

# Canadian Uncut Press Sheets

▼ CHARLES J.G. VERGE

Uncut press sheets are a recent collecting craze fanned by the post offices of the United States and Canada. This article is an attempt to provide a full listing of available material from the Canadian Post Office.

Press sheets by definition are sheets of stamps printed in a variety of sizes depending on the press used or the format of the final product: stamp panes, souvenir sheets or booklets. Normally these press sheets are cut down to the final format before being issued to post offices. Rarely are they made available uncut to the general public.

Canada's press sheets follow this rule. Although the collecting of uncut press sheets is a recent phenomenon, we have to go back to the very beginning of Canadian philately to find the first one. In 1851, Canada's first stamp, the 3d Beaver (Scott 1, 4) was printed in sheets of 200 (Pane B at the top and Pane A at the bottom). The example illustrated in Figure 1 clearly shows that the plate proof sheets were guillotined between the B and A panes. So were

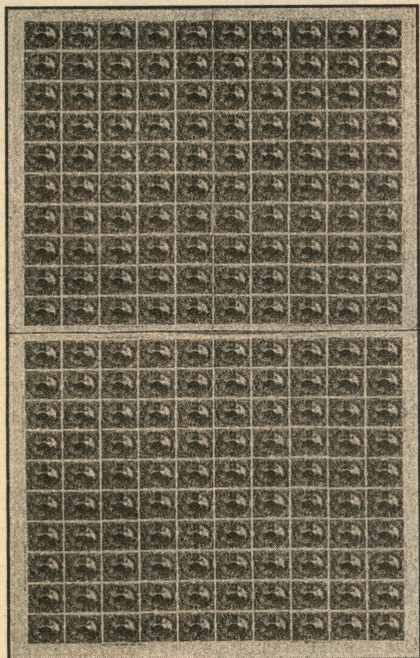


Figure 1: The full press sheet of plate proofs for Canada Scott 1, the 3d Beaver, were printed in 1856-57 by Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson. The two panes, the upper B and the lower A, are in the Canadian Postal Archives.



Figure 2: A lower margin gutter block of Canada's smallest stamp (Scott 34). This gutter separated the two panes of the printing sheet that were supplied to the post offices uncut. (Courtesy The Brigham Collection)

the sheets of stamps destined for post offices.

The next Canadian stamp to have been issued in full sheets was the 1/2¢ from the Small Queen era (Scott 34). The stamp was issued in 1882 in sheets of 200. As many as 100 gutter pairs (Figure 2) are believed to exist from sheets regularly issued to post offices during the period of use of Canada's smallest stamp (1882-1897) before it was replaced by the 1/2¢ from the long Jubilee series (1/2¢ to \$5) issued to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Queen Victoria's accession to the throne.

In 1928, booklet panes for the 1¢ (Scott 149a), 2¢ (Scott 150a) and 5¢ (Scott 153a) were printed in sheets of 360 arranged in six vertical columns of 10 booklet panes each with each alternate column inverted (tête-bêche), Figure 3. The 1998 *Unitrade Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Stamps* estimates that "150 imperforate tête-bêche pairs of booklet panes existed from five complete sheets of 360 stamps. At least two of the original sheets were cut creatively into the various pairs and blocks" listed in their catalogue.

In its description, *Unitrade* goes on to say that "perhaps 50 sets of imperforate tête-bêche pairs of booklet panes remain intact today." These booklet sheets were not regularly issued, but made their way into philatelic hands by various means including from estate sales after senior officials of the post office who owned them died.

Many other Canadian stamps in the 1920s, 30s and 40s were printed and left imperforate and then given out as favour items. None are known in full press sheets. However, uncut press sheets of plate proofs of the 1938 pictorial issue (Scott 241-245 and C6) were offered at the American Bank Note Co. Archives Sale in September 1990. Two sheets, which have since been broken up, were in the sale. Each sheet was divided into four panes of 50 stamps. Gutter blocks and cross gutter blocks were amongst the configurations cut out of these sheets.

It was not until almost 40 years later, in 1996, that Canada Post once again made uncut press sheets commercially available. Since then seven sets of stamps have been released in uncut press sheets. Some have been sold at a premium above the face value, as they were signed by the artist and designers.

The first of this new series of uncut sheets was released in January 1996, with the introduction of an ongoing series of bird stamps. New series having been issued in 1997 and 1998 and, as these are unusually popular with the stamp buying public, they are likely to continue for the next few years. The birds portrayed on the 1996 stamps

were the American Kestrel, the Atlantic Puffin, the Pileated Woodpecker and the Ruby-throated Hummingbird (Scott 1591-1594).

The sheets of 12 stamps were issued in a diamond format. Five panes of 12 stamps were printed on the press sheets. Ten thousand special uncut sheets were printed of which 1,000 were signed. Because of this signing novelty it is likely that virtually all the signed sheets were sold. Another reason for this speculation is that Canada Post increased the number to 1,500 signed sheets for the 1997 and 1998 birds uncut press sheets but maintained the total printing of 10,000. Several distinctive differences were noted on the 1996 uncut press sheets made available to the public that indicated that these sheets were different from those used to print the regular stock. The 1996 sheets, as well as the 1997 and 1998, were sold at face value: \$27 in 1996 and \$54 in both 1997 and 1998.

The 1997 stamps featuring the Mountain bluebird, the Western grebe, the Northern gannet and the Scarlet tanager (Scott 1631-1634) and the 1998 stamps featuring the Hairy woodpecker, Great crested flycatcher, the Eastern screech-owl, the Gray-crowned rosy-finch and the (Scott 1710-1713) returned to a more regular format. They were issued in rectangular sheets of 20 stamps.

The uncut press sheets were made up of six panes of 20 (Figure 4). This configuration allowed for the more standard gutter pairs and blocks and cross gutter blocks (Figure 5). The signed uncut press sheets were sold for \$69 in 1996, a full \$42 over face value and for \$89.95 in 1997 and 1998, a markup of \$35.95 over the face value.

On the occasion of CAPEX 96, the World Philatelic Exhibition held in Toronto that year, Canada Post issued the second 1996 uncut press sheet. It contained three souvenir sheets (or souvenir panes as Canada Post calls them) of the Historic Vehicles series

issued yearly from 1993 to 1996. The 24 vehicles stamps were reissued in lower denominations (5¢, 10¢ and 15¢) with an additional 25th stamp at domestic rate (45¢) that showed the Bricklin, a short-lived Canadian-made car, which had not previously been issued separately.

The change to the smaller denominations allowed Canada Post to provide a souvenir product at the show at a very low price. The face value of the souvenir sheet was \$3.75. The uncut press sheet, which came wrapped in tissue paper and in a triangular box to prevent damage, was sold at \$20, \$8.75 over face. Although 25,000 were issued, it is unlikely that all the Vehicle uncut press sheets were sold. From time to time you still find them for sale in retail post offices in Canada. Uncut press sheets include, as a rule, all the printing information that is later trimmed off before sale. These include marginal guidelines, color blocks indicating which colors were used and how to register them, cutting marks, etc. The Vehicles sheets also have a sequential identification number from 1 to 25,000 indicating the order in which they were printed (Figure 6).

As an aside, Canada Post will not divulge the number of sheets that they sell for each issue. It is therefore unlikely that they have had any sellouts for these sheets except for the annual Lunar New Year uncut press sheets that they admit publicly to have been a sellout. The demand for these far outweighed availability.

The daily stampede to the Canada Post booth at PACIFIC 97 to buy, on a first-come, first-served basis, 50 uncut press sheets of the Year of the Ox (Scott 1630)



Figure 5: Gutter block from the uncut press sheet of the 1997 birds set.



Figure 4: Number 1,500 of 1,500 signed uncut press sheet for the 1998 birds set.



Figure 3: The upper three rows of booklets from the 2¢ uncut press sheets (Scott 150a). Photo from the 1998 *Unitrade Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Stamps*.



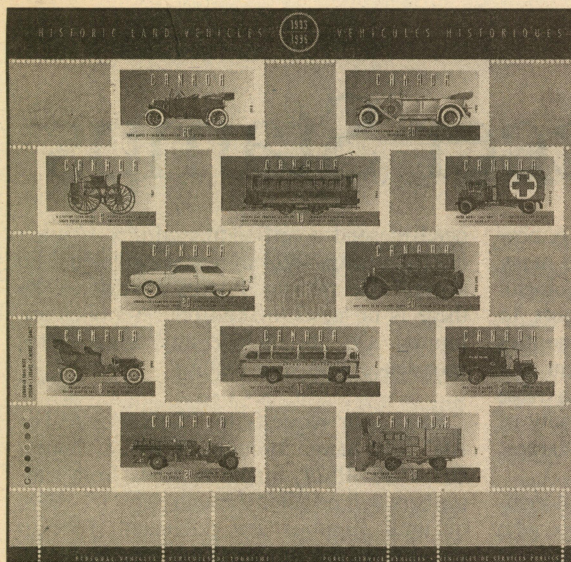


Figure 6: A section from the Historic Vehicles uncut press sheet showing the sequential sheet number.

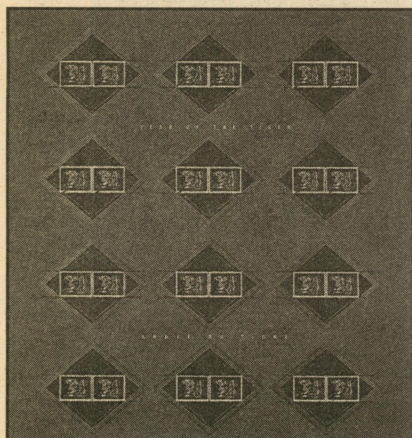


Figure 7: The sold-out uncut press sheet for The Year of the Tiger issued January 8.



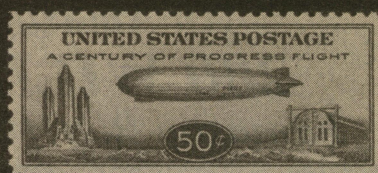
Figure 8: Uncut press sheet (660mm x 600mm) for the 125th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police commemorative.

was such a threat to security that the show organizers requested Canada Post find another way to sell them. They instituted a lottery on the third day of the show and the 50 winners had to be present at the draw and then pay \$20 for the sheet. The rush to the Canada Post booth to enter the lottery continued unabated every morning. It was quite a sight, particularly since the crowd was being gently controlled by two Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers in their striking scarlet uniforms.

The Lunar New Year uncut press sheets contain 12 souvenir sheets of two stamps each. Their face value is \$10.80. Fifteen thousand of the 1997 Year of the Ox uncut press sheets were offered at \$20 and with their quick sellout, 30,000 were ordered for the 1998 Year of the Tiger (Scott 1708,

Figure 7). These also sold out very quickly at \$24.95. None of these sheets were signed by the artist or the designer. As there are more Lunar New Years to celebrate, I guess collectors of uncut press sheets can look forward to another 10 between 1999 and 2008.

The latest in the series of uncut press sheets was issued on June 29, for the 125th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Figure 8. The two 45¢ stamps joined by a gutter (or tab depending on your definition) provide a continuous design going from the picture of an original male "Mountie" in 1873 to a 1998 female "Mountie" and showing, in the middle, the famous RCMP Musical Ride. The vibrant colors of the stamps and their original continuous design make for a very pleasing uncut press sheet.



#C18 \$70.00

## U.S. MINT F-VF, NH ★ SUPER SALE ★

Scott #	Price	Scott #	Price	Scott #	Price
488	3.20	577	1.50	C1	59.00
488LP	20.00	578	98.00	C2	89.00
489	4.80	579	87.50	C3	89.00
489LP	32.00	581	7.70	C4	21.20
490	.65	582	3.50	C5	80.00
490LP	4.40	583	2.00	C6	90.00
492	9.60	584	21.00	C7	2.25
492LP	58.00	585	14.50	C8	2.75
493	19.20	586	14.50	C9	7.00
493LP	120.00	587	6.50	C10	5.50
494	11.20	588	10.00	C11	3.85
494LP	60.00	589	22.00	C12	8.50
495	11.60	590	4.50	C13	310.00
495LP	72.00	591	52.00	C14	585.00
496	3.60	595	297.50	C15	900.00
496LP	26.80	597	.25	C16	4.50
497	20.00	598	.60	C17	1.95
497LP	124.00	599	.35	C18	70.00
498	.55	599A	110.00	C19	2.00
499	.55	600	6.00	C20	.80
500	245.00	601	3.00	C21	7.00
501	12.60	602	1.30	C22	6.00
502	15.75	603	3.00	C23	.30
503	12.00	604	.25	C24	6.75
504	9.60	605	.25	C25	.12
505	440.00	606	.25	C26	.18
506	13.60	610	.50	C27	1.00
507	28.00	611	5.40	C28	2.25
508	12.80	612	13.50	C29	1.65
509	14.40	614	2.40	C30	2.10
510	18.40	615	4.00	C31	7.20
511	9.60	616	24.00	E1	210.00
512	9.60	617	2.25	E2	203.00
513	11.60	618	4.20	E3	129.50
514	36.00	619	23.00	E4	525.00
515	50.00	620	3.50	E5	105.00
516	40.00	621	14.95	E6	77.00
517	70.00	622	9.95	E7	52.50
518	61.25	623	12.75	E8	80.50
519	380.00	630SS	375.00	E9	140.00
523	680.00	632-42	13.95	E10	227.50
524	280.00	647-48	14.70	E11	14.00
525	2.10	649-50	5.15	E12	19.60
526	26.00	658	1.75	E13	17.50
527	16.00	659	2.75	E14	2.10
528	9.60	660	3.25	E15	.60
528A	48.00	661	16.75	E16	.65
528B	20.00	662	16.75	E17	.55
529	3.00	663	12.25	E18	2.45
530	1.30	664	26.00	E19	1.25
531	9.80	665	24.00	E20	.50
532	35.00	666	75.00	E21	.60
533	195.00	667	13.00	E22	1.25
534	12.00	668	20.00	E23	1.10
534A	34.00	658-68	210.00	F1	56.00
535	9.25	669	2.75	K1	22.00
536	14.00	670	2.75	K2	22.00
537	10.00	671	2.30	K3	38.00
538	13.00	672	11.25	K4	46.00
540	14.00	673	16.00	K5	50.00
541	40.00	674	13.60	K6	62.00
542	12.00	675	39.00	K7	64.00
543	.60	676	21.50	K8	50.00
545	132.00	677	30.00	K9	50.00
546	92.00	678	36.00	K10	48.00
547	240.00	679	92.00	K11	54.00
548	4.00	669-79	260.00	K12	66.00
549	6.00	692	2.25	K13	96.00
550	34.00	693	4.25	K14	88.00
551	.20	694	1.70	K15	380.00
552	1.60	695	3.25	K16	300.00
553	3.00	696	6.30	K17	88.00
554	2.00	697	4.75	K18	78.00
555	17.30	698	7.50	Q1	3.15
556	18.90	699	7.50	Q2	3.65
557	17.30	700	13.00	Q3	6.65
558	29.75	701	33.00	Q4	18.50
559	7.70	692-701	69.95	Q5	18.50
560	42.00	704-15	17.95	Q6	31.50
561	15.00	723	7.50	Q7	45.50
562	22.75	730	20.00	Q8	87.50
563	1.60	731	19.00	Q9	48.00
564	8.40	735	9.50	Q10	182.00
565	5.00	740-49	6.95	Q11	52.50
566	22.00	750	28.00	Q12	260.00
567	22.00	751	9.00	QE1	1.15
568	19.95	756-65	7.00	QE2	1.25
569	35.00	803-31	19.95	QE3	1.85
570	53.00	832	5.50	QE4	14.00
571	42.00	833	14.00	JQ1	6.50
572	98.00	834	69.00	JQ2	55.00
573	175.00	839-51	19.95	JQ3	9.75
575	7.00	1030-52	11.50	JQ4	120.00
576	1.50	1053	58.00	JQ5	65.00

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