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Canada's Naval Ships Gain Stamps of Approval

by Laurie Farrington

The first stamps ever to be issued by Canada Post displaying Canadian commissioned naval ships are being issued on 4 November 1998. These two stamps (se-tenant or unsevered pair sheets), one of HMCS Sackville, the other of HMCS Shawinigan, honour Canadians who served and continue to serve in peace and war in this the seventy-fifth (75th) anniversary of the Naval Reserve of Canada.

The unique nature of this event has an interesting historical background. Stamp collectors will recall the deep blue Canadian 1942-43 dollar stamp (Scott A106) known as the destroyer stamp. One would have thought the destroyer on the stamp would be a Canadian wartime naval ship. Some thought it was a Canadian Tribal Class destroyer, either HMCS Iroquois or Athabaskan. However, research at the Canadian Postal Archives, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, has confirmed it was the Royal Navy HMS Cossack which served as the actual model for the one dollar stamp. The ship's number "L03" was that of Cossack which had been built in 1938.

In fact, until the release of the Sackville and Shawinigan stamps, only one Canadian naval ship had ever been the subject of a Canadian postal stamp and that was before the ship was officially commissioned into the RCN. The WWII corvette La Malbaie, photographed under construction in the shipyard, served as the model for the 20 cent Canadian corvette stamp of 1942 (Scott A104). This pre-launching photo was used. She was not commissioned as HMCS La Malbaie until after the launching.

The new 45 cent HMCS Sackville stamp is an inspired choice of ship. Sackville, commissioned in 1941, was recommissioned in 1985 as Canada's Naval Memorial.

This last survivor of Canada's wartime corvette navy is open to the public alongside a jetty in Halifax Harbour, Nova Scotia.

She remains a floating testament to the Battle of the Atlantic. A stamp unveiling is planned on board this national monument on 4 November 1998 in Halifax.



Just as the Sackville stamp pays tribute to the past, the new 45 cent HMCS Shawinigan stamp represents the future of the Naval Reserve. HMCS Shawinigan is a new maritime coastal defence vessel which is the ship of choice for the modern Naval Reserve. [The WWII corvette Shawinigan was torpedoed and lost in the Cabot Strait while protecting the North Sydney-Port au Basques ferry in 1944, with the loss of all hands.] The Shawinigan stamp unveiling will take place on 4 November 1998 in Trois Rivières aboard HMCS Shawinigan.

An unprecedented number of philatelic events (28) are planned by Canada Post to honour the 75th Anniversary of the Naval Reserve in Canada and the unveiling of the first-ever stamps in Canada of commissioned Canadian warships. Framed philatelic tributes will be presented to all twenty four (24) Naval Divisions or Stone Frigates across the country at their respective Remembrance Day parades. The Minister of National Defence will present a framed blow-up of the HMCS Sackville image to the Royal Canadian Military Institute in Toronto on 1 November. Another presentation by Canada Post will be made at the Remembrance Day ceremony at the Naval Memorial in Burlington, Ontario.

The issue of these new stamps helps to preserve Canada's proud maritime heritage. It also reflects the growing visibility, significance and recognition of the national role played by maritime affairs. The stamps will have special appeal to members of the maritime community, especially The Canadian Naval Memorial

Trust which is the custodian of the Sackville. From a philatelic perspective, these stamps are also attractive to "thematic" international stamp collectors, whose collections revolve around themes such as ships on stamps.

The Stamp Advisory Committee, Canada Post, and all those responsible for choosing the stamps, are to be congratulated for commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Naval Reserve in such an historical and visual way.