

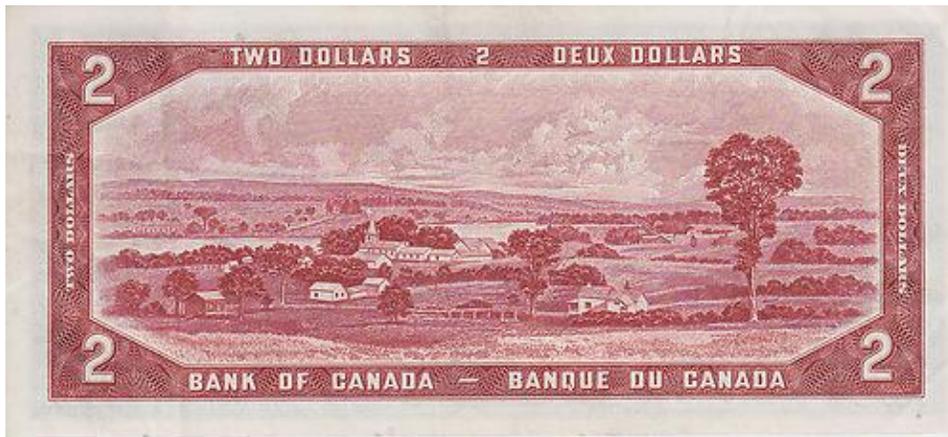


Museum Musings

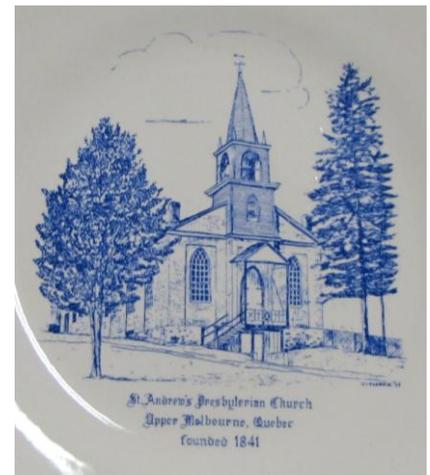
Prepared for distribution at the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
Issue of Friday, May 31, 2013

Every museum has them. They are the “stray” artefacts. In and of themselves, they seem on the surface to tell a story with a limited significance. It is just one thing, seemingly not related or connected to other artefacts, either by its use or its provenance. On each day of General Assembly, the National Presbyterian Museum will showcase its “strays” – artefacts that might not otherwise appear to figure neatly into a larger story line as would a Communion token or a 1925 Church Union ballot box or an artefact from a missionary field. But, the “strays” do have stories to tell – ones which often dovetail easily into others.

The Era When Canadian Currency Partnered a Canadian Landscape, a Presbyterian Church and a \$2 Bill



Canada's 1954 issue of its \$2 Bill featuring an engraved photo of the St. Francis River Valley with St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Upper Melbourne, Québec in the centre



St. Andrew's plate produced in 1975
V. I. Thormin, artist



The same vantage point as the 1954 Canadian \$2 Bill
(Nov. 2012)

Credit: © Dominic Labbe



Front elevation of St. Andrew's -
Congregation established in 1840
Church built in 1841-42 (Mar. 2012)

Credit: © Dominic Labbe

There is very little reason for the Museum to exhibit money, but there is a particularly notable exception. In 1954, the Canadian government issued a new set of paper money which featured an image of our new monarch – the young Queen Elizabeth II who had ascended to the throne on Feb. 6, 1952. The terra cotta coloured \$2 bill was issued on Sept. 9, 1954. The scene on the bill's reverse is the pastoral setting along the St. Francis River valley, as seen looking towards St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church and the hamlet of Upper Melbourne, Québec.

[Upper Melbourne is a hamlet located in Melbourne Township.* A village by the name of Melbourne was situated in the same township. The town of Melbourne on the left bank of the Saint-François River was merged with the "old" town of Richmond on the right bank of the river to form the amalgamated town of Richmond on Dec. 29, 1999. ("Richmond, Québec")]

A local man and internationally renowned artist, **Frederick Simpson Coburn** (1871-1960), was erroneously believed to have painted the scene. However, Coburn was the one who actually suggested the site to the Canadian government photographer. It was the photo of this site which was later engraved by the Treasury Department. Landmarks shown in the photograph of Upper Melbourne include: St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church; the Doyle house; Arthur Quinn's blacksmith shop; the Cogan house; the Alexander farm upstream; and the John Martin farm across the river. ("Canada's Two Dollar Bill, 1954-1975")

Although Frederick Simpson Coburn did not paint this scene, it is understandable why this drawing was mistakenly attributed to him. He had a deep affection for creating oil paintings inspired by nature and landscapes. His favourite settings were winter scenes in which horses and cutters emerged from the forest into clearings. (Kennell) Coburn studied at the Arts and Crafts School in Montreal, and later at art schools in New York, Berlin, Paris, London, and finally Antwerp, where he married and worked as an artist for twenty years. In 1897, he established his reputation as a skilled illustrator with his contributions to Canadian poet, William Henry Drummond's publication, *The Habitant and Other French-Canadian Poems*. His career continued to flourish as an illustrator for literary works by Louis-Honoré Fréchette, Washington Irving, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, Charles Dickens and Edgar Allan Poe (Kennell). Upon his return to Canada in 1913, Coburn set up a studio in Melbourne, Québec where he worked for forty years. He was made a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 1920. (Farfan)

Frederick Simpson Coburn joined his beloved landscape of Upper Melbourne while the 1954 \$2 bill was still in circulation. He died in 1960 and his gravestone stands in St. Andrew's cemetery located about one mile from the church on the next road up the hill.

The Queen with the Devil in Her Hairdo Canadian Paper Currency Issue of 1954



(Credit: *The Online Canadian Paper Money Museum* website)

The Canadian government's set of paper currency in 1954 became immediately notorious for the illusion of a grinning devil's face that appeared in her hair behind her ear. In 1956, The Royal Canadian Mint recalled the 1954 bills and modified them with a re-issue of nearly all denominations in the set (the year 1954 was still imprinted on the front). As of 2013, a 1954 \$2 bill without the devil's face in the Queen's hairdo is worth not much more than face value; a bill with the devil in her hairdo can be worth \$65 to \$70. *Of course*, the bill in the Museum collection is the one *without* the devil's face.

Sources:

* Healy, Esther. Thanks is extended to Esther Healy of the Richmond County Historical Society (Richmond, Québec) for clarifying the distinction between Melbourne, Upper Melbourne and Melbourne Township.

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