

Canada's 50¢ issues form a diverse collection

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Figure 1. The 50¢ Widow Weeds issue of 1893 (Scott 47) was the first stamp from Canada to bear the 50¢ denomination.



Figure 2. Canadian stamps have been designated as Official issues (for government postal use) with overprints that read "O.H.M.S." (top) or "G" (bottom).

With Canada's domestic letter rate rising to 50¢ in 2005, it's an appropriate time to review the 50¢ stamps issued by Canada since the first one appeared in 1893 (Figure 1). That classic stamp, the 50¢ blue Widow Weeds, Scott 47, shows Queen Victoria in the black dress and white veil she wore as a sign of mourning for her husband, Prince Albert, who died in 1861.

There have been 33 Canadian 50¢ postage stamps, including 17 definitives, 14 commemoratives, one semi-postal and one postage due. They range from engraved classics of the 19th century to more than a dozen recent issues from the 1980s and the 1990s.

In addition to the general postage issues, all the definitives from the 1912 King George V 50¢ "Admiral" issue to the 1953 50¢ Textiles Industries stamp were either perforated with the initials O.H.M.S. (representing "On His/Her Majesty's Service"), or overprinted with the same letters, or overprinted with the letter "G" (representing "Government").

These are Official stamps used on government mail between 1923 and 1949 for the stamps with the perforated initials, and from 1949 to 1965 (when the use of Official stamps was discontinued) for the overprints.

An example of the 50¢ Logging Of-

ficial stamp of 1949 with O.H.M.S. overprint, Scott O9, is shown at left in Figure 2.

There are eight different orientations of the OHMS perforations on Canadian stamps. Four are to the cardinal points, and the other four are to the same cardinal points but reversed.

There are no major varieties for any of the perforated 50¢ Officials, but the 50¢ overprints include varieties of note.

The 50¢ Logging Official stamp is known with the final period missing after the "S" in O.H.M.S.

The 50¢ Textiles Official (Scott O38) is recorded as having varieties as well. The first is a cracked plate on Plate 1; and the second is the blunt "G" overprint (where the crossbar on the G does not extend fully to the right). The 50¢ Textiles Official also has the most famous variety of all Canadian Official stamps: the "Flying G" variety (Scott O38a), which has the crossbar of the G curving up on both ends. The stamp is also known with a cracked plate and an additional "Fishhook G" variety (where the top of the letter G resembles the barb of a fishhook).

The Textiles G-overprint Official issue is shown at right in Figure 2.

All 50¢ stamps issued from 1893 to 1935 had only two uses: to make up higher weight rates, or to pay for parcel post, including prepayment of large bundles of circulars and bank money packets. This is why the earlier values are frequently seen postmarked with roller cancels rather than circular datestamps.



Figure 3. The 50¢ Jubilee stamp (Scott 60) shows two portraits of Queen Victoria.



Figure 4. The 50¢ Bluenose is one of Canada's most famous — and most beautiful — stamps. Bluenose is the name of the schooner pictured twice in the central design.



Figure 5. The museum at Grand-Pré and monument to Evangeline are featured on the 50¢ stamp of 1930 (Scott 176).



Figure 6. The 1967 Summer's Stores stamp shows artwork by John Ensor.

Many of the earlier 50¢ stamps are known imperforate, or imperforate between horizontally or vertically, but were not regularly issued as such.

The 50¢ Widow Weeds of 1893, Canada Scott 47, is recorded in two colors, deep blue and deep violet blue, and has a major re-entry in position 6 (the sixth stamp on the sheet, counting across starting with the first stamp at top left). The 1897 50¢ Jubilee, Scott 60 (Figure 3), also comes in two shades, ultramarine and deep ultramarine.

Both of these stamps saw use well into the next century, some seven years after Queen Victoria died in 1901.

Well-centered used copies of the King Edward VII 50¢, Scott 95 issued in 1908, postmarked with clear circular date stamps, are rare and command a premium in either of the known color shades, purple or deep purple.

The 1912 50¢ black King George V Admiral issue (Scott 120a) was printed first by a dry process, where the paper has less moisture content (plates 1-3) and then a wet process with more moisture in the paper (plate 4). It came in three color varieties during its almost 20-year lifetime: black, silver black and brown black.

The next 50¢ stamp issued by Cana-

da would become the best known and most popular of all Canadian stamps.

Universally referred to simply as the Bluenose, the 50¢ dark blue stamp of 1929 (Figure 4) has been called one of the most beautiful engraved stamps of all time. It pictures the schooner *Bluenose*, known as the queen of the North Atlantic fishing fleet, a sleek vessel from Nova Scotia that won the International Fisherman's Race in 1921 and 1922. The fame of the *Bluenose* was so widespread that it also appears on the Canadian dime.

The Bluenose stamp, Scott 158, has a "man in the mast" plate variety that was made famous in the 1994 movie, *The Return of Tommy Tricker*.

In 1930 a new 50¢ stamp appeared depicting the museum at Grand-Pré and the monument to Evangeline (Figure 5). The 50¢ Grand-Pré stamp, Scott 176, is found in dull blue and pale blue shades.

With the increase in postage costs in the mid-1930s and the advent of air-mail, the 50¢ started seeing new uses such as paying registration fees at progressively declining compensation levels. The next five 50¢ stamps — Scott 226, 244, 261, 272 and 294 — have no varieties or color shades.

With the Elizabethan era (from

1952), the Canadian Post Office started experimenting with mechanized mail-sorting equipment, and with that came a variety of papers, fluorescence and phosphor experimentations.

The 1953 50¢ Textiles stamp was the first to be printed on different fluorescent papers. There were three types of paper used: a nonfluorescent one, a high-fluorescent one and a paper with speckled fluorescence. Many engraving retouches can be found on this stamp as well.

The next 50¢ was the pictorial *Summer's Stores* by the artist John Ensor, issued in 1967 as part of the definitive series celebrating the 100th anniversary of Canadian Confederation (Figure 6). It also went through a number of printings on paper having many different fluorescence levels, and is known with two different gums: dextrin, and polyvinyl alcohol or PVA.

In 1969, a 50¢ commemorative was issued for the first time since 1897. This art issue features *Return from the Harvest Field* by Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Côté.

At the time it was an odd denomination to choose for a commemorative when the first class rate was 6¢. In addition to two plate varieties in positions 5 (bird in sky) and 41 (line from the knee), there are a number of progres-



Figure 7. Imperforate progressive plate proof pairs of the 50¢ issue of 1969 were offered at auction in 2003 by Saskatoon Stamp Centre.

sive plate proofs available. The proof examples pictured in Figure 7 were offered at auction in 2003 by Saskatoon Stamp Centre of Saskatchewan.

The 1972 50¢ Seashore definitive comes in two types with the second one having darker shading and a deeper color in the dark blue areas of the photogravure impressions. Type I is perforated $12\frac{1}{2} \times 12$ while Type II is $13\frac{1}{2}$ all around. There are also two different tagging types, identified by Canadian postal officials as OP4 and OP2.

The OP4 taggant is nasty material that migrates to all other stamps and papers around it. It is found on the first printings of Type I of the Seashore issue.

In 1975 and 1976, two different 50¢ stamps were issued to promote the 1976 Games of the XXI Olympiad held in Montreal. Neither have varieties.

A Prairie scene is found on the 1978 definitive 50¢. There is a spectacular variety, the "ghost town" error, missing the brown part of the design (Figure 8). The stamp also exists with doubling of all the brown inscriptions.

From 1985 on, the use of the 50¢ became more prevalent, including the domestic double-weight step in 1985 for which the 50¢ Sleigh definitive was issued. From 1988 to 1992 five stamps in the Art Canada series were issued in the 50¢ denomination. There was no rate for their use but the Post Office wished them to be exclusive. There were no varieties.



Figure 8. "The Ghost Town" variety (bottom) of the 1978 50¢ Prairie Scene definitive is a spectacular color-omitted error.

The 50¢ stamps of Canada, 1893-1996

Year of issue	Scott #	Subject	Definitive (D) or Commemorative (C)	Sample rates in addition to make-up for multiple rates.
1893	47	Queen Victoria	D	Parcel post
1897	60	Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee	C	Parcel post
1908	95	King Edward VII	D	Parcel post
1912	120	King George V	D	Parcel post
1929	158	Bluenose	D	Parcel post
1930	176	Grand-Pré, NS	D	Parcel post
1935	226	Parliament, Victoria, BC	D	Parcel post; ½ oz airmail to South America and Guam
1938	244	Vancouver Harbor, Vancouver, BC	D	Parcel post; ½ oz airmail to selected countries
1942	261	Munitions	D	Parcel post; ½ oz airmail to selected countries
1946	272	Lumbering	D	Parcel post; ½ oz airmail to selected countries
1950	294	Oil wells	D	Parcel post
1953	334	Textiles	D	Parcel post
1967	465A	Summer's Stores	D	Parcel post, registration
1969	492	Return from the Harvest Field	C	Parcel post, registration
1972	598	Seashore	D	Parcel post, registration
1975	666	Hurdles, Montreal Olympic Games	C	Parcel post, registration
1976	686	Performing Arts, Montreal Olympic Games	C	Parcel post, registration, airmail 3rd weight step
1978	723	Prairie Scene	D	Parcel post, subsequent AR
1978	J40	Postage due	D	None
1985	930	Sleigh	D	Domestic 2nd weight step
1988	1203	The Young Reader	C	None
1989	1241	Ceremonial Frontlet	C	None
1990	1271	The West Wind	C	None
1991	1310	Forest, British Columbia	C	None
1992	1419	Red Nasturtiums	C	None
1994	1365	Snow Apple	D	U.S. and printed matter rates
1994	1521	Diving, XV Commonwealth Games	C	U.S. and printed matter rates
1994	1527c	Sicard snow remover	C	U.S. and printed matter rates
1994	1527d	Bickle Chieftain fire engine	C	U.S. and printed matter rates
1994	1534	Choir, Christmas	C	U.S. and printed matter rates
1995	1552c	Bombardier B-12 CS snowmobile	C	U.S. and printed matter rates
1995	1552d	Gottfredson Model 20 farm truck	C	U.S. and printed matter rates
1996	B13	Literacy (45¢ + 5¢)	C	Domestic letter-rate



Figure 9. The 1992 Art Canada issue is a 50c stamp that shows Red Nasturtiums by David Milne.

The 50c Art Canada issue of 1992, showing *Red Nasturtiums* by David Milne (Scott 1419) is shown in Figure 9.

Later stamps in the Art Canada series were denominated at the international rate then in force.

Seven stamps were issued between 1994 and 1995 and had one major use: paying the first-class rate to the United States. One definitive and six commemoratives were issued for this purpose. The 50c Snow Apple definitive, Scott 1365, is shown in Figure 10.

Four of these later stamps were used to promote CAPEX 96, the World Philatelic Exhibition held in Toronto in 1996.

Thirty-three copies of the 1994 Commonwealth Games Diving stamp, Scott 1521, are recorded with the gold inscriptions missing. The design for the 1994 Christmas stamp was also used for a 52c stamp that was produced but not issued. An unknown number of copies (around 2,000 to 2,500) are known in private hands.

Finally, there remain two back-of-the-book issues that one can consider among the 50c issues of Canada (Figure 11). The 50c postage due, Scott J40, was issued three years before the use of postage dues was discontinued on Jan. 1, 1982, and there are no known errors or varieties.

In 1996 Canada issued a semipostal stamp that sold for 50c, with 5c going to ABC Canada in support of its family literacy programs. Literacy is the charity of choice of Canada Post. The design is innovative, as there is a die-cut hole in the middle of the stamp in the shape of a missing piece of a puzzle. The postage stamp is denominated 45c+5c.

As of January 2005, the cost for mailing a first-class letter in Canada will be 50c, and a slew of new definitives is expected, including one showing Queen Elizabeth II and five showing the Canadian flag over different areas of the country.

They will be the first of many new stamps, including most Canadian commemoratives for 2005, that will carry the 50c denomination.



Figure 10. The 50c Snow Apple definitive is one of seven stamps issued in the mid-1990s to fulfill the letter rate from Canada to the United States.

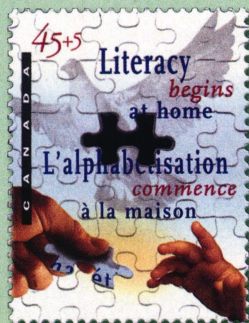


Figure 11. Canada issued a 50c postage due stamp in 1978, and a 45c+5c semipostal in 1996.

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357-61/C174-8/CQ99-101 (13)
South Pacific Games... 37.50

1981
483-84/C300-2 (5)
Red Cross Flag
Year of Disabled... 20.00
Gutter Pairs... 40.00
485-88 (4) Diana Wedding
Gutter Pairs... 36.00
489-92 (4) Discovery... 14.00
492a S/S Discovery... 14.00
493-96 (4) Christmas/
Books... 6.00
Gutter Pairs... 12.00
497-501 (5) Ships... 12.00
Gutter Pairs... 24.00

1982
509-512 (4) World Cup 1982
Printed SPECIMEN... 9.50
Same, Gutter Pairs... 19.00
Hand Stamped
"SPECIMEN"
Same, Gutter Pairs... 24.00
513-16 (4) Transport... 6.00
Gutter Pairs... 12.00
517-20 (4) Tin Can Mail... 9.25
Gutter Pairs... 18.50

519a S/S Tin Can Mail... 3.00
520a S/S Tin Can Mail... 6.50
521-23 (6) College -
English and Tongan
Languages (2 sets)... 14.00

524-25 Commonwealth Games
(2)... 7.90
Gutter Pairs... 15.80
526-28 (3) Christmas... 6.00
Gutter Pairs... 12.00
530-31 (2 values)... 14.50

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532-35 (4) Captain Cook... 18.00
536 S/S Captain Cook... 17.50
537-40 (4) Commonwealth
Day... 24.50
Gutter Pairs... 49.00

541-44 (4) Airplanes... 8.75
Gutter Pairs... 17.50
545-48 (4) WCY... 15.00
Gutter Pairs... 30.00
549-50 (2) Bank Notes... 9.00
Gutter Pairs... 18.00

555-58 (4) Christmas -
Boats... 11.00
Gutter Pairs... 22.00

1984
559-62 (4) Explorers/
Ships... 18.00
Gutter Pairs... 36.00
563-79 (17) Shell
Definitives... 58.00
Gutter Pairs... 116.00
568a (1) 9s Perf 14%... 3.00
580-81 (2) Sheets/
12 Chronicle... 14.00

1987
582-85 (4) Olympics... 14.00
Gutter Pairs... 28.00
586-87 (2) Dateline... 8.00
Gutter Pairs... 16.00
588-89 (2) Auspex... 9.00
589a S/S Auspex... 12.00
589a S/S No
Denomination... 15.00
IMPERF
589a S/S No Denom... 25.00
590-92 (3) Christmas... 5.75
Gutter Pairs... 11.50

1985
593-96 (4) Explorers/
Ships... 20.00
597-600 (4) Search for Oil
601 S/S Search for
Oil/Fish... 14.00
602-4 (5) Will Mariner... 18.00
602a-6a (5) Will Mariner... 18.00
607 Strip/5 Movies... 22.00
Gutter Pairs... 44.00
608-11 (4) Queen Mother
Gutter Pairs... 12.00
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Gutter Pairs... 26.00

1986
616-17 (2) Strips)
Halley's Comet... 28.00
Full Sheets/4... 90.00
626-28 (3) QEII 60th
Birthday... 11.50
629-30 (2) Ameripex
Black Ovpt... 6.00
Gutter Pairs Black Ovpt
629-30 (2) Ameripex
GOLD ovpt... 7.00
Gutter Pairs Gold Ovpt
629-30 (2) Ameripex GOLD
ovpt
IMPERF... 15.00

1987
646-49 (4) d'Urville
Explorer... 18.00
Gutter Pairs... 36.00
651-54 (4) Canoe Races... 12.00
654a S/S Canoe Races... 15.00
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Cartoons... 16.00
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