

Return from the Harvest Field – The Suzor-Côté commemorative Stamp of 1969

Purpose of Exhibit: Traditional exhibit with a presentation of proofs, varieties, first day covers, rates and destination of this 50 cents stamp on cover.

Exhibit Plan: refer to Title Page

Philatelic importance: When the Centennial issue was released, critics were expressed about the fact that the stamps were monochrome. As the technology was available, there was an expectation that paintings would be best reproduced by multicoloured stamps. In the spring of 1968, the Post Office Department was in contact with the National Gallery to select an artist for a stamp issue which resulted in the release on March 14, 1969 of the *Return from the Harvest Field*, the first full colour art reproduction on a Canadian stamp and the only Canadian stamp printed by photogravure by Canadian Bank Note Co.

Personal research: The last article on the Suzor-Côté stamp was published in 2010 and was the starting point for my research. I performed a thorough search for varieties by acquiring two sheets of 50 for each of the four panes. After I compared each stamps to note potential varieties, I went to Library and Archives Canada to confirm the presence of the noted varieties on each of the four pane plate proofs. This exercise resulted in the discovery of ten new constant varieties (identified in blue in the exhibit) and the confirmation of the position of one variety. My research is summarized in the article I wrote for Corgi Times (May-June 2023).

Observations: In their response to collectors complaining about the high denomination set for a commemorative issue, the Post Office Department replied that the Suzor-Côté stamp was not intended to be a regular commemorative issue: its 50 cents denomination was justified by its high production costs and current use for registration and rates for other classification of mail. So the period of use selected for this exhibit is *March 14, 1969 to August 31, 1976*, the day prior to the change of rate for registration (September 1, 1976).

Also, only 6,400,000 Suzor-Côté stamps were printed rather than 24,000,000, the number of Commemoratives generally produced. This relatively small number of stamps poses a challenge when looking for usages on cover. If finding a 56 cents 1969 domestic registered cover is easy, other postal uses or destinations are scarce if not rare. In 15 years of collecting, I only found one cover to Australasia, one to South America and none to Central America, Africa or Middle East. Despite what one might think, even covers to destinations in the United States or Europe are difficult to find!

Material Highlights:

- Lower Left finished proof pair
- «Line at knee» block with «spotted dress»
- 1972 Canada presentation card
- 1974 UPU presentation folder
- Poster postmarked on date of issue
- 1972 Canada presentation card
- 1974 UPU presentation folder
- 1974 Domestic Registration for indemnity of \$200 or less
- 1969 Special Delivery to England
- 1971 cover rated Other Article by Air

Philatelic References:

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- Frève, L. (2023), *More Varieties on the 50¢ Suzor-Côté, (Sc. 492) (part IV)*, Corgi Times, May-June 2023, Whole No. 186, Vol. XXI No. 6, pp. 100-101
- Harris, R. (2010), *50¢ Suzor-Côté, (Sc. 492) (part III)*, Corgi Times, March-April 2010, Whole No. 107, Vol. XVIII No. 5, p. 77
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- Smith, Dr. R. and Wawrukewicz, A. (2000), *Canada, Domestic and International Postal Rates and Fees 1870-1999*, The Press for Philately, 44 p.