

Halley's Comet featured on some foreign stamps

by LARRYMCINNIS
No philatelic writer seems inclined to miss writing something about the current visit of Halley's Comet.

Although Canada has no plans to postally mark the comet's appearance, I've come across some interesting tidbits about the mysterious comet, most of which were used as excuses for stamp issues.

One such was a four-stamp and a souvenir sheet issue by the small South Pacific island of Aitutaki, one of the Cook islands.

The stamps show a beautiful reproduction of the painting "Adoration of the Magi" by Giotto do Bondone (1266-1337). It is believed to be the world's first painting to show the comet.

The story goes that Giotto was so awe-struck on seeing the comet in 1301 that he substituted it for the Star of Bethlehem in his painting.

Indeed, he may have been

Indeed, he may have been historically accurate; there is a strong belief by many scientists that the Star of Bethlehem in legend was Halley's Comet in fact.

Halley's Comet is named for Edmund Halley (1656-1742), a famous English astronomer.

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At the age of 20, in 1676, he set up an observatory on St. Helena in the South Atlantic, which resulted in the

first catalogue of stars made with the use of a telescope.

In 1682, he set up a private observatory at Islington, England. That was a year when the great mysterious comet again came near Earth. Halley conducted an exhaustive study of it and predicted it would again approach Earth in 1758.

It did, and so became known as Halley's Comet. It also proved that the comet revolves around the sun.

Famous U.S. writer Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) was fascinated with Halley's Comet because it was in sight when he was born.

"I came in with Halley's Comet in 1835," he wrote in 1909. "It is coming again next year, and I expect to go out with it. It will be the greatest disappoint-

ment of my life if I don't go out with Halley's Comet."

In a way he did. Clemens dies April 21, 1910. On May 19, 1910, Earth passed through the comet's tail, but the comet would be visible before that.

The U.S. issued a 36-cent aerogramme in 1985 honoring Mark Twain and the comet. It pictures him and reproduces the quotation I've given above.

The comet will probably not be seen by many Canadians; it will be more prominent further south.

It will be at its brightest during March and April, mainly visible in the far south an hour or two before sunrise. Even then, it will be low on the horizon.

Many countries will be plotting the comet's passage by a variety of means, from aircraft and balloons to rickets.

One will be a space capsule launched by the European Space Agency. It is named, appropriately, "Giotto." Another is a Japanese capsule named "Planet A." Both are shown on the Aitutaki stamps, one on each side of the Giotto painting.

Many other issues are, or will be, even more dramatic, such as Ciskei.

Ciskei is one of the "homelands" of the Republic of South Africa and is not politically or philatelically recognized elsewhere.

However, the homelands Ciskei, Venda, Transkei and Bophuthatswana issue stamps.

This year Ciskei will have a 10-stamp sheet giving a spectacular artist's rendition of Halley's Comet streaking past Earth on its way back to the sun.

Many other countries have issued stamps about Halley and his comet. It would make a topical collection in itself.

Halley's Comet will next come close to Earth in 2061. I can hardly wait.

LETTERS

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Vasey visitors

by ELEANOR EDWARDS CAROL GRAHAM

Janet Wilson and her fiancé, Wiston Kinsey of Toronto are spending a few days with Mr. and Mrs. Vic Wilson.

The Vasey U.C.W. ladies held a very successful craft session at the home of Mrs. Mary Wilson. The next session will be on March 20 at 10 a.m.

Mrs. Madeline Edwards and her mother Mrs. Ellen Whetham of Orr Lake have returned after spending the past two weeks visiting with Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Gratrix, Jennifer and Brian of Saskatoon.

Sunday visitors with Mrs. Marth Edwards were Mr. and Mrs. Richard Soloniko and Tyler of Burlington.

Sean Leopard of Toronto spent a few days this past week with his grandmother Mrs. Katie Bannon.

Mr. and Mrs. Roy Edwards and Mr. Orval Edwards attended the funeral on Friday in Stayner of their uncle, Mr. Lorne Wyant.

The Vasey Youth Group were in Orillia on Saturday evening to hear Ace Clark tell the story of his life, and how he changed from being a member of the Wild Ones to the very different life he leads today.

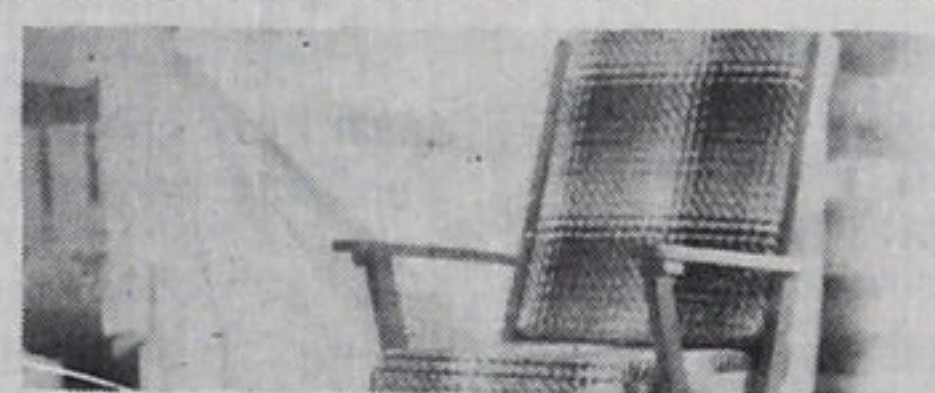
Mrs. Olive Edwards visited on Saturday with Mr. and Mrs. Neil Edwards of Wasaga Beach.

Leslie Stewart of Toronto is spending a few days with her father, Mr. Alvah Stewart.

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Graham attended a retirement banquet and dance at the United Steelworkers Hall in Orillia on Saturday evening for Mr. Ed Hurst, Union representative for this area.

DOOR CRASHER SPECIALS

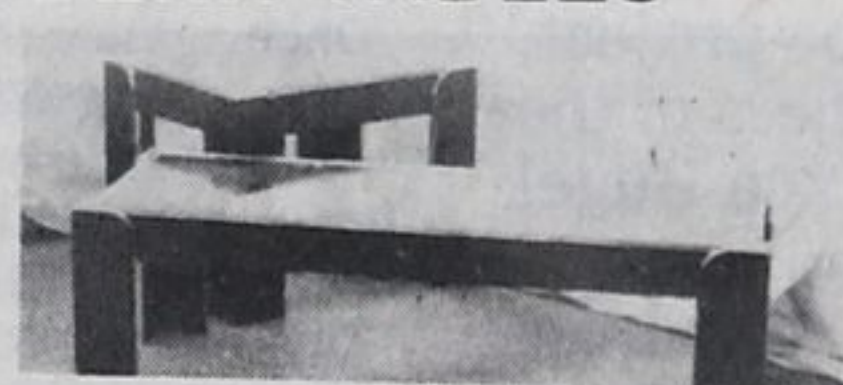
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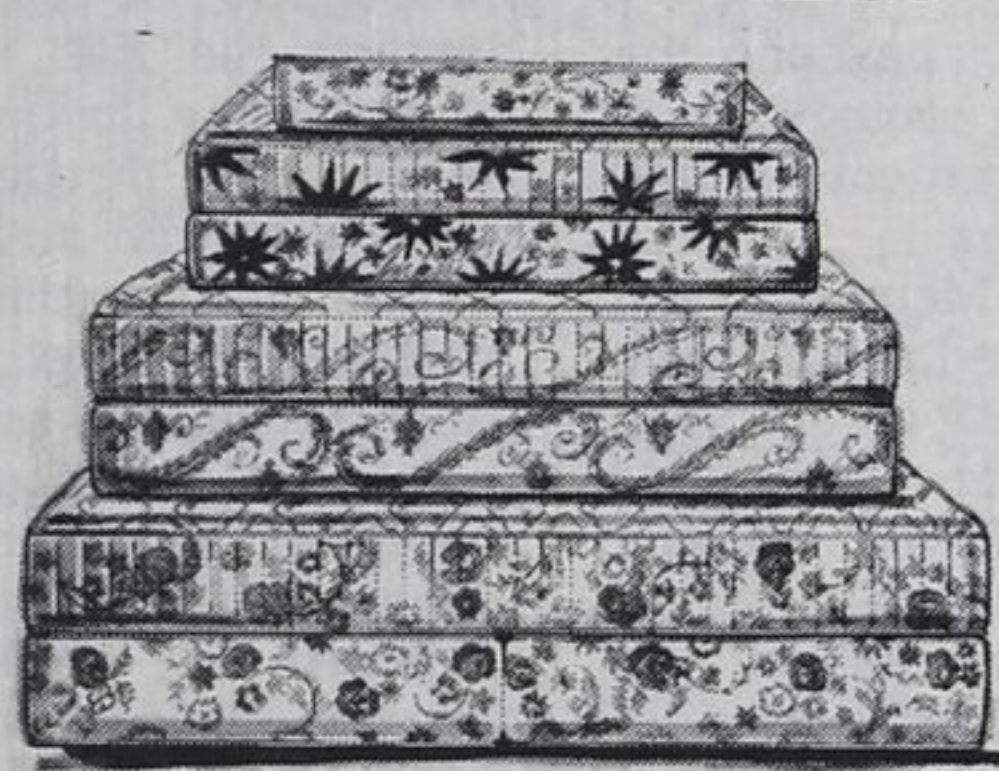
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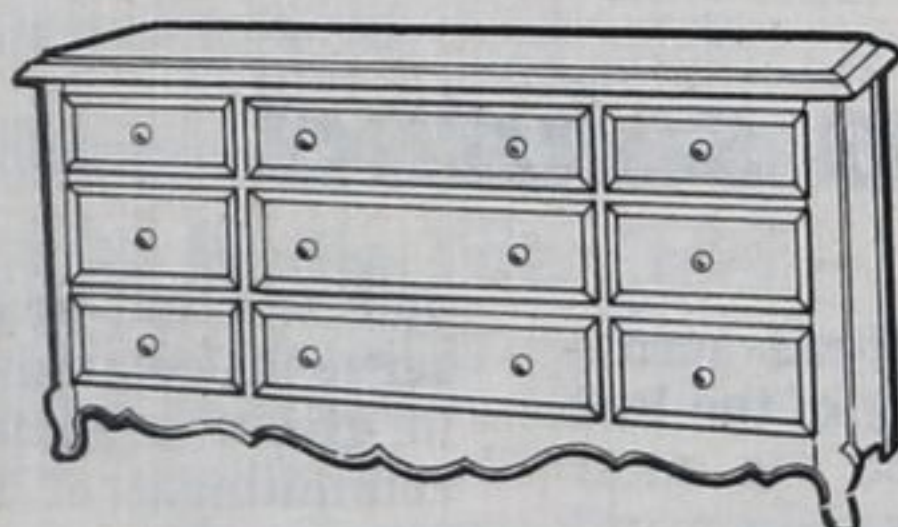
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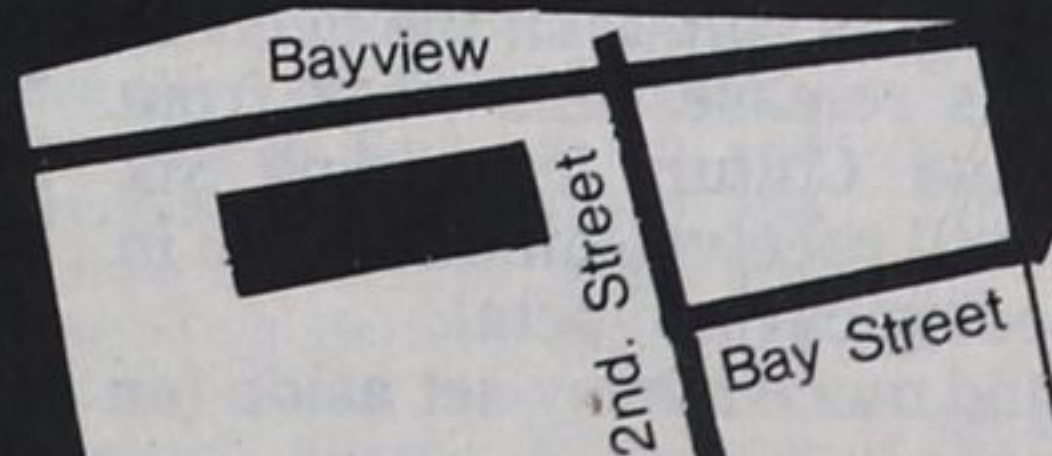


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Tuesday, March 11, 1986, Page 5