

Young Historian Restores Royal Figure to Rightful Canadian Place

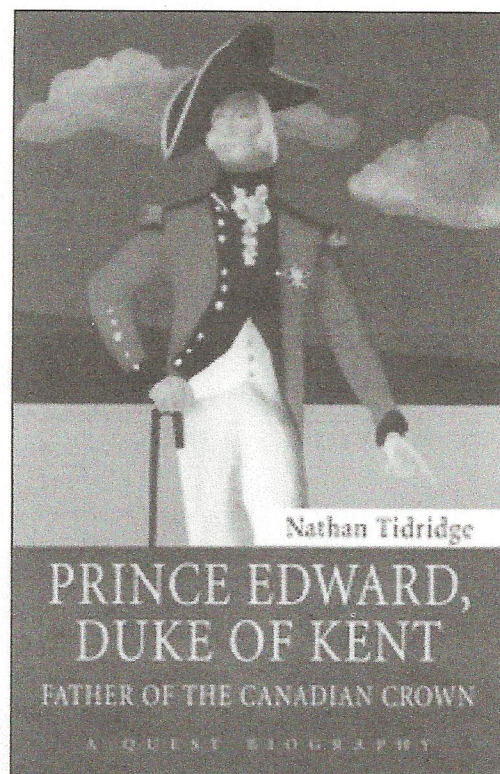
Why does the Crown appear embedded in United Kingdom culture but come across less permeating in Canada? Its role here cannot be said to have been of any less importance. One reason for the difference is the wealth of material on the Monarchy that the sceptred isle constantly turns out. Children's books, games, puzzles, imaginative souvenirs, writings for the more sophisticated: a sizeable cultural corpus keeps the colourful facts, figures, stories and myths of kingship in view for every age group overseas. The challenge facing Canadian royalists is to create as compelling and contemporary a resource in this country. *Prince Edward, Duke of Kent: Father Of The Canadian Crown**, the 2013 book by historian and educator Nathan Tidridge, who two years ago gave us *Canada's Constitutional Monarchy*, is a fine example of how to do it.

The book's subject, Prince Edward later Duke of Kent, was the fourth son of King George III and parent of the Mother of Confederation, Queen Victoria. He is a significant character in our history but one virtually relegated – intentionally, one suspects because he was royal – to oblivion, witness the fact that the Tidridge biography is the first book to be written on the Prince in decades. The young historian from Waterdown, Ontario however amply atones for this neglect with a well researched, meticulously documented and clearly written study that does the Duke proud. It is a biography that credibly re-establishes his rightful importance as a builder of Canada and definer of Canadian nationality.

In his nearly ten year residence in Lower Canada and the Maritimes from 1791 to 1800, Prince Edward made a real impact. He established the royal tour as an instrument binding together the Monarch's subjects and showing His Majesty's continuing commitment to their welfare, raised the spirits of hard pressed settler communities, inspected far flung military outposts, ameliorated French-English relations, turned Halifax into the continent's strongest fortress and even urged a union of the North American provinces such as eventually would be achieved at Confederation.

From the strong figure of the red coated Duke by folkloric artist Charles Pachter on its cover, to the helpful appendices including Edward's Canadian legacy and detailed chronology at the end, Nathan Tidridge's book is an impressive work – another product of that perennial publishing friend of the Canadian Monarchy, Dundurn. The strong and balanced underpinning to the narrative clearly establishing the geopolitical context makes the events of its subject's life easy for the reader to understand. We see the Prince on his tour of Upper Canada, explore the tensions he had to cope with among administrators such as the strong Lord Dorchester and ambitious John Graves Simcoe, learn about his lasting friendship with the de Salaberry family and sort out the truth of Edward the military offi-

Cover painting is by Charles Pachter, taken from a portrait of Prince Edward.



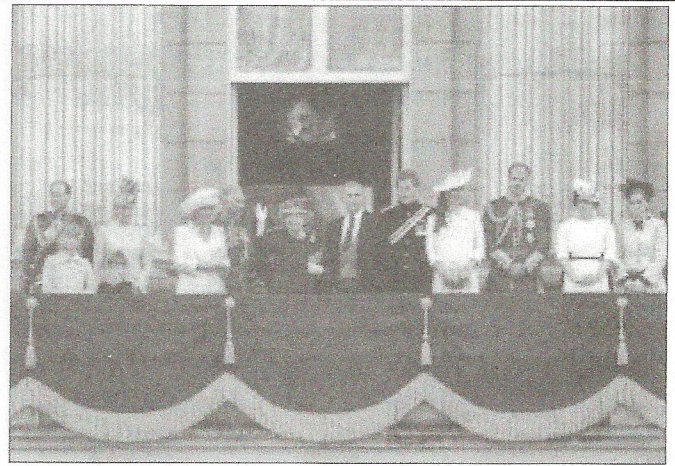
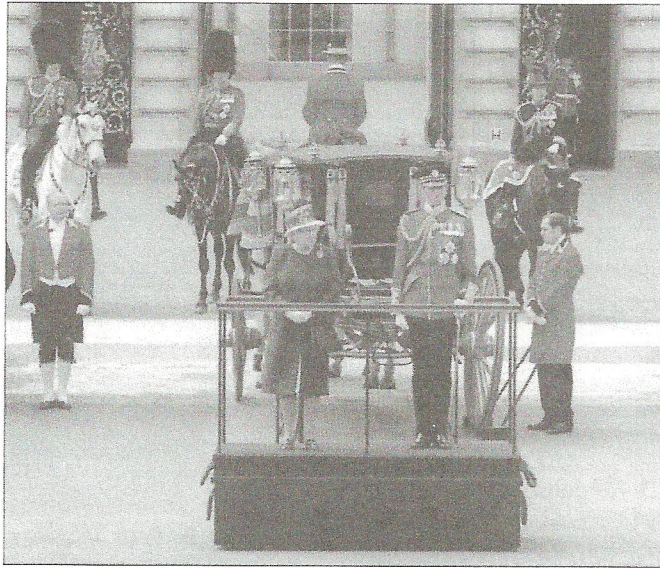
cer's dealings with the troops under his command. Well chosen illustrations and an introduction by the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia (where appreciation of the Duke remains greatest) are additional features of the book.

The perennially fascinating and popular story of the Duke of Kent's romantic yet fragile relationship with Julie de St Laurent is not neglected by the author either. Prince Edward's life was not a happy one. He was an unwilling exile on Canadian shores far from the more desirable stage with its greater opportunities for promotion or even fame on which the war of the French Revolution was being fought. But once on this side of the ocean Edward did not sulk, lamenting his fate; he applied his restless energy, considerable talent and engaging personality to the general benefit of the inhabitants. The Duke invented a telegraph system, patronized the theatre in both French and English, strengthened relations with the First Nations, created gardens and endowed Halifax with its best known landmark – the famous Town Clock. He arranged a better deployment of the provincial volunteers, encouraged music and became the first member of the Royal Family to enter the new United States. When he left North America he did not obtain the more important command he sought. In retrospect, his years in Canada would be his period of greatest achievement.

Ever been attracted by that specialized form of historical fiction called alternate history, in which an historical event unfolds differently than it did in real life? What a subject the Duke would make for it. The author's revelation that

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TROOPING THE COLOUR

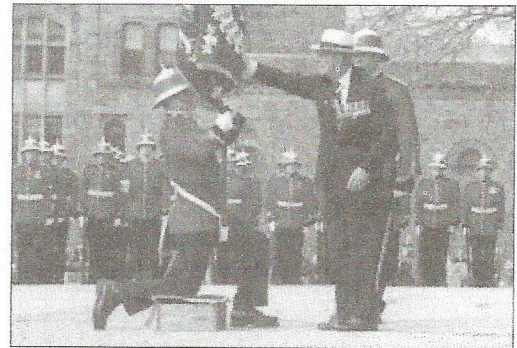


The Queen celebrated her official birthday in the United Kingdom on a bright and sunny day in June.

HRH LEAVES HOSPITAL

Prince Philip leaves Edward VII Hospital after a 10-day stay, where he had exploratory abdominal surgery. He will recuperate for three months, and miss many official events.

During his April visit to Canada, The Duke of Edinburgh presented new colours to 3rd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment. Prince Philip, who is the regiment's colonel-in-chief, presented it with a new ceremonial flag.



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Kent, in despair at not being given a post commensurate with his abilities, was in 1811 even willing to contemplate returning to Canada is sure to set the wheels spinning for any alternate history writer. Imagine if the Duke of Kent had been in command of the royal forces in North America in the War of 1812. Too staggering a fantasy to contemplate even in fiction? Perhaps a more practical recognition of the debt Canada owes to the "Father of the Canadian Crown" might appeal to you: opening a fund for a statue of His Royal Highness on Parliament Hill for instance. Be that as it may, about the Duke's newest biographer and his important writings one can only say as did Oliver: "Please, sir, I want some more!"

*** Prince Edward, Duke of Kent : Father Of The Canadian Crown**, Nathan Tidridge, Dundurn, 2013, ISBN 978-1-4597-0789-4, 288 p., illus. in b. & w., Appendices, Chronology and Bibliography, \$19.99..



Earlier, he was admitted to Canada's two highest orders as a Companion of the Order of Canada and Commander of the Order of Military Merit. Both were presented by the Governor General of Canada, David Johnston.

The visit to Canada is the prince's first major visit since 2011 when he accompanied the Queen on a tour of Australia.