

# Canada's special publicity first-day covers designed for influential people abroad

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In the mid-20th century, the Canadian Post Office Department (CPO) issued specially prepared publicity first-day covers (FDCs) to be sent to a variety of important and influential individuals throughout the world.

This publicity project was proposed as early as 1949 but did not come into effect until 1960. The project still exists, having gone through a number of iterations including mailing out the FDCs under separate covers.

From April 20 to 25, 1958, Postmaster General William Hamilton (1919-89, PMG 1957-62) visited Israel. During the visit, he met with E. D'Arcy McGreer, Canadian ambassador to Greece (April 1957-April 1963) and non-resident ambassador to Israel (March 1957-October 1958). McGreer, who served in External Affairs from 1927 to 1963, suggested to the PMG that whenever a new Canadian stamp is issued, the CPO should prepare 50 FDCs for each of Canada's heads of mission around the world as a tool to promote Canada. According to a 1959 diplomatic memorandum, McGreer had been making this suggestion for more than a decade, starting when he was high commissioner to South Africa.

On May 23, 1958, PMG Hamilton raised the issue with his colleague Sydney Earle Smith (1897-1959), secretary of state for External Affairs (1957-died in office). In his letter to Smith, he writes that each of the covers "could be accompanied by the descriptive folder which we issue on each stamp which outlines the aspect of the Canadian economy or Canadian life which is represented on the stamp." He concludes his letter by saying, "It would probably be the cheapest piece of public relations which Canada had ever undertaken."

Smith agreed with the proposal and suggested that officials of both departments draft "a circular letter to all our Heads of Post informing them of this generous offer." Such a notice was not sent by External Affairs until October 5, 1959. The release of the notice prompted the PMG to send a personal

and confidential letter to McGreer on October 28, thanking him for the idea. He also commented bitterly, "I am left to wondering, however, what it is about Government at every level which seems to make it almost impossible to move quickly on these matters. So many people from different Departments become involved in each activity that it seems to fall between the stools on so many occasions; I don't think I will ever become reconciled to accepting such a state of affairs!"

In the meantime, on June 18, 1958, Deputy Postmaster General George A. Boyle (DPMG, 1957-61) informed the

PMG of the CPO's concerns on this proposal. They included the possibility of mushrooming, uncontrollable distribution of the FDCs, and the additional costs associated with the production of the covers and the translations of the messages into several languages. Additionally, as 60 percent of FDC sales were to customers in the United States, DPMG Boyle advised against adding Canadian heads of mission in the United States to the list.

CPO and PMG files do not refer to this project until more than a year later when PMG Hamilton wrote to Howard C. Green (1895-1989), the new secre-

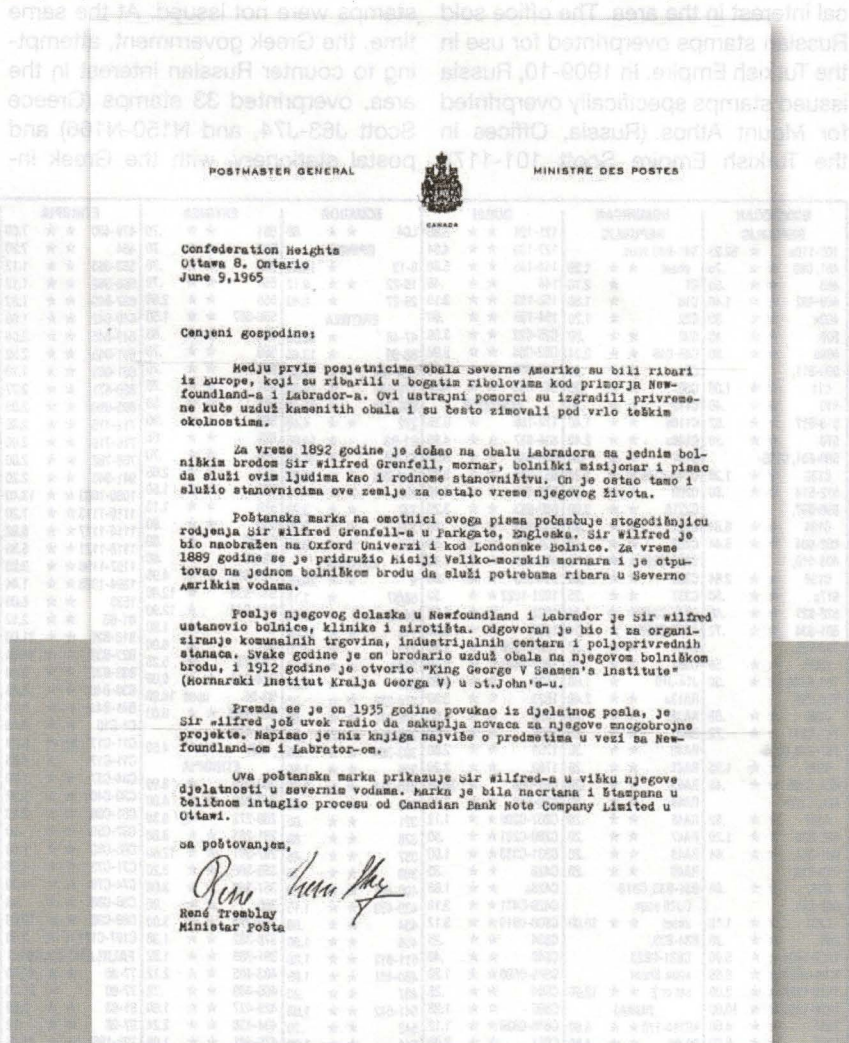
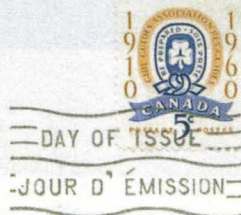
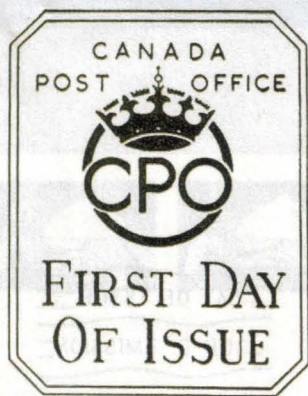


Figure 1. This publicity-information insert for the 1960 Canada 5c Sir William Grenfell stamp is written in Serbo-Croatian and signed by Minister of Posts René Tremblay.





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Portuguese, Russian, Serbo-Croat and Spanish, with Polish being added a few months later. A typical letter, signed by René Tremblay, minister of posts, is shown in Figure 1. The letter, promoting the 1965 Canada 5c Sir Wilfred Grenfell stamp, was written in Serbo-Croatian.

Responses to the October 5, 1959, notice to heads of missions said that 2,086 FDCs should be mailed to influential personalities in 47 different countries, including a list of 167 from the Canadian Consulate General in New York. Twenty heads of mission did not respond. A final decision was reached where no FDCs were to be sent to the United States under this program. However, names of publications received from missions in the United States would be added to the already existing press-release distribution list. The proposed FDC publicity list was pared down to just fewer

Figure 2. The first publicity first-day cover and a sample of the Block & Anderson Ltd. Bandurette addressing label. The letters SP at the upper right of the address on the FDC indicates that the publicity information insert was to be written in Spanish.

tary of state for External Affairs (1959-1963), to confirm the move ahead of the project. The letter mentions a major change of approach to the distribution of the covers, suggesting that the CPO mail the covers directly to the names on the lists provided by heads

of missions instead of the External Affairs doing so. He also suggested that, for more impact, the information to be inserted in the FDCs should be translated into as many languages as possible and should not be limited to the four Universal Postal Union official languages.

The original list of languages used were Dutch, English, Finnish, German, French, Greek,

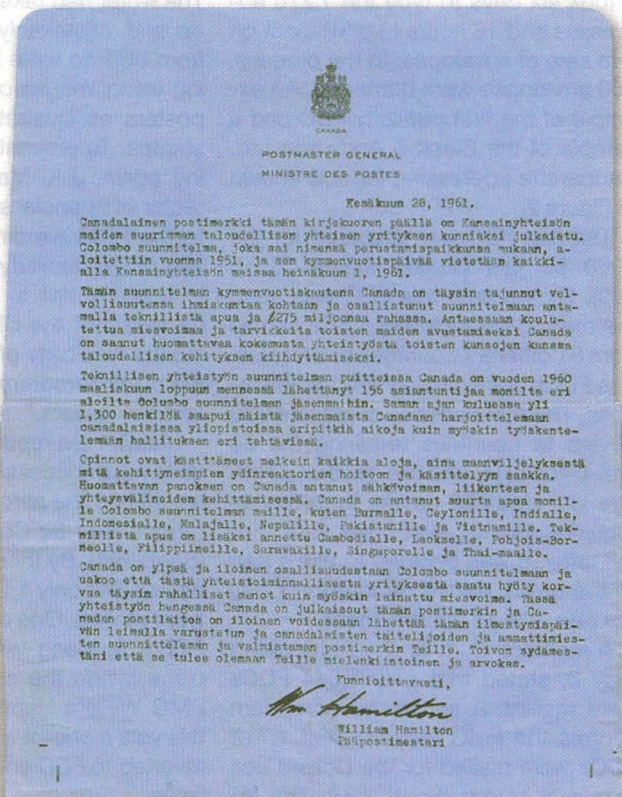
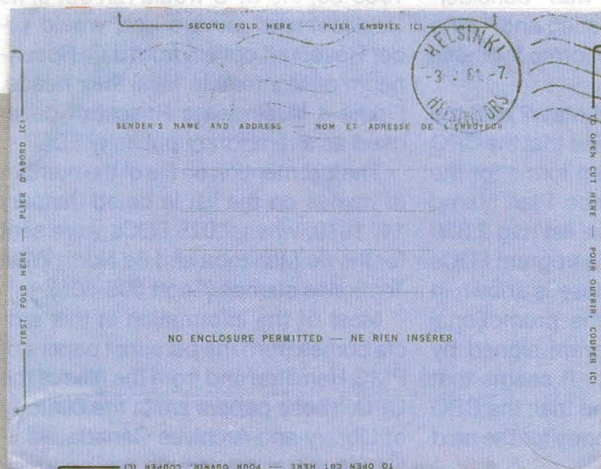


Figure 3. The only aerogram used for this program and its printed publicity information signed by Postmaster General William Hamilton. The aerogram is franked with a pair of Canada's 1961 5c stamp commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Colombo Plan. The Colombo Plan was designed to assist underdeveloped countries by providing trained manpower and resources.



than 1,300 names.

Technical information on the production of the FDCs is found in the files and includes the fact that the parchment quality of the envelopes would not allow the information sheet to be inserted by machine. Address labels were prepared using a typewriter on Block & Anderson Ltd. Bandarette labels. Addressograph plates were considered, but the CPO did not have an address plate maker for these plates. The work was contracted out to the queen's printer. The addresses were to be printed on P.S. 2 FDC envelopes.

A total of 5,000 envelopes were ordered February 10, 1960. These envelopes were normally used by the CPO as replacement envelopes for those sent by collectors whose own covers had been damaged in the FDC servicing process. Starting February 18, it took six days to type the 1,270 addresses and 16 hours to print them on two sets of envelopes. In the process, 166 envelopes were damaged. An example of the first publicity FDC and a sample of the Block & Anderson Ltd. Bandarette addressing label is shown in Figure 2.

The first FDC was prepared for the 1960 5¢ Girl Guides stamp (Scott 389). By the time this FDC was sent, the mailing list included 1,652 names from 61 different countries or colonies. The FDCs were divided into two packages. The first package contained 930 covers to countries requiring the 5¢ first-class rate, and the second package included 722 covers to countries requiring the 6¢ first-class rate. For the latter, it was decided to use a pair of the newly issued 5¢ stamp to pay the rate — a 4¢ overpayment.

A memorandum to the PMG dated May 2, stated that only 1,644 FDCs were mailed. A similar memorandum informs the PMG May 26, that 1,712 FDCs were mailed for the Dollard des Ormeaux stamp (Scott 390). The increase in number is accounted for by the addition to the list of names from Poland and Czechoslovakia. By



**Figure 4.** This Rosecraft cover, produced by J.C. Rosenbaum of Montreal, was used as a temporary publicity FDC when the Canadian Post Office ran out of replacement covers. The stamp is the 5¢ Sir William Grenfell stamp mentioned in the publicity-information insert in Figure 1.

early 1961, the list had grown to 1,900 names.

On March 20, 1961, an amusing article appeared in *El Comercio*, a Peruvian newspaper, complimenting Canada on issuing stamps promoting Austria. The writer had taken two press releases and mistakenly used information from both to write his articles, including using images of Austrian publicity posters as illustrations for Canadian stamps. To prevent this from happening again, J.A. MacDonald, CPO director of financial services, suggested to the PMG wording changes for the text of the publicity-information sheet. In a postscript to his memorandum, he said that the CPO was "considering the feasibility of [testing and] using the blank aerogramme forms for these first day covers."

MacDonald reported May 2 that the tests were successful and that the CPO would use the aerogram forms for the forthcoming 5¢ Colombo Plan stamp (Scott 394). By then, the list had 2,330 names, but only 1,794 aerogram FDCs were mailed. One of these is shown in Figure 3, along with the promotional piece inside the aerogram signed by PMG William Hamilton. It seems that this was a one-of-a-kind trial; the CPO reverted to FDC envelopes for the next issue.

By March 1963, it was suggested by B. Mac Erb, chief of CPO public relations, that the addressing system

for the FDCs be made more permanent and put on metal addressograph plates. In his reply, J.R. Carpenter, superintendent, Postal Division, mentioned that the "mailing list is depleting itself because of the fact that we never add names to the mailing list but we do take a large number off the list because of changes of address, death, etc."

By January 22, the list of 2,000 names had been shipped to the Department of Public Printing and Stationery for addressograph plate preparation and list management.

Little is found in the files after 1963 that indicates changes to the program. However, from time to time, mainly 1963-65, the CPO would run out of its "replacement" covers and would order Rosecraft covers from J.C. Rosenbaum of Montreal to fulfill their needs. Figure 4 illustrates a Rosecraft cover used as a temporary publicity FDC.

The last mention on file of the number of names on the list is dated January 14, 1970, when 2,025 FDCs were sent for the 6¢ Manitoba and 6¢ North West Territories stamps (Scott 505-506).

Most of the information in this article comes from the personal papers of PMG Hamilton and from the files of the CPO. These papers are in the custody of Library and Archives Canada. All illustrations in the article are courtesy of Andrew Chung, except for the Bandarette addressing label, which is courtesy of Library and Archives Canada. ■