

## THE 1927 HISTORICAL ISSUE - 12 CENT SIR WILFRID LAURIER AND SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD.

**What is known about this stamp?** – July 1, 1926 marked the beginning of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Confederation. The “Historical” set of three stamps recognizing early Canadian political leaders was to be released early in 1926. One of the designs featured portraits of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Sir John A. Macdonald. However, the release early in the year did not happen. Instead the Historical and Confederation sets were released together on June 29, 1927 at the end of the 60<sup>th</sup> Confederation year. Why these stamps were held back or issued at all is not clear. The Historical 5, 12 and 20 cent values duplicated those of the Confederation issue. The reason for issuance appears to be clearly political. However, thank goodness for the politics of the day, for without it we would not have the 12 cent Laurier and Macdonald, a magnificent example of superior engraving.

The 12 cent Laurier Macdonald was engraved at the American Bank Note Company by Edwin H. Gunn based on a photograph by William J. Topley, and was printed by the Canadian Bank Note Company, perf. 12. It was generally used to pay the 10 cent registration fee and the 2 cent domestic rate, as shown on the registered cover from Craik, Sask. to Winnipeg, Man. The 12 cent could also be used as a single stamp to pay for a registered cover to the USA or British Empire, or could be used as a single stamp to pay some foreign rates. (i.e. Surface letter to Sweden 2oz 12 cents)



One might wonder why Macdonald and Laurier are shown together on the 12 cent Historical Issue since they appear to represent two different solitudes: English and French, Protestant and Catholic, Tory and Liberal. As well, Macdonald had been the “Father of Confederation” and had been Postmaster General in Upper Canada in 1858, yet Laurier did not enter the Federal Parliament until 1874. However, facing each other on this stamp underscores that they served in Parliament at the same time on opposite sides of the house. In 1887 Laurier was elected Liberal leader and served in opposition to Macdonald during the latter part of Macdonald's years as Prime Minister. In spite of their political differences, both men were nation builders who worked hard to promote national unity.

As Canadian nation builders they share many honours.



1. Both were honoured twice during the 60th Confederation Year. The identical engraved portraits, as they initially appeared on the 12 cent Historical issue were used again on the 1 and 5 cent stamps of the Confederation issue, not the other way around as thought by those who read the catalogues in chronological order. Kimber A. Wald & Winthrop S. Boggs both note that the design of the 12 cent Laurier Macdonald was approved 15<sup>th</sup> of July 1926 and Boggs notes that the Confederation series was approved April 20 1927. Thus confirming that 12 cent Historical predates the Confederation series by 9 months. (The reason the Historical issue is listed in most catalogues after the Confederation series is not clear.)



2. Both were first, long serving Prime Ministers. Macdonald was the Dominion of Canada's first Prime Minister 1867- 1891, except for 1873-78, serving as PM for 19 years. Laurier was Canada's first Prime Minister of French ancestry 1896-1911, serving as PM for 15 years.

3. Both were knighted “Knight Commander of the Bath” by Queen Victoria. Macdonald had his knighthood announced July 1, 1867. Laurier was knighted in 1897 while he attended the Queen's Diamond Jubilee ceremonies.

4. Both have a special day named in their honour. On March 21, 2002 Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, enacted : the *Sir John A. Macdonald Day and the Sir Wilfrid Laurier Day Act*. Throughout Canada, in each and every year, the 11th day of January shall be known under the name of "Sir John A. Macdonald Day" and the twentieth day of November shall be known under the name of "Sir Wilfrid Laurier Day".

5. Both were the first Canadians to have their portraits on our national currency. In 1935, Macdonald was featured on the \$500 note and Laurier was on the \$1,000. The portraits used were those initially engraved by Edwin. H. Gunn for the 12 cent Historical Issue.

