

THE STAMP THAT NEVER WAS



I was running a type house in Montreal at the time I was asked to design the new Christmas stamps for the Canadian Post Office. So I found this wood carving of a woman blowing a horn at the Provincial Museum in Quebec City. Since it was of 18th century French-Canadian origin I thought they would be delighted in Ottawa, where including the French is a top priority.

Being a printer, instead of sending them drawings of my projected designs, I sent printed, perforated sheets of stamps, which looked wonderful. But one of my employees took one of the stamps from the wastepaper basket and mailed a letter with it.

Two weeks, later, after I had heard that the stamps were rejected, two burley Mounties arrived at my office on Sherbrooke Street and demanded that I turn over all printed copies of the stamps. I did, but secretly kept some. They asked if there were any others, so I had to tell them that I had given a set to McGill University's Special Collections Division of the Library because they collected all my printing for the archives they kept of my work ever since I had worked at McGill for ten years. So over they went and confronted poor Mrs. Lewis, who was head of Special Collections, demanding she hand over their stamps to them. Totally frightened and bewildered, she almost fainted, but complied.

I never found out why my designs were rejected, but at Christmas the Post Office came out with a set of banal stamps showing candles on them.