



Stamps by Larry McInnis

Stamps Trace History Of Canada's Highest Court

The Supreme Court of Canada is this country's top court, the court of last resort. It is the final word in constitutional, criminal, and civil law.

The court was clearly the child of Canada's first Prime Minister, John A. Macdonald. Barely a year after Confederation in 1867, he instructed Toronto lawyer Henry Strong to prepare an establishing bill.

One of the first critics of the bill was Oliver Mowat. His criticisms were constructive, and Macdonald listened to him.

As well he should. Mowat had studied law in Macdonald's Kingston law office. He was also a Father of Confederation, and was commemorated with a 6-cent stamp issued Aug. 12, 1970 (Scott 517) to mark the 150th anniversary of his birth.

In the background of the stamp design, the Parliament buildings are shown. The federal Supreme Court building might have been more appropriate, except it was long, long after Mowat's lifetime that it was constructed.

However, a reading room in the main Parliament building did serve as the location for the Supreme Court after it was finally established in 1875. The wheels of government ground slowly then, too.

However important the Supreme Court may have been in shaping the fabric of Canadian law, it obviously wasn't encouraged. In 1882, the court got its own building: a converted workshop and stable.

These quarters were occupied for more than half a century before approval could be obtained for a more suitable establishment.

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