

National Postal Museum houses British North America philatelic treasures

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Many important items of British North America (BNA) philately can be found in public or private institutions throughout the world. For example, one of the greatest Newfoundland airmail collections is in the British Library, and some unique, never-before-seen items are housed in the Royal Collection in London and in Royal Mail's archives.

Some may be surprised to learn that several BNA rarities reside at the Smithsonian Institution's National Postal Museum (NPM) in Washington, D.C.

Individual items of note can be found in many of the collections in the vault of the NPM. The William Ahmanson collection has the largest number of gems of traditional philately in the NPM holdings. The Ahmanson collection has complete mint collections of all the BNA provinces, including British Columbia and Vancouver Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland. The collec-

tion includes rare Newfoundland airmail stamps.

The value of the Ahmanson collection is staggering, cataloging up to \$1 million depending on condition and whether the stamps have original gum. Highlights of British Columbia and Vancouver Island (Figure 1) include Scott 1 and 3 and the surcharged stamps of 1867-71 (Scott 8-18), some of which were never issued.

Highlights of New Brunswick (Figure 2) include Scott 1-4, including the two shades of the 1/- stamp of 1851 and an example of the infamous 5¢ Charles Connell stamp (Scott 5) that was printed but never issued.

The Nova Scotia collection (Figure 3) comprises all issues from 1851-57 (Scott 1-7), including the two shades of the 1/- stamp. The highlights of Prince Edward Island are Scott 2 and 3.

The first 17 stamps of Newfoundland in the collection (Scott 1-11, 11A, 12, 12A and 13-15) make a spectacular display.

This group includes the 1/- orange stamp of 1860, which is annotated on the album page shown in Figure 4 as being on vertical laid paper. Volume 2 of the 2008 *Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* mentions this stamp in a footnote: "A 1sh exists in orange on horizontally or vertically laid paper. Most authorities consider these to be proofs. Value, \$10,000."

The stamps issued for the 1919 Hawker flight (Scott C1), the De Pinedo flight (Scott C4) and the Columbia flight (Scott C5) are in very fine condition and, with the remainder of the Newfoundland airmails, form an ensemble that is rarely seen (Figure 5).

The Canada section of the Ahmanson collection is not as impressive as the provinces section. Missing are some of the key early items required for a complete Canada collection, particularly the 3-penny Beaver stamp on laid paper (Scott 1) and the 12d black (Scott 3).

The NPM has a reference collec-

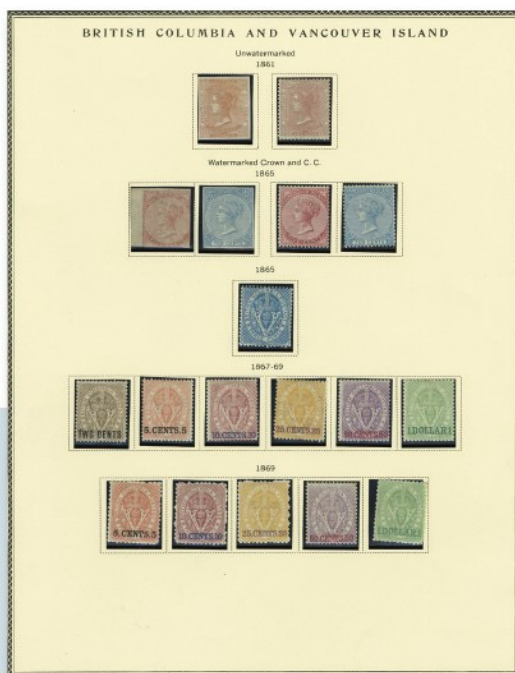


Figure 1. The Ahmanson British Columbia and Vancouver Island collection includes the surcharged stamps of 1867-71, some of which were never issued.



Figure 2. The 5¢ Charles Connell stamp, which was printed but never issued, is part of the Ahmanson collection of New Brunswick in the National Postal Museum.

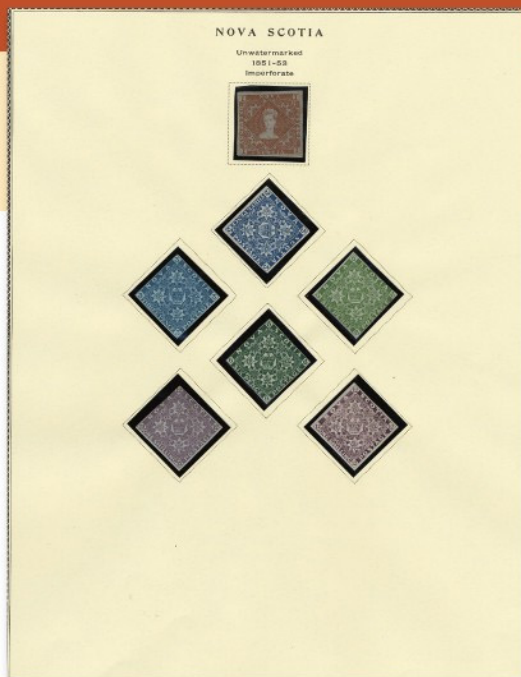


Figure 3. Two shades of the 1/- stamp are featured in the Nova Scotia collection at the National Postal Museum.

tion that includes stamps from various countries that were sent by the Universal Postal Union to member countries as part of the agreed-upon stamp exchange that began in 1874, when the General Postal Union (later to become the Universal Postal Union) was founded. Items from Canada in this collection, which include Scott 1, combined

with the Ahmanson collection, should ensure an almost complete Canada collection for the NPM. However, in my search through the vault, I was unable to locate a 12d black, one of Canada's most important stamps.

The NPM

has a small portfolio, referred to as the rarities file, that contains two BNA items: another example of Newfoundland's first airmail stamp prepared for the 1919 Hawker flight (Scott C1) and a used example of Canada's famous 1959 St. Lawrence Seaway stamp with inverted center (Scott 387a, Figure 6).



Figure 5. Early Newfoundland airmail issues in the Ahmanson collection include the 1919 Hawker Flight stamp (Scott C1), the De Pinedo Flight stamp (Scott C4) and the Columbia flight issue (Scott C5).

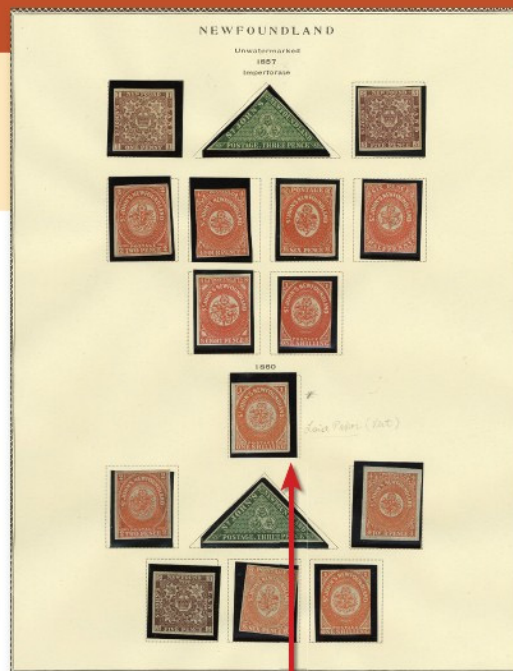


Figure 4. Newfoundland's 1/- orange stamp of 1860 is annotated on this album page as being on vertical laid paper, as can be seen in the enlargement.

This Seaway stamp was part of a joint issue with the United States to commemorate the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway. I wrote a more detailed article on this stamp in the O Canada column in the April 2003 issue of *Scott Stamp Monthly*.

The NPM has an extensive worldwide postal stationery collection in its possession. The Michel collection contains many fine items of early Canadian postal stationery, including eight mint unofficial stationery items (three postal



Figure 6. The 1959 5¢ St. Lawrence Seaway stamp with inverted center.

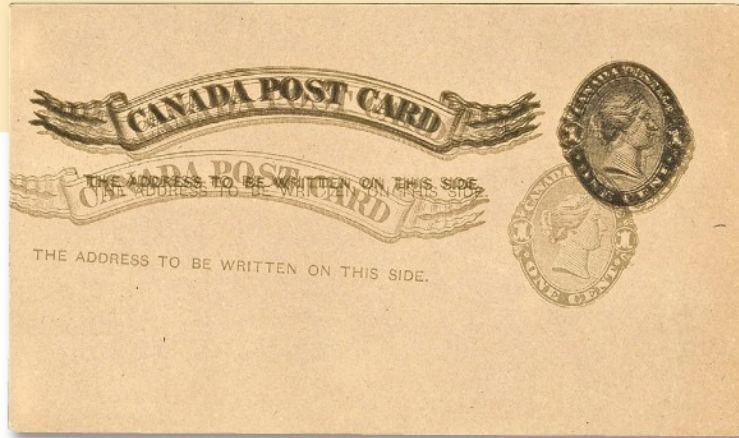
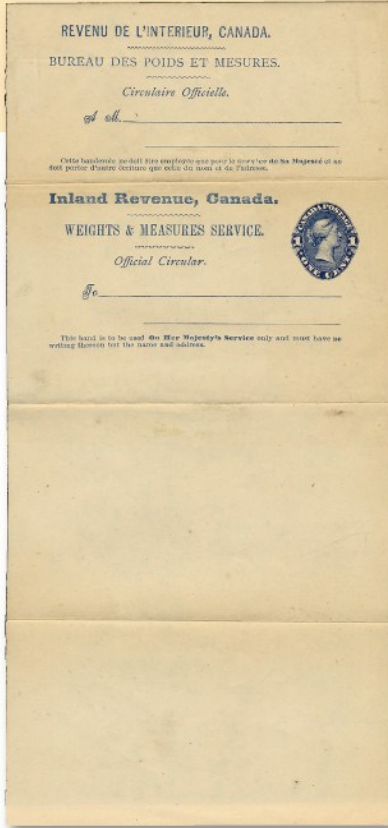


Figure 7. A printed-to-private-order wrapper (left) and quadruple printing on a postal card. Both postal stationery items are in the Michel collection at the National Postal Museum.

cards, three stamped envelopes and two wrappers) prepared by Henry Hechler, when he saw service in the North West Rebellion in 1885. Although the items were unauthorized, the Canada Post Office tolerated these Hechler fabrications. Used examples are recorded and fetch high prices when they reach the philatelic market.

Two other unusual and elusive Canadian items are found in the Michel collection and are shown in Figure 7. The first is a printed-to-private-order

wrapper prepared for the Weights and Measure Service of the Inland Revenue Department. The stamp used for this wrapper was first issued in 1887. The second is a quadruple print of the stamp and text on an 1887 postal card.

The NPM has an extensive maps on stamps thematic collection donated by Allan Lee. Although I did not do a thorough review of it, I did find two Canadian items worthy of note. The collection contains one of two examples known of the 1898 3¢ Imperial Penny Postage pho-

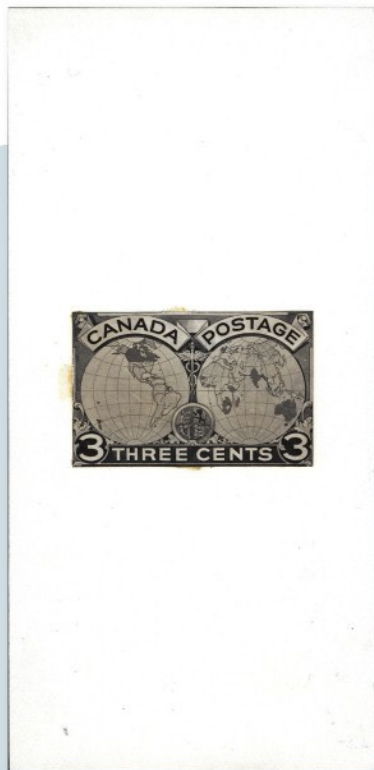


Figure 8. One of two known contemporary photographic examples of a long-lost essay for Canada's 1898 3¢ Imperial Penny Postage stamp.

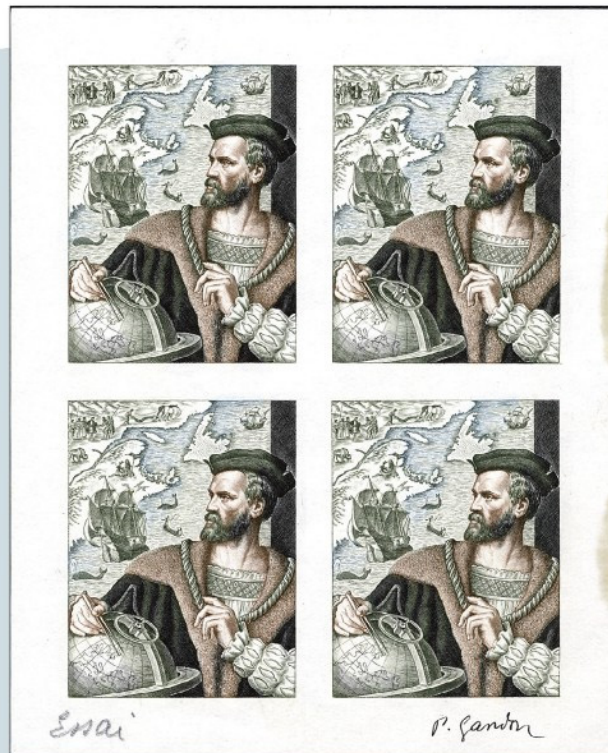


Figure 9. A rejected essay for Canada's 1934 Jacques Cartier stamp.



Figure 10. A semi-official first-flight cover from the Bachelor collection prepared for the December 12, 1916, first flight by Commercial Airways Ltd. between Edmonton and Peace River.



Figure 11. This cover is addressed to Louis-Joseph Papineau (1786-1871), a Canadian patriot and leader of the 1837 Rebellion in Lower Canada. The cover is one of the few known addressed to Papineau.

topographic essay. The essay is a stamp-size photograph of the ink-and-wash drawing whose whereabouts are unknown. The origins and the name of the creator of this essay are also unknown.

Spink Shreves Galleries recently sold the other example, shown in Figure 8, for \$632.50 (including a 15-percent buyer's premium), when the Fred G. Fawn Imperial Penny Postage collection was dispersed.

The second item (Figure 9) is most unusual. According to Lee's notes, it is a "cartographical drawing" by French stamp designer Pierre Gandon. Lee also states that "it began as a commemorative engraving prepared" for the French government on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Jacques Cartier's discovery of Canada. In 1975, Gandon recalled that he had redrawn the engraving on a smaller scale without the place names and submitted it to the Canadian Post Office Department for consideration when the post office was preparing to issue a stamp in 1934 for the event. Because it was not used, it might be listed as a rejected essay.

As an aside, Gandon engraved France's two 1934 stamps that honor

Jacques Cartier (Scott 296-297). It is said that because no contemporary portrait of Cartier exists, Gandon used his own portrait for these stamps, augmented with an early 16th-century beard.

The Emma E. Bachelor airmail collection housed in the NPM contains one of the 1,400 tête-bêche sheets of two stamps printed for the special flights between Toronto and Ottawa undertaken by the Aero Club of Canada. The number of intact sheets remaining today is unknown.

The collection also contains Canadian first-flight covers, many bearing semi-official airmail stamps. Figure 10 shows the back of one of these flown covers honoring a December 12, 1916, first flight by Commercial Airways Ltd. between Edmonton and Peace River. A total of 724 pieces of mail were carried on the flight.

Sometime in the past, the staff of the NPM gathered all the loose postal history items and put them into boxes filed according to country. Although there are no covers of major philatelic importance in the Canada boxes, some very interesting philatelic items are included.

Figure 11 shows a cover addressed to Louis-Joseph Papineau (1786-1871), a

Canadian patriot and leader of the 1837 Rebellion in Lower Canada. He was honored on a stamp issued on the 100th anniversary of his death (Scott 539). When the Papineau family archives were dispersed, many covers made their way to the philatelic market. Most of these are addressed to one of Papineau's sons. This cover is one of the few known addressed to the family patriarch.

Figure 12 shows two covers addressed to Montgomery Blair (1813-1883), postmaster general of the United States (1861-1864). Blair organized the 1863 Paris Postal Conference that was the precursor to the founding, in 1874, of the General Postal Union (later the Universal Postal Union). The stampless cover is addressed to President's Square in Washington, D.C., now called Lafayette Square.

The February 19, 1904, cover to Clara Barton (1821-1912) shown in Figure 13 was redirected to her at her home in Glen Echo, Maryland. It is addressed to her as president of the Red Cross Society in the last few months she held that position. She resigned in May 1904.

The cover shown in Figure 14 is interesting on two counts. The first is that it bears the very first Canadian Christ-



Figure 12. Two covers sent from Canada to United States Postmaster General Montgomery Blair, a leader of postal reform in the 1800s. The stampless cover on the left is addressed to President's Square, now Lafayette Square, in Washington, D.C.

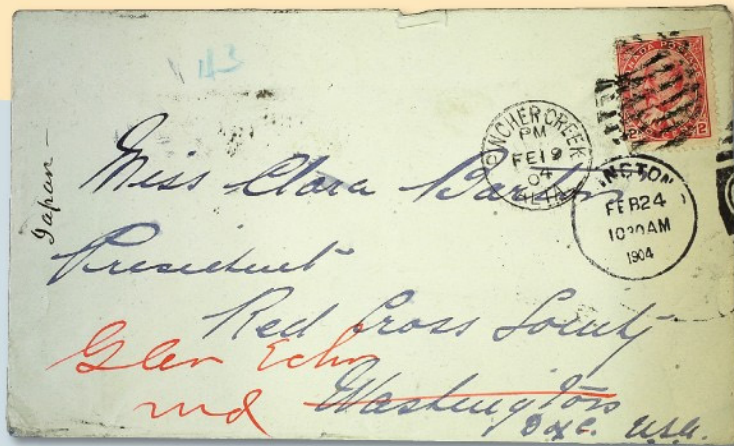


Figure 13. This cover in the National Postal Museum collection is addressed to Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross.

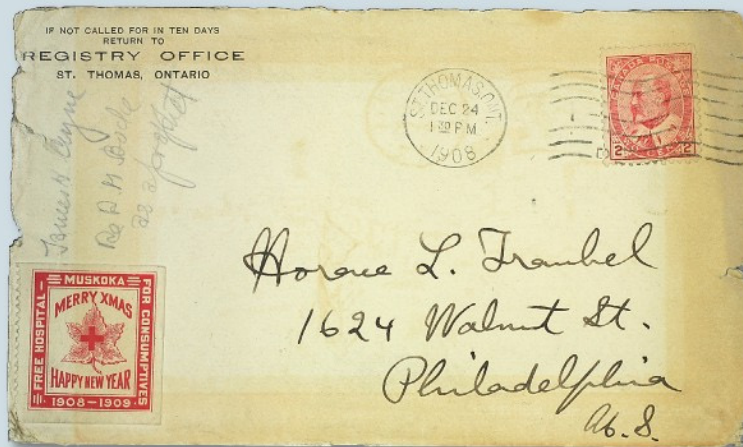


Figure 14. This cover was mailed from one Walt Whitman disciple to another. The cover may have contained part of Richard Maurice Bucke's biography. It is addressed to Horace L. Traubel (1858-1919), in whose journal, *The Conservator*, Bucke's biography appeared.



Figure 15. Quebec stamp dealer P.E. Paquet sent this cover that now reside in the NPM. The unusual labels make the cover especially interesting to collectors.

mas Seal, which was issued 100 years ago, in 1908. The cover was mailed by James H. Coyne (1849-1942), registrar of deeds in St. Thomas, Ontario, from 1907 to 1908. In it there was likely one of the installments of his biography of Richard Maurice Bucke (1837-1901/2?), a Canadian psychiatrist and disciple of Walt Whitman. The cover is addressed to another of Whitman's disciples, Horace L. Traubel (1858-1919), in whose journal, *The Conservator*, Bucke's biography appeared.

Well-known Quebec stamp dealer P.E. Paquet sent the cover shown in Figure 15. The combination of labels found on the cover makes it unusual. One is for a register of collectors who exchange postcards. Paquet was member 3038 of that group. The other is a political/religious label asking the Sacred Heart of Jesus to protect French Canada.

The NPM is devoted to presenting the colorful and engaging history of the United States mail service and showcasing the largest and most comprehensive collection of stamps and philatelic material in the world. The museum uses exhibits, public programs and research, as well as its web sites to make this rich history available to visitors, collectors and scholars from around the world.

The National Postal Museum is located at 2 Massachusetts Ave. N.E., across from Union Station, and is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For more information, visit the museum's primary web site at www.postalmuseum.si.edu and the new Arago research site at www.arago.si.edu.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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