

THE ½¢ QUEBEC TRICENTENARY - CANADA'S LAST ½¢ STAMP

In the summer of 1908 Canadians honoured the three hundredth anniversary of the founding of Quebec in 1608 by Samuel de Champlain. In March, 1908 the government proposed to issue an 8 stamp series to commemorate the occasion. The stamp series was approved, and released on July 16, 1908 for sale to the public throughout the Dominion, prior to the arrival of the Prince of Wales aboard HMS Indomitable July 22, 1908 at Quebec City. Portraits of their Royal Highnesses, the Prince and Princess of Wales were featured on the ½¢ stamp, reproduced from photographs taken in 1906 by Messrs. W. and D. Downey, London, England. Also issued were 1, 2, 5, 7, 10, 15 and 20 cent denominations.

Prior to 1908, ½¢ stamps were issued throughout the Victorian era. During Queen Victoria's reign ½¢ stamps included Large Queens, Small Queens, Jubilees, Queen leafs and Queen numerals, printed from 1868 to 1902. These earlier issues are illustrated in the Prologue of the exhibit. The ½ cent postage rate remained for prepayment of single newspapers and periodicals less than 1 ounce until May 1909. The end of the ½¢ stamp was already forewarned with the absence of an Edward VII ½¢ denomination.

The purpose of the exhibit is to illustrate the last half cent stamp issued by Canada Post as part of the Quebec Tercentenary Issue. The demand for the new stamps was extraordinary, due to the historic festivities surrounding the founding of Quebec.

The ½¢ Tercentenary is a dark brown image, of the Prince and Princess of Wales, printed from a single plate. The stamp series was printed on the usual white wove paper and were perforated 12. Large quantities of the ½¢ value were bought up by people who imagined it would be as rare as the corresponding value of the Jubilee stamps. However, two million Tercentenary ½¢ stamps were issued versus only 150,000 Jubilee stamps, therefore the expected rarity and increase in value did not occur. Once it was determined that the ½¢ stamp would not increase in value similarly to the ½¢ Jubilee stamp, many post cards and letters were festooned with ½¢ Tercentenary stamps to pay for domestic and international postage. By October, 1908, the whole Tercentenary stamp series was sold out.

This exhibit features the envelope in which the Tercentenary stamp series was sold as well as a single envelope franked with the complete Tercentenary series. The left pane of 50, ½¢ stamps, a large and small die proof of the Prince and Princess of Wales, a block of 4, an imperforate pair, the major re-entry-#44. As well, foreign, domestic, registered mail and commemorative postal usages of the ½¢ stamp are featured in the exhibit. Items deemed rare/important are identified with a crown.



Toronto ON to Farmingham MA, USA, franked with a block of (4) ½¢ Tercentenary stamps and (2) ½¢ Victoria numerals tied by Toronto duplex cancel, Feb. 27, 1920. This illustrates a late in period use of the Victoria and Tercentenary ½¢ stamps.

Table of Contents:

- The ½¢ Quebec Tercentenary - Canada's Last ½¢ Stamp
- 1.0 Prologue
- 2.0 Tercentenary Envelopes
- 3.0 Block and Imperforate Pair
- 3.1 Quebec Tercentenary ½¢ Die Proofs
- 4.0 Half Sheet & Major Re-entry
- 5.0 Usages
- 5.1 House Holder Rate
- 5.2 ½¢ Postal Rate
- 5.3 ½¢ Franking
- 5.4 Foreign Mail
- 5.4.1 USA
- 5.4.2 The All-Red-Route

References:

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