

Montreal history as seen through stamps

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The history of Montreal, Canada, the city in which I was born and where I lived the first 30 years of my life, can be told through stamps. Several stamps have been issued by Canada to honor the city and its accomplishments.

This, of course, is nowhere near a complete or even an academic look at the city.

Although Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain explored Hochelaga, the area now called Montreal, in 1535 and 1611, respectively, it wasn't until 1642 that a permanent settlement named Ville-Marie was established by Paul de Chomedey, sieur de Maisonneuve (Scott 1405, Figure 1).



Figure 1. This 42¢ stamp issued by Canada in 1992 pictures a view of Ville-Marie, the first permanent settlement of Montreal.



Figure 3. Jeanne Mance, who established the first hospital in North America, is shown on an 8¢ stamp (Scott 615) issued by Canada in 1973. The 47¢ stamp (Scott 1915) was issued in 2001 to honor the 300th anniversary of the Great Peace of Montreal.

Cartier is honored on Scott 7, 17, 97, 208, 754, 756 and 1011, and Champlain is the subject of Scott 97, 227, 379, 2155. A selection of stamps honoring the explorers is shown in Figure 2.

In 1645, Jeanne Mance (Scott 615) established the Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal, the first hospital in North America. By 1701, the French had come to terms with 39 native tribes, who signed the Great Peace of Montreal that year (Scott 1915). Both stamps are shown in Figure 3.

In 1760, Montreal fell to the British and became part of British North



Figure 2. Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain explored Hochelaga, the area now called Montreal, in 1535 and 1611, respectively. The two explorers have been honored on several Canadian stamps.

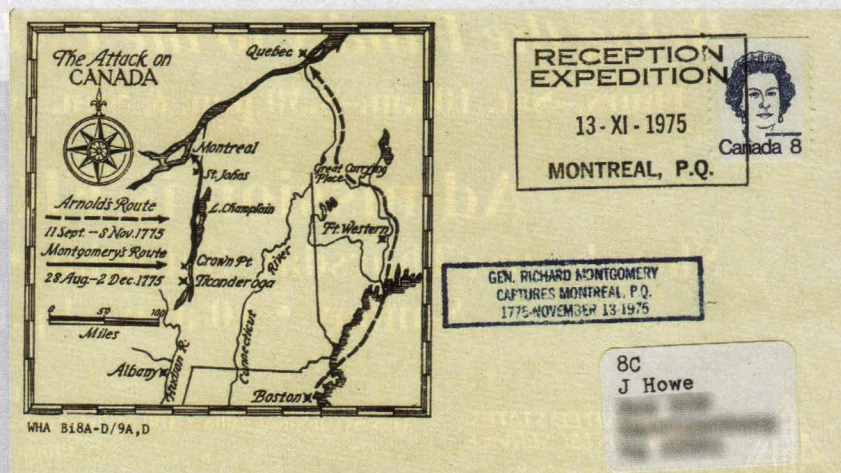


Figure 4. This souvenir cover commemorates the 200th anniversary of the 1775 capture of Montreal by the Americans. The cover was sent from Montreal to Virginia.



Figure 5. Montreal is known for its architecture and historical buildings. Many have been shown on Canada's stamps, including the cross atop Mount Royal, St. Joseph's Oratory, Jacques Cartier Bridge, Notre-Dame Cathedral and Montreal Botanical Gardens.

The city was incorporated in 1832 and served as the capital of the country from 1844 to 1849.

Figure 5 shows a selection of stamps that depict Montreal's most important architectural symbols. Sites shown on Canadian stamps include the Mount Royal cross (Scott 1404 and 1407a), Olympic Stadium (Scott 682 and 688), Place Ville-Marie (Scott 687, 1404 and 1407a), St. Joseph's Oratory (Scott 2020), Jacques Cartier Bridge (Scott 2100), Notre-Dame Cathedral (Scott 687), Montreal Botanical Gardens (Scott 1314) and the city's art-laden Metro system (Scott 1404, 1407a and 2030).

Architecturally, among the most unusual aspects of Montreal housing are the thousands of outside wrought-iron staircases adorning the front of multi-level rental units. An example is shown on Scott 1755e (Figure 6).

Most Montrealers would be shocked to know that the construction of these staircases was banned in 1940 because of the deterioration of the quality of work-

manship and because real estate developers were adding them with no respect to architectural integrity. The staircases were reintroduced in 1994 and are allowed to be built only on streets where these structures already exist.

The oldest building in Montreal is Maison Saint-Gabriel (Scott 1755c), founded by St. Marguerite Bourgeoys (Scott 660) to house the women sent from France to Canada to marry Montreal colonists (Figure 7).

Two of the biggest draws in Las Vegas in the last few years have been Céline Dion and Cirque du Soleil, both from Montreal. Cirque du Soleil (Scott 1819b, Figure 8) has no permanent venue in Montreal, but the city houses its headquarters, which employs 1,600 people.

Montreal author Mordecai Richler created some of Canada's most memorable fictional characters: Duddy Kravitz and Jacob Two-Two. One of Richler's most revered works is *St. Urbain's Horseman*.



Figure 6. A wrought-iron staircase is shown on this 45¢ stamp issued in 1998. The stamp is from a sheetlet of nine stamps.

Montrealers love movies, particularly those about Montrealers. Going to see a Canadian-made movie is a patriotic duty in Canada, and for Montrealers, it's sheer entertainment. Few of these movies are represented on stamps, although many have won awards at the Oscars and at the Cannes Festival. Three films honored on stamps are *Mon Oncle Antoine* (Scott 1616a), *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (Scott 1616b) and *Les Ordres* (Scott 1616c). The stamps are



Figure 7. Maison Saint-Gabriel (Scott 1755c), the oldest building in Montreal, was founded by St. Marguerite Bourgeoys, who is shown at right on Scott 660.



Figure 8. Performers from Cirque du Soleil are pictured on this 46¢ stamp from one of the 1999-2000 Millennium souvenir sheets.



Figure 9. Montreal authors Gabrielle Roy (Scott 1624), Roger Lemelin (Scott 1829c) and Émile Nelligan (Scott 818) are honored on stamps issued by Canada.



Figure 10. Music is important to the cultural heritage of Montrealers. Canadian stamps have honored the Montreal Symphony Orchestra; Montreal's most famous jazzman, Oscar Peterson; and the Montreal Jazz Festival.

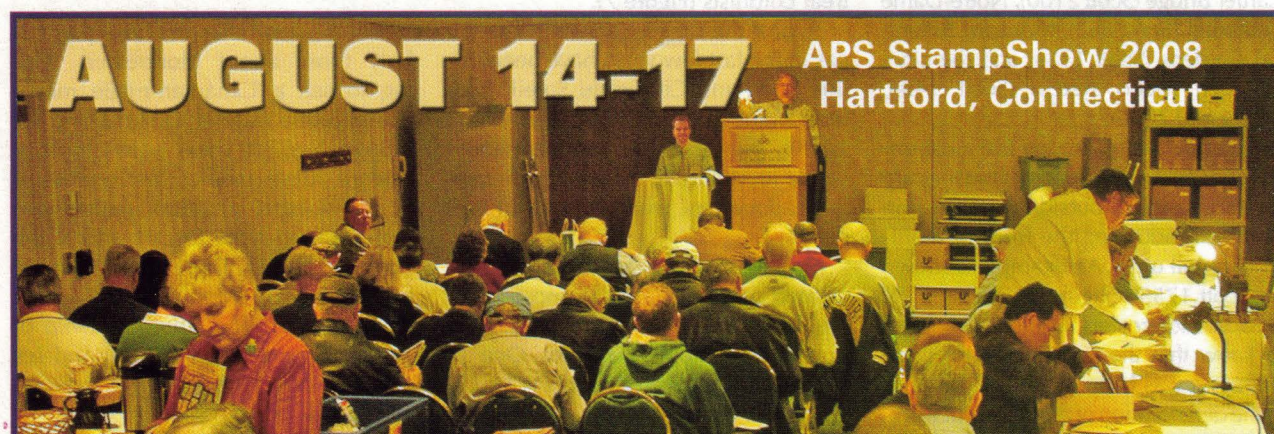
contained in two souvenir sheets.

Many authors have featured Montreal in their writings. Authors honored on stamps include Gabrielle Roy (Scott 1624), Roger Lemelin (Scott 1829c)

and Émile Nelligan (Scott 818), the subjects of stamps shown in Figure 9.

Some of the current Montreal cultural activities that attract worldwide attention are the Just for Laughs com-

edy festival, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra (Scott 1010) and the Montreal Jazz Festival (Scott 2021). Montreal's most famous jazzman is native son Oscar Peterson (Scott 2118). The



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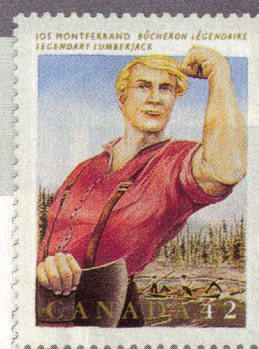
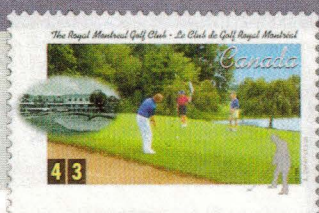


Figure 11. The Royal Montreal Golf Club, the Grand-Prix de Montréal and the Montreal Canadiens hockey team are three of many sports themes featured on Canadian stamps.

Figure 12. Fur trader and boxer Jos Montferrand is pictured on this 42¢ stamp, one of four stamps issued in 1992 in the Legendary Heroes set.

stamps for the orchestra, festival and Peterson are pictured in Figure 10.

Shown in Figure 11 are three Canadian sports stamps with ties to Montreal. Montreal is home to Canada's oldest golf club, The Royal Montreal Golf Club, founded in 1873 (Scott 1557), and to Canada's first YMCA, founded in 1851 (Scott 1925).

The Grand-Prix de Montréal is held every year at the Gilles-Villeneuve

track, named for the famous Montreal Formula One racer (Scott 1647-1648 and 1648a).

One of the most notable Canadian sport franchises is the Montreal Canadiens hockey team. The team is honored on Scott 1444, 1638c-1638d and 1638f, 1885a, 1935b-1935c, 1971c and 1971f, 1972d and 1972f, and 2017a and 2018a. The Canadiens have won 24 Stanley Cups, nine of which were won between 1956 and 1969. The team captured its last Stanley Cup in 1993, and its current drought is the longest in the team's history.

Montreal has been home to some of the world's strongest men: lumberjack, fur trader and boxer Jos Mont-

ferrand (Scott 1435, Figure 12); lumberjack, circus performer and tavern owner Louis Cyr; strongman and television and film performer The Great Antonio; and Ben Weider, Napoleonic scholar and founder of a worldwide bodybuilding empire.

By 1817, Montreal was well-established. The Bank of Montreal, Canada's oldest chartered bank, was founded and acted as the central bank of the country until the Bank of Canada was established in 1935.

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Figure 13. Lachine Canal, a major international port in Montreal, is shown on this 45¢ Canals of Canada stamp issued in 1998.

In 1825, Montreal became a major international port with the opening of the Lachine Canal (Scott 1731, Figure 13). The City of Montreal is built on an island — the Montreal region is an archipelago of more than 400 islands — and communications are important to its economic well-being. In 1854, the railway-friendly Victoria Bridge was built; at the time, it was the longest bridge in the world.

The year 1959 saw the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, which begins at Montreal. The seaway is shown on Scott 388, 457, 457p, 467 and 1015, two of which are pictured in Figure 14.

The construction of Montreal's underground city began in 1962, and today it continues as the largest such complex in the world. Montreal's subway system opened in 1966, in time to be available for what was then the world's most successful world's fair, Expo 67 (Scott 469). The city also was host to the 1976 Olympic Games (Scott 623-624, 629-632, 644-647, 656-657, 664-666, 681-



Figure 14. The St. Lawrence Seaway, pictured on these two stamps, begins at Montreal.



Figure 15. Canada issued several stamps to promote the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games.

688 and B1-B12). Stamps honoring the 1976 Montreal Olympics are pictured in Figure 15.

Montreal is home to the Canadian Space Agency (Scott 1999a-1999h); Pratt and Whitney, aircraft engine manufacturers (Scott 1596, 1807c); and Canadair, maker of world-renowned regional jets (Scott 1596).

More than 40,000 Montrealers are employed by the biotechnology or life-sciences sectors (Scott 1598); approximately 110,000 Montrealers work in information technology (Scott 1597).

Canadian astronauts are shown on a souvenir sheet of eight 48¢ stamps issued in 2003. Three stamps from the sheet are pictured in Figure 16, featuring astronauts from Montreal: Robert Thirsk, Dave Williams (a McGill University graduate) and Julie Payette.

The world's fifth largest brewery, Molson Coors Brewing Company, originates in Montreal. The company was founded in 1786 by John Molson, who was honored with a 34¢ stamp in



Figure 16. Astronauts Robert Thirsk, Dave Williams (a McGill University graduate) and Julie Payette, all from Montreal, are pictured on stamps from a 2003 souvenir sheet.

1986 (Scott 1117, Figure 17).

Snowmobiles hail from Montreal, where their manufacturer, the Bombardier Company, is headquartered. Snowmobiles are depicted on Scott 1552b and 1552c (Figure 18), 1605e, 1605u, and 1832d. The company employs 56,000 worldwide and has annual revenues of almost \$15 billion. Since the 1980s, the company has had a voracious appetite for acquiring transportation manufacturing companies. The company acquired Canadair and de Havilland aircraft, and established itself as the world's largest passenger-train, subway-car and light-rail car manufacturer.

Plexiglas was invented in Montreal in 1931 by William Chalmers, a McGill University graduate chemistry student, as was the snowblower, by Arthur Sicard in 1927 (Scott 1527c, Figure 19).



Figure 17. John Molson, founder of the Molson Coors Brewing Company in Montreal, is pictured on this 34¢ stamp issued in 1986 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Molson's death and the bicentennial of the founding of the brewery.



Figure 18. This 50¢ stamp from the Historic Vehicles series shows a 1948 Bombardier B-12 CS multi-passenger snowmobile. The Bombardier Company is located in Montreal.



Figure 19. A 1927 Sicard snow remover/snowblower is shown on this 50¢ stamp issued in 1994. This stamp also is from the Historic Vehicles series. The snowblower was invented in Montreal.