

Canadian Participation in the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition

SYNOPSIS

Purpose: This post card exhibit illustrates Canada's participation in the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition. As one of the British Empire's important colonies, Canada's pavilion showcased its riches and resources. It also contributed some of the most entertaining attractions to the delight of visitors.

Treatment: The post cards show Canada Court from the exterior; its position relative to other pavilions; its interior displays; associated pavilions, its popular attractions and finally the Olympic stadium where the 1908 London Games took place and where Canada had relative success by winning 16 medals.

Study and Research: First, we have to establish the importance of this exhibition to place Canada's participation in context. In this period of world fairs, the Franco-British Exhibition (F.B.E.) was the first fair organized by two countries and was the largest fair in Britain to date. It attracted 8 million visitors.

The Canadian Pavilion was situated in the northwestern sector of the exhibition grounds between the large Machinery Hall and the Australian pavilion. It contained 60 000 square feet of rich displays reflecting the size and importance of the colony.

The official postcard publisher for the F-B-E was Valentine & Sons Ltd., Dundee, London & New York. Valentine & Sons (1825-1980) was one of the largest postcard publisher in the early 1900's. Postcards were produced in color and black and white, in different sizes and styles. Most of the Valentine Series cards in this exhibit are numbered but are not shown in numerical order. Some of the interior views are sequential but there does not appear to be any systematic order.

The majority of the used cards have been cancelled with one of the F.B.E. special cancellations during September 1908.

Besides the Valentine Series, cards from E. Alexander, Bonnett & Shum and Millar & Lang Ltd. are shown in this exhibit. There were 22 different card manufacturers showing off views and panoramas of this exhibition.

The Canadian Pavilion was eventually restuctured for the Japan-British Ex. in 1910. It became the Japan Wrestling Arena.

In conclusion, the Olympic Games Stadium is included since it was part of the exhibition grounds plan. Canada also had relative success at these Games and their participation also became an important part of this international fair.

Rarity and Condition: I believe that after 5 years of research, all known postcards related to the Canadian participation were found. They include the main Canada Court pavilion; 15 different interior views from that pavilion; the Canadian Pacific pavilion; the outdoor attractions including the Tobogan Run and the Scenic Railway.

More views of Canada Court and its interior displays were produced than for any other pavilion. There exists a postcard, from Bacon's "Excelsior" series, with a map plan of the exhibition grounds but I was unable to locate a copy.

As usual, real photo postcards are not used as commonly as lithographed cards for these international fairs. A few produced by local London publishers were found for this exhibit. Colorized cards, sepia or halftone cards also were included in this group.

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