

I am a Dual Citizen of the US and Canada

By Joe Petrie

Dual citizenship was a topic of a recent meeting of the Friends of Irish Research (FIR) in Brockton Massachusetts. The focus was on dual Irish Citizenship. I have known for years that my wife was an automatic citizen of Ireland by descent. I had also known that our sons were entitled to Irish citizenship. Why? My mother-in-law was born and raised in Youghal, County Cork, Ireland. She migrated to Massachusetts, married, had 3 children, and applied for US Citizenship but died before being naturalized.

That FIR meeting got me to wondering about whether I really was a dual US and Canadian citizen. Note the really! I had been told by both of my parents that my brothers and I were Canadians by birth. Both of my parents were born in Nova Scotia. Dad was born in Bridgeport in May 1906 and Mom was born in Glace Bay in March 1904. Both became naturalized US citizens in the 1940s after I was born in 1939.

Oral history indicates that in 1939 when my family was vacationing in Dominion in June – August 1939, Dad went to Sydney and registered our births - because he was considering returning to Dominion to work in his father's grocery store. But remember that oral history can be more fiction than fact. Also, please note that I was in my 50s when I found out that I was in Dominion in 1939. I never thought that my parents were risk-takers. I guess that they were because I was a month old when they drove the family to Dominion – and I was nearly 4 months old when we returned in August to the US so that my oldest brother could start school.

I googled "Dual Canadian Citizenship". One result was an official Canadian Government web site travel.gc.ca/ . One paragraph on the Contact Us tab at the bottom of the Home Page took me to Canadian citizenship. It said: "In general, you are a Canadian citizen if you were born outside Canada and one of your parents was a Canadian citizen at the time of your birth and that parent was either born in Canada or naturalized in Canada ('naturalized' means that the parent was a permanent resident — a landed immigrant — before becoming a citizen). You are the first generation born outside Canada." Essentially, I have been a Canadian citizen automatically by descent since I was born.

Now I know that officially I am a dual citizen and I am proud of it!

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