



“Musing from the Hill” by Susan Crossett

as seen on the *Dunkirk Observer* on Fridays
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Honoring Our Neighbors to The North

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“The Constitution Act of 1867 united the three separate British colonies of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick into the single Dominion called Canada. On July 1, Canada Day is celebrated with concerts, parades and fireworks to commemorate the union of the three colonies.”

I love learning new things. It's always a great reminder how little I actually know.

Funny how few of my high school memories remain. Friends – some – of course, a few of the teachers (mostly because I enjoyed later contact with them) and very little of my classes. For some reason (I suspect way back then I thought teachers knew everything) I remember studying the American Revolution and, for whatever reason, asking what the French were up to. I must have been even a thorn in peoples' sides way back then for Mr. Whoever had no answer. Mostly now by reading more European history of that era, I understand the French were involved everywhere they could be.



For the vast majority of my readers, Canada is just a quick drive away (though, as I write I'm not certain they want to see us – Covid, you know). Canada to me is Stratford and Niagara-on-the-Lake: wonderful food prepared with a care not seen in this country, spectacular gardens, inviting shops and, definitely, the gracious locals – should one be lucky enough to meet some. Too many tourists but needed (and envied, wishing some of those would travel just a bit further south). Did I mention the time, theatre, second to none?

Soon our neighbors will be celebrating Canada Day (July first).

Naively – NO – ignorantly, I had presumed it was their Independence Day – just like our Fourth. Hardly. They are celebrating the date when all the provinces came together to make what we now think of as Canada.

There was a Canada before, a Province which was a British colony. The Act of Union by the British Parliament and proclaimed by the Crown in February of 1841 combined the colonies of Upper Canada and Lower Canada, abolishing the separate parliaments and creating a single Legislative Council. The Province of Canada only lasted until July 1, 1867 when it was divided into the separate provinces of Ontario and



Quebec.'

Nova Scotia seems to have the longest history, occupied for thousands of years by aboriginal people. The Europeans grew aware of it by the late 15th century and possibly as early as the Viking Voyages of AD 1000. A grant from James I allowed the French and Scotch to settle there during the 17th century.

Naturally the American Revolutionary War created an uproar between those favoring the Crown and these colonies. Newly arrived Loyalist refugees in Parrtown (Saint John) immediately wanted to split from Nova Scotia to separate themselves from what they saw as republican and democratic influences in the city. To them the government of Nova Scotia represented a Yankee population sympathetic to the American Revolution which disparaged the strongly anti-American, anti-republican leanings of the Loyalists.

A bitterly contested election in 1786 pitted loyalty to the King and his appointed government agent against those still loyal to the king but wanting local affairs to be handled locally. Meanwhile the British administrator felt that the capital, Halifax, was too far away to the west to permit good governing so he decreed Nova Scotia had to be divided. Thus, on August 16, 1784, New Brunswick was created from what had all been part of Nova Scotia.

Let's not forget there are all sorts of wars going on throughout this period – British, French, American, those in the Canadian territories, and the Indians. In fact, in 1842 the rivalry between New Brunswick and Maine grew so heated that the British troops were called out. The Aroostock War was quite bloodless except for maulings by bears.



We are so inured by the history of our troublesome colonial founding that few if any stop to reflect that the Canadians had it as bad – or worse.

While we plowed and harvested (and fought some), the French were creating major bedlam to our north.

So how did these deeply split provinces ever get combined? Thank the Constitution Act of 1867 which united the three separate British colonies of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick into the single Dominion called Canada.

Perhaps we can join in their celebration on Canada Day, July first – at a safe distance of course.

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