance-buoy outside St. John's the next day, dropped her off at a waiting tug and proceeded to Halifax.

We arrived in Halifax on December 29, were processed through Immigration fairly quickly, and traveled by train to Cornwall arriving late at night New Year's eve. We stayed with my uncle and aunt for several months before getting a place of our own. Without any knowledge of the English language I was put into Grade 1, and my sisters into Grade 6 & 8. I'm sure it was a difficult time for all of us but it's been well worth it and we have nothing but fond memories of those early days in Canada.

I visited Pier 21 with one of my sisters during the summer of 1999. The location brought back old sensations and dusty memories. We were very

touched and impressed with how the facilities were restored, loved the video presentation, and plan to return again.