

Canada's 1935 10¢ Mountie stamp finds favor among collectors

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One of the most popular stamps with young collectors is Canada's 10¢ Royal Canadian Mounted Police stamp (Scott 223, Figure 1), issued June 1, 1935. The design shows a Mountie on horseback.

In part, the stamp's popularity comes from the 1988 film, *Tommy Tricker and the Stamp Traveller* (1988), and its sequel, *The Return of Tommy Tricker* (1994), both produced by Productions La Fête. Canada Post lent technical assistance to the filmmakers and, in 1988, had a tie-in marketing campaign.

The 1988 film is the story of a mischievous character named Tommy Tricker who makes a dishonest philatelic trade with his friend Ralphie Lucas, setting off a series of adventures that includes an unsolved mystery. Basically, Tommy sells Ralphie's valuable collection to a collector for another that he thinks is valueless.

In this collection, Ralphie, his sister Nancy and their friend Albert find old letters written by an 11-year old boy, telling the story of a valuable collection halfway around the world. According to the letters, the only way to get to it is to hitch a ride on a stamp, specifically the 10¢ Royal Canadian Mounted Police stamp. The 1994 sequel had an entirely new cast but continued the outlandish traveling on stamps. It was not as well received as the first film.

Adults are fond of the 1935 stamp because it is well-designed and engraved, and because it represents a quintessential icon of Canada: the Mountie in his dress uniform on horseback.

The 10¢ carmine-rose stamp — it has a deep rose shade — was printed by the Canadian Bank Note Co. in sheets of 200 subjects, cut into post office panes of 50 stamps perforated

gauge 12. Two plates were used to print the 4,086,000 stamps issued. Four hundred plate proofs in India on card are recorded. They were offered for sale at the American Bank Note Co. archive sale in 1990. Also, 300 imperforate stamps are known, most in pairs. Both the plate proofs and the imperforates exist in gutter pairs, blocks and cross-gutter blocks. All are rare.

Canadian Bank Note Co. officially received order O-831 for the stamp from the Canada Post Office Department February 11, 1935, although work on the design started at an earlier date. The stamp was designed by Herman Herbert Schwartz (1885-1962), based on an uncredited photograph. Three photographs, one of which is shown in Figure 2, were sent to the ABNC in New York February 21, 26 and 27. ABNC designed and engraved most Canadian



Figure 1. The 1935 10¢ Royal Canadian Mounted Police stamp (top) was adapted for *Tommy Tricker and the Stamp Traveller* by adding a young boy riding in back of the Mountie.
Courtesy Production La Fête



Figure 2. One of the three photographs submitted to the American Bank Note Co. for the 10¢ Royal Canadian Mounted Police stamp issued in 1935. The photographer is unknown. ABNC designed and engraved most Canadian postage stamps in New York until the 1950s.
Courtesy Library and Archives Canada

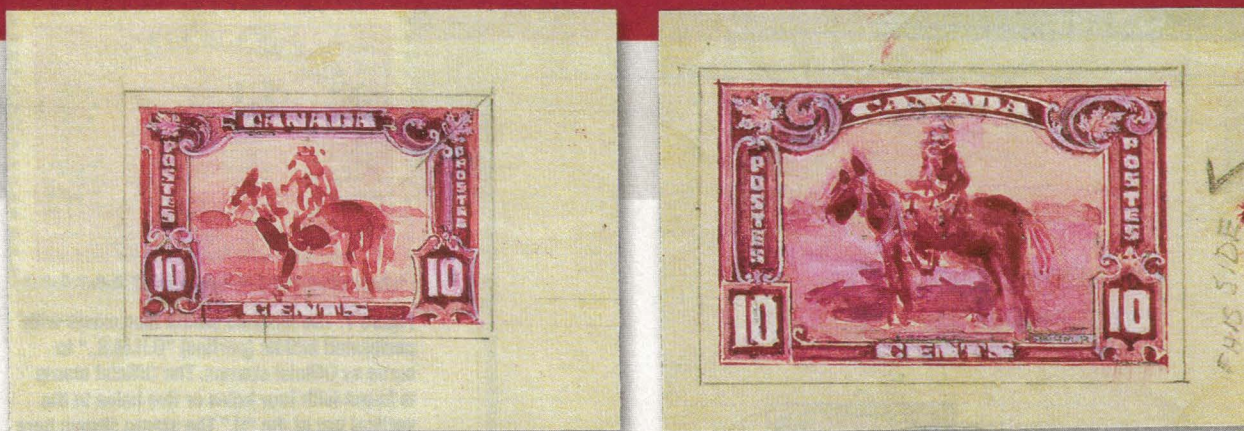


Figure 3. These preliminary watercolor essays were prepared by the American Bank Note Co. The stamp was designed by Herman Herbert Schwartz.
Courtesy Saskatoon Stamp Centre

an postage stamps in New York until the 1950s.

Schwartz was responsible for the design of 154 Canadian stamps in his 47-year career with ABNC, among them the world-famous 1929 50¢ Bluenose stamp (Scott 158). Sydney F. Smith (1901-42) engraved the Mountie, and 37-year ABNC veteran Harold Osborn (1893-1968) engraved the horse and the landscape. Smith engraved eight Canadian stamps between 1935 and 1942, and Osborn engraved 11 stamps between 1927 and 1943. The files give no name to the engraver of the frame and numerals.

Preliminary watercolor essays, shown in Figure 3, were prepared and approved.

On February 12, a collage/model, shown in Figure 4, was sent to the postmaster general, the Honorable Arthur Sauvé (1874-1944; postmaster general, 1930-35), for approval. The model consisted of a reduced hand-tinted photo of the Mountie superimposed on Canada's 20¢ Harvesting Wheat stamp (Scott 157), from the 1928-29 Scroll issue printed by Canadian Bank Note Co. Another model, shown in Figure 5, was sent at a later date. On it, we find the first reference to the color chosen, "80-a Rose."

ABNC sent the unhardened die proof for approval April 5. The Post Office Department approved it April 10, and ABNC was informed by telegram the same day. The hardened die proof (X-G-580) was sent to the

Post Office Department in Ottawa for approval April 11 and was approved April 16. Sometime after that date, it was decided to change the color of the stamp to carmine rose (86 Rose), and a new die proof in that color (Figure 6) was prepared and approved in Ottawa May 9.

This was reconfirmed by a May 27 note signed by the acting deputy postmaster general, P.T. Coolican, on that date. The initials "P. J. W." for Percy J. Wood, vice president of Canadian Bank Note Co., through whose office these items were shipped from and to New York, are found on several of the items sent to Ottawa.

The Mountie stamp exists with perforated initials (perfin) "O.H.M.S.," to serve as Official stamps. The Official



Figure 4. The first collage/model prepared by stamp designer Schwartz. The model was sent February 12, 1935, to Postmaster General Arthur Sauvé for approval.
Courtesy Library and Archives Canada.



Figure 5. The second model prepared for the 1935 10¢ Royal Canadian Mounted Police stamp. On this model, the original color is identified as "80-a Rose." This color was not used for the issued stamp.
Courtesy Library and Archives Canada.



Figure 6. The Canada Post Office Department approved this die proof for the 10c Mountie stamp May 9, 1935, after the color was changed to carmine rose (86 Rose).
Courtesy Library and Archives Canada.

stamp is found with five holes in the vertical bar of the "H" (Scott OA223), and with four holes (Scott O223, Figure 7). The initials stand for "On His Majesty's Service."

The Department of Finance was responsible for the "O.H.M.S." perforation from 1923 until 1935, when the Post Office Department took over the

responsibility. In 1939, the use of Official stamps was made compulsory on all mail from government departments. In 1949, the perfins were replaced by an "O.H.M.S." overprint.

The stamp with the five-hole perfin is virtually non-existent in unused condition. The perfins may have up to eight different orientations relative to



Figure 7. The Mountie stamp also exists with perforated initials (perfins) "O.H.M.S.," to serve as Official stamps. The Official stamp is found with four holes or five holes in the vertical bar of the "H." The stamp shown here is the four-hole variety, Scott O223.

the postage stamp on which they are applied: facing out from the image of the stamp in the directions of east, south, west and north, or reversed as viewed from the front in the same directions. These perfins have been faked, and collectors are cautioned to take care when buying them.

In addition to its iconic image, the Mountie stamp has a number of well-known varieties that make it appealing to collectors. The first of these is the broken-leg Mountie. This variety draws its name from a white uninked part of the design on the Mountie's left leg. Although the variety is constant, it comes in several states, from completely severing the leg to barely touching it. Close-ups of two states of the broken-leg variety are shown in Figure 8.

What caused the variety is unknown, and several theories have been put forward, none of which are satisfactory. Some suggest that the varieties might have been caused by

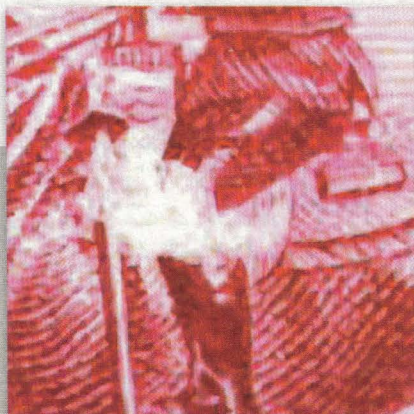


Figure 8. Two states of the broken-leg variety can be found. On the first state (left), the white completely severs the leg. On the stamp on the right, the white barely touches the leg.
Courtesy of D. Robin Harris, Unitrade Associates and Saskatoon Stamp Centre.



Figure 9. The birdcage variety resembles a hook on the horse's rump.
Courtesy of D. Robin Harris, Unitrade Associates



Figure 10. The lasso or whip flaw was probably caused by a cracked plate.
Courtesy of Damell

chipping of the chromium plating on one of the printing plates. This is unlikely because it would cause a deeper recess in the plate where ink would accumulate. Another theory, also difficult to credit, is that there was a tear in or damage to the inking roller. If this were the case, the variety would not always be in the same place.

The broken-leg variety on a used example with the five-hole "O.H.M.S."

perfin was sold at a Maresch & Son auction February 25, 2009. The estimate was Canadian \$1,500, and the stamp realized Canadian \$5,750. Not recorded before, this combination of variety and perfin resulted in a bidding war between two collectors determined to acquire this unique item.

The variety already was well-known in 1938, when Ronald Tuckwell wrote "Fortunate Flaws" in the *Canadian Magazine*. He calls it "... the outstanding plum of the entire issue," and reports that "already more than one single copy has been sold to covetous collectors for as high as five dollars!" Tuckwell goes on to identify another 14 flaws in the stamp, some of which are simply constant extra dots strewn about the stamp, while two others he

mentions are highly collectible today.

An image showing the location of these flaws and Tuckwell's complete article can be found online at Toronto stamp dealer John Talman's blog at talmantips.blogspot.com/2008/05/canadas-mountie-stamp-of-1935.html.

The second well-known variety is the birdcage variety, shown in Figure 9. It is found in position 48 of plate 1. The variety looks like a hook on the horse's rump. Some of the birdcage varieties are clearer than others and might be related to the third, non-constant flaw called the lasso, or whip, flaw (Figure 10). A cracked plate might have caused both. A fourth important non-constant variety is a diagonal line going through the foot of the "1" in the right value tablet. ■

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