

A Family History Essay

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Sophie Jasciewicz arrived in Germany with her family from Poland because her father despite his Polish name had German lineage and arrived in Germany to work on the railroad. They ended up in *Kamp Heerle* in the Polish section. Sophie a beautiful young woman was a talented seamstress; she was placed in a job making clothing.

Jancsi Katona, a young man with a zest for life had trained as a master tailor. He was born in Lujog (Lugosh) Transylvania to German-Hungarian parents. When Transylvania became part of Romania the Hungarians living there became a minority in their own land. Desperate to find a way out of his village Jancsi became an athlete; he made it to the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. He was in Germany working as a tailor and living in the Romanian section of *Kamp Heerle*.

Although Jancsi and Sophie came from different backgrounds they were both working in the clothing industry and as fate would have it they met and fell in love. The young couple were married in 1945 and ten months later became the proud parents of a baby girl, my Aunt Annie.

Jancsi was very anxious to leave war-torn Europe for greener pastures. Sophie was anxious about travelling across the world to an uncertain future.

After the war the family either had to stay in Germany or emigrate because the UN would not release Opa Jancsi's papers to return home to Romania; he was considered a Displaced Person.

In December 1948, the family embarked on the RMS Scythia which left the Bremerhaven port in Germany and made the winter Atlantic crossing to Pier 21 in Halifax, Nova Scotia where all immigrants were received in Canada upon arrival from Europe. The family travelled light, a suitcase each, holding their few treasured belongings.

Pier 21 was a forbidding looking place with wire luggage cages and wooden benches; it took hours to get processed. Finally the family was bundled into a train headed for Montreal, the center of Canada's garment industry, and upon arrival were met by the Hungarian Priest who found them a room with a Ukranian family.

Oma worked in a factory and part-time in the YMCA kitchen. Opa also worked in a factory; he vowed once his passage debt was paid he would work for himself - which he did into his eighties.

Eventually the family who took the Katonas in moved, and the newcomers took over the flat. The family left the piano behind; which now sits in my living room.

Aunt Annie says the family was shown many kindnesses during those first years in Montreal as they wove their lives into the fabric of their new Country.