

Canadian stamps honor Nobel laureates

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All science is either physics or stamp collecting." This quote is attributed to Sir Ernest Rutherford (1871-1937), who is commemorated on a Canadian 1971 6¢ stamp (Scott 534, Figure 1) honoring the 100th anniversary of Rutherford's birth.

Physicists are notorious for scorning scientists from other fields. For Rutherford (1st Baron Rutherford of Nelson), there was an irony in this quote. His Nobel Prize in 1908 was for achievements in chemistry, not physics. Although a New Zealander by birth, Rutherford earned the Nobel Prize for his work at McGill University in Montreal.

A photolithograph progressive proof of the 6¢ Rutherford stamp is shown in Figure 2.

Depending on how you look at it — and I have taken the widest possible parameters — 17 Canadians and one Canadian organization have won Nobel Prizes since the prizes were first awarded in 1901. Two other Nobel laureates — Dr. John MacLeod (1876-1935, Scotland), who shared the 1923 prize in physiology or medicine with Sir Frederick Banting, and Marchese Guglielmo Marconi (1874-1937, Italy), who re-

ceived the prize in physics in 1909 — were honored for work accomplished partly in Canada.

Marconi, Rutherford and England's Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965), who received the 1953 Nobel Prize in literature, have all been honored on Canadian stamps, although none of them was Canadian. McLeod has not been honored on a Canadian stamp.

Marconi received postal honors from Canada in 1974, on an 8¢ stamp issued to commemorate the Italian electrical engineer and inventor (Scott 654, Figure 3). The stamp pictures Marconi and a view of St. John's, Newfoundland, from Signal Hill, where he received the first transatlantic radio signal. Also shown in Figure 3 is the painting on which the 1974 Marconi stamp is based.

Marconi also is pictured on a 2002 stamp, one of a se-tenant pair of 48¢ stamps (Scott 1963-1964, Figure 4) honoring communication technology centenaries. Sir Sandford Fleming (1827-1915) is shown on the other stamp. In addition to his portrait, the

Marconi stamp features radio and transmission towers.

Churchill has been honored on Canadian stamps for his leadership and statesmanship, and for being a member of the queen's privy council for Canada. Two Canadian stamps commemorate Churchill. A 5¢ stamp was issued in 1965 to honor his death (Scott 440, Figure 5). The watercolor essay on which the stamp is based is shown in Figure 6.

In 2008, Canada Post issued a set of stamps and a souvenir sheet featuring photographic portraits by Canadian photographer Yousuf Karsh. The \$1.60 stamp (Scott 2273) shows Churchill. The souvenir sheet in the Karsh set (Scott 2271, Figure 7) features Karsh photographs of Churchill and seven other Nobel Prize winners: Albert Camus (literature, 1957), Albert Einstein (physics, 1921), Ernest Hemingway (literature, 1954), Martin Luther King Jr. (peace, 1964), Lester B. Pearson (peace, 1957), Mother Theresa (peace, 1979) and Elie Weisel (peace, 1979).

Of the 17 Canadian Nobel laure-



Figure 1. Sir Ernest Rutherford (1871-1937) is commemorated on a Canadian 1971 6¢ stamp (Scott 534) honoring the 100th anniversary of his birth.



Figure 2. This photolithograph progressive proof was pulled for the 1971 6¢ Rutherford stamp.



Figure 3. Italian electrical engineer and inventor Guglielmo Marconi received postal honors from Canada in 1974, on this 8¢ stamp. The stamp shows St. John's, Newfoundland, in the background. The stamp is based on the painting shown at right. Marconi received the prize in physics in 1909 for work accomplished partly at Signal Hill in St. John's.



Figure 4. Marconi is pictured on the right-hand stamp of this 2002 pair of 48¢ stamps (Scott 1963-1964). Sir Sandford Fleming is shown on the left-hand stamp.

ates, only four have been honored on Canadian stamps. They are: Sir Frederick Banting (1891-1941, Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine, 1923); Lester Bowles Pearson, prime minister of Canada from 1963 to 1968 (1897-1972, Nobel Peace Prize, 1957); Dr. Gerhard Herzberg (1904-1999, Nobel Prize in chemistry, 1971); and Dr. Michael Smith (1932-2000, Nobel Prize in chemistry, 1993).

The 13 other individual laureates all were born in Canada. Five received the Nobel Prize in chemistry (1949, 1983, 1986, 1989 and 1992), three in economics (1996, 1997 and 1999), two in physics (1990 and 1994), two in physiology or medicine (1966 and 1981), and one in literature (1976).

The literature laureate, Saul Bellow (1915-2005), is probably the best known of the Nobel Prize winners who have not been honored on a Canadian stamp.

The only Canadian organization

to be selected was the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs that co-shared the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995 with one of the Pugwash Conferences' co-founders, Joseph Roblatt. The other co-founder was Lord Bertrand Russell, 3rd Earl Russell (1872-1970), a Nobel laureate in literature in 1950. The conferences are held in Pugwash, Nova Scotia, because Cyrus Eaton, a friend of Russell, agreed to finance them if they were held in his hometown of Pugwash.

Two Canadian stamps honor Prime Minister Lester Pearson: a 6¢ stamp (Scott 591, Figure 8) issued in 1973 as part of a definitive series honoring prime ministers and Queen Elizabeth II, and a 46¢ stamp (Scott 1825c) from one of the Millennium souvenir sheets issued in 1999 and 2000. A trial color proof card of the 6¢ stamp is shown in Figure 9. Only Scott 1822a and 1825c specifically honor the Nobel achievements of Banting and Pearson. The stamps are shown in Figure 10.



Figure 5. British statesman Winston Churchill is honored on this 5¢ stamp (Scott 440) issued in 1965, the year of his death.



Figure 6. This watercolor essay was created for the 1965 5¢ Winston Churchill stamp. The commemorative stamp is the first Canadian stamp to be printed by duo-tone lithography.



Figure 7. Eight Nobel laureates are pictured together on this 2008 souvenir sheet featuring portraits by Canadian photographer Yousuf Karsh. The stamps show Audrey Hepburn, Churchill and Karsh.

The Banting and Pearson stamps were issued January 17, 2000, as part of Canada Post's 64-stamp Millennium commemoration. The 46¢ stamps were issued in 17 souvenir sheets of four stamps each. Banting shared a souvenir sheet (Scott 1822) with three other medical innovators: Maude Abbott, Armand Frappier and Hans Selye. Pearson shared a souvenir sheet (Scott 1825) with other humanitarians and peacekeeping endeavors: Raoul Dandurand, Elizabeth Smellie and Pauline Vanier, honoring Canada's role in banning land mines.

Originally, Canada Post planned to issue the stamps in 1999 only in a

limited-edition souvenir book. As a result of public backlash because the stamps were excessively priced over face value, Canada Post reissued the stamps in 2000 to make them available to the general public. The book (200,000 numbered copies) was published September 15, 1999, and was sold for \$59.99 in Canadian funds. It had 94 pages with bilingual text and black-and-white photographs. The 64 stamps in the

book were printed two per page on stamp paper.

Stamps from the book can be distinguished from the stamps from the souvenir sheets by the copyright date (©1999) found in the upper-left margin of every stamp. The date on the stamps from the book is larger than the one on the stamps from the souvenir sheets.

The other two stamps honoring Banting include a 1971 6¢ stamp is-



Figure 8. Prime Minister Lester Pearson is honored on this 6¢ stamp (Scott 591) issued in 1973 as part of a definitive series honoring prime ministers and Queen Elizabeth II.

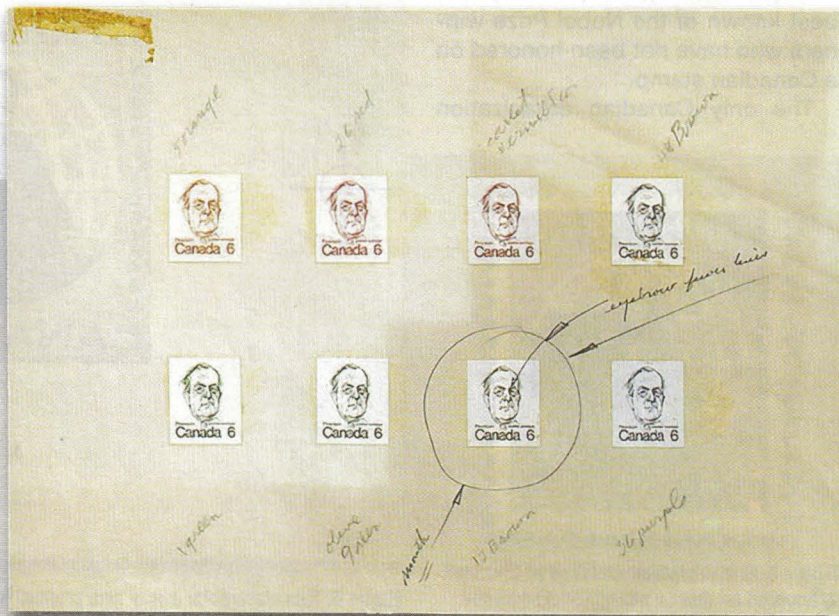


Figure 9. A trial color proof card for the 1973 6¢ Lester Bowles Pearson definitive stamp.



Figure 10. Sir Frederick Banting and Pearson are shown on 46¢ stamps (Scott 1822a and 1825c, respectively) from a Millennium souvenir sheet issued in 2000.

sued to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the discovery of insulin (Scott 533), and a 40¢ stamp (Scott 1304) issued in 1991 to honor his career as a doctor. Both are shown in Figure 11. A progressive proof of the 6¢ stamp is shown in Figure 12. The 40¢ stamp is from a set of four stamps that pays tribute to medical doctors. The other doctors are Harold R. Griffith, Wilder G. Penfield and Jennie K. Trout.

Herzberg and Smith are honored on a se-tenant pair of 49¢ stamps issued in 2004 (Scott 2061-2062, Figure 13).

Of the stamps mentioned in this article, varieties are known for a few of them. The Rutherford stamp is known with the black color missing, known as the "missing atom" variety. The 1973 Pearson stamp was issued in pane and booklet formats. The pane is known with the stamp printed on the gum side (Scott 591a), untagged and printed on ribbed paper. It is also known imperforate 26 | Scott Stamp Monthly



Figure 11. A 1971 6¢ stamp (Scott 533) was issued to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the discovery of insulin by Banting and fellow medical scientist Charles H. Best, and a 1991 40¢ stamp (Scott 1304) was issued to honor Banting's career in medicine.



Figure 12. A progressive proof was pulled for the 6¢ stamp shown in Figure 11, honoring the 50th anniversary of the discovery of insulin by Banting and Charles H. Best.



Figure 13. Gerhard Herzberg and Michael Smith, both Nobel laureates in chemistry, are honored on this pair of 49¢ stamps (Scott 2061-2062) issued by Canada Post in 2004.

on half of the bottom margin, likely from a paper fold of some kind. The booklet version is known with a re-entry in the letters "age" of "Post-age" (Scott 586a and 586b).

The 1974 Marconi stamp is listed untagged. It is interesting to note that various features of the Herzberg

and Smith se-tenant pair of 49¢ stamps — including the hidden date — fluoresce when exposed to ultra-violet light.

Essays and proofs are shown in this article courtesy of Canada Post and the Canadian Postal Archives.