

The Immigrant Experience

**Upper and Lower Canada
in the early 19th Century**

Population Explosion

- No one who lived in British North America or in Lower Canada could have been prepared for the waves of immigrants that arrived at the close of the War of 1812.



The Great Migration, 1815-1850

1815	680
1820	17 921
1825	8 741
1830	66 339
1840	32 293
1845	31 803
1850	32 961

Where did they settle?

- Most of these immigrants settled in Upper Canada
- Some settled in Lower Canada's Eastern Townships, between Quebec City and Montreal
- The long settled – and French – St. Lawrence corridor was unavailable

Where did these immigrants come from and why did they leave?

- Immigrants came primarily from Great Britain or the United States
- Others came from European countries (Germany, France + Eastern Europe)
- Immigrants were attracted to these new lands by widespread advertising campaigns
- Potential buyers were wooed with promises of cheap, fertile land, close to towns and markets



Native People's Reactions

- Six Nations' leaders had to remain vigilant so that their lands would not be sold off by Britain
- Other Native leader signed treaties in attempts to secure territory for their people



A Rude Awakening

- The first rude awakening was the journey across the Atlantic Ocean
- The second rude awakening was the fact that moving to Canada was a costly and emotional venture
 - People spent all their money they had on the trip and on supplies for a year or two of life in the colonies
 - New settlers also had to be prepared for long periods of separation from family and friends and many prepared themselves never to see their loved one back in Britain and Europe again

The Coffin Ships



- Those who embarked on the journey were brave and resolute
- Sometimes, however, they were desperate, especially the poorest people who came in the infamous coffin ships:
 - A death ship
 - Many people died while travelling in steerage
 - Immigrants would starve if they did not bring enough food for the journey and they would also die of disease
 - The bodies were dumped overboard

Deadly Journeys

- As few people could afford to travel like the members of the upper class in above deck cabins on sailing ships, the poor and displaced tenant farmers travelled in steerage (below deck, where cargo is usually stored) in filthy, overloaded cargo vessels
- For many, it would be their last journey.

Created by Potential Profit

- Cargo vessels regularly transported lumber and other products from North America to Europe
- On the return voyage, however, the ship would sail empty
- Ship owners decided a profit could be made if below decks were converted to carry passengers



Why so Deadly?

- Bunks were built where cargo would otherwise be stowed
- Other than pots and tubs, no bathroom facilities were constructed, and poor hygiene posed a serious health risk.



Deadly!

- Steerage passengers were squeezed into extraordinary close quarters, which encourages the spread of disease.
- Cholera and other deadly plagues (smallpox, typhoid fever, typhus, scarlet fever, tuberculosis (consumption), pneumonia, meningitis, dysentery, diphtheria, and rheumatic fever) killed many before they ever reached Canada's shores
- In 1832, for instance, half of all the immigrants who did make it to Canada were seriously ill

The Deadly Journeys

