



Brass Buttons and Silver Horseshoes: Stories from Canada's British War Brides

Linda Granfield

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Canada's war brides were the young women who met, fell in love with, and married Canadian servicemen in Europe in World War II. Forty-eight thousand from Britain, with 22,000 children, followed their husbands to Canada during and just after the war.

Some of them were barely teenagers when the war began, but they grew up quickly in a world of blackouts and rationing and bombing raids, when loved ones were absent and the future uncertain. Love grew quickly in such a climate. Sometimes the romances were leisurely, but frequently it was a headlong rush into marriage followed by emigration to an unknown land, with family left behind, often never to be seen again.

Linda Granfield effortlessly recaptures the spirit of those days, in stories from the war brides and with visual material of all kinds, including photos, mementoes from the voyage to Halifax, and the documents required along the way. The women tell of flirtations at dances and canteens, of hasty marriages in borrowed dresses, of tearful farewells in English ports, and of unheard-of delights like lobster and grapefruit aboard the still-gracious ocean liners. Some expected to see cowboys and Indians and igloos in Canada, and were surprised how different their husbands looked in unfamiliar civilian attire. And the trains! Who knew a country could be so big!

Nothing could prepare the war brides for their new country. City girls, many of them, they now had to call upon all their resources to survive unexpected hardships. Winters could be punishing, husbands could show their true colours, or in-laws turn a cold shoulder. But for the most part quick wits, good humour, and loving new families pulled them through. It took firm resolve and a spirit of adventure to follow a stranger to a new world, and though a good few returned to Britain, most never wanted to return. Canada had become their home.



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