

Canada and Newfoundland stamps pay tribute to 1939 royal visit

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In the summer of 1939, on the eve of World War II, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, later known as Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, paid a visit to Canada, the United States and Newfoundland. This was the first visit by a reigning British monarch to the New World.

On May 15, 1939, Canada issued three stamps of 1¢, 2¢ and 3¢ denominations to commemorate the visit (Scott 246-248). Newfoundland issued a single 5¢ stamp June 17 (Scott 249). The 5¢ stamp was surcharged with 2¢ and 4¢ denominations November 20, 1939 (Scott 250-251). The Royal Visit stamps are shown in Figure 1.

The Canadian stamps were the first stamps from this country to combine two separate engraved plates: one for the frame and one for the vignettes. This meant that each stamp had two plate numbers in combinations such as 1-1, 1-2, 2-1, 3-1 and so on. According to D. Robin Harris, editor of *The Untrade Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Stamps*, there are 176 possible plate-number combinations for the three values, of which 11 have yet to be reported. Harris said another 13 combinations have only a few examples reported of each.

Herman Herbert Schwartz (1885-1962) designed the three stamps using photographs of Marcus Adams (1¢ stamp), Photographic Stores Limited (2¢ stamp, Figure 2) and Dorothy Wilding (3¢ stamp).

Marcus Adams (1875-1959), the son of photographer Walton Adams, established a reputation as a leading child photographer. In 1919, he joined Bertram Park and his wife Yvonne Gregory to form the "Three Photographers." They maintained their own styles and studios, but they shared printing and retouching equipment, as well as darkroom staff.

In 1926, Adams took the first official photographs of the Duchess of York and Princess Elizabeth (future Queen Mother and Queen Elizabeth II, respectively) and continued taking photographs of royal children up to 1956.

Photographic Stores Limited maintained offices in Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa, where the firm did most of its developing and printing. Dorothy Wilding (1893-1976) was a famous English society photographer whose portraits of British monarchs adorn the stamps of many countries, including Great Britain and Canada (Scott 337-342). An article on Wilding appeared in *The Canadian Philatelist* (Volume 55, Number 3, 2004).

Sydney F. Smith (1901-42), the assistant chief engraver of American Bank Note Company (ABN), engraved Adams' photographs of Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret Rose, the daughters of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. William H. Maple engraved the frame of the 1¢ stamp.

The 2¢ stamp required several artists. The sculpture of the National War Memorial in Ottawa was designed by

Vernon March (1891-1930). He died before the monument was erected, and his siblings continued his work until the monument's completion in 1939. The picture was engraved by American Joseph Keller (1903-87), based on a preliminary sketch by Charles Mack (Figure 3). Walter Rosch engraved the frame.

For the 3¢ stamp, the portraits of the king and queen were engraved by William F. Ford (1892-1962), superintendent of the Picture Engraving Department of ABN (1940-60). Charles H. Milks engraved the frame. Milks worked for ABN at various times and at Canadian Bank Note Company (CBN) from 1911 until his retirement.

All three stamps were perforated gauge 12 and were printed by CBN in sheets of 200 subjects and later cut into post office panes of 50 stamps. Panes of 150 imperforate stamps (75 pairs) are known for each of the three values.

The Canadian Postal Archives has progressive plate proof sheets of all three stamps that show only the frame or only the vignette. The proofs are all dated between March 1939 and June 1939. Those identified as May 17 or later were pulled earlier. The date indicates when the sheets were entered into the production file and not when the proofs were pulled (Figure 4).

Only one major variety is known to exist on this issue: a re-entry on the lower steps of the National War Monument 2¢ stamp. The re-entry is found in posi-



Figure 1. Both Canada and Newfoundland issued stamps in 1939 to commemorate the visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to North America. Canada issued three stamps (1¢, 2¢ and 3¢ denominations, Scott 246-248), and Newfoundland issued a single 5¢ stamp (Scott 249). Newfoundland later surcharged the 5¢ stamp with 2¢ and 4¢ denominations (Scott 250-251).



Figure 2. Canada's 2¢ Royal Visit stamp is based on a photograph of the War Memorial in Ottawa by Photographic Stores Limited.

tion 17 of the lower left pane, plate 2-2.

All three stamps were ordered January 10, 1939. For the 1¢ stamp, the finished product was approved March 20, with 50,043,000 stamps printed. There are 18 possible combination plate blocks found in all four corners of the sheet (one per pane). They are plates 1-1 to 1-4, 2-1 to 2-4, 3-1 to 3-4, 4-1 to 4-4, 5-1 and 5-2. The rare combination plate blocks for this value are the upper left (UL), upper right (UR) and lower left (LL) blocks of plates 1-3 and 2-4, and the UL, LL and lower right (LR) blocks of plates 1-4 and 2-3. The unreported combination plate blocks for this value are LR (1-3 and 2-4) and UR (1-4 and 2-3).

The finished product for the 2¢ stamp was approved March 2, with 50,224,000 stamps printed. There are only six combination plate blocks known, and none is rare or unrecorded. They are plates 1-1, 1-2, 2-1, 2-2, 3-1 and 3-2.

The 3¢ stamp was approved March 6, with 100 million stamps printed. There are 20 possible combination plate blocks as follows: 1-1 to 1-4, 2-1 to 2-4, 3-1

Figure 3. Charles Mack created the artwork for the 2¢ Royal Visit stamp. The stamp shows the National War Memorial in Ottawa, Ontario.

to 3-4, 4-1 to 4-4, 5-1 to 5-4. The rare combination plate blocks for this value are the upper left (UL) and lower left (LL) blocks of plates 5-3. Unrecorded combination plate blocks for this value that might exist are LL and LR (5-3). Harris believes that the plate 5-1 combination does not exist (or was not used) because no corners have been recorded.

The print run of commemoratives at the time ran between 3 million and 12 million, with one exception: a 50 million print run for the 1937 3¢ Coronation stamp. The large printing quantities of both the Coronation stamps and the Royal Visit stamps make them easily available to collectors.

An enterprising correspondent adept in mail art used the vignettes of the 1¢ stamp and 3¢ stamp to decorate an envelope that likely carried a Valentine's greeting posted at Vancouver, British Columbia, February 13 (year date unreadable). The artist used several Great Britain 1936 King Edward VIII stamps (Scott 230) for the leaves and, for the planter, an Australia 1929 stamp (Scott 103) that commemorates the 100th anniversary of Western Australia. The cover is shown in Figure 5. King Edward

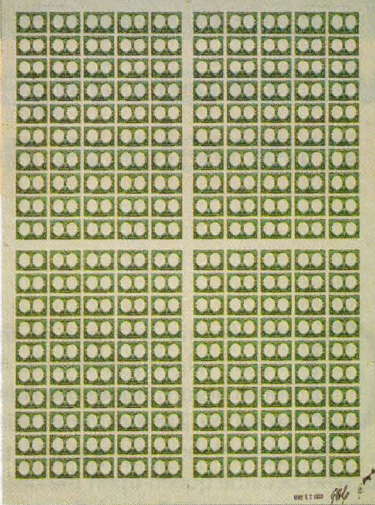


Figure 4. Plate proof sheets of the frames of the 1¢ stamp, dated May 17, 1939, and the vignettes of the 3¢ stamp, dated April 10, 1939.

VIII was King George VI's older brother and the uncle of the Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret Rose.

The Royal Visit stamps were extensively used on mail posted on the royal train that carried the royal couple from one end of Canada to the other and then to Washington, D.C., and New York City, where they visited the New York World's Fair.



Figure 5. Mail art at its best using the stamps of three different countries. The artist used several examples of Great Britain 1936 King Edward VIII stamps (Scott 230) for the leaves, and for the planter, he used an Australia 1929 stamp (Scott 103) that commemorates the 100th anniversary of Western Australia. Canada's 1¢ and 3¢ Royal Visit stamps paid the letter rate to the United States, from Vancouver, British Columbia, to Tacoma, Washington.