

# The Royal Tour of King George VI

👑 King George VI reigned from 1936-1952.

👑 In 1939 King George VI and his wife Queen Elizabeth (the grandparents of King Charles III) toured Newfoundland, Canada, and visited the United States. George VI became the first reigning monarch to visit both countries. **Since this visit occurred after the Statute of Westminster (1931) it is very important to emphasize that George VI toured the country as King of Canada, and not the British monarch.**

👑 Their Majesties toured Canada for 29 days by train (over a distance of 8,600 miles), and millions gathered to catch a glimpse of the Royal Train and its occupants.

## Facts about the tour:

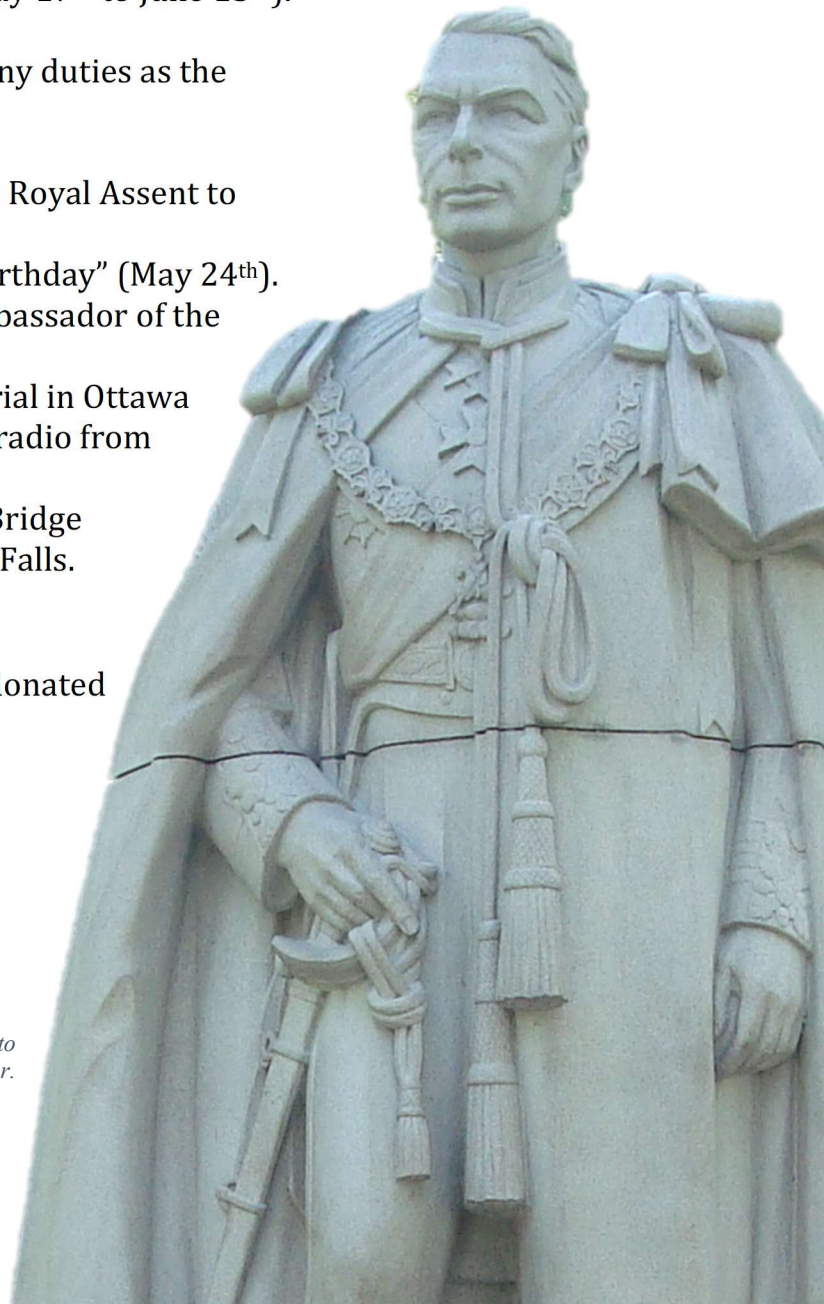
👑 Began in Quebec City (the Plains of Abraham) and travelled across by train the nation before ending in Halifax 29 days later. (May 17<sup>th</sup> to June 15<sup>th</sup>).

👑 While in Canada George VI performed many duties as the King of Canada:

- Visited Parliament Hill and granted Royal Assent to Legislation.
- Celebrated his official “Canadian Birthday” (May 24<sup>th</sup>).
- Accepted the credentials of the Ambassador of the United States while in Quebec.
- Dedicated the National War Memorial in Ottawa
- Addressed the Commonwealth via radio from Winnipeg’s Government House
- Dedicated the site of the Rainbow Bridge (international crossing) at Niagara Falls.
- Opened the *Queen Elizabeth Way*.

👑 The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation donated over 100 staff to cover the event.

*This statue of King George VI was unveiled at Niagara Falls in 1963 to commemorate the 1939 Royal Tour.*



- ♁ Queen Elizabeth laid the cornerstone of the new home of Canada's Supreme Court in the presence of her husband, King George VI, on May 20, 1939. The Queen addressed the dignitaries saying "*Perhaps it is not inappropriate that this task should be performed by a woman; for woman's position in a civilized society has depended upon the growth of law*"<sup>1</sup> (Remember that the Person's Case was only 10 years old at that point).
- ♁ Prime Minister Mackenzie King was always there to greet the king and queen at each stop (to their amusement).
- ♁ War was declared three months after the departure of the Royal Couple – Britain declared war on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, and Canadian prime minister Mackenzie King advised King George VI to proclaim a state of war between Canada and the German Reich for September 10<sup>th</sup>.

### Visiting the United States:

- ♁ King George VI was the first monarch to visit the United States. Since he traveled to the US as the King of Canada, he was attended by Prime Minister Mackenzie King.
- ♁ A friendship between the king and American President Franklin D. Roosevelt developed during this visit that would persist through the Second World War.



*Prime minister Mackenzie King developed a strong attachment to Queen Elizabeth (consort to King George VI). Some of his personal pictures were altered to reflect his attachment.*

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<sup>1</sup> R.B Fleming, *The Royal Tour of Canada: the 1939 Visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth*, (Toronto: Lynx Images Inc., 2002), 53.  
Created 2015, Updated October 2024

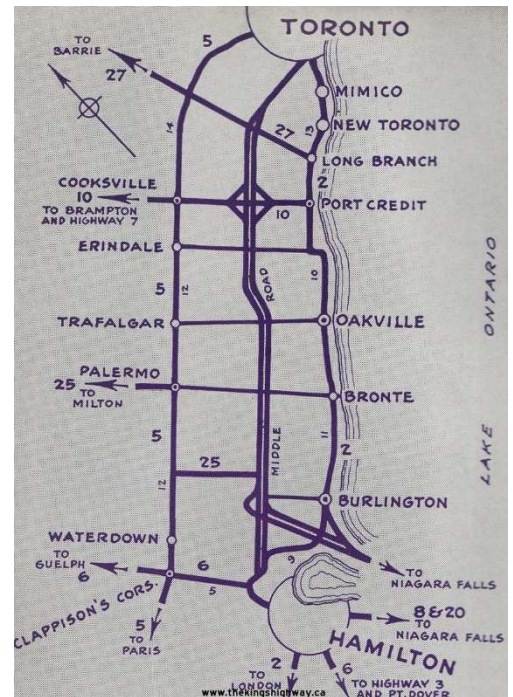
# The Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW)

- The introduction of the automobile was felt across Ontario, necessitating the establishment of Department of Public Highways of Ontario (DPHO) in 1916. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the landscape of the province, particularly Southern Ontario, completely transformed as a complex web of roadways were constructed to meet the needs of this transformative form of transportation.

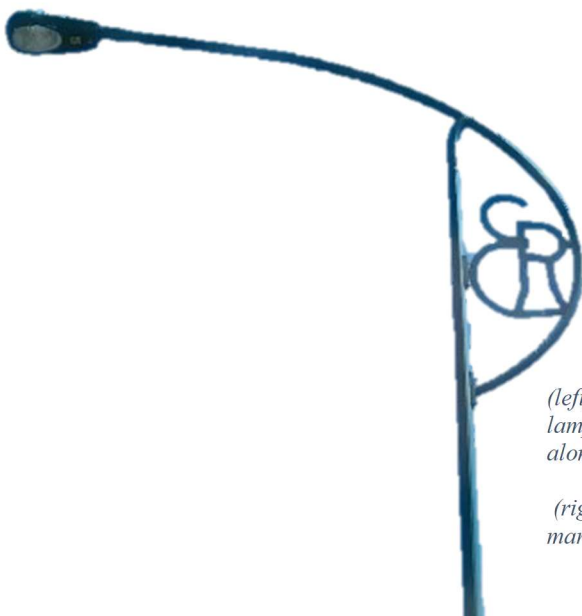


- *The King's Highway* is the primary highway network of Ontario, and constitutes the majority of the principal inter-urban roadways in the province. Highways 5 and 6 are examples of the King's Highway network.

- , During the 1930s, and inspired by the autobahn in Germany, the Government of Ontario constructed *The Middle Road*, a four-lane, controlled access (on ramps with no stops), “super highway” linking Toronto to Burlington. This highway soon would be expanded to Niagara Falls and the US border.
- Cameron Bevers writes on [www.thekingshighway.ca](http://www.thekingshighway.ca): *While the new Toronto-Niagara Falls Highway was the pinnacle of 1930s highway engineering and innovation, the name "Middle Road" simply did not inspire an image of grandeur. While the Ontario Government was considering new names for the highway, an idea surfaced to re-dedicate the Middle Road Highway as the "Queen Elizabeth Way", to commemorate the first Royal Visit to Canada by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (The Queen Mother). Queen Elizabeth was delighted with the honour and agreed to attend a special dedication ceremony in St. Catharines on June 7, 1939.*



*A map of the Middle Road, 1931-1939.*



*(left) One of the distinctive “ER” lampposts (Elizabeth Regina) found along the QEW.*



*(right) Original, and present-day, markers for the Queen Elizabeth Way.*