

# A Canadian postal stationery primer

▼ CHARLES J.G. VERGE

Nine years after the Province of Canada issued its first stamp in 1851, Canadian postal stationery made its appearance. The first issues were envelopes embossed with the image of Queen Victoria, manufactured in 1860 by George F. Nesbitt & Co. of New York. Two values were created: 5¢ red and 10¢ dark brown, on cream and white

diagonally laid paper with batonne lines about 18 millimeters apart. The envelopes were watermarked Ca/POD. An example is shown in Figure 1. In 1865, the 5¢ envelope was reissued with a less rounded flap. Forgeries of the stamps are known in cut square formats (where the imprinted stamp is saved within a square section of paper cut from the envelope).

With the exception of Newfoundland, the other stamp-issuing provinces (British

Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Vancouver Island) making up the Canadian Confederation never issued postal stationery items.

The first Dominion of Canada envelope issues were not introduced until 1877, and they resembled the Nesbitt envelopes, even being printed on the same type of paper. The values were 1¢ blue and 3¢ red, printed by the British American Bank Note Co., Ltd. (BABN). The indicia (imprinted postage stamp designs) on the envelopes were larger in size than those of the Nesbitt envelopes.

Envelopes are the only postal stationery items still regularly produced by Canada Post. Until 1931 the indicia were always embossed.

In 1933, the Department of Public Printing and Stationery — which had taken over the printing of the envelopes from BABN in 1898 — started issuing envelopes with indicia that more or less matched the definitive stamp issue current at the time; the first being the Medallion issue of 1933. Three values — 1¢ green, 2¢ brown and 3¢ red — were each printed in two sizes: No. 8 (165mm x 99mm) and No. 10 (241mm x 105mm).

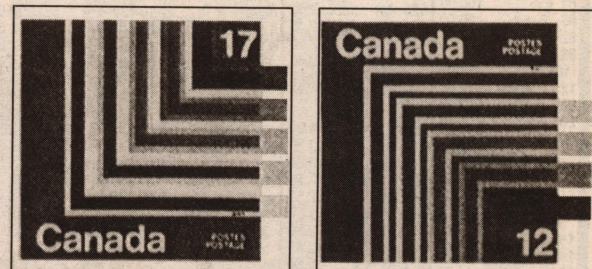


Figure 2. The Fisher design indicia used on both envelopes and postal cards from 1975 to 1979.

These two distinct envelope sizes were introduced in 1923 and are still the only two sizes of envelope produced by Canada Post today.

Canada Post abandoned copying the current definitive issue images in 1975 and introduced distinctive designs for its postal stationery. The



Figure 1. A Province of Canada Nesbitt 10¢ postal stationery envelope used in 1868 with additional Dominion of Canada first-issue stamps to pay the registered Canadian packet rate to Ireland. Courtesy of the Brigham Collection.

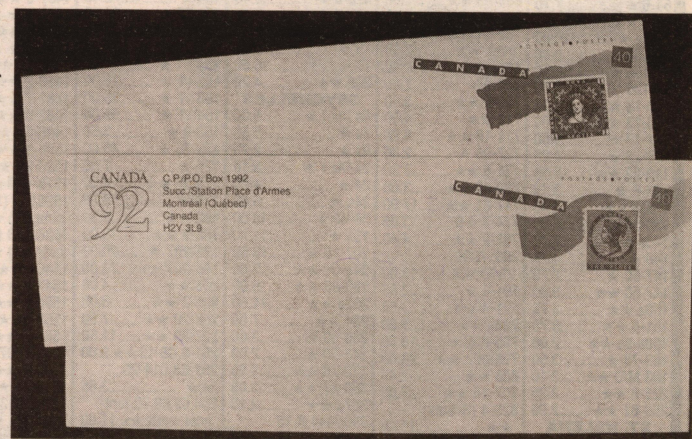


Figure 3. Two examples of the colonial postage series of envelopes with one bearing the private-to-order return address of Canada 92, the World Philatelic Youth Exhibition.

Fisher issue, consisting of angled lines (Figure 2), was followed by a series of Modes of Transportation envelopes issued from 1982 to 1989, a Postal Scales series (1990-91), a Colonial Postage issue series (1991-92, shown in Figure 3), a Provincial Capitals series (1992-95), and the current Birds of Canada series that started in 1996.

A short series of four envelopes, matching the Scenic Highways commemoratives of 1997, was issued on a trial basis that year to see if there was a market for window envelopes.

It is interesting to note that Canada has produced only one registered mail envelope, in 1927 (Figure 4). The 10¢ King George V indicium on the envelope paid only the registration fee. Postage was additional and had to be paid in added stamps. The No. 8-size envelope was modeled on those of Great Britain and was printed on a linen-lined envelope by McCorquodale & Co., Ltd.

Official, election, private-to-order and special events envelopes were issued in many different shapes and sizes after they were allowed in 1894. The vastness of the subject is beyond the scope of this article and may be the subject of another later on.

The Post Office Department of the new Dominion of Canada introduced postal cards earlier than envelopes. The 1¢ blue Queen Victoria postal card issued in 1871 comes in

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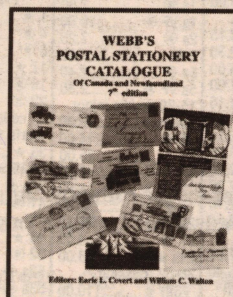
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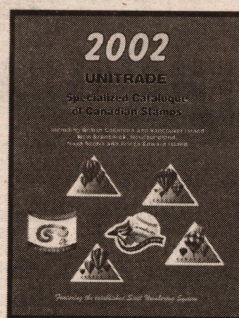


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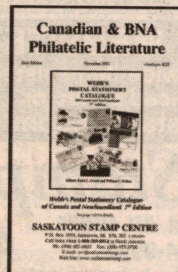
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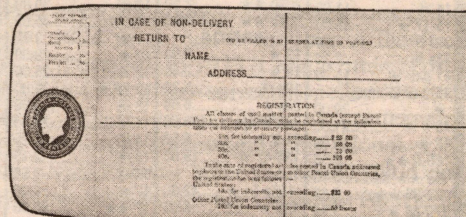


Figure 4. Canada's only registered postal stationery envelope. The 10¢ imprinted stamp paid the registration fee only; additional stamps were added to pay postage.



Figure 5. Essay for Canada's first commemorative postal card issued in 1897 for Queen Victoria's 60th year on the throne. Ex-Horace W. Harrison.

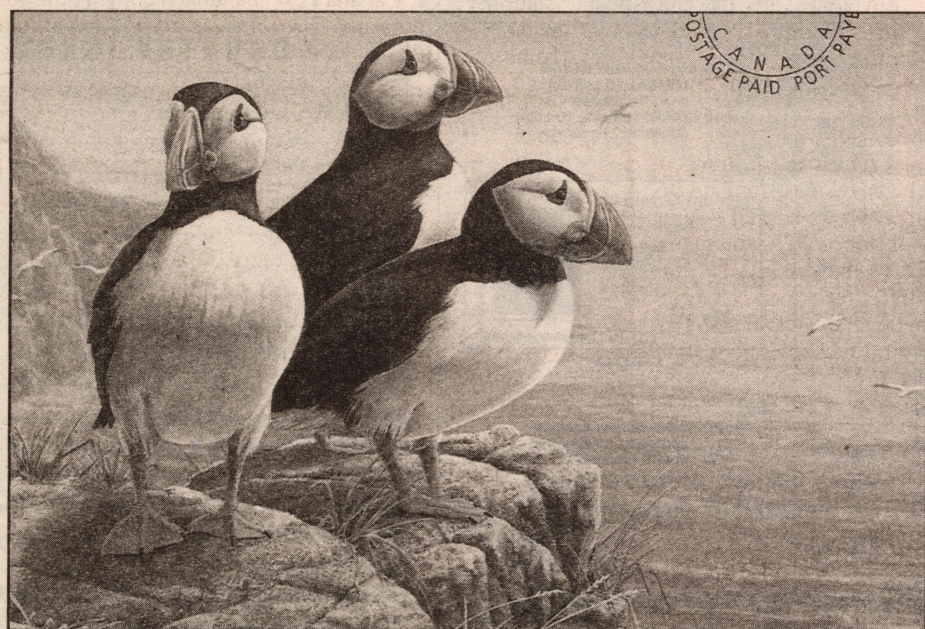


Figure 6. Front and reverse of special nondenominated postal cards for worldwide distribution that Canada Post started to issue in 1994.

many shades and some examples can be found with portions of the plate numbers used to print the cards. According to *Webb's Postal Stationery Catalogue of Canada and Newfoundland* (7th Edition), plate numbers 4, 11, 13, 18, 22 and 23 are recorded.

From 1871 until 1912, postal cards were only issued in two denominations: a 1¢ card for domestic purposes and a 2¢ card for mailings to the United Kingdom in 1877 and to UPU countries starting in 1879. Canada's first commemorative postal card was issued in 1897 for Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee (the 60th anniversary of her reign). The 1¢ Jubilee stamp was used on the card but printed in black rather than the stamp's original orange color (Figure 5).

From 1897 onward, postal cards were produced with indicia similar to the definitive series stamps. The later design change came at the same time as the change for envelopes

(1975). Only the Fisher design and the modes of transportation series were used for the postal cards. In 1986, Canada Post abandoned the production of regular issue postal cards, citing a lack of interest in them.

Postal cards reappeared in 1994, but only for special purposes and usually to accompany a commemorative issue. In addition, the cards were nondenominated. They bear the words "postage paid," "port payé" and "For posting in Canada and delivery worldwide." They are normally sold at a premium over postage value (Figure 6).

Also beyond the scope of this article are private-to-order postal cards. Many of these are prized acquisitions for thematicists because they are imprinted with varied advertising information or natural scenes and cityscapes.

In Fall 1997, Canada Post entered into a joint venture with the Postcard Factory —



Figure 7. One of the more than 300 postal cards produced by the Postcard Factory in cooperation with Canada Post.

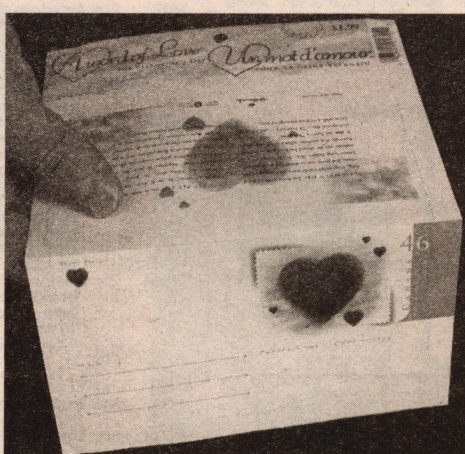


Figure 8. The first Canadian letter card to be issued in more than 100 years. The trial issue for Valentine's Day 2000 was not very successful.

Canada's leading postcard printer — to give postal cards a wider distribution. An initial 25 different design cards were produced and distributed by the Postcard Factory to stores where postcards are sold, and by Canada Post to its more than 7,000 post offices and outlets. The cards are still being produced, and it is highly likely that there are now more than 300 different collectible types (Figure 7).

The indicia of the post bands and wrappers of Canada followed very closely those of the postal cards. A dark blue 1¢ wrapper with Queen Victoria design was first introduced in 1875. There are 26 different wrappers, some having minor varieties and others being precanceled. The 1962 Cameo definitive stamp design was the last to be used on a wrapper. They were discontinued in the mid-1960s. There are no known private-to-order wrappers.

Letter cards had an even shorter life, being first seen in 1893 and disappearing at the turn of the 20th century. On Jan. 17, 2000, Canada Post issued a private-to-order letter card jointly with Hallmark Cards to celebrate

Valentine's Day. The cards sold for \$1.99 (about \$1.40 in U.S. funds) and the venture was not successful. Two distinct shades are known (Figure 8).

The last major postal stationery item in Canada is the aerogram or air letter sheet. They first appeared for general use in 1947, following upon the successful military air letter sheets of World War II. In addition to their light weight, they were convenient for the many immigrants coming to Canada who wanted to write home to friends and relatives. By 2000, this need no longer existed at a level where producing the air letters was a financially viable proposition, and they were dropped.

The portrait of King George VI appeared on the 10¢ blue stamp (for mail to United Kingdom and armed forces) and 15¢ carmine stamp (for mail to other destinations) imprinted on the first air letter sheets. From 1949 to 1971 airplanes formed the major part of the indicium's design, with postage values ranging from 10¢ to 15¢. From 1972 until their demise, air letter indicia showed a variety of elements such as a maple leaf, flowers, different sky pictures, planes, balloons, kites; and on the last one, a harlequin duck. The 1973 floral series of 12 air letters was interesting because it was the first and only time that both external (to other countries) and internal (domestic) air letters were produced. The internal issues were called domestogrammes and had the same floral designs as the air letters (aerograms). The series was reissued in 1974 to correct a spelling in the French of "Postage." In 1973 it was written "Poste," and in 1974 it was correctly spelled "Postes."

There are no private-to-order air letter sheets or domestogrammes. However, two private-to-order letter sheets do exist. One issued in 1893-95 for the Canadian Pacific Railway and another around 1975 for the Contagious Diseases Division of the Quebec Government's Ministry of Social Services bearing as the indicium the 8¢ Queen Elizabeth stamp from the 1967-73 Centennial definitive series.