

by charles j.g. verge

## Canada Post's Special Envelope Series

Every year there are more than 500 suggestions for Canadian stamp issues submitted to the Post Office for consideration by individuals, politicians, associations, municipalities, and people from other countries. Clearly, it is impossible for Canada's Stamp Advisory Committee to satisfy everybody's request for a stamp. They try to be judicious in their selection, but they also have to be mindful of the number of stamps issued every year and the importance of the anniversary or event to be celebrated. In 1997, in part to relieve the pressure, Canada Post introduced a series of special envelopes to honor some of the events and people *not* commemorated by stamps. A complete listing of these envelopes can be found in the accompanying table.

The number of envelopes issued was fairly consistent at the beginning with 5,000 envelopes being the norm. However, there were three exceptions in the early days: 5,500 were issued for the Postal Museum; 27,000 for Canada Post's Heritage Club; and 7,000 for the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. The number of envelopes issued for the Tercentenary of the Ursulines in Three-Rivers has never been announced; however, it is likely that it was on the order of 5,000 like the others. There are other particularities with some of the envelopes but these will be explained as we go through the list. An example of virtually all these envelopes was distributed to philatelic correspondents on Canada Post's press list, and many others may have been given



### 2. National Postal Museum

out at the events where they were launched, rather than sold. Numbers of envelopes issued will be mentioned, with the description of the envelope below, when it is not 5,000. The cost of the envelopes was \$2.99 for the Pearson set; 75 cents for envelopes issued June 11–November 11, 1997; and \$1.50 for those on sale March 7, 1998–May 18, 2001. Since January 12, 2002, the price has been \$2 per envelope.

#### 1. 100th Anniversary of the Birth of Lester B. Pearson (April 23, 1997)

The first person to be commemorated on these envelopes was Canada's only Nobel Peace Prize winner and its former Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson (1897–1972) on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of his birth. Pearson was one of Canada's pre-eminent diplomats before becoming a politician. He was Ambassador to the United States (1945–46) during the development and ratification of the United Nations Charter. When, in 1956, Great Britain and France were opposed by the United States in the Suez Crisis, Pearson used his diplomatic skills to defuse the situation through the creation of a

United Nations peacekeeping force, for which efforts he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957. This is the only commemoration in the series so far that has warranted more than one envelope. Three were issued with different cachets: one for Pearson the diplomat, one for the Nobel Prize winner, and the last for the Prime Minister. Canada Post's press release indicated that there were to be 5,000 sets issued but when the envelopes appeared for sale in *Canada Stamp Details*, the magazine of the National Philatelic Centre, only 3,800 sets were said to be on sale. It is likely that the missing 1,200 were sold to the Liberal Party of Canada, which Pearson led from 1958 to 1968.

#### 2. National Postal Museum (June 11, 1997)

Fifty-five hundred envelopes were designed for the reopening of the National



1. 100th Anniversary  
of the Birth of Lester  
B. Pearson





**3. Festival of the Future**

Postal Museum, now known as the Canadian Postal Museum, in permanent quarters at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. One of the special exhibits on display for the opening was one on airmail, entitled *Winged Messenger*. As part of the celebrations, 500 of the envelopes were carried on a hydroplane that landed outside the museum. These envelopes bore a special cachet and were distributed to guests at the press conference prior to the reopening celebrations.

**3. Festival of the Future  
(August 15, 1997)**

The Festival is an interactive celebration of emerging information technology and provides a window on today's world. The first such Festival was held between August 15–September 1, 1997, and has since become an annual summer event coinciding with the Canadian National Exhibition held in Toronto.

**4. 50th Anniversary of the Discovery of Oil at Leduc, AB  
(August 25, 1997)**

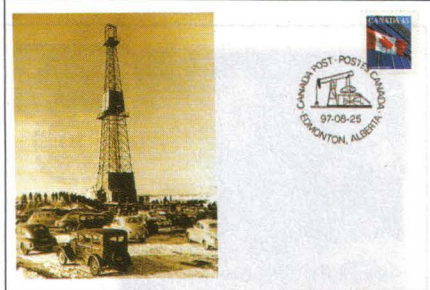
The envelope features a photograph of the Leduc No. 1 oil well that came into production on February 13, 1947. In its lifetime, the prolific Leduc field yielded 300 million barrels of crude.

**5. 300th Anniversary of the Ursulines  
(November 2, 1997)**

This envelope celebrates the three hundredth anniversary of the arrival of the Ursulines religious order in Three-Rivers to take up teaching and nursing duties for the community. At the end of the nineteenth century, the community blossomed and founded others like it in the Mauricie region and in Maine. This is the only envelope for which printing quantities were never published.

**6. 50th Anniversary of Canadian Participation in the 1948 Olympic Games  
(March 7, 1998)**

Canada made sporting history on the ice rink at St. Moritz, Switzerland in



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1948. One of the highlights of the Games was the gold medal-winning performance of Barbara Ann Scott, World and European champion. Pair skaters Suzanne Morrow and Wally Distelmeyer, won the bronze while skating in a blinding snowstorm. Canada's most surprising victory came in ice hockey when the RCAF Flyers, a pulled-together-at-the-last-minute entry, won the gold medal. They were unbeaten in eight games.

**7. Reopening of Canada House  
(May 13, 1998)**

After years of refurbishing Canada House, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II reopened the traditional home of the Canadian High Commissioner in London, England. The building was purchased in 1923 and had previously housed the Union Club for more than 100 years. This neo-Hellenic structure, built by Sir Robert Smirke, is situated on Trafalgar Square in the heart of London.

**8. 90th Anniversary of The Royal Canadian Mint  
(June 22, 1998)**

This is the only commemorative envelope *never* to be put on sale through the National Philatelic Centre in Antigonish. It is likely that the Mint itself bought up most of them for distribution to its employees and clients. The Mint building was inaugurated on January 2, 1908, by the then Governor General of Canada, The Earl Grey, when he struck the first coins ever produced in Canada. The Mint was a subsidiary of the British Royal Mint until 1931 when control passed to the Government of Canada.

**9. 80th Anniversary of The Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and the 100th Anniversary of Free Mailing for the Blind  
(October 29, 1998)**

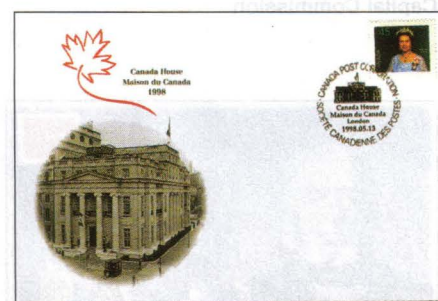
Although the envelope does not mention it, a Canada Post press release confirms that the envelope was issued mainly to commemorate the granting of



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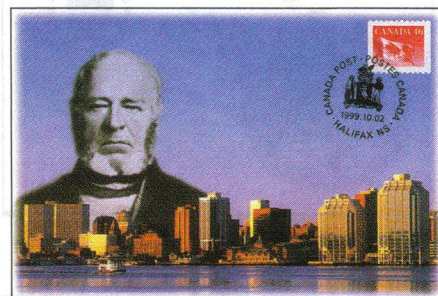




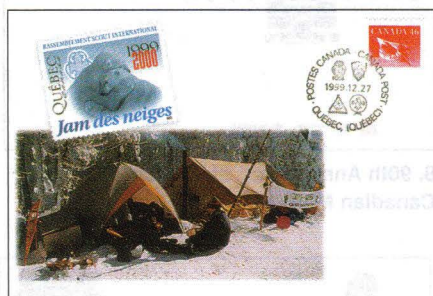
10. 300th Anniversary of the Death of Frontenac



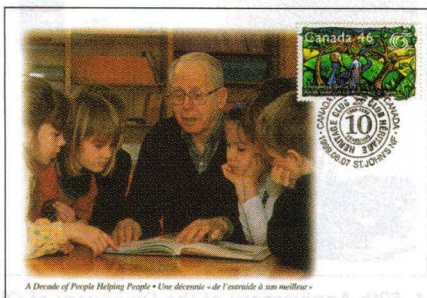
13. 100th Anniversary of the National Capital Commission



14. 250th Anniversary of the Founding of Halifax



15. "Jam des Neiges"



11. 10th Anniversary of Canada Post's Heritage Club

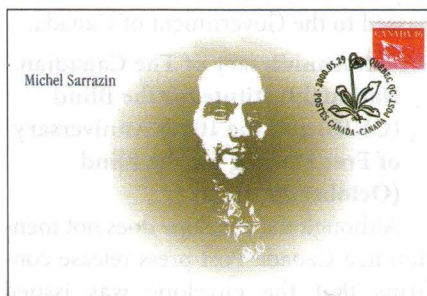
free mailing for materials for the blind in 1898. The envelope shows Dr. Euclid Herie, president of the CNIB, and is franked by the stamp issued for the 100th anniversary of Imperial Penny Postage. Sir William Mulock, the Postmaster General who granted the right of free mailing, is shown on the stamp. What surprises me is that neither the stamp nor the special envelope have any Braille on them.

#### 10. 300th Anniversary of the Death of Frontenac (November 19, 1998)

Louis de Buade, Comte de Frontenac (1620–1698) served as colonial governor of New France for almost two decades during the latter part of the seventeenth century. Frontenac expanded France's territorial holdings by establishing a network of forts and trading posts on the Great Lakes. He was frequently embroiled in clashes with the American colonies. His successful defense of Quebec in 1690 against Sir William Phipps, who was besieging the city in reprisal for raids on frontier settlements in New England and New York, is legendary. Frontenac's defiant refusal to surrender, "I have no reply ... other than from the mouths of my cannon and muskets," has become part of Canadian history lore.

#### 11. 10th Anniversary of Canada Post's Heritage Club (June 7, 1999)

The Heritage Club's motto is "People Helping People." In addition to being a



16. Michel Sarrazin



12. 75th Anniversary of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool

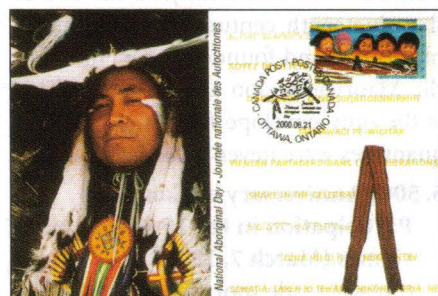
social club for retired or current employees of Canada Post having twenty-five or more years of service, the group works to alleviate illiteracy, poverty, and illness. There are more than 25,000 active members in thirty-one chapters across the country. The large number of envelopes (27,000) produced is due to the fact that each one of the members of the club received a copy at the individual annual dinners of the chapters.

#### 12. 75th Anniversary of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool (June 24, 1999):

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool has more than 70,000 farmer members and more than 3,000 employees. Founded in 1924, it represents the collective interests of the farmers in Western Canada, and is Canada's largest publicly traded agribusiness cooperative. Seven thousand envelopes were issued for this anniversary.

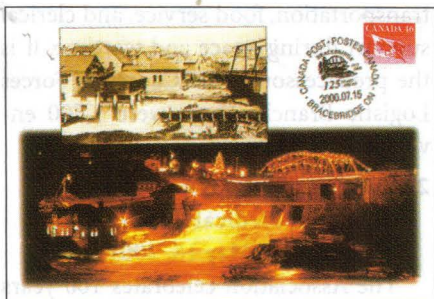
#### 13. 100th Anniversary of the National Capital Commission (June 30, 1999):

Unlike the District of Columbia, Canada's national capital region is not a separate geographic or political entity. Its territory is spread on both sides of the banks of the Ottawa River in the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec. In 1899 Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier realized that a federal agency was required for long-range planning to beautify and improve the capital. His



17. National Aboriginal Day





**18. 125th Anniversary of the Town of Bracebridge**

government created the Ottawa Improvement Commission. It became the National Capital Commission in 1958, having been named the Federal District Commission in the 1920s.

**14. 250th Anniversary of the Founding of Halifax (October 2, 1999)**

It had been Canada Post's practice in the past to commemorate anniversaries of Provincial capitals. It abandoned this in 1999. Halifax, the capital of Nova Scotia, got a special envelope instead. It seems to be a backhanded commemoration of the event since the most prominent feature of the envelope is the portrait of Alexander Keith. Keith was a legendary brew master and businessman who played an integral part in the development of Halifax. He served on the first city council in 1841 as alderman and then was mayor for three terms.

**15. "Jam des Neiges" (December 27, 1999)**

This envelope was issued for a huge gathering of Scouts held on the Plains of Abraham in Quebec City from December 27, 1999, to January 5, 2000. This first international jamboree to be held in winter included camping out in the cold weather and snow, themed activities, and winter sports. It was a new adventure for many Scouts from warmer climates. In



**19. 10th Anniversary of the Canada-U.S. Fulbright Program**

fact, many of them came completely unprepared for the weather and had to be provided with a winter survival kit. The participants of the Jamboree bought up most of the envelopes since scouting is such a popular stamp collecting area. Very few were available for sale through the National Philatelic Centre, and those that were were sold out a few days after the envelope was issued.

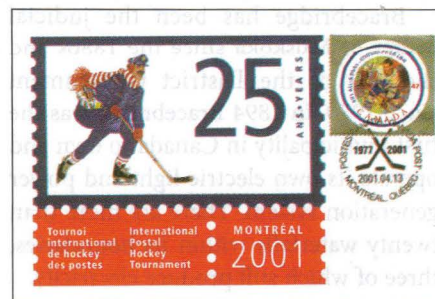
**16. Michel Sarrazin (May 29, 2000)**

Sarrazin was Canada's first doctor and scientist. He arrived in New France in 1685 as a marine surgeon. He performed what is believed to be the first mastectomy in Canada in 1700. "The King's Doctor" was an inveterate researcher, seeking out unknown plants and animals. He was the first "Canadian" to become a member of the prestigious Royal Science Academy in Paris.

**17. National Aboriginal Day (June 21, 2000)**

On June 13, 1996, June 21 was officially declared National Aboriginal Day the conclusion of a campaign for its proclamation that began in 1982. The day is a time to celebrate the rich cultural diversity, achievements and contributions of Canada's first peoples. Seven thousand envelopes were produced.

**18. 125th Anniversary of the Town of Bracebridge (July 15, 2000)**



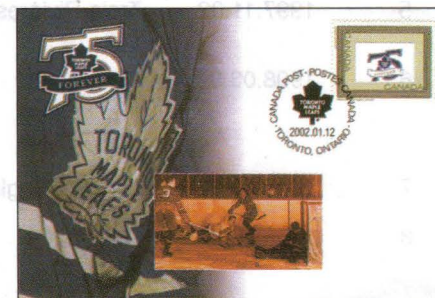
**20. 25th International Postal Hockey Tournament**



**21. 100th Anniversary of The Royal Canadian Army Service Corps**



**22. 100th Anniversary of The Canadian Medical Protective Association**



**23. 75th Anniversary of the Toronto Maple Leafs**

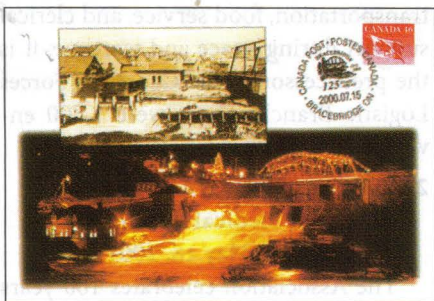


**24. 175th Anniversary of the City of Guelph**



**25. Le Courier de Saint-Hyacinthe**





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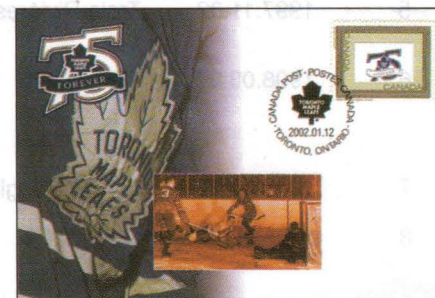
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Bracebridge has been the judicial center of Muskoka since the 1880s and the seat of the District Government since 1970. In 1894 Bracebridge was the first municipality in Canada to own and operate its own electric light and power generation system. There are more than twenty waterfalls within its boundaries, three of which still produce electricity.

#### 19. 10th Anniversary of the Canada-U.S. Fulbright Program (September 29, 2000):

The initiative is part of the United States' renowned Fulbright Educational Exchange Program. Canada-U.S. Fulbright Fellows and scholars study Canada, the United States, and their bilateral relations with a goal of infusing new perspectives and energy in their respective domestic affairs and international relations.

#### 20. 25th International Postal Hockey Tournament (April 13, 2001)

At the outset, this annual event,

begun in Sudbury, Ontario, was to encourage friendship and fellowship among Canada's postal employees. It now draws dozens of teams from across North America and raises large amounts of money for charity. Twelve thousand envelopes were issued, but they are probably the most sought after of the commemorative envelopes. The reason is that they were franked with any one of the six NHL All-Stars stamps issued in 2001. Therefore only 2,000 sets are possible, although fewer exist, as individual envelopes were given to some participants or sold to customers of the National Philatelic Centre. Canada Post's philatelic magazine, *Details*, never mentioned that the envelopes were franked with six different stamps.

#### 21. 100th Anniversary of The Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (May 3, 2001)

The Corps was formed in 1901 to provide the army with combat supplies,

transportation, food service, and clerical support during peace and wartime. It is the predecessor of the Canadian Forces Logistic Branch. There were 7,500 envelopes issued on this occasion.

#### 22. 100th Anniversary of The Canadian Medical Protective Association (May 18, 2001)

The Association celebrates 100 years of providing service for physicians by physicians as a non-profit mutual defense organization to protect their professional integrity. Ten thousand envelopes were prepared.

#### 23. 75th Anniversary of the Toronto Maple Leafs (January 12, 2001)

The team won its first Stanley Cup, emblematic of hockey supremacy, in its inaugural season. It was called the Arenas initially, and then the St. Patricks. It was not until 1927 that the team changed to its now-famous name and its blue-and-white uniform. Thirty thousand envelopes were printed and

## Canada's Special Commemorative Envelopes

Envelope Number	Date of Issue	Place of Issue	Person/Event	Price	Number prepared	Date Removed from Sale or Sold Out
1	1997.04.23	Ottawa, ON	100th Anniversary of the Birth of Lester B. Pearson (set of 3 different cachets)	\$2.99	15,000 (5,000 sets)	July–Aug. 1997
2	1997.06.11	Hull, QC	Opening of the National Postal Museum	\$.75	5,500	Aug.–Sept. 1999
3	1997.08.15	Toronto, ON	Festival of the Future	\$.75	5,000	July–Aug. 1998
4	1997.08.25	Edmonton, AB	50th Anniversary of the Discovery of Oil in Leduc, AB	\$.75	5,000	Aug.–Sept. 1999
5	1997.11.02	Trois-Rivières, QC	300th Anniversary of The Ursulines of Three Rivers	\$.75	5,000?	Aug.–Sept. 1999
6	1998.03.07	Ottawa, ON	50th Anniversary of the Canadian Participation in the 1948 Olympic Games	\$1.50	5,000	July–Aug. 1998
7	1998.05.13	London, England	Re-opening of Canada House	\$1.50	5,000	March–April 1999
8	1998.06.22	Ottawa, ON	90th Anniversary of The Royal Canadian Mint	\$1.50	5,000	Date unknown Never on sale at the National Philatelic Centre
9	1998.10.29	Toronto, ON	80th Anniversary of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and the 100th Anniversary of Free Mailing for the Blind	\$1.50	5,000	April–June 2000
10	1998.11.19	Quebec, QC	300th Anniversary of the Death of Frontenac	\$1.50	5,000	April–June 2000
11	1999.06.07	St. John's, NF	10th Anniversary of Canada Post's Heritage Club	\$1.50	27,000	Aug.–Sept. 1999



franked. Twenty thousand were handed out to the fans at a Maple Leafs hockey game and the remainder were available for sale from the National Philatelic Centre.

#### 24. 175th Anniversary of the City of Guelph (April 23, 2002)

Guelph is one of the first planned towns in Canada. It was founded by John Galt and named in honor of the British Royal Family, whose surname was Guelph. Its nickname is the "Royal City" and it is famous as the birthplace of opera singer Edward Johnson and of Colonel John McRae, the soldier-poet who wrote "In Flanders Fields." Fourteen thousand envelopes were produced, with several hundreds given out to guest attending the City of Guelph's Gala Birthday black tie affair.

#### 25. Le Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe (May 1, 2002)

The first edition of *Le Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe* was sold February 24,

1853. This French-language newspaper has been proclaimed Canada's weekly-of-the-year on more than one occasion. Twelve thousand envelopes were printed.

In all, twenty-five different individuals or events have been commemorated on thirty-two different, collectible special envelopes. Of these, five are still available for sale at time of writing. They are numbers 20, and 22–25. Today, the most difficult to acquire would probably be a complete set (six envelopes) of the International Postal Hockey Tournament (20); the three envelopes in the Pearson set (1), the National Postal Museum with the special flight cachet (2); the 1948 Olympic Games (6); Royal Canadian Mint (8); and the "Jam des Neiges" (15). The latter three were sold out within days or weeks of issue. As these are official souvenir products of Canada Post, they should be acceptable

in exhibits of thematics, particularly for their illustrated cancels. Their souvenir status and the fact that they have not gone through the mail perhaps renders them less desirable for international exhibiting, but sometimes this is the only way to illustrate your thematic story. Canada Post has made an effort to match the stamp to the event when such a stamp existed and was available from stock. Nevertheless, the envelopes' small print numbers makes finding them a challenge. Good hunting!

One final note: Canada Post illustrates and talks about all these envelopes in its *Details* magazine, but frequently shows only a proposed design for the envelopes rather than the final product. It would be interesting to study both and speculate on why the design changed.

Envelope Number	Date of Issue	Place of Issue	Person/Event	Price	Number prepared	Date Removed from Sale or Sold Out
12	1999.06.24	Regina, SK	75th Anniversary of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool	\$1.50	7,000	Jan.–Feb. 2000
13	1999.06.30	Ottawa, ON	100th Anniversary of the National Capital Commission	\$1.50	5,000	Jan.–Feb. 2000
14	1999.10.02	Halifax, NS	250th Anniversary of the Founding of Halifax	\$1.50	5,000	Jan.–Feb. 2000
15	1999.12.27	Quebec, QC	Jam des Neiges	\$1.50	5,000	Jan.–Feb. 2000
16	2000.05.29	Quebec, QC	Michel Sarrazin	\$1.50	5,000	Jan.–March 2001
17	2000.06.21	Ottawa, ON	National Aboriginal Day	\$1.50	7,000	April–June 2001
18	2000.07.15	Bracebridge, ON	15th Anniversary of Bracebridge	\$1.50	5,000	Jan.–March 2001
19	2000.09.29	Ottawa, ON	10th Anniversary of the Canada-US Fulbright Program	\$1.50	5,000	Oct.–Dec. 2001
20	2001.04.13	Montreal, QC	25th International postal Hockey Tournament (all the envelopes in the set have the same cachet but are franked with six different 2001 NHL All-Stars stamps)	\$1.50	12,000 (2,000 sets)	Still on sale (April 15, 2002)
21	2001.05.03	Borden, ON	100th Anniversary of The Royal Army Service Corps	\$1.50	7,500	Jan.–March 2002
22	2002.05.08	Ottawa, ON	100th Anniversary of the Canadian Medical Protective Association	\$1.50	10,000	Still on sale (April 15, 2002)
23	2002.01.12	Toronto, ON	75th Anniversary of the Toronto Maple Leafs	\$2.00	30,000	Still on sale (April 15, 2002)
24	2002.04.23	Guelph, ON	175th Anniversary of Guelph	\$2.00	14,000	Still on sale (April 15, 2002)
25	2002.05.01	Saint-Hyacinthe, QC	Le Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe	\$2.00	12,000	Still on sale (April 15, 2002)