

Not until the reign of King Louis XIV of France did these “letters of request” become popular. The King granted personally signed documents to his court favourites. The letter was dubbed “passe port,” literally meaning “to pass through a port,” because most international travel was by sailing ship. Hence the term “passport.”

In the 100 years since Louis XIV’s reign, almost every country in Europe set up a system to issue passports. Besides needing passports from their own countries, travellers also had to have visas issued by the countries they wanted to visit, much as we have travel visas today.

The rising popularity of rail travel in the mid-19th century led to an explosion of tourism throughout Europe and caused a complete breakdown in the European passport and visa system. In answer to the crisis, France simply abolished passports and visas in 1861. Other European countries followed suit and by 1914, passport requirements had been eliminated practically everywhere in Europe. However, World War I brought renewed concerns for international security, and passports and visas were again required, as a “temporary” measure.

## EARLY CANADIAN EXPERIENCES

The story of the Canadian passport is entwined in Canada’s history both as a colony of Great Britain and as a neighbour to the United States.

Before 1862, Canadians, as British subjects, could travel freely to and from the United States without passports. To travel to Europe, though, a Canadian had to get a British passport at the Foreign Office in London. Those who were not British subjects by birth could still go to the United States with a certificate of naturalization – actually issued by the local Canadian mayors mainly for voting in municipal elections.