

The Canadian Postal Archives

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The Canadian Postal Archives (CPA) was created on April 1, 1988, by the National Archives of Canada to acquire and preserve our philatelic heritage for all Canadians. The CPA makes its collections, such as the national stamp collection, available for research and consultation by the general public in conjunction with a philatelic reference library.

The collections include many kinds of records : the philatelic items, related original artwork, photographs, postal maps, broadsides, circulars, posters, private manuscripts and library material.

The Philatelic Collections. – The Canadian Postal Archives takes pride in a number of rarities among the vast holdings of its philatelic collections : examples are a mint marginal corner pair of the twelve-pence black issued by the Province of Canada in 1851, and a single-plate proof, on vertical laid paper, of the 1860 Dominion of Newfoundland one-shilling orange postage stamp. The most sought-after example in our holdings of a Canadian stamp with a design error is the 1959 commemorative issue of the St. Lawrence Seaway five-cent stamp with the inverted centre.

However, the distinguishing feature of the bulk of the philatelic collection is the many essays, proofs, die proofs, press proof sheets and other items that mark the various stages of stamp production. These offer the philatelic specialist the opportunity to research the development of a particular stamp issue from start to finish.

Augmenting the Canada Post Corporation materials are the specialized private and corporate collections. Outstanding examples are the H.E. Guertin and R.F. Webb collections of military mails ; the R. Del French collection of postal stationery ; the F.G. Stulberg collection of steamboat mails ; the Col. Robert H. Pratt collections of proofs and essays of Newfoundland.

Manuscripts and Papers. – In order to document the widespread hobby and study of philately in Canada, the Postal Archives has initiated the acquisition of private papers generated by collectors and individuals associated with philatelic activities over the years.

The Canadian Postal Archives' collections of papers complement the vast and rich holdings in other areas of the National Archives. The Archives holds the Post Office Department record group which represents thousands of linear feet of files generated by the Post Office Department ; and retains the British Post Office manuscript group for Canada and British North America.

The Library Collections. – The Library retains approximately 20,000 publications on all aspects of Canadian and international philately. An extensive collection of books from the Universal Postal Union includes special reports, conventions for postal rates, regulations on exchange of mail between countries, and so forth. In 1975, the postal archives began to photocopy and bind major stamp and cover collections formed by prominent philatelists. The collections of Messrs. Wellburn, Stulberg, Malott, Pratt, Bayley, Arnell, Smith, Des Rivières and others are now available for research in this form. They permit researchers to identify the provenance of the items they hold. They also provide an important visual record of the holdings and specialized research that was compiled by a particular collector over the years.

Consultation of Originals. – Researchers are welcome to visit the CPA in person during regular hours of operation, or they can obtain research assistance by writing or phoning. Researchers who are unable to visit the NA in person may obtain access to most of the publications through inter-institutional loan. The staff of the National Archives will try to answer your questions or will guide you to sources most likely to provide you with the information you require. For more information please contact :

National Archives of Canada, 395 Wellington St., Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0N3.