

Canada Spotlights Its Chinatown Gates

On May 1, Canada Post issued a booklet of eight “Gates of Chinatown” stamps, also offered in a souvenir sheet (shown) and an uncut press sheet of five souvenir sheets.

Wooden or stone gates, known as paifang in Mandarin, were originally used to separate subdivisions in Chinese cities. Eventually, these gates lost that role, but their doors remained as monuments. These gates are often the most visible representation of Chinatown in Canada’s cities.

Clockwise from the upper right:

Founded in 1909, Winnipeg’s Chinatown is one of Canada’s older Chinese communities. The gate, built in 1987, is a pedestrian overpass that connects and complements the Dynasty and Mandarin buildings.

In Vancouver, the Millennium Gate, built in 2002, was inspired by the Inner City Gates of 19th and 20th century Beijing. It combines Eastern and Western designs to represent the past and future of the community.

Victoria’s Gate of Harmonious Interest, built in 1981, stands in the heart of Canada’s first Chinatown. The gate blends traditional and symbolic elements and features hand-carved stone lions from Victoria’s sister city, Suzhou. One pillar commemorates Chinese Canadians who fought and died in World War II.

Located at the entrance to the Mississauga Chinese Center, this city’s timber gate was constructed solely with traditional wooden studs. Cooperation between China and Canada is demonstrated in the government support

and construction expertise that made this gate possible.

Built in 2010, the Ottawa Chinatown Gateway, featuring nine roofs, is a royal Chinese arch that can only be built in capital cities. The gate has good-luck symbols embedded within, including five Chinese coins, one of which is at least 1,000 years old.

The Chinese Gate in Edmonton benefited from the expertise of Chinese architects and craftsmanship from the sister city of Harbin. Built in 1987, the gate features traditional Chinese motifs, colours, decorative tiles and ornate lighting.

The Zhong Hua Men Archway, standing at Gerrard East and Hamilton streets in Toronto’s Chinatown East, was built thanks to many Canadian and Chinese partners. The gate honors Chinese Canadian settlers, particularly those who labored on the transcontinental railway.

Montreal’s Chinatown actually has four gates—North, South, East and West. The North Gate on the stamp was donated by the city of Shanghai in 1999.

To create these stamps, eight illustrators across the country took to their communities to create watercolor paintings of the gates. Stamp designer H el ene L’Heureux of Interaction/design then used these images to create unique stamps that work together as a set.

To enhance the issue, L’Heureux found the answer in traditional Chinese coins and designs. “The souvenir sheet shape represents the coin and allows a layout of the eight illustrations around the square hole in the center,” says L’Heureux.

