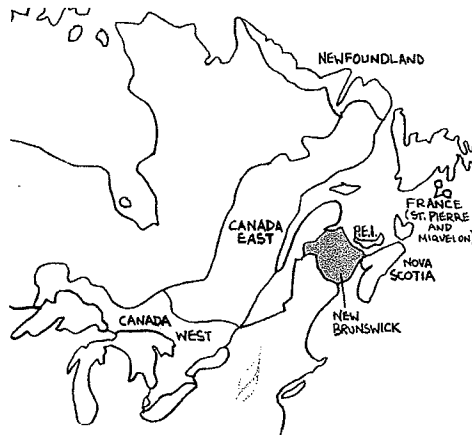


# New Brunswick – Background

Population (circa 1860): 252,000

Urban centre: Saint John (28,805)

**Key figures:** Samuel Leonard Tilley (1818-1896)  
John M. Johnson (1818-1868)  
William H. Steeves (1814-1873)  
Edward B. Chandler (1800-1880)  
John Hamilton Gray (1814-1889)  
Peter Mitchell (1824-1899)  
Charles Fisher (1808-1880)  
R.D. Wilmot (1809-1891)



Since the early nineteenth century, New Brunswick life has been dominated by the timber trade. The economy and even the colonial character are shaped by it. The vast forests in the western part of the colony are the bedrock of this industry and, in many ways, form a natural barrier between New Brunswick and the rest of the continent. In fact, only three to four percent of the colony's trade is with the Canadas, while twenty percent of all British timber imports come from New Brunswick. This rich supply of lumber has led to a thriving shipbuilding industry in Saint John. And while people in the colony are also involved in farming and fishing, any significant growth of an agricultural economy is impeded by the attractive profits in the lumber industry.

Though it is not the colony's capital, Saint John is one of the Maritimes' largest cities. Deeply influenced by the rugged life of the timber trade, Saint John is known as a "fast city," with lively and aggressive residents. Fredericton, a sleepy town by comparison, has been chosen the colonial capital because it is upriver and easier to defend in case of attack.

The fear of attack from the United States army, or the Fenian marauders, is very real. The colony's long border with the United States is poorly defended and not easily accessible to troops from outside New Brunswick. British troops sent to defend the colonies during the winter months of the American Civil War had to travel by sled through New Brunswick. Britain's reluctance to defend the colonies in the future has made closer ties between the British North American provinces crucial to security.

The solution to any questions surrounding colonial defence is an Intercolonial Railway. Though it would be too costly for New Brunswick to pay for on its own, the rail line would be central to the colony's defence and, if built, would open up New Brunswick economically to both the Western and the Eastern North American markets. Saint John would now be connected to Montreal in the West and Halifax in the East.

# New Brunswick – Viewpoints

Drawn from R.D. Francis, R. Jones & D.B. Smith, *Origins: Canadian History to Confederation* (Holt, 1988); H.H. Herstein, L.J. Hughes & R.C. Kirbyson, *Challenge and Survival: The History of Canada* (Prentice, 1970) and P.B. Waite, *Confederation, 1854-1867* (Holt, 1972).

## 1. Marching song of the Fenian Brotherhood

(From sometime in the 1860s)

*The group, formed in the United States in 1859, was dedicated to fighting for the independence of Ireland.*

We are the Fenian Brotherhood,  
skilled in the art of war,  
And we're going to fight for Ireland,  
the land that we adore,  
Many battles have we won, along with  
the boys in blue,  
And we'll go and capture Canada for  
we've got nothing else to do.

## 2. On nationhood

(*St. John Morning News*, 2 June 1858)

The experience of history tells us that Colonies cannot be Colonies forever; and Canada in time will assume that character among the Nations of the world which her position, her wealth, and her intelligence will entitle her to.

## 3. On Union and the Intercolonial Railway

(*Saint John Morning News*, 25 August 1858)

We regard the building of the inter-Colonial Railroad to be an absolute condition [of British North American union]—for there can be no union of feeling and sentiment, or harmony of understanding and action, while such physical difficulties are geographically described, stand in the way of the people of Canada West and those of Nova Scotia, separated by a distance of 800 miles, and who can only communicate with one another through American territory.

## 4. Britain's view of British North America

(*St. John Morning Telegraph*, 12 September 1864)

(T)he Mother Country [Great Britain] is becoming tired of her Colonial dependencies. This is undoubtedly the prevailing sentiment among the English Statesmen. . . . It does not pay at present to retain the British North American Colonies. . . . Why, then, should the British take any special interest in our welfare? Blood goes for nothing these days, for Anglo-Saxon blood is everywhere. Commerce is everything—and everything must succumb to commercial calculations.

We consider, then, that the time is near at hand when we shall be told to shift for ourselves; and the American difficulty, if we are not greatly mistaken, has brought the time considerably nearer to our doors than it otherwise would be.