



ROUTES TO ROOTS NEWSLETTER

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*It has been over 60
years since the end of
World War II ...*

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Is There a War Bride in Your Family Tree

It has been over 60 years since the end of World War II, but many Canadians today wouldn't be here but for the thousands of young women, typically from Great Britain, who met and married Canadian servicemen during World War II. Between 1942-1946, almost 65,000 war brides and their children came to Canada.

My own mother-in-law travelled alone as a young bride to Canada in 1944. Her husband would not return to Canada for another six months. My mother-in-law said that she was not fearful about crossing the Atlantic in war time. To her it was a big adventure. These many years later she cannot remember a great deal about the day she left England but does recall having to arrive at a certain servicemen's club in London at an appointed time and to arrive alone. The War Brides were later taken to a railroad station where they were put on a train to Scotland.

Once in Scotland, she, along with many other women and their families, boarded the *Ile de France*. This ship, once a luxury liner but then stripped down to be a troop transport and later a hospital ship, left its berth in Greenock, Scotland on a cold and gray November day, travelling as part of a convoy headed across the treacherous waters of the North Atlantic.

The sea voyage itself took eight days. With little to do on board, the passengers could be outside during daylight hours but the Atlantic, in November, was bleak and cold and the waters rough at times. But with privacy at a premium, each cabin filled with bunk beds and accommodating several people, the outdoor excursions were welcome. Night brought blacked out port holes to avoid enemy detection.

The ship, filled with its cargo of English War Brides landed at Pier 21 in Halifax on November 23rd, 1944. One can only imagine that many of these women faced a moment of truth as they disembarked, catching their first glimpse of Canada, their new home. To learn more about our Canadian War Brides, or perhaps a member of your own family, visit <http://www.canadianwarbrides.com/index.asp>. 

Fleshing Out the Bones in Your Family Tree

So many people are proud of the number of people in their family tree or how many pages their tree takes to print out or that they can cover an entire wall in the family room with their printed tree. That isn't enough, though. Who are the people behind the names, what are their stories?

When talking about your family history, the first question people often ask is, "How far back have you gone?" and if these people are not family members they will have little interest in all of those name and dates going back in time. They might, however, if you can bring those people to life through stories.

Fleshing out the bones of your family can help you weave yourself into the fabric of

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history. It's a lot easier to get your children interested in World War I if you can show a family member was a part of it. But how do you make these names in our family tree come alive? Stories. Every family has them. Some are sad; some are funny. Some are poignant, some you might rather forget. Stories. You probably heard them from your grandmother or your father or some other family member. Stories about when they were young. Stories about their lives. You laugh at a funny story and you may cry at a sad one but those stories are what make us the people we are today. Perhaps there is a scoundrel in the family or maybe a hero. The people may just be an ordinary people, living lives without any special significance other than without them, we wouldn't be here.

Many of our ancestors will remain shadowy figures, known only by words inscribed in a family Bible or on a piece of weathered marble. Some, though, will have left letters, diaries that will bring them alive for us and, if we record it properly, for generations to come.

Let's see if together we can find those small pieces of information that can make them all seem real! ✍

**It's your family's past.
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