

# Canada's Unissued 1994 Christmas Stamps

▼ CHARLES J.G. VERGE

In the spring of 1994, Canada Post announced that it would raise the price of postage effective October 1 of that year. The domestic letter rate was being increased by two cents from 43 to 45 cents; the basic rate to the United States was increased by two cents as well from 50 to 52 cents; and the international rate was raised from 88 to 90 cents.

Such rate increases required the approval of the federal Cabinet before being implemented. The public was not impressed that the rate increase was scheduled just in time for the Christmas card season and put political pressure on the cabinet.

Christmas stamps require a longer lead time to produce because they are printed in much larger quantities (44 millions versus 15 millions in 1994) than most other commemoratives. In anticipation of getting the rate increase, Canada Post proceeded to print the 1994 Christmas stamps denominated in the new rates. On Sept. 28, 1994, the federal Cabinet decided to postpone the rate increase pending further study by the Cabinet on its impact, especially on small business.

This decision left Canada Post in an awkward position. It proceeded to reprint all the Christmas stamps and booklets in the old rates of 43, 50, 88 and 38 cents (Canada Scott 1533-1536 issued Nov. 3, 1994). Canada Post had also printed a number of new

definitives in the new rates which were to go on sale September 29. What were they to do with these higher rate stamps?

Ralph Mitchener, in his Oct. 15, 1994 Ottawa Citizen "Stamps" column, wrote "At least some of the stamps have been printed with the proposed new rates on them. Will they be reprinted, revalued with overprints for the unchanged rates, or sold as is?"

In fact, for the definitives the answer was easy, they would be stored until the new rates were approved. The Christmas stamps would be destroyed. Canada Post has since confirmed that the stamps were destroyed but would not say where, when and by whom. In fact, Canada Post has not been very forthcoming with information about the 1994 Christmas issue when asked about the higher rate stamps. Canada Post's normal procedure for the destruction of unwanted stamps and printer's waste is to send it to a security firm in Toronto where they are incinerated and proper accounting is kept. There is no reason not to believe that the Christmas stamps were destroyed by fire. So why are some of them now on the market?

In late spring 1998, Bruce Holmes of Halifax, Nova Scotia, a collector formerly from Montreal whom I had met on numerous occasions at the Lakeshore Stamp Club, phoned to inform me that he had just recently bought three sheets of the U.S. rate 1994 Christmas stamp as discount postage at a flea market in Halifax. He told me that it was only when he got home that he realized



Figure 1:  
On the left  
the 1994  
U.S. rate  
stamp as  
issued.  
On the  
right the  
unissued  
52-cent U.S.  
rate stamp  
found in  
1998 in  
Halifax,  
Nova  
Scotia.

that the denomination on the stamps was 52 cents and not the 50 cents found in the catalogue (Figure 1).

He also indicated that there was no difference between the two stamps. They both had the same design, perforations and tagging. Holmes said that he was approaching me in my capacity as Canada Post Liaison for The Royal Philatelic Society of Canada (RPSC) asking if I would inquire of Canada Post as to their position on ownership of these evidently nonissued stamps.

I met with officials of Canada Post a few weeks later to discuss three separate cases of "unissued" stamps and printer's waste that had recently flooded the Canadian philatelic market. After some weeks of investigation, Canada Post decided that they were not interested in obtaining ownership of

these three sheets.

I so informed Holmes. He then proceeded to contact a great number of dealers across North America, including John Jamieson of Saskatoon Stamp Centre, to try and market his treasure trove. Jamieson and the other dealers felt that Holmes was seeking too much for the stamps.

In September, Holmes wrote a letter to the editor of *The Canadian Philatelist*, the journal of the RPSC. His discovery became public knowledge when the letter was published in the November-December 1998 issue. A large photo of the upper right block of four figured prominently on the cover of the magazine.

While negotiating with Holmes to buy his sheets, Jamieson became aware that the seller at the flea market had more than just the three sheets in Holmes' possession. At the October 1998 convention of the British North America Philatelic Society (BNAPS) held in Orlando, Fla., Jamieson was approached by a collector with three other sheets of the same stamp. They made a deal and the collector "promised he would check back with his source to see if there were more." By January 1999, Saskatoon Stamp Centre had purchased "what we were assured was all there was." Jamieson is convinced that these came from the same source as the Holmes sheets albeit by a circuitous route. Jamieson split his purchase with Bathurst, Nova Scotia stamp dealer Gary J. Lyon (Eastern Auctions, Ltd.).

I recently picked up the threads of this story when I decided to write this article. I asked Cimon Morin, chief, Canada Postal Archives (CPA), to check in the CPA's holdings to see what they had on these Christmas stamps. He came back and said that they had preliminary designs and proof sheets of not only the 52-cent rate but of all the other higher rate stamps (45, 90 and 39 cents) as well as the essays and proofs of the booklet covers. He also mentioned that the holdings did not include "finished" stamps.

The 39-cent stamp was to be issued only in booklet form. These Christmas booklets, called Greet More, were a discounted postage incentive for postal patrons to buy Christmas cards that had envelopes that allowed them to enter the postal code in special boxes for faster sorting. For these cards, the domestic rate postage would have been reduced from 45 cents to 39 cents had the new rates gone into effect on October 1.

The Greet More booklets were reprinted with a star replacing the lower rate denomination and they were valued at 38 cents each, a reduction of five cents from the domestic letter rate of 43 cents. Either because the printer, Canadian Bank Note

## CANADA • BNA

Choice Early Classics to Modern Varieties



The 52¢ Variety (left)  
Normal 50¢ (right)

The 90¢ Variety (left)  
Normal 88¢ (right)

Our current illustrated Canadian/BNA price list  
FREE on REQUEST

## 1994 Christmas Varieties

Canada's 1994 Christmas stamps were released November 3, 1994 in denominations of 38¢ (undenominated, postcard Greetmore rate), 43¢ (domestic first-class), 50¢ (USA), and 88¢ (international).

However, earlier in 1994, Canada Post was lobbying the Government in Ottawa for an increase in postal rates to 45¢/52¢/90¢. They obviously expected to receive permission to raise rates as evidence now shows.

It takes many months lead-time to prepare a new stamp issue. The Christmas stamps were likely printed in the new values by the end of August. When the rate increase was turned down, the already printed stamps in the new denominations would have been recalled for destruction. However, the 52¢ and 90¢ values are known to exist in collectors hands.

We have the following available:

### 52¢ Choir

Singles: US\$129.00  
Block of 4: US\$459.00  
Imprint block of 4: US\$525.00  
M/S imprint blocks:  
US\$1,950.00

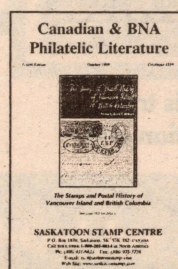
### 90¢ Carolling

Singles: US\$250.00  
(only singles are available)

We have to limit the 90¢ to  
purchasers of the 52¢ variety.

Internationally Recognized as a Leading Buyer of Canadian Errors and Varieties

## PHILATELIC LITERATURE



- We are the world's largest retail dealer in Canadian and BNA literature.
- Visit our web site for recently received titles and other book specials.
- Our 128-page Canadian/BNA Literature price list FREE on REQUEST.

## WANTED: CANADIAN ERRORS

- ♦ IMPERFORATES ♦ MISSING COLOURS ♦ INVERTED COLOURS ♦
- ♦ MISPERFS ♦ COLOUR SHIFTS ♦ PRINTED ON GUM ♦
- ♦ TAGGING ♦ BETTER VARIETIES ♦

## SASKATOON STAMP CENTRE

P.O. Box 1870, Saskatoon, SK S7K 3S2 CANADA  
Call TOLL FREE 1-800-205-8814 in North America  
Ph: (306) 931-6633 Fax: (306) 975-3728



E-mail: [ssc@saskatoonstamp.com](mailto:ssc@saskatoonstamp.com)  
Web site: [www.saskatoonstamp.com](http://www.saskatoonstamp.com)



Continued to page 42



Continued from page 40

Co. (CBN), ran out of time or the post office decided to salvage some of the material, labels were produced for the Greet More booklets to put over the sales information of the booklet covers originally printed for the higher rate Greet More booklets (Figure 2).

Before going further, I must mention that the 39-cent denomination must have been an error. It should have been 40 cents, an increase of 2 cents on the old rate like all the other higher rates. Proof of this comes when you

**Figure 2: The Greet More booklet with the added sticker covering the higher rate information.**



remove the label from the booklet and you see the sales notation of "10 x 40 cents / \$4.00."

The amount of paper required to print so many stamps strained the paper inventory of CBN. It originally had printed the 52-cent on coated paper but had to switch to Peterborough paper when it reprinted the stamps with a 50-cent denomination (Figure 3).

With all this reprinting even Canada Post was confused. They listed all the Christmas stamps as being on coated paper in their November/December *Canada Stamp Details* and the Winter 1994 edition of *Collections Canada*. William J. Wilson in his "New Issues" column in *BNA Topics*, the journal of BNAPS, picked up on this and wrote "In fact, only the 38¢, 50¢ and 88¢ stamp booklets are on coated paper; all sheet stamps and the 43¢ stamp booklet are on Peterborough paper. The information in these two official publications of Canada Post might have been correct if the higher rate stamps had not been replaced." The gum on coated paper is of a "greenish" hue while that on Peterborough paper is much whiter in appearance. Jamieson believes that by studying the use of the two different papers by CBN during 1994 it is possible to date the printing of the 52-cent stamp to no later than August 1994.

It is likely that a full post office pad of 50 panes of 50 stamps each was in the hands of the flea market dealer. Holmes has three, the Jamieson/Lyon horde is 42 panes and five must have been sold the same day as those purchased by Holmes. From these five panes, whose purchaser remains unknown, come the only possible usages.

At the time of discovery of these panes, spring 1998, the rate to the United States was 52 cents and the purchaser may have used these on mail. None have so far surfaced and any use after September 1998 could be construed as philatelic since after

**Figure 3: On the left the 50-cent plate block with the letter "P" beside the colored stars indicating the use of Peterborough paper. On the right the 52-cent plate block with a "C" indicating coated paper.**



unaccounted for.

What is the status of these stamps? Going back to the 19th century, Canadian unissued designs and values were known as essays, die proofs or plate proofs. Rarely were they perforated or intended for sale. In the late 1990s, imperforates appeared in

that date 45 panes were in the hands of philatelists or dealers.

It was only when Jamieson put his 52-cent stamps for sale and sent out a flyer in mid-September 1999, that I found out that a number of 90-cent international rates had also appeared on the market (Figure 4). Jamieson tells me that there are 1,000 single 90-cent stamps available but no multiples. Why no multiples? The story of the 90-cent stamp remains to be told.

The next question is how did these stamps get on the market? There are three possibilities. First, I need to point out that new issues are normally sent out to the retail post offices a week to 10 days before the issue date and that there are two types of pane stock: retail and philatelic. The difference between them is that on retail panes the printing and plate information found on all four corners of philatelic panes has been guillotined. Retail panes are sent to retail post offices and philatelic panes are sent to philatelic outlets and to the National Philatelic Centre in Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

All full panes of the 52-cent stamp so far discovered have the printing and plate information on them. Therefore, they either came from a) the National Philatelic Centre, b) a philatelic outlet or c) were sent to a standing order customer of the National Philatelic Centre prior to the release date. This latter possibility is not impossible as I know of at least one stamp dealer who frequently receives his order from Antigonish many days before the stamp's official release date. Knowing the security measures put in place by Canada Post, I am amazed that, when the stamps were recalled, a full pad of 50 panes was

designs or denominations that were never planned or issued. These are definitely printer's waste as they could not have come from anywhere else but the printers.

This is the first time in Canadian philatelic history that an unissued "finished" stamp has reached the market. In my view they are still essays because they were never intended to be issued. In the October 4 number of *Linn's Stamp News*, Denise McCarty reports that James E. Kloetzel, the editor of the *Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*, indicates that Scott will list these in a footnote as they also consider them as essays. Unitrade's *Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Stamps* will undoubtedly follow Darnell's *Canada-BNA* and give the stamps minor numbers.

You might be interested to know that the two-cent rate increase did not go into effect until Aug. 1, 1995. Canada Post had lobbied for May 1, 1995. The post office learned its lesson with the 1994 Christmas stamps and had prepared nondenominated stamps for the 30th anniversary of the Canadian Flag commemorative issued on May 1 (Canada Scott 1546) and the booklet of 10 stamps in honor of the Fortress of Louisbourg issued May 5 (Canada Scott 1547-1551). Although sold for 43 cents these stamps are still valid for the current 46 cents domestic rate. ▼



**Figure 4: The left stamp is the 88-cent issued international rate stamp and the right stamp is the unissued 90-cent stamp.**

## SUPERB UNITED STATES CURRENCY FOR SALE



**Stanley Morycz**  
P.O. BOX 355, DEPT. S  
ENGLEWOOD, OHIO 45322  
937-898-0114

Send for a **FREE**  
Price List