Happy days

In the 1950s, anything seemed possible in Canada. It was the first time in three decades that the country was not afflicted by war or depression. The nation was advancing on all fronts — our population reached 14 million in 1951, and post-war prosperity was driving the growth of cities and suburbs and the rapid development of industry.

While the decade was all about moving forward, it began firmly rooted in connections to the past. In 1951, royal mania swept the nation as then Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh travelled 16,100 kilometres across the country during a five-week royal tour. With loyal hearts, tens of thousands of Canadians turned up to catch a glimpse of the princess, who would become their queen in less than a year. To meet the demands of readers, the Canadian Geographical Journal printed an extra few thousand copies of its December 1951 special royal issue, which sold for 35 cents.

As the decade progressed, Canada began to make new connections. Driven by the growing economy’s labour needs, the nation opened its doors to non-British immigrants like never before. For many of these new arrivals, Canada was nirvana. As a displaced person from Europe remarked in a Journal feature, “I only hope I will succeed to be a good citizen to show all the thankfulness towards this country for the opportunity given me and my family.”

Even our future sovereign recognized the 1950s as a turning point for Canada, noting on her departure from the 1951 royal tour “the greatness of this nation and the even greater future which is within its grasp.”

Mary Vincent