

Daedalus takes flight on 1935 airmail

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Figure 1. Canada's 6¢ airmail stamp, Daedalus in Flight, is part of the 1935 Pictorials definitive stamp series.

A new Canadian definitive stamp set known as "the Pictorials" was issued June 1, 1935. It would be the country's final definitive series during the reign of King George V; he died the following January.

The set includes low, medium and high value stamps, one airmail and one special delivery stamp. Because of its design, the airmail issue (Scott C5) is known as Daedalus in Flight.

The 6¢ airmail is pictured in Figure 1.

The myth of Daedalus and his son Icarus is well known. To escape the wrath of King Minos and fly free from imprisonment, Daedalus used feathers and wax to build wings for himself and his son. However, despite his father's warnings, Icarus flew too close to the sun, causing the wax holding the feathers together to melt. Icarus fell into the sea and drowned, but Daedalus reached Sicily safely.

Alonzo Earl Foringer (1878-1948), a figure portraitist, muralist and illustrator, was commissioned to create an original design based on the Daedalus myth that would appear on the airmail stamp (Figure 2).

Foringer studied a number of existing artworks, including a photograph of the statue *Daedalus Equipping Icarus* by British sculptor Francis Derwent Wood (Figure 3). He was also provided with two rough sketches: one depicting the scene in the painting *Daedalus and Icarus*, by Sir Anthony van Dyck (1599-1614); the



Figure 2. It is believed that artist Alonzo Earl Foringer created this drawing of Daedalus. Foringer's later oil painting served as the model for the central stamp design.

Courtesy of Canadian Postal Archives (CPA); CPA POS-2593.



DAEDALUS EQUIPPING ICARUS FRANCIS DERWENT WOOD R.A.

The Memorial Exhibition of Mr. F.D. Wood R.A. 1904-1905

Figure 3. One inspiration for the stamp design was F.D. Wood's statue, *Daedalus Equipping Icarus*, shown above on a photograph from the Canadian Postal Archives. Courtesy of CPA; CPA 1990-241.0504.

Figure 4. As Foringer prepared his artwork for the airmail stamp, he consulted sketches based on Sir Anthony van Dyck's painting *Daedalus and Icarus*, and on a bas-relief sculpture in Rome. Courtesy of CPA; CPA 1990-241.0508; CPA 1990-241.0511.



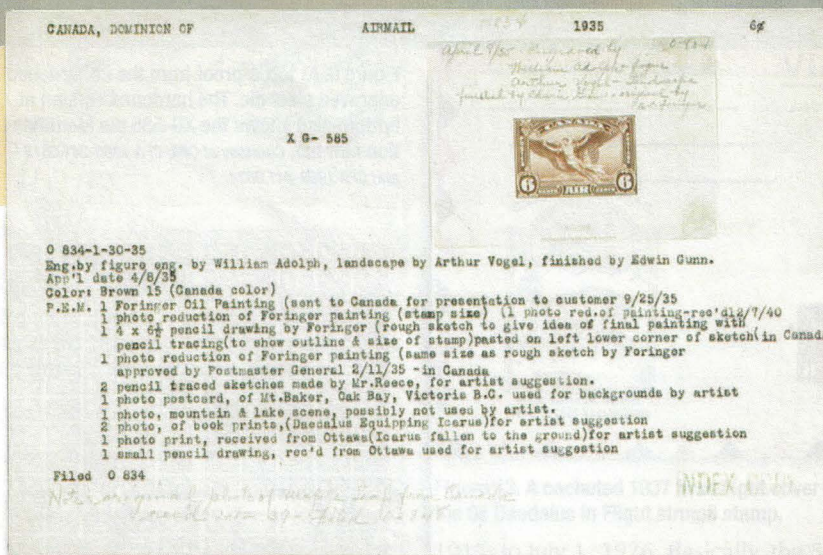


Figure 5. An index card from the American Bank Note Company includes details about the preparation of the airmail stamp artwork. Courtesy of CPA; CPA POS-2812.

other representing an antique bas-relief in the Villa Albani in Rome.

The sketches, shown in Figure 4, were created by a "Mr. Reece" — probably Arnold Reece, head of the American Bank Note Co. design department — after illustrations in *The World in the Air*, a two-volume set of books by Francis Trevelyan Miller, published in 1930.

Some details about these designs sources are recorded on an American Bank Note Co. index card for the airmail stamp, which is pictured in Figure 5. Foringer's final submitted design was an oil painting sent to the Post Office by American Bank Note on September 25, 1935.

Herman Herbert Schwartz (1885-1962) served as the designer of this stamp. Biographic details and a picture of Schwartz appeared in the September 2005 O Canada column. Among his many Canadian stamp credits was his design of the famous 50¢ Bluenose stamp of 1929 (Scott 158).

The composition of the stamp shows Foringer's *Daedalus in Flight* painting, with mountains in the background and the sea below. An early essay of the layout is shown in Figure 6.

The background is an artist's rendition of a view across the Straits of Georgia as seen from Oak Bay, near Victoria, British



Figure 6. A preliminary essay by stamp designer H.H. Schwartz shows many details of the central design and frame that appear on the finished stamp. Courtesy of CPA; CPA POS-2592.

Columbia. The depth of the background gives the impression of height and flight.

Foringer's design was engraved by William Adolph (1866?-1947). He began his work for ABN in the Philadelphia office between 1881 and 1892. In March 1892, he was appointed to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. He eventually returned to ABN in 1933 and worked from home during the last years of his life.

The Daedalus in Flight stamp was one of only two Canadian stamps Adolph worked on. The other is Scott 224, the 13¢ Charlottetown Conference issue of the same 1935 Pictorial definitive series.

Figure 7 shows a dated card with a photo model of the Daedalus design. Adolph's name is printed near the bottom of the card.

The landscape engraving was the responsibility of Arthur C. Vogel (1893-1959). In 1913, he started work at ABN and left in 1946 to do freelance engraving that included work for the E.A. Wright Bank Note Co. He worked on seven Canadian stamps, including the 20¢ Niagara Falls (Scott 225) in the Pictorial series.

The design was finished by Edwin H. Gunn (1876-1940). Gunn was an artist in his own right, having exhibited at the National Academy of Design and with the American Water Color Society. He began work at ABN in 1891, and in 1923 was promoted to the position of superintendent of the Engraving Division. Between 1908 and 1935, he engraved parts of 20 Canadian stamps.

Die proofs were prepared during and after the engraving process (Figure 8) and the final design was approved April 8, 1935.

The stamps were printed shortly thereafter in sheets of 200 which, when perforated, would be guillotined into four panes of 50 stamps each for distribution to post offices.

A plate proof of a 200-subject sheet is shown in Figure 9.

Five million stamps were printed us-



Figure 7. A photo model of the Daedalus design dated January 13, 1935. The card bears the name of engraver William Adolph. Courtesy of CPA; CPA 1990-241.0502.



Figure 8. At top, a proof from the unhardened engraved steel die. The hardened version at bottom also shows the XG-585 die identification number. Courtesy of CPA; CPA 1990-241.0512 and CPA 1990-241.0524.

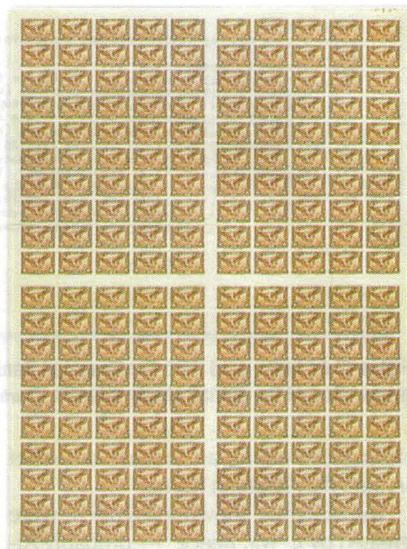


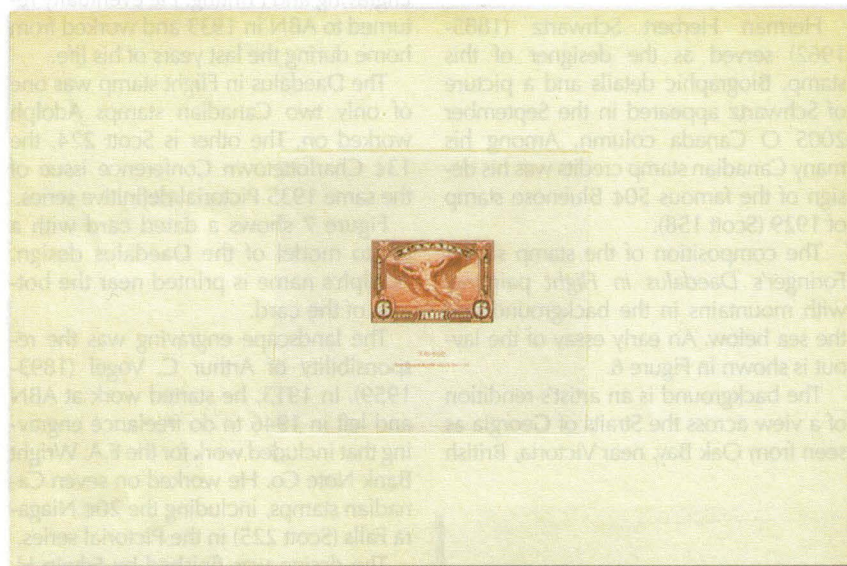
Figure 9. A complete 200-subject plate proof sheet. Four post office panes of 50 would be cut from the printed stamp sheets.

Courtesy of CPA; CPA POS-4332.

shows two diagonal strokes on the feathers under Daedalus' left wing, just above his calf. The stamp is from position 14 on the sheet's lower-right pane. A detail of the variety is shown in Figure 11.

Less well known is the "AIR" variety (Figure 12), which is similar to the shilling-mark variety on the 13¢ value of the 1935 Jubilee issue, as described in the August 2005 O Canada column. A distinctive white mark in the bottom tablet, similar to a shilling slash, is found near the top of the left arm of the "A" in "AIR." This variety appears on the stamp in position 10 of the lower left pane.

Canada issued nine airmail stamps between 1928 and 1946. The Daedalus in Flight issue falls in the middle of this set, and was the first airmail stamp inscribed with the 6¢ value. Two ear-



ing a single plate numbered "1." The plate block of 10 stamps in Figure 10 shows the plate number imprinted in the margin at left.

The stamp, perforated 12, comes in two shades: red brown and yellow brown.

Five panes are known imperforate, for a possible maximum total of 125 imperf

pairs. The number of surviving pairs is lower, however, as larger blocks, gutter pairs and gutter blocks are known. The imperforates were handed out as favors to senior Post Office employees, or sold or given to certain collectors.

The stamp has two major varieties. The "Moulting Wing" variety is well known: it

Figure 10. The plate block of 10 stamps from the lower left pane shows the plate number 1 in the margin.

Courtesy of CPA; CPA 1995-256.005.





Figure 11. Two stray diagonal marks characterize the "Moulting Wing" plate variety of the 6c airmail. Courtesy of Ralph E. Trimble.



Figure 12. The "AIR" variety of the 6c airmail shows a single stray white mark to the left of the A in "AIR." Courtesy of The Untrade Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Stamps.

lier 6c airmails (Scott C3-C4) are 1932 overprints on the 5c airmails, Scott C1 of 1928 and C2 of 1930.

The 6c domestic airmail rate was introduced July 1, 1931, to re-impose the war tax of 1c per item that had been collected previously from April 1,



Figure 13. A cacheted 1937 first-flight cover from Prince George to Manson Creek, franked with the 6c Daedalus in Flight airmail stamp.

1915, to July 1, 1926. Basically, the 5c per ounce airmail fee did not change until April 2, 1951, when the original 1c war tax and the additional 1c war tax added April 1, 1943, were incorporated into the basic postage rates, making the domestic airmail rate 7c.

The late 1920s and the 1930s were the heyday of experimental flights in Canada. The vastness of the country meant that several hundred flights were undertaken during that period. The Post Office participated in many of these events, applying an official cachet to envelopes traveling

on first flights or legs thereof.

Figure 13 shows an example of one of these Post Office-supported flights. The cover, mailed June 2, 1937, was one of 2,808 pieces of mail transported on the Prince George-Manson Creek leg of the first flight between Prince George and Takla Landing. The post offices at Manson Creek and Takla Landing — both in British Columbia — were both re-opened on the day of the inaugural flight. Both offices remain open, although they have been closed and re-opened several times since.

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