

Cello-paq panes part of packaging experiment

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Canada's Post Office Department introduced the cello-paq concept in September 1961. Cello-paqs were sealed cellophane packs that contained one or two panes of 20 or 25 stamps of the current definitive stamps. They were extended to the annual Christmas series when these were introduced in 1964 (Figure 1).

The special stamp panes contained in the cello-paqs have straight edges on all four sides, and are individually identified and valued in Vol. 2 of the *Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*.

Originally conceived to replace stamp booklets, since they cost less to produce, the cello-paq experiment ended in 1967.

The costs of packaging the cello-paqs were set Feb. 14, 1961, at \$15.53 per thousand for the 2¢ stamps and \$12.17 per thousand for the 5¢. All prices quoted in this article refer to Canadian dollars.

Because of the Canadian Bank Note Company's (CBN) experience with the Wrap Ade machinery and improvements made to the original plans, the cost of production was reduced by 26 percent for the 2¢ (\$11.48) and 35 percent for the 5¢ (\$8.15) on Jan. 10, 1962.

The machine assembled 20,000 2¢ cello-paqs in a day and 25,000 5¢

packs in the same time. The Post Office was unhappy with the "by thousand" packaging of CBN because the cello-paqs were "difficult to handle in bulk (and) because they are slippery and difficult to count." The Post Office wanted them in bundles of one hundred. CBN agreed on Feb. 6, 1962 to do so at an extra cost of 25¢ per thousand for the 2¢ and 20¢ for the 5¢. This extra expenditure, amounting to some \$1,150 per year, was approved by W. H. Wilson, the deputy postmaster general.

From the outset, a program was introduced to urge postmasters to promote cello-paqs over booklets, but it did not seem to work. J. V. Montague, director of accounting, in an Aug. 2, 1962 memorandum to J. A. MacDonald, the comptroller of the Post Office, already sounded the death knell for the cello-paqs. He wrote, "It appears there has been little success in increasing the sales of cello packs."

Montague proposed that a notice be printed in the Post Office's *Weekly Bulletin* in the General Section to discourage sales of postage stamps in booklet form. However, the same *Bulletin* included a mention that booklets needed to be provided to those who asked for them, and

for vending machines.

At a time when the motto was to encourage the sale of cello-paqs, the Post Office was increasing the number of booklet vending machines by 363 in fiscal year 1961-62 and another 100 between April 1 and July 31, 1962, for a total of just over 2000 machines in service on Aug. 1, 1962. With an increase in machines operating of 30 percent over 18 months, it is no wonder that booklet demand increased. Montague also sought suggestions from six postmasters who had a successful ratio of sale of cello-paqs to booklets. Supervisory officers used these suggestions when they discussed sales techniques on visits to departmental employees.

Wilson, in a June 22, 1962, letter to the chief administrative officer of the Republic of South Africa's Post Office, indicated that "the sales of our twenty-five cent booklets has been increasing rapidly each year to the point where last year the cost had reached twenty percent of our total budget for our postal supplies."

Furthermore, he writes that the cost of producing an equivalent number of booklets "is several times in excess of the equivalent number of stamps in



Figure 1. Canada's cello-paqs were introduced in 1961. Each pack contained one or two panes of 20 or 25 stamps.

Canada's Cello-paqs, 1961-67

All stamps were produced in panes of 20 or 25 with one or two panes to a pack.

Scott/ Unitrade*	Year	Denom.	No. of panes	Stamps per pane	Description
338a	1961	2¢	2	25	1954 Wilding issue. Two types exist: Type I has instructions at the side; Type II at top and bottom.
341b	1961	5¢	1	20	1954 Wilding issue. Two types as 2¢.
402a	1963	2¢	2	25	1963 Cameo issue.
402axx	1963	2¢	2	25	1963 Cameo issue, <i>precanceled</i> .
404b	1963	4¢	1	25	1963 Cameo issue.
404bi	1963	4¢	1	25	1963 Cameo issue, <i>fluorescent paper</i> .
405b	1963	5¢	1	20	1963 Cameo issue. One imperforate sheet was known; broken up into eight pairs and one block of four.
405q	1963	5¢	1	20	1963 Cameo issue. Winnipeg tagged, 2 bars.
434a	1964	3¢	2	25	Christmas
434ii	1964	3¢	2	25	Christmas, <i>fluorescent paper</i> .
434q	1964	3¢	2	25	Christmas, Winnipeg tagged 2 bars.
434v	1964	3¢	2	25	Christmas, Winnipeg tagged 2 bars and fluorescent paper.
443a	1965	3¢	2	25	Christmas
443q	1965	3¢	2	25	Christmas, Winnipeg tagged 2 bars.
451a	1966	3¢	2	25	Christmas
451q	1966	3¢	2	25	Christmas, Winnipeg tagged 2 bars.
457b	1967	4¢	1	25	1967 Centennial issue, <i>dull fluo- rescent paper</i> .
457i	1967	4¢	1	25	1967 Centennial issue.
458b	1967	5¢	1	20	1967 Centennial issue, <i>dull fluo- rescent paper</i> .
458bp	1967	5¢	1	20	1967 Centennial issue, Winnipeg tagged 2 bars.
476a	1967	3¢	2	25	Christmas.
476q	1967	3¢	2	25	Christmas, Winnipeg tagged 2 bars.
476qi	1967	3¢	2	25	Christmas, Winnipeg tagged 2 bars and fluorescent paper.
476qii	1967	3¢	2	25	Christmas, high fluorescent paper.

*The Unitrade Canada Specialized Catalogue uses Scott catalog numbers under license, with additional suffixes in some cases.

cello packs." In fact, it was nine times more costly.

In the same letter, Wilson gives other reasons for the introduction of cello-paqs. The first was health benefits of the sealed pack. He wrote, "in recent years

the sanitary feature had become increasingly significant. In the last year or two a general order was issued to our clerks to pass postage stamps across the wicket with the gummed side up."

A third reason was one of speedy service at Christmas time (Figure 2). The Post Office had experimented during the previous Christmas sea-

sons (1958-60) with manila envelopes containing \$1 worth of postage. These envelopes had been overprinted with "20 × 5¢ = \$1.00" or "50 × 2¢ = \$1."

The general postal consumer was not enthralled by the Cello-Paqs. They felt that they were too bulky for pocket or purse, too costly, too many stamps had to be bought at once and they were not as convenient as booklets. The only time they seemed to be popular was at Christmas, when consumers needed large quantities of stamps for their greeting cards.

Additionally, stamp collectors had some concerns with the waterproof M.S.T. 276-42 cellophane compound used by T.C.F. of Canada Ltd., a division of Celanese Corporation, to make the cello-paqs.

Doug Patrick, the stamp columnist for *The Globe and Mail*, wrote to the Post Office Department in early 1962 requesting to know whether "the nitric acid used in the manufacture of cellophane was likely to damage the dyes employed in the printing of postage stamps."

MacDonald replied on March 12, 1962, indicating that the cellophane used did not contain nitric acid, but that "all coatings of this type of film are, however, based on nitrocellulose which can evolve an oxide of nitrogen if it is decomposed under alkaline conditions."

He then goes on to guarantee that the cello-paqs coating composition is "chemically stabilized against such an



Figure 2. Canada's Christmas issues for 1966 and 1967 in 50-stamp packs, each containing two 25-stamp panes.



Figure 3. Two types exist of the 1961 Wilding issue packaging: with instructions along the side (Type I, left) and at top and bottom (Type II, right).

event." He also states that "millions of pounds of these films" have been produced in the commercial world with printing on them from various sources and inks, and that there has been no evidence of "bleaching or fading."

The Post Office had also tested this type of packaging with printing inks used to manufacture postage stamps and noted that "test samples have been retained for as long as twenty-one months and the stamps appear to be in perfect condition."

The following is an extract from the Post Office Department's release of Jan. 11, 1962 explaining how the panes from the 1953 Wilding issue contained in the Cello-Paqs were produced.

"The large stamp sheets of the manufacturer are cut for the 2-cent miniature sheets of twenty-five stamps and are printed from the same printing plate as the sheets which are cut to post office panes of one hundred stamps. Since these panes could be cut to four miniature sheets without loss, it was only

necessary to remove the first and every fifth perforating wheel to outline the blocks of twenty-five stamps with a gutter which could be guillotine cut.

"This procedure could not be followed for the 5-cent stamp because there would be wastage of twenty per cent. A new printing plate was laid down with six hundred stamp impressions and the normal wide gutters between panes were eliminated. The gutters between each block of twenty stamps was increased by a small fraction and, as in the case of the 2-cent sheets, perforating wheels were removed to provide the straight edges on all sides, coupled with the guillotine cutting in the gutters."

Responding to a request by H. G. Potts of Halfmoon Bay, B.C., to the Post Office, Canadian Bank Note, in a letter to the Post Office on Aug. 28, 1964, gave the following information as to the number of Cello-Paqs produced containing the Wilding 2¢ and 5¢ issues.

- 2¢ side wording – 5,185,400 packs of 2 panes.
- 2¢ top & bottom wording – unknown quantity of packs – 1,908,000 panes of 25 were printed.
- 5¢ side wording – 4,035,700 packs of one pane.
- 5¢ top & bottom wording – unknown quantity of packs – 170,000 panes of 25 were printed.

The reason the number of "top & bottom wording" packs are unknown is that CBN did not package the panes. They were delivered to the Post Office for insertion in preformed packs by Post Office staff.

Figure 3 shows the two types of the 5¢ Wilding issue cello-paqs, Scott 341b.

Cello-Paqs are gone but, more than 40 years later, booklets are still with us and are very popular with Canadian consumers, particularly in the Prairies, where there is a tradition of purchasing booklets as a result of a large rural delivery network established in those provinces in the 20th century. ■

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