



## The 1957 Ottawa UPU Congress by David McLaughlin

As strange as it may seem, a find in a Romanian flea market by a man whom I have never met led to my interest in the 14<sup>th</sup> UPU Congress in Ottawa in 1957. The find was a metal Congress nameplate and the finder was inquiring with the Greene Foundation about its origin. Kathy Hartley, former Librarian at the Greene Foundation, found images similar to that on the nameplate in various Congress publications held by the Harry Sutherland Philatelic Library.

Some rainy day browsing through internet auction sites uncovered the second badge (fig 1) on Delcampe and a similar design UPU Congress stamp essay on the Library and Archives Canada (LAC) website. The badge is cast in a copper alloy with a flat plate at the bottom upon which the delegate's name was engraved. The badge was silver plated and bears a "Birk" stamp on the back indicating that they were made by H. (Henry) Birk, a prominent jewelry manufacturer and retailer in Montreal. From the similarity of the designs on the essay and the badge it is obvious that the essay design was repurposed for the delegate name badges.

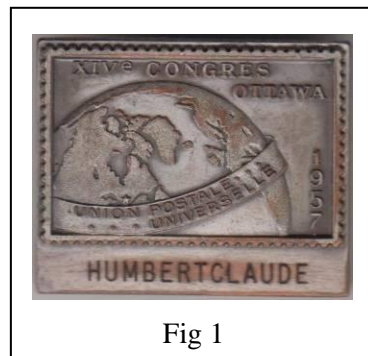


Fig 1

The UPU Congress was an important event for Canada. It was only the second time that a UPU congress had been held in North America, the first being the Washington Congress, sixty years prior in 1897. The congress was held in the Parliament Buildings and lasted 7 weeks from Aug 14 to Oct 3, 1957. Three hundred and fifty delegates attended from 91 of the 96 UPU member countries. Observers attended from five international agencies including UN, UNESCO and WHO. Visitors to Parliament Hill during the Congress were treated to a vexillologist's delight with the flags of 96 UPU Member nations lining the walkway from Wellington Street to the Centre Block entrance.



Fig 2

Behind the scenes a significant effort was required to support the congress and the delegates. Stenographers typed 8300 pages of documents. Two million pages were

either polycopied (commercial photocopiers were not introduced until 1959) or printed by the Queen's Printer to assist the congress delegates in their work. Simultaneous translation of plenary and committee meetings was provided in English, French, Spanish and Russian.

As is customary at UPU meetings, the delegates exchanged presentation booklets with the stamps of their countries. Based on the number of delegates and the number of member countries attending, over 30,000 of these booklets were exchanged at the congress. Figs 2 and 3 show the cover and a sample page for the Israel booklet.



Fig 3



The Canadian booklet is shown on fig 4 with its suede and red cover with gold embossing. A 1999 article in BNA Topics Vol 56, No. 1 by Andrew Chung and Jerome Jarnick provides more detailed information on the Canadian booklet and its production.

Two stamps were produced for the occasion, a 5¢ and 15¢ value, Scott/Unitrade numbers 371 and 372 respectively. These stamps were designed by Carl Mangold, a prominent industrial designer and PSSC member #30.



Fig 5

The stamps were very well produced with no catalogued varieties or errors. In my collection I have only one variety, that being a 50 % offset on the 5¢ value. (fig 5)

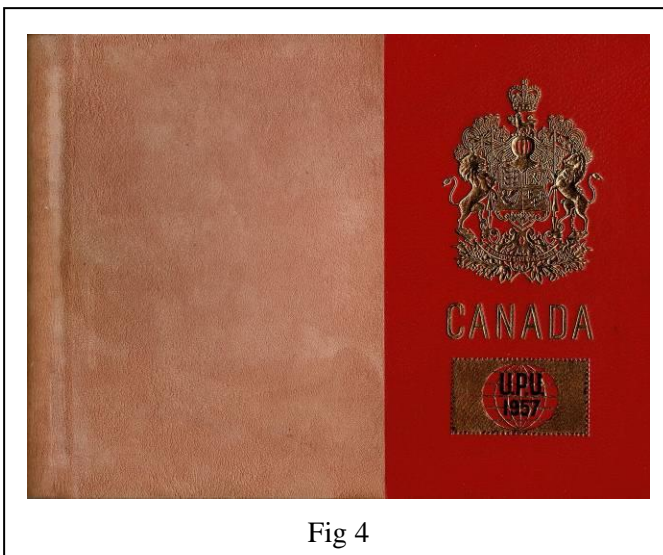


Fig 4

A Post Office was established in the Centre Block of the Parliament Buildings exclusively for the 350 delegates and the congress administration. Neither the delegates nor the UPU administration were provided free franking privileges but it is understood the stamps were provided free to delegates. Delegates were also provided with special stationery in both 100% rag paper and light airmail paper. Both #5 and #9 envelopes were available for the delegate stationery. All UPU administration mail seen, used Canada Post Office issue manilla envelopes and UPU address stickers. Several UPU Congress markings were used including Pitney Bowes machine cancels, a 33 mm steel circular date stamp, a Money Order Office Number (Moon) stamp, a Roller cancel, a Registration Cancel and circular rubber date stamps. Due to the exclusivity of the Post Office, collectors were largely frustrated in efforts to get examples of the UPU Congress cancellations, especially on cacheted First Day Covers.

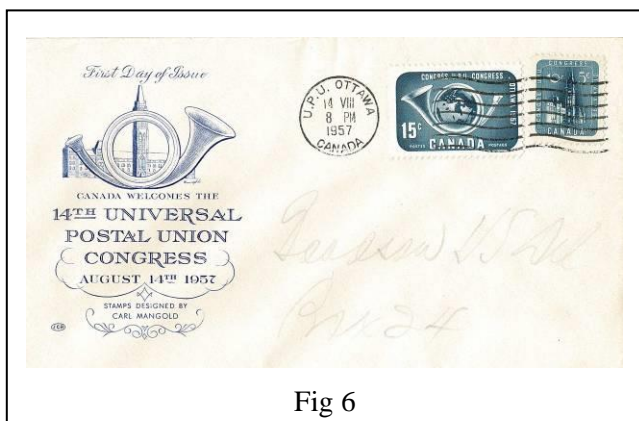


Fig 6

The Pitney Bowes machine cancel used at the Congress Post office had a UPU Ottawa hub and a seven wavy line obliterator. A proof exists of the UPU Ottawa Hub and the day of issue obliterator but this is not known to have been used. A FDC with the Pitney Bowes machine cancel is shown in fig 6 with a Rosenbaum cachet. Bob Vogel kindly provided the back story for this JCR cacheted FDC with the UPU Ottawa hub. Joe Rosenbaum knew the USA Postmaster General who was in Ottawa for the Congress

and gave him a few cacheted envelopes to have postmarked on the day of issue, some for the PMG to keep and some to be returned to Joe. The example in fig 6 is addressed in pencil to "Goodson, US Del Box 24". David Goodson was one of the USA delegates and it would appear that the US PMG used his envelopes to provide FDCs for his delegates.





Fig 7 shows another usage of the machine cancel. This example is effectively unaddressed printed matter (householder mail). The unsealed envelope undoubtedly contained a printed invitation to a social event of some sort and was addressed to no specific person and to no specific address (box number). The Postmaster was simply required to put one in every box. It is the

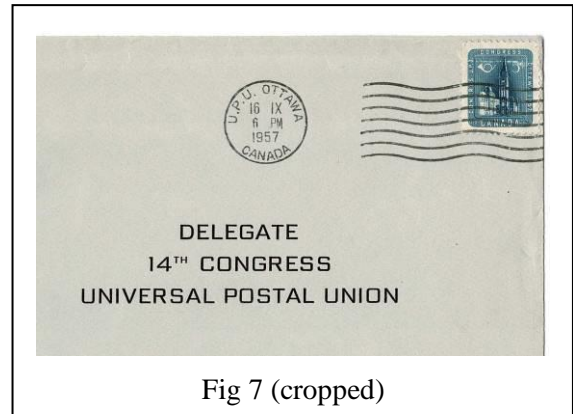


Fig 7 (cropped)

only known example of householder mail at the Congress and actually overpays the 1½¢ householder rate by 3½¢.

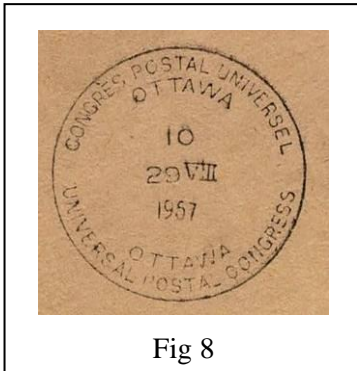


Fig 8

Two proofs of the 33 mm circular date stamp exist, one with the *O* of Ottawa below the *P* in Postal and the second with the *O* of Ottawa below the *S* in Congrès. The former detailed in fig 8 is the only one found in use. The practical use is on larger envelopes as in the triple weight airmail letter to Europe in fig 9, however, they can also be found on regular envelopes.

The UPU Congress was designated as Money Order Office Number (MOON) 4003 and a MOON 4003 handstamp of standard design was produced. There are favour cancels of the MOON 4003 cancel in existence but only one commercial usage is known. On the fourth day of the Congress, a Belgian delegate sent an 18-20 oz. package of printed matter by registered mail to his wife in Belgium (figs 10 & 11). The 31¢ postage was cancelled by a red MOON 4003 cancel. This may have been the delegate's way of getting some of the presentation booklets he received back to Belgium.



Fig 9 (cropped)



Fig 11

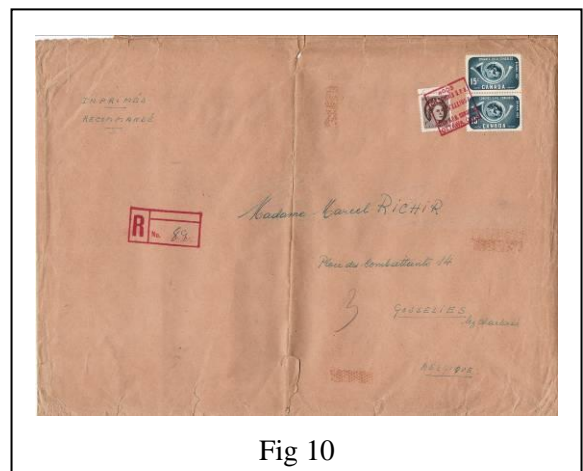


Fig 10



The UPU Congress roller cancel is equally elusive. Two proof strikes exist of the five-line cancel.

- Line 1      Congrès Postal Universel
- Line 2      Universal Postal Congress
- Line 3      Date as a 1 or 2- digit number
- Line 4      Month in Roman numerals, 1957
- Line 5      Ottawa Canada

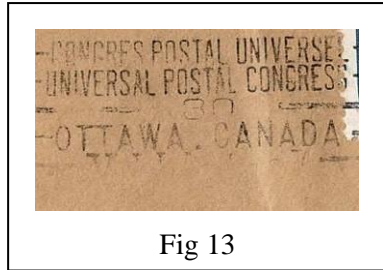


Fig 13

Figs 12 & 13 illustrate the only known example of the roller cancel used on a

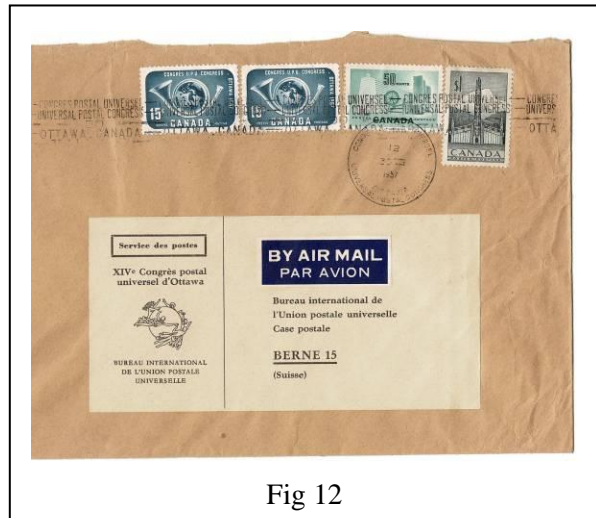


Fig 12

12 x weight airmail letter to Bern Switzerland. Lines 4 and 5 are reversed from the proof strikes. My theory is that each line of the cancel was a ring on the roller and that the roller could be disassembled to exchange date or month rings and it was just reassembled in the wrong order.

The Registration cancel is of the standard multi box design. No office name was ever added so it remained a nude cancel throughout the full Congress. For the first few days all registration numbers were applied in manuscript until a number hand stamp was obtained.

The analysis of the registration markings on the covers in my collection (fig 14) provides insight into the mail handled at the Congress Post Office. In total about 3,000 registered letters were handled, sometimes well over 100 per day.

Date	#	Type	Comment
August 14, 1957	62	m/s	First day of Congress
August 15, 1957	70	m/s	Second day of Congress
August 17, 1957	89	m/s	
August 20, 1957	138	Stamp	
August 29, 1957	341	m/s	
August 30, 1957	433	Stamp	
September 2, 1957	531	Stamp	
September 11, 1957	1047	Stamp	
September 19, 1957	1650	Stamp	
September 20, 1957	1759	Stamp	
September 23, 1957	2068	Stamp	
September 26, 1957	2448	Stamp	
September 27, 1957	2564	Stamp	
October 3, 1957	2933	Stamp	Last Day of Congress
October 23, 1957	3434	m/s	Ottawa R Cancel, Nude Reg Marking, Congress Stationery

Fig 14

From the cover in fig 15 it is apparent that UPU administration staff continued their work for several weeks after the Congress' closing. The Canada Post Office continued to assist UPU administration staff after the UPU Congress Post Office was closed by continuing to log registered letters locally with the same nude cancel and numbering system before taking the mail to the Ottawa Post Office registration division for mailing.



Fig 15





The rubber hand stamps that were proofed were not used by the UPU Post Office but were used by the Canadian Secretariat for non postal purposes. Fig 16 is one of two known examples of this marking and is used as a receiving marking on an incoming newspaper wrapper from Zurich.

Pitney Bowes wanted to set up a mail-o-mat machine in the Parliament Buildings but were not allowed to so they set one up in the Chateau Laurier hotel lobby.

Cards mailed from this machine had a special franking commemorating the Congress. The example in Fig 17 is addressed to Werner Simon, the editor of the World Meter Mail Catalog at the time. No more than 10-20 of these cards are known to exist.

Pitney Bowes also produced 1000 numbered #10 envelopes with a commemorative UPU Congress franking which were mailed to collectors from Toronto on September 11, 1957.

As noted, collectors were largely frustrated in obtaining examples of the UPU Post Office; however, some enterprising collectors found ways to get delegates to send them letters. The delegate mail in fig 18 was mailed by the Egyptian delegate Mohamed Ibrahim Sobhi to a collector in Saskatoon(n) Sask. on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the Congress. Mr. Sobhi later became the UPU Director General in 1975.

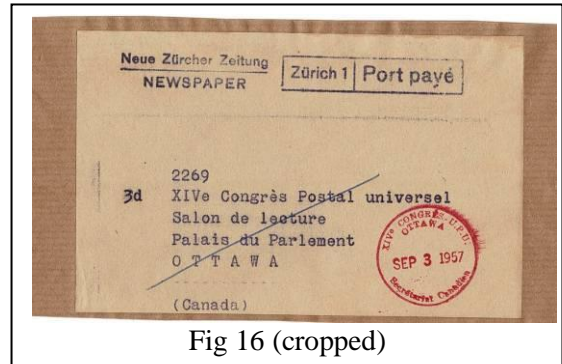


Fig 16 (cropped)

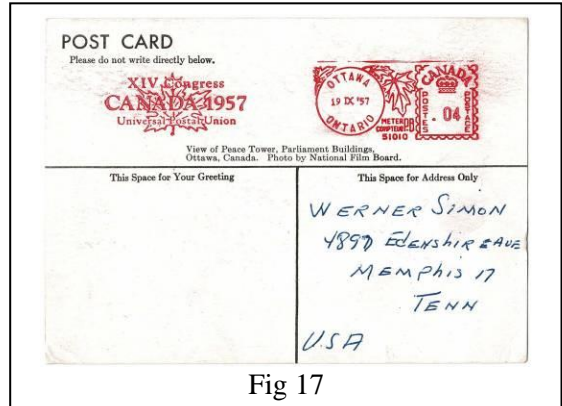


Fig 17

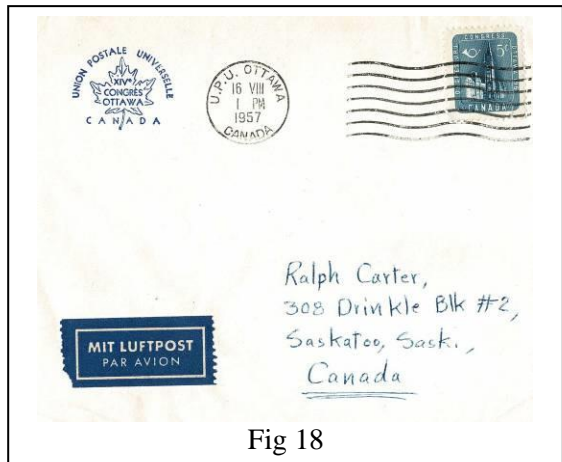


Fig 18

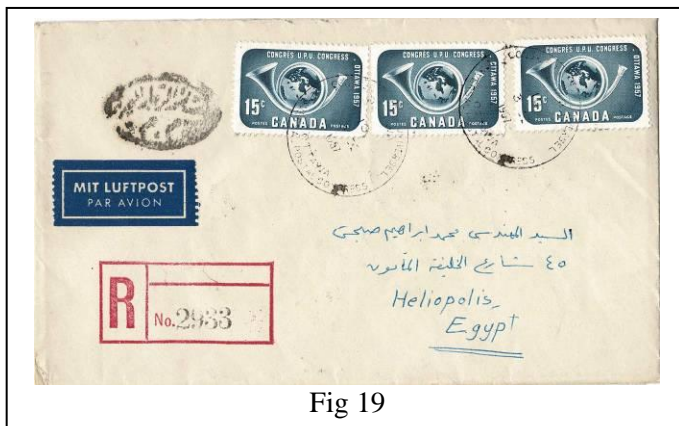


Fig 19

The airmail rate to Europe and Africa was 15¢ per ½ oz but the rate to Asia was higher at 25¢ per ½ oz. Egypt is a transcontinental country linking Africa and Asia. For postal purposes Egypt was considered as Asia. The cover in fig 19,

again from Mr. Sobhi, is rated at 25¢ for ½ oz airmail plus 20¢ for registration.

Philatelists say that behind every stamp is a story. This story began for me with a flea market find in Romania by a man I have never met but it continues to develop. I have yet to find archival material or delegate covers to the vast majority of UPU countries in attendance. Surprisingly as well, I have not found press photos or much ephemera related to the 14<sup>th</sup> UPU Congress in Ottawa in 1957. The search continues.