

# Canada Post's Special Envelope Series

▼ CHARLES J.G. VERGE

Every year more than 500 suggestions for Canadian stamp issues are submitted to the Post Office for consideration by individuals, politicians, associations, municipalities and people from other countries. It is impossible for Canada's Stamp Advisory Committee to satisfy everyone'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 each year and the importance of the anniversary or event to be celebrated. Some years have more worthwhile celebrations than other years and some choices must be made. 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. Table 1 is complete listing of these envelopes.

The number of envelopes produced (5,000) is fairly consistent, with three exceptions. There were 5,500 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 in 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 media list and many others may have been given out at events where they were launched rather than sold.

## 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF LESTER B. PEARSON

The first person to be commemorated on these envelopes was Canada's only Nobel Peace Prize winner and former Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson (1897-1972) on the occasion of the 100th 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 he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957.

This is the only commemoration in the series that has so far warranted more than one envelope. Three were issued: one for Pearson the diplomat, one for the Nobel Prize winner and the last for the Prime Minister (Figure 1). Canada Post's news 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 that Pearson led from 1958 to 1968.

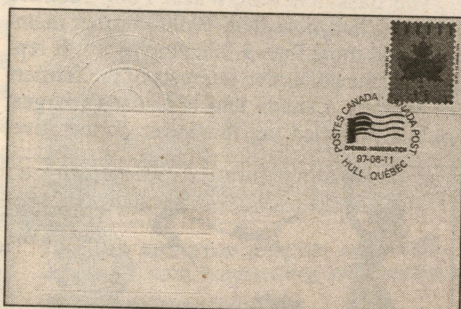


Figure 2: The National Postal Museum envelope with the Flight cachet used on the 500 envelopes carried on a special flight the day of the opening of the museum. This one also bears the signature of the pilot.

## NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM

Fifty-five hundred envelopes were made for the reopening of the National 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 an airmail exhibit titled *Winged Messenger*. As part of the celebrations 500 of the envelopes were carried aboard a hydroplane that landed outside the museum. These envelopes bore a special cachet and were distributed to guests at the news conference prior to the reopening celebrations of the museum (Figure 2).

## FESTIVAL OF THE FUTURE

The festival is an interactive celebration of emerging information technology and provides a window to today's world. The first such festival was held between Aug. 15-Sept. 1, 1997, and has since become an annual event coinciding with the Canadian National Exhibition held in Toronto, Ont., every summer (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Festival of the Future.

## 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DISCOVERY OF OIL AT LEDUC

The envelope features a photograph of the Leduc, Alberta, No. 1 oil well that came into production on Feb. 13, 1947. In its lifetime, the prolific Leduc field yielded 300 million barrels of crude (Figure 4).

## 300TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE URSULINES

This envelope celebrates the 300th anniversary of the arrival of the Ursulines religious

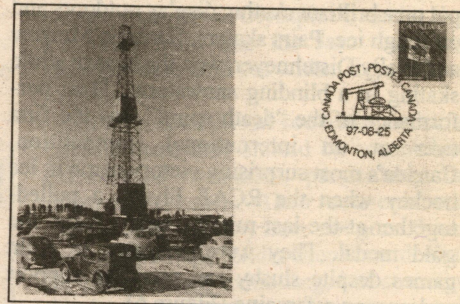


Figure 4: 50th anniversary of the discovery of oil at Leduc.



Figure 5: 300th anniversary of the Ursulines.

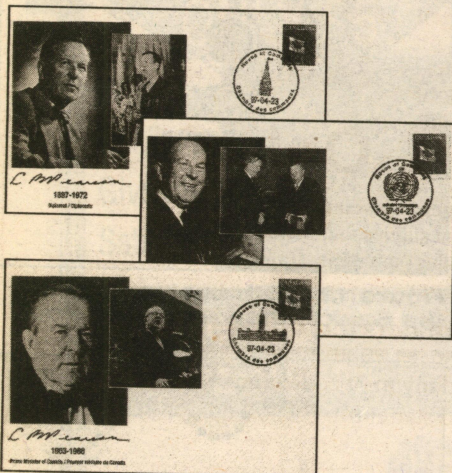


Figure 1: The 100th Anniversary of the Birth of Lester B. Pearson sparked the only commemoration in the series that has warranted more than one envelope. Three were issued: one for Pearson the diplomat, one for the Nobel Prize winner and the last for the Prime Minister.

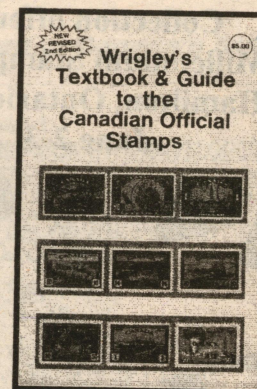
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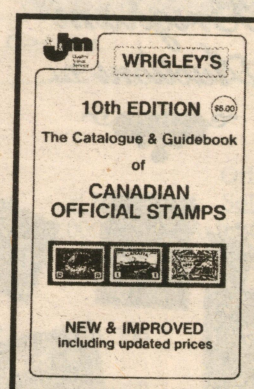


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The latest editions of Wrigley's *Textbook & Guide to the Canadian Official Stamps* (2nd edition) and *The Catalogue & Guidebook of Canadian Official Stamps* (10th edition).



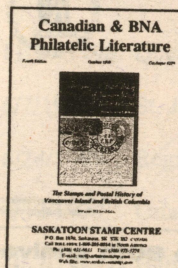
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order in Three-Rivers to take up teaching and nursing duties for the community. Later, at the end of the 19th century, the little community blossomed and founded other communities in the Mauricie region and in Maine. This is the only envelope for which printing quantities were never published (Figure 5).

#### 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF CANADIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE 1948 OLYMPIC GAMES

Canada made sporting history on the ice rink at St. Moritz, Switzerland, in 1948. One of the highlights of the Games was the gold medal winning performance of Barbara Ann Scott, World and European champion. She put on a brilliant skating display outdoors and on rough ice. Pairs skaters, Suzanne Morrow and Wally Distelmeyer, won the bronze while skating in a blinding snowstorm. Their performance of the "death spiral" was the first ever at an international competition. 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 despite slushy ice, poor fan support and uneven refereeing (Figure 6).

#### REOPENING OF CANADA HOUSE

After years of refurbishing, Canada House, the traditional home of the Canadian High Commissioner in London, England, was reopened by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. 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 (Figure 7).

#### 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ROYAL CANADIAN MINT

This is the only commemorative envelope

never put on sale through the National Philatelic Centre in Antigonish. It is likely that most of them were bought by the mint itself for distribution to its employees and clients. The mint building was inaugurated on Jan. 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 (Figure 8).

#### 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CANADIAN NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND AND THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF FREE MAILING FOR THE BLIND

Although the envelope does not mention it, the Canada Post news release confirms that the envelope was issued mainly to commemorate the granting of free mailing for materials for the blind in 1898. The envelope shows Dr. Euclid Herie, president of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (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 (Figure 9).

#### 300TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF FRONTENAC

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 17th 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 (Figure 10).

#### 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF CANADA POST'S HERITAGE CLUB

The Heritage Club's motto is "People Helping People." In addition to being a social club for retired Canada Post or current employees with 25 or more years of service, the group works to alleviate illiteracy - Canada Post's charity of choice; poverty and illness. There are more than 25,000 active members in 31 Chapters across the country. The large number of envelopes 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 (Figure 11).

#### 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SASKATCHEWAN WHEAT POOL

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, founded in 1924, has more than 70,000 farmer members and more than 3,000 employees. 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 (Figure 12).

#### 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION

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 government created the Ottawa Improvement Commission. It became the National Capital Commission in 1958, having been named the Federal District Commission in the 1920s (Figure 13).

#### 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF HALIFAX

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

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Figure 6: 50th anniversary of Canadian participation in the 1948 Olympic Games.

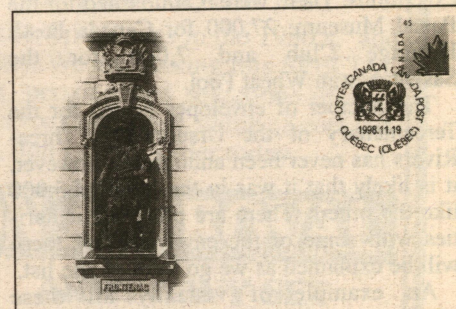


Figure 10: 300th anniversary of the Death of Frontenac.

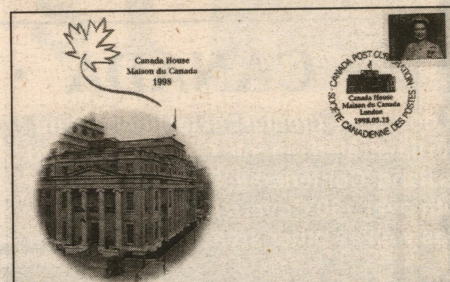


Figure 7: The reopening of Canada House.



Figure 11: 10th anniversary of Canada Post's Heritage Club.

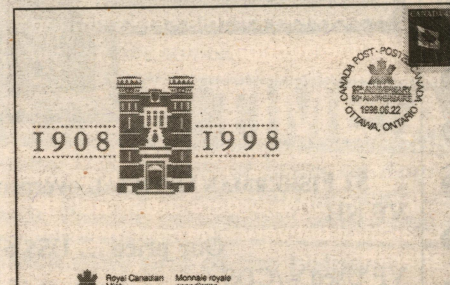


Figure 8: The 90th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Mint.



Figure 12: 75th anniversary of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool.



Figure 9: The 80th anniversary of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and the 100th anniversary of free mailing for the blind.

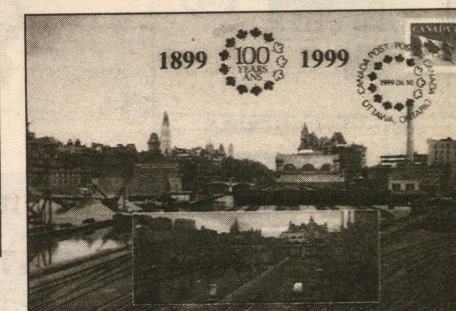


Figure 13: 100th anniversary of the National Capital Commission.

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Continued from page 40

Keith. Keith was a legendary brewmaster 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 (Figure 14).

### JAM DES NEIGES

This envelope was issued for a huge gathering of Scouts held on the Plains of Abraham in Quebec City from Dec. 27, 1999, to Jan. 5, 2000. This first international jamboree to be held in winter included camping out in cold winter weather and

snow, themed activities and winter sports. It was a new adventure for many Scouts from warmer climates. In fact many of them came completely unprepared for the weather and had to be provided with a winter survival kit. Most of the envelopes were bought up by the participants of the jamboree since scouting is such a popular stamp collecting area. Very few were available for sale through the National Philatelic Centre because they were sold out a few days after the envelope was issued (Figure 15).

Figure 16 shows essays for the last three envelopes. Canada Post used the essays to

illustrate their announcements in *Canada's Stamp Details* in the May-June-July 1999 issue.

In all, 15 different individuals or events have been commemorated on 17 different special envelopes. Of these, four are still available for sale: CNIB, Frontenac, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and Halifax.

Today, the most difficult to acquire would probably be the Pearson set, the National Postal Museum with the special flight cachet; the 1948 Olympic Games, Royal Canadian Mint and the Jam des Neiges since all 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 their illustrated cancels. Their souvenir status and the fact that they have not gone through the mail perhaps render 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. Good hunting. The envelopes' small print numbers makes finding them a challenge.

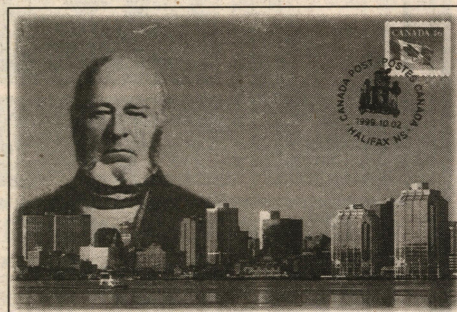


Figure 14: The 250th anniversary of the founding of Halifax.



Figure 15: Jam des Neiges.

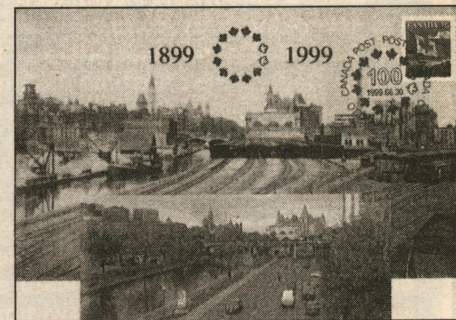
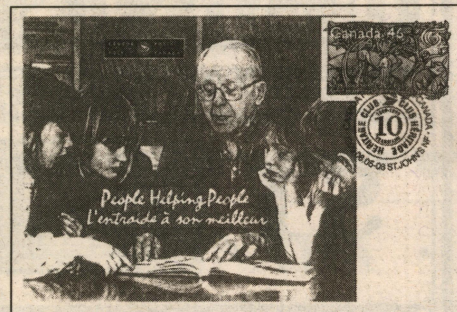


Figure 16: Essays for three issues as they appeared in *Canada's Stamp Details*.

TABLE 1  
CANADA'S SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE ENVELOPES

Date of Issue	Place of Issue	Person/Event	Price	# Made	Off Sale/Sold Out
4/23/1997	Ottawa, ON	100th Anniversary of the Birth of Lester B. Pearson (set of 3)	\$2.90	5,000 sets	July 1997
6/11/1997	Hull, QC	Opening of the National Postal Museum	.70	5,500	Aug. 1999
8/15/1997	Toronto, ON	Festival of the Future	.70	5,000	July 1998
8/25/1997	Edmonton, AB	50th Anniversary of the Discovery of Oil in Leduc, AB	.70	5,000	Aug. 1999
11/2/1997	Trois-Rivieres, QC	300th Anniversary of The Ursulines of Three Rivers	.70	5,000?	Aug. 1999
3/7/1998	Ottawa, ON	50th Anniv. of the Canadian participation in the 1948 Olympic Games	\$1.50	5,000	July 1998
5/13/1998	London, Eng.	Reopening of Canada House	\$1.50	5,000	Mar. 1999
6/22/1998	Ottawa, ON	90th Anniversary of The Royal Canadian Mint	\$1.50	5,000	Unknown
10/29/1998	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	On sale
11/19/1998	Quebec, QC	300th Anniversary of the Death of Frontenac	\$1.50	5,000	On sale
6/7/1999	St. John's, NF	10th Anniversary of Canada Post's Heritage Club	\$1.50	27,000	Aug. 1999
6/24/1999	Regina, SK	75th Anniversary of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool	\$1.50	7,000	On sale
6/30/1999	Ottawa, ON	100th Anniversary of the National Capital Commission	\$1.50	5,000	Jan. 2000
10/2/1999	Halifax, NS	250th Anniversary of the Founding of Halifax	\$1.50	5,000	On sale
12/27/1999	Quebec, QC	Jam des Neiges	\$1.50	5,000	Jan. 2000