

# 1943: Netherlands' Princess Margriet born in Ottawa

Source : [CBC Archives](https://bit.ly/2NuyFWU) - <https://bit.ly/2NuyFWU>

## The Story

---

Royal history is made in Ottawa on Jan. 19, 1943, when Dutch Princess Juliana gives birth to her daughter Margriet Francisca at the city's Civic Hospital. The first royal baby to ever be born in North America, the historic birth helped forge a bond between Canada and the Netherlands that endures to this day. This CBC Television clip looks back at the momentous delivery that captured the attention of war weary Canadians.

Crown Princess Juliana and her two small daughters arrived in Canada in June 1940, a month after they fled the Netherlands in the wake of the German army invasion. The heir to the Dutch throne, Juliana lived in exile in Ottawa for four years and became a fixture in the capital city's social circles. After learning of Juliana's pregnancy, the Canadian government proclaimed the hospital's maternity suite "extraterritorial" so that the royal baby would have full Dutch citizenship.

## Did You Know?

---

- On May 10, 1940, Germany invaded the Netherlands, capturing many of its cities and killing thousands. Fearing for their safety, the Dutch royal family escaped to London, England. Concerned that the German army would reach England, Queen Wilhelmina decided to send Princess Juliana, her only child and heir, to Canada in order to preserve the royal line. In early June the 31-year-old princess and her children secretly boarded a ship bound for Halifax.
- Princess Juliana arrived in Ottawa with her daughters, two-and-a-half-year-old Beatrix and nine-month-old Irene, on June 24, 1940. They were welcomed as guests at Rideau Hall by the Earl of Athlone, Canada's governor general. Juliana's husband, Prince Bernhard, stayed in London, where he was serving in the Royal Air Force.
- Juliana was not the only exiled royal to stay at Rideau Hall during the Second World War. The Earl of Athlone played host to numerous royals, including Prince Olav and Princess Martha of Norway, Grand Duchess Charlotte and Prince Felix of Luxembourg and Empress Zita of Austria.
- The Dutch royals eventually moved into Stornaway House, where they lived for the next four years. Ottawa residents were quickly won over by Princess Juliana, who insisted that her family be treated like any other. She enrolled her daughters in public school, did her own grocery shopping and lined up for movies.
- In 1942, news of Princess Juliana's pregnancy generated substantial media interest. If the four-room maternity suite had not been designated "extraterritorial," Juliana's child would not have had sole Dutch citizenship and could not legally succeed her.
- Princess Margriet Francisca was born at 7 p.m. on Jan. 19, 1943. The new princess's name meant "daisy of freedom." Magrieten is a special breed of daisy that was blooming in the Netherlands when it was invaded by Germany.

- The birth dominated headlines for three straight days. Celebrations were held across Canada, including one in Guelph, Ont., where Dutch troops were in training. The soldiers were granted a day of leave, which they spent eating a special Christmas dinner and attending an impromptu concert.
- Princess Juliana and her daughters remained in Ottawa until May 1945, when the Netherlands was liberated from German occupation. On May 5, the commander of the occupation forces surrendered to the 1st Canadian Army Corps. Within days, Queen Wilhelmina and Princess Juliana returned to their homeland. Beatrix, Irene and Margriet followed a few months later.
- To express her gratitude for Canada's hospitality, Juliana donated 100,000 tulip bulbs to the City of Ottawa in 1945 and promised another 20,000 bulbs every year of her life. Her one request was that some of the flowers be allowed to bloom on the grounds of the Civic Hospital, where her daughter was born.
- In the years since, many Dutch people and organizations have added to Juliana's gift, which has helped to establish Ottawa's popular Tulip Festival. The annual event, held in May, showcases nearly a million tulips in bloom across the National Capital Region. In 1995, Princess Margriet returned to Ottawa to officially open the festival and to mark the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands.
- Juliana served as Queen of the Netherlands from 1948 to 1980, when she was succeeded by her eldest daughter, Beatrix. Juliana died on March 20, 2004, at the age of 94.

---

**Also on January 19:**

- **1649:** The first execution takes place in Lower Canada (Quebec). The deed is performed on a 16-year-old girl found guilty of theft.
- **1962:** The Canadian government announces changes to immigration laws. The changes are designed to prevent discrimination based on race or national origin, and allow greater immigration from Asia, Africa and the Middle East.
- **1989:** Canadian Airlines International announces that it is purchasing Wardair, Canada's third-largest carrier, for about \$248 million.