

# Collecting Canada on a budget

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Is Canada an expensive country to collect? It can be, if your collecting ambitions include the earliest classic stamps, but there are dozens of specialized areas of Canadian philately that are fascinating and affordable — including some from the 19th century.

By choosing to concentrate on a smaller and more focused area, the collector on a budget has many opportunities to create a fine collection of Canadian stamps or postal history.

## 19TH CENTURY STAMPS

Queen Victoria reigned over Canada as a province and colony first, from 1837 until 1867, and then as a dominion, from the beginnings of the Canadian Confederation until her death in 1901. All Canadian stamp designs of the period portray the queen, with the exception of four.

Canada's first stamp was the 3-penny red, Scott 1, issued in 1851 (Figure 1). The design depicts a beaver, the first mam-



Figure 1. Canada's prized 3-penny Beaver stamp, Scott 1, is a classic issue that most collectors unfortunately cannot afford.

mal to be shown on a regularly issued stamp — if you make an exception of the bears on the 1843 St. Louis Postmaster's Provisionals — and the only rodent until the 1930s. The same beaver design was also used on two other 3p stamps of the 1850s, Scott 4 and 12, and on the 5¢ stamp of 1859, Scott 15.

The next two stamp designs that do not depict the queen show men: the queen's consort, Prince Albert (on the 6p stamps Scott 2, 5, 10 and 13, and on the 10¢ stamps Scott 16 and 17), and Jacques Cartier, the discoverer of Canada (on the 10p Scott 7, and the 17¢ Scott 19).

The final non-queen design of the era was the "XMAS 1898" commemorative in two color varieties celebrating the introduction of the Imperial Penny Postage (Scott 85 and 86).

The issues of the province of Canada, Scott 1-20, and the first issue of the dominion, Scott 21-33, include some formidable rarities that are beyond the means of many collectors.

However, some single stamps from the other 19th-century Queen Victoria series can be purchased reasonably and developed into very nice collections.

Because the stamps of this period have engraved designs, collectors have discovered an array of flaws and re-entries. Specialists also consider the varieties of papers used, the sometimes unstable inks (creating a range of color shades) and the large number of fancy cancels.

One frequently sees specialized single-stamp exhibits of the 1¢ (Scott 35) and 3¢ (Scott 37 and 41) Small Queen issue of

1870 (Figure 2). Also gaining popularity are single-stamp collections of the Leaf and Numeral issues of 1897-98, Scott 66-73 and 74-84, particularly since Peter Spencer started publishing his findings on these issues. His first book is titled *Pretty in Pink: The Plates and States of the Canada 1898 Two Cent Numeral Issue*.

## 20TH CENTURY STAMPS

Many early issues of the 20th century are popular among collectors and have been the subject of intense study. Some items may be difficult to acquire if one wishes to put together, for example, specialized collections of the Edward VII issues (Scott 89-95) and the King George V "Admiral" issues (Scott 104-134, 136-140 and 184). Again, however, the lower values (Figure 3) can be a treasure trove for those who like to look for re-entries, flaws and other varieties.

The least documented areas in Canadian philately are those of the late George V period (1928-36) and the George VI period (1937-52). During this time, Canada issued a variety of small definitive issues, as well some attractive engraved pictorials and commemoratives (Figure 4).

The field is wide open for collectors, and the study of lower values, including coil and booklet formats, would be affordable and appealing. Some of the higher-value definitives of these series, denominated 10¢ to \$1, can be fairly expensive, particularly in mint condition, but there are still many stamps from this era that are reasonably priced.

The Queen Elizabeth II period (1952



Figure 2. The 1¢ and 3¢ stamps from the 1870 Small Queens set are more reasonable, particularly in used condition; either can be developed into an interesting specialized collection.



Figure 3. Lower value stamps of the 1903 King Edward VII issue (left) and the King George V "Admiral" issue (right). Postally used stamps provide an affordable opportunity for collection and study.





Figure 4. Engraved stamps of the later George V period (left) and the George VI period (right) are available at reasonable prices.

to date) is another that provides opportunities for collectors. D. Robin Harris has produced seven well documented and highly specialized handbooks on definitives of the period: the Karsh, Wilding and Cameo issues; the Centennial series; the Caricature and Landscape series; the Environment series; the Artifact and Parliament series; the Wildlife and Architecture series; and the Fruit and Flag series (Figure 5).

These series are still very affordable and many collectors have now started turning their attention to them. There are many varieties to search out, and many new discoveries still to be made.

A different kind of challenge would be to complete a collection of modern commemoratives canceled with circular datestamps. It's a task tougher than you may think when you consider the barriers that exist: ink-jet cancels, stamps not canceled on larger envelopes or packages, and Canadian privacy legislation that prevents much commercial business

mail from reaching the collector market.

The collector on a budget could also consider assembling all the souvenir sheets issued by Canada Post. Not the sheetlets or small panes of 16 with marginal designs, but rather, those issues that fit the traditional definition of a souvenir sheet. The first, shown in Figure 6, was issued for CAPEX 78, the World Philatelic Exhibition held in Toronto in 1978. The souvenir sheet features a stamp-on-stamp motif (Scott 756a).

#### POSTAL HISTORY

Much 19th century postal history is difficult to acquire on a limited budget, but there are some wonderful exceptions. Covers and postal items of lower value definitives between 1870 and the end of the Queen Victoria era are often affordable.

One way to build an interesting postal history collection is to concentrate on a single county or a specific post office. Figure 7 shows examples of two reason-

ably priced stampless covers from Petite-Nation, Papineau County, Quebec.

Canadian postal history of the 20th century is mostly affordable and can be very rewarding, as few postal history collections of note have been put together for any issue of this period. There is still a wealth of new finds to be made, particularly concerning rates and documenting the earliest and latest known usages of postal markings.

The envelopes and mail thrown into the wastebasket today are the treasures of tomorrow. Elizabethan postal history is fascinating and relatively cheap. The mechanization process started in the 1960s brought about a variety of paper, ink and fluorescence experiments that can form an interesting collection. Figure 7 pictures a 1962 souvenir cover that commemorates the first sale of tagged stamps in Canada. These stamps were marked with a nearly invisible chemical compound that activated automatic mail sorting and canceling machinery.



Figure 5. Elizabeth II definitives are very collectible and affordable. Some sets extend over several years and include perforation varieties, coil versions and more.



**Figure 6.** Canada's first souvenir sheet shows classic early stamps. It is an attractive beginning of a souvenir sheet collection that is within most budgets and easily completed.



Postal rate increases since the 1970s have sometimes resulted in short and complex rate periods where modern postal history rarities can be found.

Another interesting collection would gather together usages of Canada's 13 semipostal stamps. The first 12 were issued in support of the 1976 Montreal Summer Olympic Games (Scott B1-B12) and the last was issued 20 years later in support of literacy (Scott B13), Canada Post's charity of choice.

Stampless mail of the 20th century is interesting as well. Parliamentary free franks, permit mail and metered mail are all examples of available and affordable modern stampless mail.

#### RAILWAY AND AIRMAIL

Because Canada is such a vast country, much of its mail was carried by train from the very beginning and by airplane later on. Canada had hundreds of railway post offices and railway stations handstamps and markings. A study of later railway mail routes from the 1930s to the 1970s can be rewarding and accomplished with a small budget, but the search can be exhausting, as the material is not plentiful.

Early airmail stamps and covers of Canada and Newfoundland are now reaching values similar to the more expensive classics of the 19th century. However, from 1928 to 1939, the Post Office created hundreds of special cachets that were stamped on government contract mails carried on a multitude of airmail routes within Canada (Figure 9). The cachets are highly the-

matic in nature and very affordable: most can be found for under \$5 each.

#### POSTAL STATIONERY

Many of Canada's postal stationery items are reasonably priced and a basic post-Confederation (1868) collection can still be assembled. Of course, collectors can also limit themselves to a specific era to focus the collection and lessen the cost.

The more adventuresome collector can try to collect the 500-plus postcards with stamp indicia issued since 1997 by Canada Post and the PostCard Factory. Even more difficult is locating examples that are postally used.

The "Presenting-En primeur" postcards that Canada Post used between 1991 and 1993 to announce its new issues are popular with some collectors. They come with and without printed permit indicia. Details of these cards and a checklist of issues were presented in the December 2000 *Scott Stamp Monthly*.

Canada Post also issues special commemorative envelopes when the Stamp

Advisory Committee decides that the subject proposed for a stamp is less deserving. This series of attractive envelopes was started in 1997 and is ongoing. The print run is low, between 5,000 and 27,000, with most being in the 5,000-to-12,000 range. The covers are affordable, usually priced between \$5 and \$10 in dealers' boxes. Not all are easy to find, as most dealers don't carry them, but they are worth the hunt.

The commemorative envelopes are not postal stationery items, as they do not have an imprinted stamp. Instead, they normally bear a regular definitive, postmarked with a special cancel only available on these envelopes.

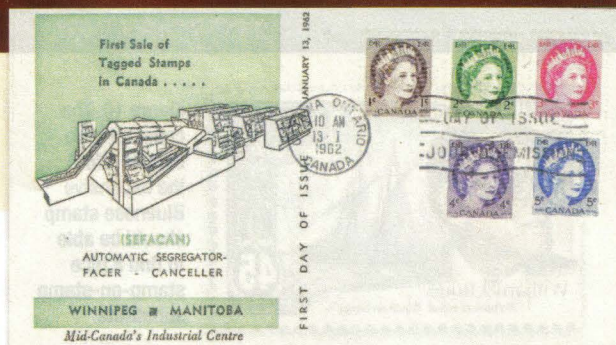
#### TOPICS AND THEMES

With some 2,500 stamps issued by Canada (and the British North America provinces that issued their own stamps in the 19th century), a wealth of thematic subjects present themselves to the topical collector. Almost 1,800 of these stamps have been issued since 1952 and are easily found at very rea-



**Figure 7.** Two stampless covers from Papineau County. One way to build a specialized postal history collection is to focus on a single Canadian county.





**Figure 8. A first-day cover of Canada's first tagged stamps. The application of chemical tagging was an early step in a widespread program of postal mechanization.**

sonable prices in dealers' postage stocks, sometimes even below face value.

With a few rare exceptions, such as the 50¢ Bluenose definitive of 1929 (Scott 158), even the pre-1952 thematic commemoratives or definitives can be obtained at reasonable prices.

But even if you cannot afford that Bluenose issue, two affordable stamp-on-stamp versions of it exist. Canada Scott 913 is a lithographed 60¢ stamp from the Canada 82 souvenir sheet that reproduces the original stamp; Canada Scott 1738 is lithographed with engraved details, and was released in 1998 to commemorate W.J. Roué, the ship's designer (Figure 10). It shows a large portion of the Bluenose stamp design.

If you are a traditional thematic collector you will find many options on Canadian stamps to choose from, including birds and other wildlife, flowers, ships, planes, trains, and even the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. If your tastes run a little more avant-garde, your thematic collection might be in need of a stamp showing french fries (Scott 1833d), a lawyer (Scott 1523d), a top hat (Scott 2024), the Canadarm space project (Scott 1999), a maestro's baton (Scott 1968), a



**Figure 9. Canada Post's official airmail cachets present a number of different collecting opportunities.**

June 2006

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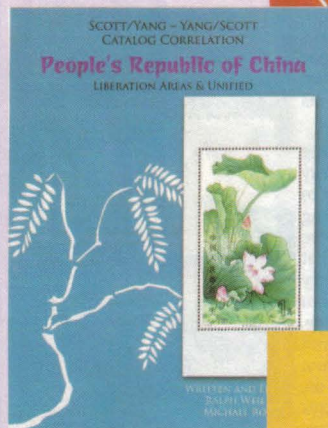
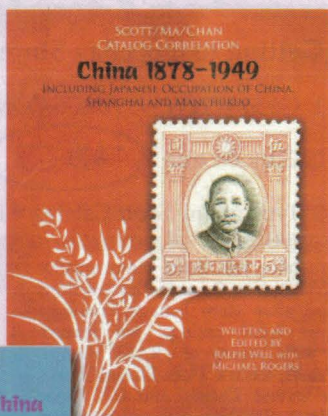
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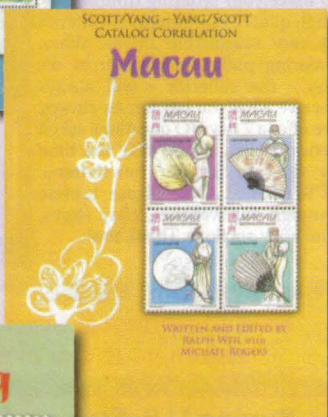
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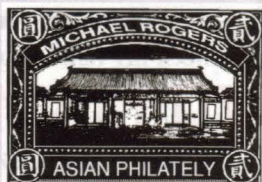
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## O CANADA



Figure 10. The collector who cannot afford the expensive Bluenose stamp should be able to find a nice stamp-on-stamp substitute.

chalkboard eraser (Scott 1961) or a reel of film (Scott 684) (Figure 11).

### THE PROVINCES AND COLONIES OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA

Much of the philatelic material from the provinces is beyond the pocketbook of most collectors, with the possible exception of the George VI stamp issues of Newfoundland. Assembling a collection of those stamps should be fairly easy. Supplementing it with appropriate postal history, however, could be a challenge.

Using just a little imagination, the collectors can find many areas in Canadian philately that can be collected with a minimum of cash and some dedicated searching. The trick is to start with a stamp catalog such as the *Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* or the *Unitrade Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Stamps*. Try to visualize what your collection will look like, and then see, with the catalog values as your guide, if the collection you have in mind will fit your budget. ■



Figure 11. Many modern Canadian stamps provide opportunities for the thematic collector, with topics ranging from the popular to the obscure.