

Upper Canada Village, Ontario

Canada's political shape, after a century of conflict between the rival settlers, the political ambitions of the parent nations and the critical Seven Years War, began to emerge from the dust and smoke over the Plains of Abraham in 1759, where a battle was fought that resulted in the total conquest of the colonies by the British.

The Treaty of Paris, signed in 1763, placed New France under British sovereignty, though it permitted the French to retain their religion.

The American Revolutionary War of the 1770s, with the birth of an independent nation south of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River, was an event as important for future Canadians as for the new citizens of the United States of America.

For, despite the overtures of the leaders of the Revolution and a march on Montreal by American forces, both French and English colonists in the north chose British sovereignty instead of the political independence conceived by their southern neighbours. British North America, partly French, partly English, was born.

For the ensuing 50 years, the colonies comprising British North America — Upper and Lower Canada (Ontario and Quebec), New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia — developed materially, and their populations increased. First came the Loyalists from the newly-created United States in the early 1780s to settle in Ontario and the maritime colonies; next came thousands of immigrants from Britain and Northwest Europe to accept offers of free land and supplies.

Agriculture and forestry eventually surpassed the fur trade in importance and were developed to the stage where the settlers could import manufactured goods in exchange for flour and lumber. Roads and canals were built; cities, towns and villages developed; religious and educational institutions flourished. The foundations for political evolution from colonialism were established.

Several important developments hastened the union of the colonies into a young nation in 1867. Among these were:

