

The 1967 Centennial definitive issue

CHARLES J.G. VERGE



Figure 1. The complete set of Centennial definitives. The stamps were issued beginning in 1967 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Confederation.

On February 8, 1967, Canada's Post Office Department issued a complete new series of definitives to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Canadian Confederation. This 40-year-old issue (Scott 454-465, 465A-B, 543-544, Figure 1) has turned out to be the most complex and fascinating definitive series ever produced in Canada.

The series made its debut at a time when Canada's Post Office Department, like many other postal administrations, was in the throws of experimentation to produce a better product more conducive to mechanical sorting and canceling in attempts to modernize the mail system. Canada's first experiments in this area started January 13, 1962, when the 1¢ through 5¢ values of the 1954 Wilding issues (Scott 337-341) were printed with additional phosphor bands.

Although available nationally, these stamps were to be used in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where the Segregator, Stacker, Facer-Canceler (SEFACAN) equipment machine was on trial. The machine is shown in Figure 2 in the cachet of a first-day cover for the Wilding phosphor-tagged stamps issued in 1962.

The installation of the SEFACAN was the first of its kind in North

America and one of the first of four machines to go into operation in the world.

Two different taggings were used on the Wildings. The stamps either had a 4-millimeter vertical phosphor center bar or a 4mm bar set over the perforations, giving two 2mm bars to each stamp or one 2mm bar either on the right or the left of the stamp. The machine detected these bars when a shortwave ultraviolet light made the phosphor bands glow under the light for several seconds. Collectors call this process Winnipeg tagging.

In 1966 the Pitney-Bowes Corporation developed the MK-11 facer-canceler. It worked by reflecting a light beam on the moving letter into the machine's electric-eye sensor. The Post Office installed this machine in several Canadian post offices in the late 1960s.

Continuing its experimentation, the Post Office developed and adopted a third type of facer-canceler system, which was installed in the Ottawa, Ontario, sorting plant. The system used phosphor tagging on the stamps, known to stamp collectors as Ottawa or general tagging. Two 3mm phosphor bars were placed vertically on the perforations on each side of the stamp. Shortwave ultraviolet light

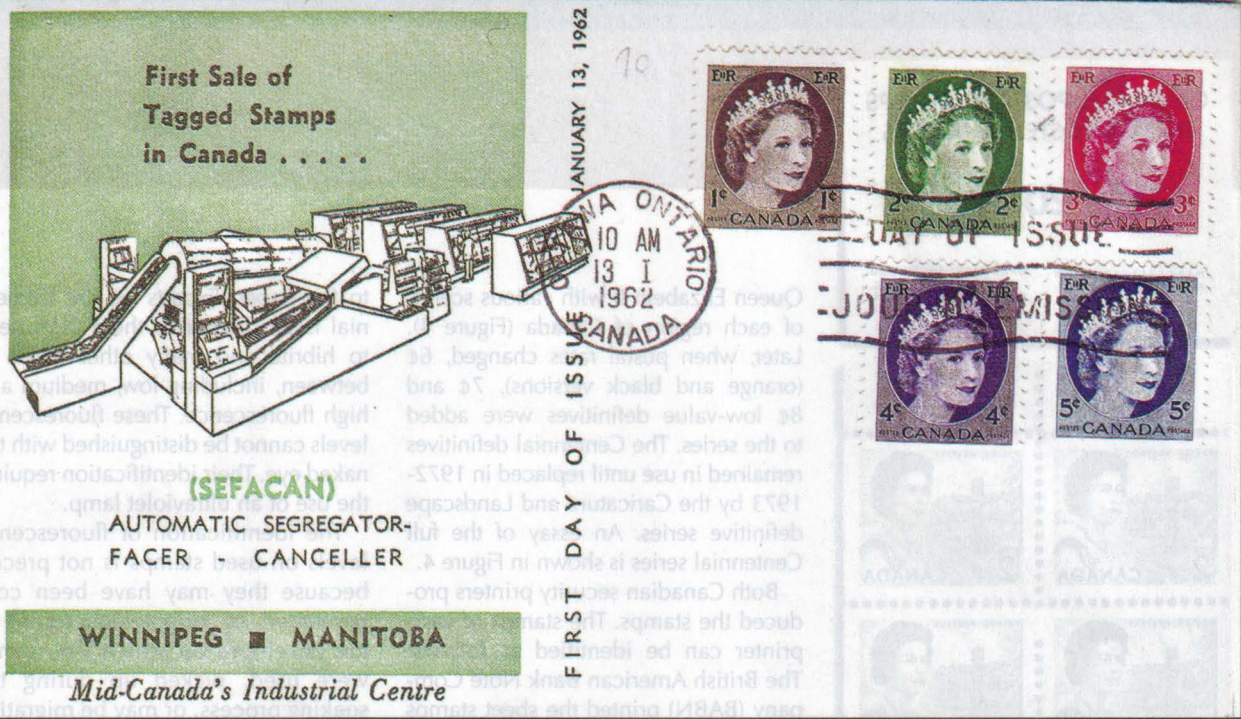


Figure 2. This first-day cover is for the 1962 Wilding phosphor-tagged stamps. The cachet shows a SEFACAN facer-canceller

causes the phosphor to glow, but only while it is exposed.

The stamps and the machine were introduced for use in November 1971. Two types of Ottawa or general tagging were used and are identified as OP-4 and OP-2 tagging.

Extreme caution should be taken with stamps bearing the OP-4 tagging that was used for stamps printed from November 1971 until October 1972. The taggant migrates onto and through stamps, booklet covers and album pages. Acetate mounts reduce the possibility of contamination, but leaching can still occur.

All three tagging machines were in operation during the period the Centennial definitives were current. Figure 3 shows the different phosphor tagging used for the Centennial stamps.

The story of the Centennial issue is long and would take several articles to do it in-depth justice, so I will present an overview of the series.

D. Robin Harris, editor of the *Uni-trade Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Stamps* and author, with Léopold Beaudet, of the acclaimed *Centennial Definitive Series, 1967-1973* handbook (available online at www.adminware.ca) says that the Centennial series is known for several firsts. General tagging and comb perforations were introduced for the first time with this issue, Canadian stamp sizes went metric, and integral booklets were produced. The stamp pane inside an integral booklet is affixed to the covers by a thin line of glue along the selva (or margin paper) edge. The panes in earlier booklets were affixed with a stamp through the pane selva.

The original series comprised five low-value stamps: 1¢, 2¢, 3¢, 4¢ and 5¢. The medium-value and high-value denominations were 8¢, 10¢, 15¢, 20¢, 25¢, 50¢ and \$1.

The medium-value and high-value stamps feature monochrome engravings of paintings by Canada's most famous artist group, the Group of Seven.

The low-value definitives show
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Figure 3. This diagram shows the different phosphor-tagging systems used while the Centennials were current. The two examples at top and the one in the middle are Winnipeg tagged, and the bottom example is general tagged. Winnipeg tagging has a brief afterglow when ultraviolet light is removed.



Figure 4. This essay of the full Centennial series is a black-and-white ink drawing on a photochemical print with acetate overlay.
Courtesy of the Canadian Postal Archives



Figure 5. The front and back of the booklet sold in machines made by the Opal Manufacturing Co. Ltd.



Figure 6. The "airplane in the sky" variety of the 1¢ stamp, which shows the northern lights and a dog team.

Queen Elizabeth II with various scenes of each region of Canada (Figure 4). Later, when postal rates changed, 6¢ (orange and black versions), 7¢ and 8¢ low-value definitives were added to the series. The Centennial definitives remained in use until replaced in 1972-1973 by the Caricature and Landscape definitive series. An essay of the full Centennial series is shown in Figure 4.

Both Canadian security printers produced the stamps. The stamps of each printer can be identified as follows: The British American Bank Note Company (BABN) printed the sheet stamps and booklets that are perforated 10×10 or 12½×12. The Canadian Bank Note Company (CBN) printed all the perf 12 stamps produced in sheets, booklets and coil rolls.

The initial printings (1967) were on plain paper. Starting a year later, brighteners were added to the paper, giving varying degrees of fluorescence

to the paper. Experts on the Centennial issue categorize them from dead to hibrite and many other levels in between, including low, medium and high fluorescence. These fluorescence levels cannot be distinguished with the naked eye. Their identification requires the use of an ultraviolet lamp.

The identification of fluorescence levels on used stamps is not precise because they may have been contaminated by brighteners found in the envelopes on which the stamps were used, picked up during the soaking process, or may be migrating OP-4 tagging.

Paper varieties exist, such as the ribbed paper found on some of the 2¢ and 8¢ (Parliament), and the 1¢, 7¢ and 8¢ (Parliament) booklet stamps, and the creamy uncoated paper used for a portion of the 3¢ printings.

The Post Office also experimented

(Continued on page 28)



Figure 7. The "totem pole eyes" varieties of the 2¢ stamp. From left to right: four eyes closed, top left eye opened and four eyes open.



Figure 8. The engraver's slip variety on the 5¢ shows a stroke in the upper part of the "5." The stamp features lobster traps and a boat.



Figure 9. The re-entry on the 6¢ orange stamp shows doubling of the "C" in "CANADA."



Figure 10. This block of four of the 6¢ orange postal forgery was meant to defraud Canada Post Office.

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with gum on this series. A very shiny gum known as dextrin is on the early printings; a new PVA gum was introduced in 1971. The PVA gum is matte and almost invisible. Some sheets of some values, particularly the medium and high values, were issued with a spotty white gum. Sheets of the 1¢ and 6¢ (die 1a) stamps are known printed on the gum side.

Booklets for the Centennial series are numerous and basically fall under the same rules as sheet stamps when it comes to printers, fluorescence, perforations and gum. The different levels of fluorescence also affect the booklet cover stock. As a result, there is an almost infinite number of collectible booklets based on the fluorescence-level mix of the cover and of the stamp pane or panes.

An unusual vending-machine booklet

called the Opal booklet was placed on sale on October 26, 1970. An example is shown in Figure 5. The name is taken from the dispensing machine manufacturer, the Opal Manufacturing Co. Ltd.

The booklet was made up of one pane of eight stamps printed on hi-brite-glazed paper containing four each of the 2¢ and 3¢ stamps separated by a gutter. The booklets contained 20¢ worth of stamps but sold for 25¢. A small number of booklets had a row

of perforations through the middle of the gutter at the booklet fold. This item has been extensively faked, and stamp expertizers are wary of issuing certificates for this variety.

Coils were produced in rolls of 500 (Scott 466-468, the 3¢, 4¢ and 5¢) or 100 (Scott 468A-468B and 549-550, the 6¢ orange, 6¢ black, and 7¢ and 8¢ stamps). The coils have two major varieties: the paste-up pairs, which are usually off center, and the jump strips (collected in strips of four stamps), which are also off center, with the designs of the two stamps where the jump occurs slightly out of alignment from one another, hence its name.

Varieties exist for some values of the series. The 1¢ (Scott 454) has an "airplane in the sky" flaw found on booklet panes produced by the BABN in 1967 (Figure 6).

The 2¢ Queen and Totem Pole stamp (Scott 455) has several eye varieties. The major ones are four eyes closed, top left eye open and four eyes open. Harris wrote about this variety in his *Centennial Definitive Series, 1967-1973* handbook:

"In early 2000, Léopold Beaudet did additional research including studying proofs of the two printing plates at the National Archives in Ottawa, ON. The ... diagrams [shown here in Figure 7] are based on his findings and add much to the initial discoveries.

"The 'Blinky' varieties are based on how the two pair of eyes on the Totem Pole are printed. In the normal state, all four eyes are fully open (i.e. a solid dot of colour). Various combinations of missing dots and partial dots result in what appears to be "blinking" Totem Poles!

"Thirty-three different types (from thirty-seven stamps of the 1200 found on the six panes of each of 2 plates) have been plated by Léopold ..."

The 5¢ (Scott 458) has a stroke in the upper part of the "5," likely an engraver's slip. This variety is found in position 11 only on plate 3 (Figure 8). This variety can be found on both untagged and tagged stamps.

The 6¢ orange (Scott 459) comes with almost 100 constant plate varieties, including the one shown in Figure 9, the doubling of the "C" of "CANADA." It is almost an old-fashioned re-entry.

Also, the 6¢ orange was forged to defraud the post office. An example of this postal forgery is shown in Figure 10.

The 6¢ black (Scott 460) was separate-



Figure 11. The three dies used for the printing of the 6¢ black stamp (Scott 460), from left to right, die I, die II and die IA. Die I exhibits weak engraving; die II shows strong engraving. Dies I and II (perf 12½×12) were used by the British American Bank Note Company (BABN). Die IA, which is similar to die I, was used only by the Canadian Bank Note Company (CBN).

KATHLEEN WUNDERLY



Figure 12. The "extra spire" variety on the 8¢ Library of Parliament with the design portion of the normal stamp on the left.

ly engraved by the two companies. Three dies were used for printing this stamp. The differences in the dies are shown in Figure 11. Die I has weak engraving; die II exhibits strong engraving.

The BABN used dies I and II (perf 12½×12), and although die IA is similar to die II, die 1A was only used by CBN for the perf 12 stamps it printed.

The 8¢ (Scott 544) has more than 75 constant cylinder varieties. The most impressive one is the "extra spire" variety recorded on both the untagged and tagged stamps. The variety is shown in Figure 12 next to the design portion of a normal stamp.

This is an elusive variety. Harris went through more than 18,000 copies of the stamp, one at a time, to find this very noticeable variety. You don't need a magnifying glass to locate it. He found only four, meaning he found approximately one for every 4,500 stamps he examined. Harris says that the "extra spire" variety comes from the top row of the pane of 100 (10×10). The exact position is unknown, but he believes that it comes from plate 4, issued in July 1972. Seven plates were used for this stamp.

Only one variety, not illustrated here, exists for the medium-value and high-value stamps. The variety is referred to as the "plastic flow" variety, which results in the doubling of the denomination numerals on the 8¢ and the 15¢.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All illustrations in this article, except Figures 1, 2 and 4, are courtesy of D. Robin Harris, author of Centennial Definitive Series, 1967-1973.

May 2007

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