

Stamp With Suzor-Côté Painting A Scarce Item

A severe case of laryngitis denied Canada a possibly brilliant operatic tenor, but assured the nation of an undeniably brilliant artist.

Marc Aurèle de Foy

Suzor-Côté was born in 1869 at Arthabaska, Que., the son of Théophile Côté, a notary with an artistic flair, and Cécile Adéline de Foy Suzor.

A notary in Quebec in

those days ranked on the income scale with doctors and lawyers, so the young Suzor-Côté was guaranteed a good education.

After his graduation from Collège du Sacré-Coeur at Arthabaska, the young man became obsessed with reproducing art masterpieces, attempting to be ex-

act in every minute detail.

In 1890, he gave it up and went to Paris, intent on embarking on an operatic singing career. He studied at the Paris Conservatoire.

While in Paris he contracted laryngitis. During an operation, a vocal chord was damaged, ending a career that hadn't really begun.

Suzor-Côté turned immediately to art. He studied at l'École des Beaux-Arts under Léon Bonnat and at the Julian and Colarossi academies.

By 1894 he had exhibited at the Salon des Artistes Français and in 1898 won the grand prize at the Paris Salon for his "Death of


Archimedes."

His success in Europe was assured, yet his homeland beckoned. In 1908 he returned to Canada.

Yet the painting that marked him for Canadian national fame after it was reproduced on a stamp in 1969 was done while he was still in Paris.

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