

# Real Life Safety Heroes: John Brown, the Original Victoria's Secret



Canada Day commemorates July 1, 1867, the day Britain signed the Constitution Act uniting its colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and what would become Ontario and Québec to create the autonomous Dominion of Canada. It was Queen Victoria who signed that law.

## Victoria's Secret

And here's something else about Queen Victoria that not a lot of people know: she had her own personal safety director. John Brown (who was played by Billy Connolly in the 1997 movie, *Mrs. Brown*, starring Dame Judi Dench as the Queen) was a servant to Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert. After Albert's untimely death in 1861, he became Victoria's "personal attendant."

Among his many chores, Brown was entrusted with the Queen's personal safety. In 1863, the Queen suffered some minor injuries in a couple of carriage accidents. It could have been much worse had Brown not been there to intervene. From that point on, Brown would ride everywhere the Queen did and look after her.

Queen Victoria and John Brown had a special relationship. Biographers suggest that Brown is the only person the Queen

completely trusted. Although that's hard to prove, what is clear is that the Queen allowed Brown to take verbal liberties that no others would have dared. Onlookers would gasp when Brown barked orders to the Queen like "sit down" in the carriage and "button up your shawl." But the Queen would meekly obey, knowing that Brown was just looking after her own safety and health.

In his later years, Brown became something of an embarrassment to the court. There were persistent rumors of a romance between Brown and Victoria (completely untrue) and courtiers wanted Brown out. But the Queen would have none of it. Of Brown, Victoria would say: "I feel I have a good and devoted soul in the house, whose only interest is my welfare. God knows how much I want to be taken care of."

Brown would remain by Queen Victoria's side until his death in 1883.

