



First Impressions

**BNAPS First Day
Cover Study Group
Issue No. 4
December 2009**

Congratulations Study Group!

This is our fourth newsletter—and we have completed our first year as an active Study Group within BNAPS. Gary Dickinson will have a complete update on membership, etc. in our next newsletter, but I can say that the group is growing and your efforts to make it a success—particularly with the website—have made it look easy.

The FDC website is a terrific thing to see—nearly 6000 FDCs and growing! The challenge for us is to keep adding to it—and then figuring out how best to organize it so items can be easily found. Doug Holmes has thought quite a bit about this, and as the number of covers grows the need becomes more apparent. Nevertheless—keep adding covers and if you haven’t seen it yet—take a look around (www.canadafdc.org).

I would like to invite the membership to comment on the newsletter—what’s good, what isn’t, and what you would like to see included. We’ve had a good beginning and I certainly appreciate the contributions of those of you who have sent articles or scans to me.

Wishing you and yours all the best this Holiday Season.

- George Basher

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Submitting Articles to First Impressions

Articles should be submitted in either manuscript or MS Word, and scans of covers should be in JPEG format. E-mail submissions to gbasher@nycap.rr.com or mail to George Basher, 4 Foxwood Circle, East Greenbush, NY 12061, United States.

We Need Your Articles!!

The success of this newsletter—and the study group—depends on all of us who join. There is a real shortage of written information about Canadian FDCs and one of the prime purposes of this Study Group is to change that. Please contribute—no matter what your writing skills or experience—and share your knowledge with the rest of us.

Please send your submissions to: George Basher, 4 Foxwood Circle, East Greenbush, NY 12061 United States, or gbasher@nycap.rr.com. MS Word is preferred, but I’ll work with what you have.

What Makes a "Good" First Day Cover?

By George Basher

One of the things (among many) that personally make me crazy is how the FDC market has evolved. Back in the "old" days, you prepared your cover or bought commercial covers, went to the Post Office on the Day of Issue, bought the stamps, put them on the cover and then put them in the mail stream or perhaps handed them to the clerk who handed it back to you. You might even include a note or a card in the envelope to ensure safe passage or commemorate the occasion. There were a variety of stamp dealers and publishers who created a wide variety of these FDCs, especially in the 1930 – 1970 time frame. The evolution of the hobby in Canada may be unique – with Canada Post entering the FDC business in 1971, the private cachet makers and small-time dealers simply could not compete with the folks who controlled the system.

A modern Canada Post FDC is one that has been professionally designed, often right along with the stamp itself, and usually meets the highest production standards of the industry. The stamps and cancellation are prepared in advance or up to several months after the "First Day" has passed. The envelope, if it can be still called such, has never gone through the mails, has no address, and can't even be opened to insert a communication or letter. I admit they're pretty to look at, but there is a sterile sameness that comes over the hobby when we aspire to collect these perfect specimens.

What follows is a look at a few FDCs that are far from this example – while the cachets and stamps are not particularly rare, these covers are unique in the journey they've taken and the stories they have to tell.



Figure 1—BC Centennial Cover to Australia

Figure 1 shows a cover sent from Lakefield, ON to New South Wales, Australia. If I read the markings correctly, it appears there is no such town as "Thumore" in NSW, so the cover worked its way back half way around the world for an additional five cents postage due, picking up a few interesting postal markings on the way.



Figure 2 Alberta-Saskatchewan cover to Cuba

Figure 2 shows another cover sent from Lakefield, ON to Havana, Cuba. My Spanish is terrible, but it appears from the markings that the mailman couldn't find the address on the cover, so another five cents brought it home from the tropics – much more decorated than when it left.

Figure 3 shows another cover from Lakefield, ON to “Khorramsharher” Iran. The actual spelling of the town is Khorramshar (خرمشهر for those of you who read Arabic). I suspect that wasn't the problem in this case, more likely it was the task of finding Milanian Sfory's house in a city of 400,000 inhabitants. Interestingly, there is no postage due marking on this cover, which nevertheless found its way home.



Figure 3 David Thompson cover to Iran



Figure 4 Oil Centennial to Germany

What Makes A “Good”... (from Page 3)

Figure 3 is my favorite – showing the struggles of postal clerks whose native language isn't English trying to figure out what to do with a piece of mail they can't deliver. The German markings indicate they couldn't resolve the address in the Harz region, so back it went – to Oil Springs, ON where the cachet notes the first well drilled in Canada. Once there, the Canadian clerks managed to get it on its way back to Lakefield – having gone from Germany to Montreal to Oil Springs and then home.

The trials and tribulations these covers have endured have provided me with hours of entertaining research and sleuthing – and I'm nowhere near done with them. The point is this: FDCs that aren't “perfect” have just as much place in the collection as those pristine ones that are untouched by any human hand. I know I'll keep looking for them!

THE MAPLE LEAF CACHET

By Gary Dickinson

In the first issue of *First Impressions* I described what appeared to be a third “first cachet” for a Canadian stamp issue. As shown again in Figure 1, this cover was posted at Toronto to a Toronto addressee with the rate underpaid by one Scott #141 and the first day cancellation on June 29, 1927. It now appears, however, that the rubber-stamped, maple leaf cachet in red outline with yellow hand-colouring may have been added later to an existing uncached FDC.

A suggestion that this cachet might be an “add-on” came from FDCSG member Bruce Perkins, who noted that he had been seen the same cachet on a number of covers from different sources extending over a period of time ranging from 1927 (as illustrated here) to as late as 1976. The notion that the cachet had a murky origin was strengthened when he found it on a FDC for Scott #245 from 1938, a cover sent by T.R. Legault of the Post Office Department to collector



Fig 1. Earliest known date with the Maple Leaf cachet.

A.F. Brophy of Montreal, as the maple leaf was not usually featured on the Legault FDC's. (Figure 2) Perkins also noted that the same cachet appeared on several covers in Pierre Dorval's book *Canadian FDC Cachets 1927-1937*, and a blue-inked example of the same rubber stamped cachet was featured on a FDC for the 10 cent Fur Resources issue of 1950 (Scott #301) and on one for the 4 cent Citizenship issue of 1947 (Scott #275).

Our erstwhile editor George Basher searched his extensive collection of FDC's and unearthed two examples of the maple leaf cachet, one of which is shown in Figure 3. Both of his

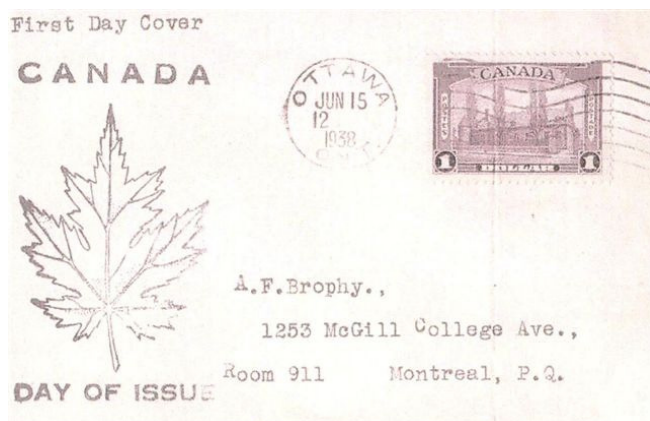


Figure 2. Maple Leaf cachet in black on a FDC for #245 mailed to Montreal philatelist A.F. Brophy on June 15, 1938 by T.R. Legault, with an Ottawa first day cancellation on June 15, 1938. (Image courtesy of Bruce Perkins)

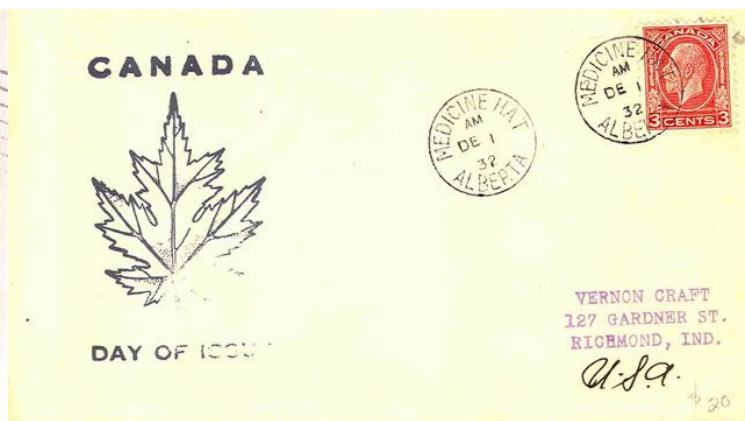


Figure 3. Black-inked maple leaf cachet on a FDC from Medicine Hat, AB to Vernon Craft in Richmond, Indiana dated December 1, 1932, with a single #197. (Image courtesy of George Basher)

covers are from 1932 and show this rubber-stamped cachet in black ink.

A final illustration of the “maple leaf forever” cachet is shown in Figure 4. This was purchased recently at auction and shows a red-coloured, black-outlined leaf squeezed between a boxed registration hand stamp and a Scott #242. The word “CANADA” on the cachet slightly overlaps the corner of the registration box, indicating a later application. The cover further confirms Bruce Perkins’ observation that the cachet is suspect in that it was applied to a FDC from the Post Office Department. Such an application was not part of its normal processing of first day covers.

I would be interested in knowing of other applications of this maple leaf cachet, and would appreciate seeing scans of further examples. Please contact Gary Dickinson at gandbdickinson@shaw.ca. If the response warrants it, a further report will be prepared for *First Impressions*.

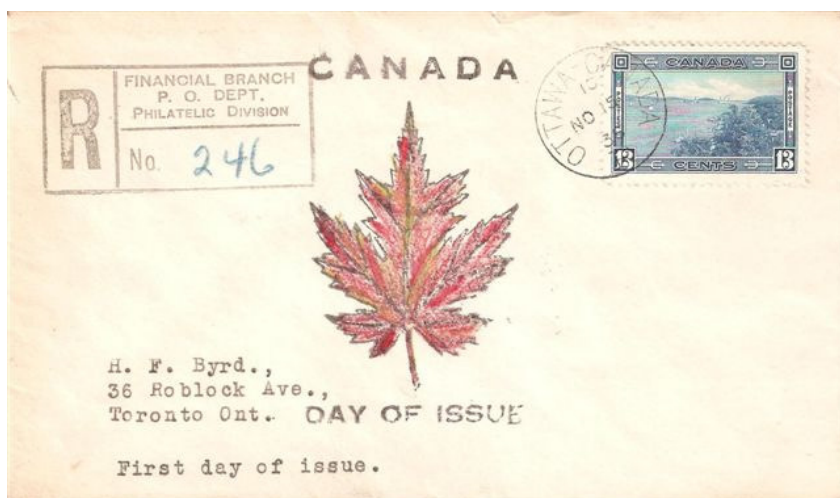


Figure 4. Red-coloured, black-outlined maple leaf registered by the Philatelic Division at Ottawa on November 15, 1938 and addressed to H.F. Byrd in Toronto.

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We're on the Web!

www.CanadaFDC.org

We expect that this FDC Study Group will do some or all of the following things, depending on participant interests:

- * publish an occasional newsletter (at least 3 per year,
- * arrange for publication of member articles, monographs, and other writings,
- * develop catalogues and other sources of information about FDC's,
- * facilitate the exchange of FDC's among members,
- * convene meetings at BNAPS conferences, and
- * serve as a "home" for all Canadian FDC collectors.

The British North America Philatelic Society

The Society for Canadian Philately

Joining the First Day Cover Study Group

1. The first year of membership will begin whenever you sign up and end on December 31, 2010 regardless of when you sign up. The annual fee is \$10 Canadian.
2. If you are NOT now a member of BNAPS, you have two options:
 - A. Join BNAPS and receive free membership in the FDC Study Group until December 31, 2010. The BNAPS membership application is available on their website at <http://www.bnaps.org/form.htm>. Your dues should be sent directly to BNAPS, and they will forward a portion of that to the Study Group.
 - B. Join the Study Group as a trial member until December 31, 2010 and pay only the \$10 study group membership fee. You must join BNAPS by the end of that period to retain your membership in the Study Group. Your dues for the first year of the Study Group should be sent to Treasurer Gary Dickinson.
3. If you ARE now a member of BNAPS, you may join as many study groups as you wish, including the FDC Study Group whose membership fee is \$10. Your dues for the first year of the Study Group should be sent to Treasurer Gary Dickinson.
4. Any \$10 membership fees for the Study Group may be paid by PayPal (click on "Send Money", use Gary Dickinson's e-mail address shown above, and check "Services/Other") or by cheque or cash to Gary Dickinson, 648 San Michelle Road, Kelowna, B.C., Canada, V1W 2J1.