

A postage stamp journey through Canada's national parks

▼ CHARLES J.G. VERGE

Canada is the second largest country in the world, with 90 percent of its population living within 200 miles of the United States border. It is not surprising, then, that as early as 1885 the Canadian government chose to establish national parks in the vast empty hinterland. Since the creation that year of Banff National Park in the Rocky Mountains of Alberta, 38 other national parks have been set aside to protect natural beauty and wildlife and offer a wide range of outdoor activities.

Canada's national parks were featured in a high-value definitive stamp series issued by Canada Post from 1979 to 1986. Before 1979, Canada had issued only two stamps depicting scenes from national parks. The first, a 10¢

stamp showing Mount Hurd in British Columbia's Yoho National Park (Scott 155), is part of the 1928-29 Scroll definitive series. The stamp is shown at left in Figure 1.

The second was a \$1 stamp issued in 1930 as the highest value in the Arch definitive series (Scott 177). It depicts Mount Edith Cavell in Jasper National Park, situated along Alberta's southwestern border. The stamp is shown at right in Figure 1.

The 1979-86 National Parks stamp series is remarkable not only for its large number of major varieties but also for the fact that a \$5 stamp made its appearance. It had been 86 years since the only previous \$5 stamp had been issued, the highest value of the Queen Victoria Jubilee issue of 1897 (Scott 65). In addition, the Parks series was current during a time of major rate changes; additional values in the series had been planned but were never



Figure 1. The first Canadian stamp to show a national park scene was the 10¢ Mount Hurd stamp of 1928, Scott 155, pictured at left. The \$1 Mount Edith Cavell stamp of 1930 followed, featuring the peak from Jasper National Park. Scott 177 is shown at right.



Figure 2. The first issue of the 1979-86 National Park definitive series was the \$1 Fundy National Park stamp, Scott 726, issued Jan. 24, 1979.

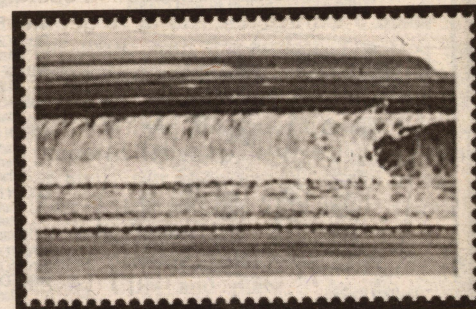


Figure 3. The \$1 Fundy National Park stamp was discovered with the black inscription omitted. This single stamp is from a full error pane of 50.

issued. All the stamps in the series are based on paintings commissioned by Canada Post of areas of the selected parks.

The first stamp in the set was the \$1 Fundy National Park stamp (Scott 726) designed by Ron Bolt. Fundy National Park is found along Chignecto Bay in the eastern province of New Brunswick. The stamp, shown in Figure 2, was issued Jan. 24, 1979. Two plates were used to print the issue. While plate 1 stamps were marked with a nearly invisible fluorescent tagging compound, the stamps from plate 2, released March 4, 1981, were untagged. The inscriptions on the stamps are steel-engraved and, typical of many stamps in the series, the inscriptions can be found slightly displaced or dramatically moved. On the Fundy National Park stamp, the "\$1" is known moved from the left of the stamp to the right.

Three significant varieties exist for this stamp. Two hundred error stamps are recorded

without the black inscriptions (Figure 3); a "kiss print" exists that doubles the inscription (the stamp paper was lightly "kissed" with a second impression); and an inverted inscription (also kiss print) is found. It is strongly recommended that you get a certificate of authenticity for any of the significant varieties in this set.

The Alan Collier-designed \$2 Kluane National Park stamp (Scott 727, shown in Figure 4) was issued April 27, 1979, just a few months after the Fundy National Park stamp. Four plates were produced, and all the stamps created were untagged. Plate 1 and plate 2 (Feb. 4, 1981) are on Abitibi paper, plate 3 (Dec. 14, 1984) is on Clark paper, and plate 4 (March 15, 1985) is on Harrison paper. Some 500 to 600 stamps are thought to exist without the silver inscriptions. The kiss-print doubled inscription variety exists on this stamp, as well as the doubling of the word Kluane in

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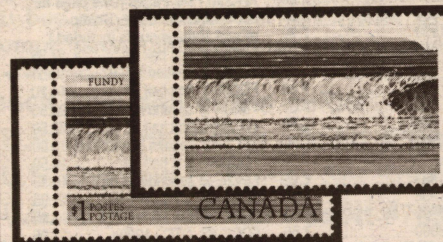


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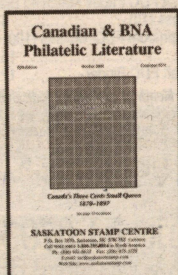
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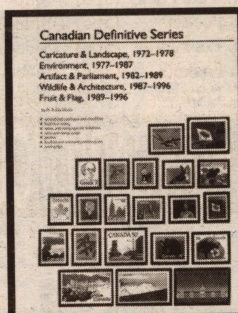
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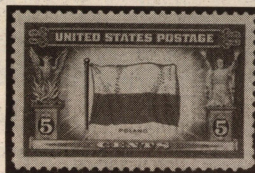
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Figure 4. Kluane National Park occupies the entire southwest corner of the Yukon and includes Canada's highest peak: Mount Logan. The \$2 stamp, Scott 727, was issued April 27, 1979.

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black. These doubling varieties are not found together on the same stamps.

Kluane National Park is in the remote southwest corner of the Yukon Territory and is home to Mount Logan, Canada's highest peak.

Although Canada's registration fee — which had been \$1.50 since 1979 — went up to \$1.85 on Jan. 18, 1982, a \$1.50 stamp featuring southern Alberta's Waterton Lakes National Park (Scott 935) had been prepared, and it was decided to issue it anyway for general postage use. It was released June 18, 1982. Only one variety has been recorded for this stamp, with 25 stamps (one pane) missing the black inscription color. Brent Laycock and William Tibbles designed the stamp, which is one of two stamps in the series, and the first Canadian definitive since 1950, printed without the words "Postes-Postage" in the design. The other is the \$5 Point Pelee National Park stamp. Figure 5 shows the issued \$1.50 stamp, along with another design by Laycock that did not appear on the final issue.

With postage rates continuing to rise, Canada Post decided the time had come to issue a \$5 stamp. Point Pelee National Park, southeast of Windsor, Ontario, was chosen as the subject of the stamp (Scott 937, Figure 6) designed by Wayne Terry and William Tibbles. The Canadian Bank Note Co. (CBN) used three plates and three papers to print the stamp. Plate 1 (Jan. 10, 1983) was printed on Abitibi paper, plate 2 (Dec. 14, 1984) on coated Clark paper, and plate 3 (Aug. 30, 1985) on

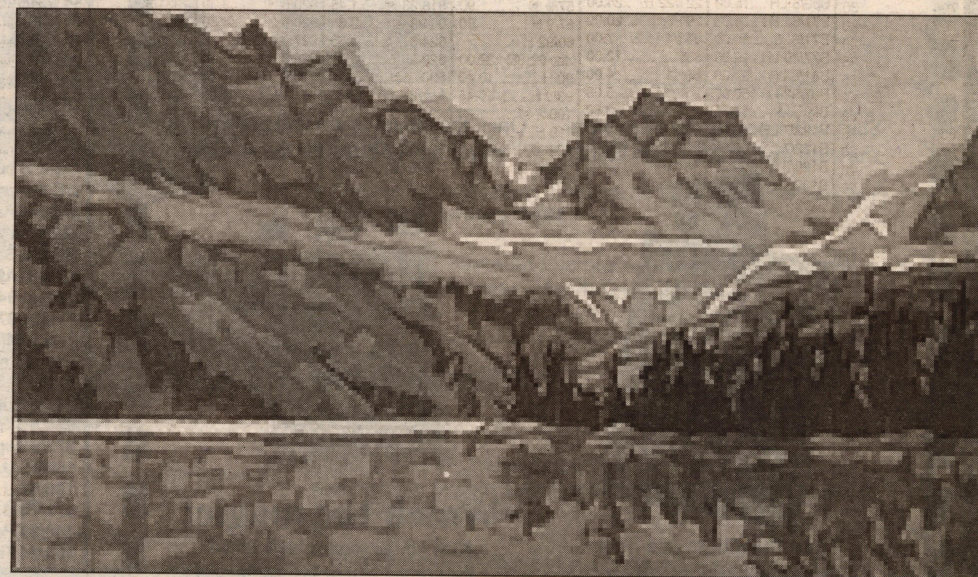


Figure 5. The \$1.50 Waterton Lakes National Park stamp of 1982 (Scott 935, top left). The painting below it by Brent Laycock, which was not used for the final design, is one of the many illustrations commissioned for the series by Canada Post (National Archives of Canada, POS-3604).

Harrison and Sons paper. The stamp has no recorded constant varieties.

In 1984 Canada Post decided to issue \$1, \$2 and \$5 National Parks stamps with new designs. Collectors and the general public were upset at this decision but Canada Post went ahead with the project. The first new stamp issued was the \$1, with a design featuring British Columbia's Glacier National Park (Scott 934). For this stamp Canada Post used a proposed design by Laycock for a \$3 stamp that had never been issued, shown at top in Figure 7. The finished \$1 stamp is shown at bottom in Figure 7.

Three printing plates were used: the first two by CBN and plate 3 by the British American Bank Note Co. (BABN) when it took over the contract to print the high-value definitives. Plate 1 was printed on coated Clark paper and issued Aug. 15, 1984, plate 2 was printed on Harrison and Sons uncoated paper (July 12, 1985), and Plate 3 on Harrison and Sons coated paper (Sept. 26, 1986).



Figure 6. The \$5 Point Pelee National Park stamp of 1983 (Scott 937). The park includes Canada's southernmost point on the shores of Lake Erie, and is an excellent bird watching venue.

Varieties are known for plates 1 and 2. The plate 1 varieties are missing blue inscriptions and imperforate stamps; one imperforate pane of 25 is recorded. Although it has been reported that 12 pairs exist, the pane was divided into four corner blocks, four pairs and a single marginal stamp. One collector now trying to put the error pane back together has managed to obtain more than half the stamps. Double inscriptions, similar to the ones mentioned previously for other stamps, are found on some \$1 stamps from plate 3.

Two plates were used to print the new \$2 stamp (Scott 936) showing Banff National Park, Canada's oldest (Figure 8), and two papers were used by the two printers. CBN used Plate 1 with uncoated Harrison and Sons paper (June 21, 1985), while the BABN used Plate 2 to print the stamps on Harrison and Sons coated paper (Oct. 29, 1986). Only the double inscription variety can be found on this stamp, and only on the CBN printing.

The last stamp issued in the series was the \$5 value depicting La Mauricie National Park

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Figure 7. Artwork by Brent Laycock for a proposed \$3 Glacier National Park stamp (top; National Archives of Canada, e9303) was eventually adapted for a \$1 stamp issued in 1984 (Scott 934, bottom).

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in Quebec's interior (Scott 1084, Figure 9). The two printers shared the one plate to print this stamp. This time CBN (March 14, 1986) and BABN (June 5, 1987) used the same Harrison and Sons paper. The CBN printing has the only variety, a pane of 25 with missing inscriptions. Two single used stamps showing the same variety are recorded.

Finally, Canada Post had planned at least two other stamps in this series. The artworks for these are in different stages of production. The first, and most advanced, is a proposed \$2.50

stamp showing Gros Morne National Park in Newfoundland (Figure 10). The second, which had not reached any production stage, was a painting commissioned from Robert Genn of a typical landscape of Pacific Rim National Park (Figure 11) on Vancouver Island.

Figure 12 shows the only other national park to be shown on a Canadian stamp. Issued



Figure 8. Banff National Park, Canada's oldest, is featured on a \$2 stamp (Scott 936) issued in 1985, 100 years after the park officially opened.



Figure 9. The \$5 La Mauricie National Park stamp of 1986 (Scott 1084). The park was created in 1970 to preserve a part of the Canadian Shield (also known as the Laurentian Plateau).

Aug. 20, 1991, in the Heritage Rivers series, the 40¢ stamp pictures a scene from Nahanni National Park Reserve of the Northwest

Territories (Scott 1321). The stamp is found twice in a booklet of 10 featuring five different heritage rivers.

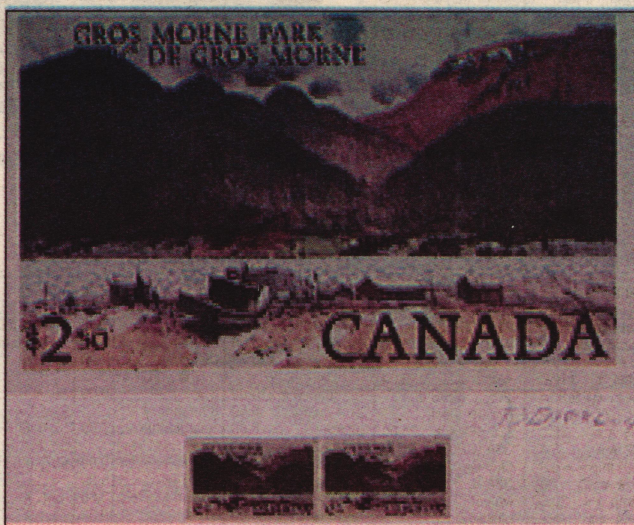


Figure 10. Artwork for the unissued \$2.50 Gros Morne National Park stamp: a montage, essay and photomontage on a panel (National Archives of Canada, e9306).

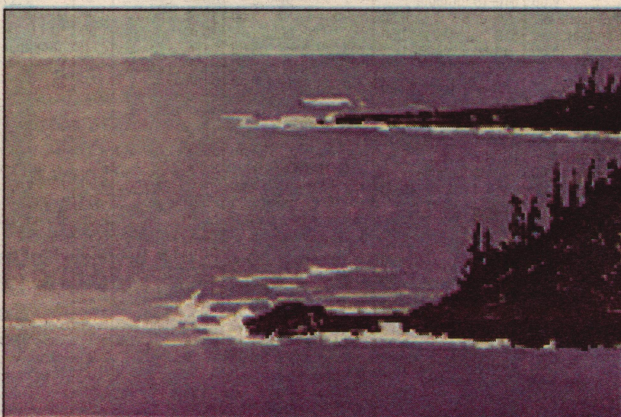


Figure 11. Oil on canvas painting by Robert Genn for Pacific Rim National Park stamp that was proposed but never issued.



Figure 12. The 40¢ South Nahanni stamp of 1991 is the most recent Canadian stamp to feature a national park.

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