

The Tercentenary Times

BNAPS Study Group – Quebec Tercentenary Issue of 1908
Volume 1, Number 1, November 2026

Issued on July 16, 1908, to celebrate the 300th anniversary of Samuel de Champlain's founding of Quebec City, the eight-stamp Quebec Tercentenary set was Canada's third commemorative issue and its first multi-stamp historical series. Released at the height of the Edwardian postcard boom, the issue produced a rich array of postal history, rates, and postmarks.

We are delighted to announce the launch of the BNAPS Tercentenary Study Group. Special thanks to our founding sponsors—Gary Steele, Morris Beattie, Robin Harris, Rick Friesen, and Mike Halhed.

Membership is free, with no dues. This newsletter will be published every other month as a PDF and archived on the BNAPS website. Thanks to Ron Smith, Leo Beaudet, and Darin Cherniwchan for logistical support in setting up the group.

Whether you specialize in the 1908 Tercentenary issue or simply have one or two intriguing Tercentenary covers, postcards, or postmarks tucked away in your collection, we invite you to join and share your material. Scanned images and brief notes for any of our regular reporting categories may be emailed to Lane Robson, Editor, at wlmrobson@gmail.com.

In This Issue

Bisect Tercentenary Stamps

Panama Canal & Edwardian Thrift

Sparks Auctions Highlights – Oct 2026

Why are there so few Sunday postmarks on Tercentenary stamps?

Letters to the Editor

Postmarks, Varieties, Cards, and Covers

This section will illustrate and document Tercentenary items submitted by members, grouped into the following preliminary tracking categories: Provincial Postmarks, RPO, Squared Circle, Fancy Cancel, Perforated Initials, Varieties, Proofs, Dead Letter Office, OHMS, Postage Due, Postal Stationery, First Day Covers, Advertising Covers, Exhibition & Fair Covers, and Destination Covers. Each issue will focus on one of these categories.

Bisect Tercentenary Stamps

Postage stamps were sometimes bisected to use half their face value. Although never officially sanctioned and banned after April 1, 1868, local postmasters tolerated the practice to meet public demand during shortages of certain denominations, especially in remote areas. This unofficial practice was more common in the Maritimes.

Bisect covers are rare. J. T. Anders, former editor of *The BNAPS 1898 Christmas Map Stamp Newsletter,* reported four Map bisects. By comparison, there are only three Tercentenary bisects in the study group database.

Articles copyright © 2026 by the respective authors and/or the Tercentenary Study Group.

Known Bisect Tercentenary Stamps

Source*	Stamp	Postmark	Type	Destination
AB	2c	Upper Stewiacke, NS Dec 9, 1908 Paid 2c domestic rate. ½ x 2c + 1c KE	Cover	Middle Stewiacke, NS
M	2c	Edmonton, AB Aug 1, 1908 Paid 1c domestic postcard rate.	Postcard	Salmon Arm, BC (CDS, Aug 2, 1908)
N	2c	Illegible Split Circle, Oct 29, 1908 Paid 1c domestic postcard rate.	Postcard	Southwest Margaree, NS

*AB-Art Bunce, M-McNaught, N-Nickle



Upper Stewiacke, NS (CDS, Dec 9, 1908) – Middle Stewiacke, NS.

Do you have or know of an unrecorded Tercentenary Bisect to add to the database?

Stories from the Mailbag

This section will highlight a cover or postcard and tell its story. The story will review the known history of the individual or business that sent or received the cover. In 1908, Canada was a small country of bustling communities. Those who wrote letters and cards were often a who's who in their respective towns or cities. Their stories are Canada's story.

The Panama Canal & Edwardian Thrift

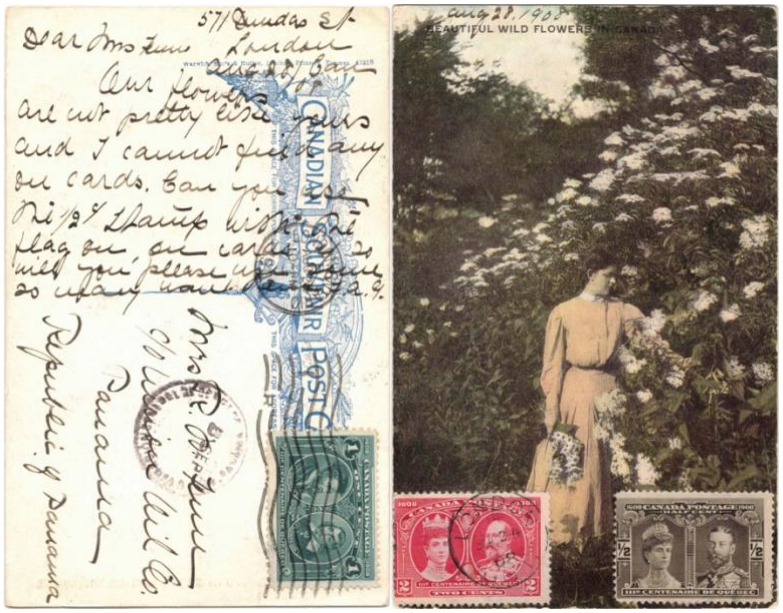
Canada's 2c postal convention letter rate and 1c postcard rate with the United States were extended to U.S. overseas territories, including the Panama Canal Zone and the Republic of Panama. The year 1908 was both the chronological midpoint of the 1904–1914 Panama Canal project and the all-time peak year for steam-shovel excavation in the Culebra Cut.

The United States assumed control of the project from the French on May 4, 1904. Dr. William Gorgas brought yellow fever and malaria under control in 1905–1906,

and Colonel George W. Goethals became Chief Engineer in 1907. Excavation more than doubled, rising from 15.7 million cubic yards in 1907 to a project record of 37.1 million cubic yards in 1908. About 10% of the 56,000 workers died during the American construction period. This astounding mortality was accepted as the price of progress!

To power the Canal's steam shovels, oil-burning locomotives, and power plants, the Union Oil Company of California built an 8-inch pipeline across the Isthmus from Balboa to Mount Hope. It recruited oilfield specialists from Southwestern Ontario and named its Panama office "Petrolia," after the Ontario community and the birthplace of Ontario's oil industry.

The postcard shown here was mailed from 571 Dundas Street in London, Ontario, on August 28, 1908, to Mrs. R. W. Fenn, care of the Union Oil Company in Panama, where her husband, engineer Robert W. Fenn, served as Union Oil's resident manager.



London, ON (Machine Cancel, Aug 28, 1908) – Panama (CDS, Sep 8, 1908).
½c, 1c, and 2c Tercentenary – Transit 11 days.

The 1c stamp on the address side paid the postcard rate and was cancelled with a London machine "flag" cancel. The sender glued two additional Tercentenary stamps onto the picture side: a 2c stamp with a clean August 24 London CDS, soaked off an earlier envelope, and an unblemished ½c stamp. In her message, the sender asks, "Can you use the ½c stamp without flag on, on cards? If so, will you please use some so I may know." Likely fellow members of an international postcard club, these two presumably affluent women, guided by the Edwardian maxim that "a penny saved is a penny earned," took the trouble to soak, salvage, and exchange even ½c stamps untouched by a machine cancel!

Do you have a Tercentenary cover or postcard with an interesting addressee, message, or destination? Send a scan and a brief note, and we will include it in a future issue.

Recent Auction Highlights

Each newsletter will track notable realizations for the 1908 Tercentenary issue. The table highlights selected items from the 118 lots offered at the Sparks Auction of the Art Bunce collection. The prices do not include the 20% buyer's premium.

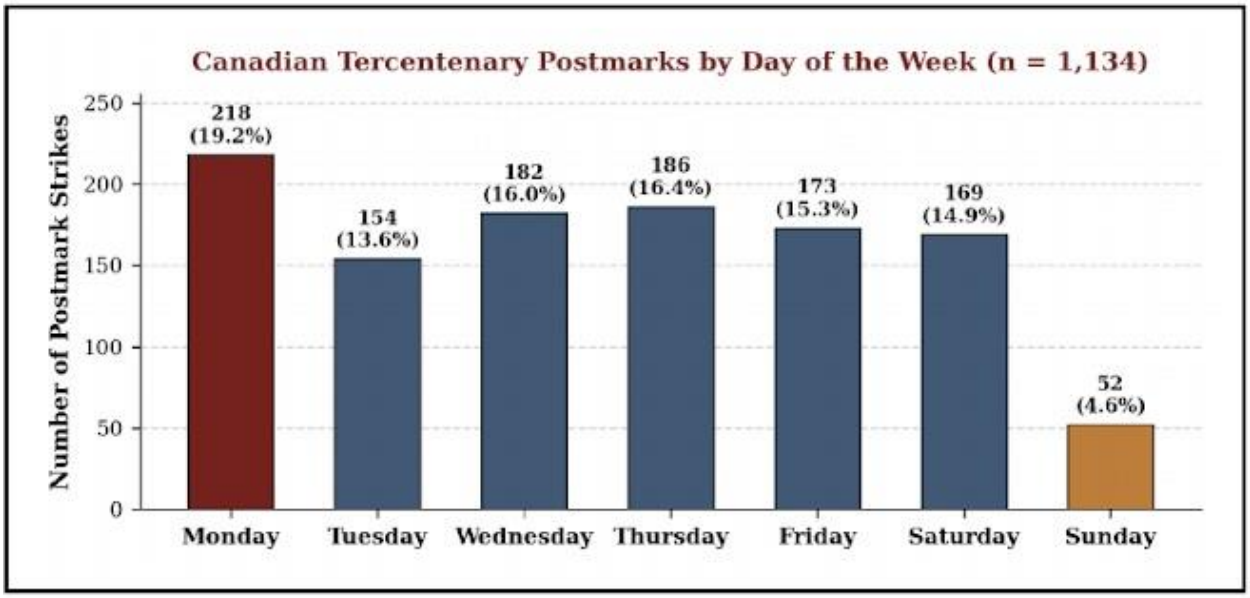
Sparks Auctions Highlights – October 2026

Tercentenary	CAD
Complete set, registered, OHMS, special delivery, Winnipeg, MB (CDS, Oct 1, 1908) – Winnipeg, MB. One of sixteen complete-set covers known.	$900
Complete set, Halifax, NS (CDS, Aug 3, 1908) – New Zealand. Another of the sixteen known.	$900
½c large Die Essay, civilian portrait, one of six known.	$3,400
½c large Die Proof, military uniform.	$600
½c x 2, 1c with Upper Columbia Tramway & Navigation Co. local stamp. Calgary, AB (CDS, Sep 8, 1908) – Wilmer, BC.	$2,300
2c Bisect on 1c KE postal stationery envelope. Upper Stewiacke, NS (CDS, Dec 9, 1908) – Middle Stewiacke, NS.	$425
5c Plate 1 upper-margin inscription block of four, hinged in the selvedge only, F-VF.	$650
10c large Die Proof, colour, on India paper.	$1,300
2c x 2, 10c Registered on parcel postage tag. Strathroy, ON (Oval, Oct 15, 1908).	$500
20c Hamilton, ON (Machine Cancel, Aug 1, 1908) – Davos, Switzerland.	$1,600

Did You Know?

Why are there so few Sunday postmarks on Tercentenary stamps?

In 1906, Parliament enacted the federal *Lord's Day Act*, which took effect on March 1, 1907—sixteen months before the Quebec Tercentenary stamps were issued. Designed to preserve Sunday as a day of rest across the Dominion, the Act prohibited commercial labour, closed post office counters on Sundays, and halted local Sunday passenger and mail trains across eastern Canada, granting a narrow exemption only to long-distance transcontinental trains already in multi-day transit through Western Canada.



An analysis of the editor's Tercentenary postmark collection database—comprising 1,134 dated postmark strikes (974 origin strikes and 160 receivers)—reveals the impact of the *Lord's Day Act* on mail delivery in 1908. People wrote letters on Sundays and could post them in mailboxes, but the letters were held until a postal clerk processed them on Monday.

Letters to the Editor

Do you have a Tercentenary comment or suggestion?
Send an email to Lane Robson, Editor, at wlmrobson@gmail.com.

Next Issue – January 2027

The theme of the next issue is *Dead Letter Office (DLO) covers and postcards*.

Do you have a Tercentenary DLO cover or postcard to feature in our January issue?
Send an image and a brief story to the editor, and we will include it in the next issue!

Announcements

Royal*2027*Royale & BNAPEX 2027 – September 3–5, 2027 in Calgary!
Labour Day Weekend at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.