

The Toronto Hospital for Sick Children's Early Christmas Appeals

The Sweetest of All Charities

Purpose: This social philately exhibit illustrates the mailed material used by Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children in its early Christmas fundraising campaigns, and how the messaging and images changed over time, reflecting the growth of the institution as well as societal changes especially during and after WWI.

Scope: The exhibit includes both appeal material (campaign booklets, letters and illustrated covers) and donation acknowledgement post cards.

The exhibit covers a key period of growth and transformation for the Hospital under the stewardship and influence of its most crucial benefactor, newspaper magnate John Ross Robertson, and concludes in the years after his death. Under Robertson's leadership, the Hospital embraced new technology and medical theory and transformed from its roots as a Christian charity into a modern secular Hospital for pediatric care and research.

Importance: The Hospital for Sick Children is the largest pediatric hospital in Canada and has earned an international reputation for clinical care and research. In its early years it received funding from government grants as well as paying patients but relied heavily on donations to support its mandate to provide treatment to all sick children of Ontario.

This exhibit is the only significant assembly of printed material used by the Hospital in its early fundraising campaigns. The Hospital was the only user of this group of private order post cards lacking address separation headings (with the exception of the 1¢ carmine Admiral issue), and the only user of private order cards for charitable fundraising. It would be very difficult if not impossible to duplicate this exhibit due to the scarcity of the material.

Treatment: Following an introduction of Robertson, the second chapter illustrates the printed material used in appeals such as campaign booklets, letters and illustrated covers. The final chapter deals with acknowledgement of donations, starting in 1896 with early forms printed on regular issue and private post cards, followed by an in-depth study comprising all major styles of private order post cards used by the Hospital, and ending with the transition back to regular issue post cards in 1926.

The exhibit is not meant to be an exhaustive catalogue of post card types. Rather, the material has been carefully selected to illustrate the social history of the Hospital's fundraising campaigns.



Illustration from 1891 book on the history of the Hospital.

For clarity and ease of viewing, the historical text is distinguished from philatelic and other descriptive text using different font styles and colours.

Original research and personal study: Study of the material has been supplemented by research at the Hospital's archives. The exhibitor has identified previously undescribed varieties of the KEVII private order post cards (**Ref. 1**), as illustrated on **p8** of the exhibit. The exhibit provides documentation of the print runs and dates of private order post cards and detailed information regarding the types of card backs, including illustrations, beyond what is published in catalogues. A KEVII card from the same printing as the first KGV card (**p9, one of two examples known**) identifies a blended print run (**Ref. 2**). The documentation of print runs has enabled estimation of the number of donations received by the Hospital over a period of several years (1907-1913, see **p9**). The figures for donation amounts are taken from the Hospital's Annual Reports (Hospital archives).

Rarity and condition: All of the printed appeal material is extremely scarce, especially the booklets and letters that are rarely found. No specimen printings of cards or covers are known. The exhibit includes a rare donation receipt postal card that mentions the Hospital's founding Ladies' Committee, which resigned in 1899 (**p6**).

The exhibitor has carried out a detailed census of the private order post cards based on multiple sources including the exhibitor's own 10+ year collection, online auctions, the Hospital archives and known collectors of this material. Census information is included for all private order cards in the exhibit (ranging from unique to at most 18 examples known); in most cases 5 or fewer examples are known. Fewer than 150 private order cards are known in total. The exhibit includes several items of which only one or two examples are known (boxed in **red**).

All items are in the best possible condition considering their overall scarcity and age (100+ years).

Presentation: The exhibit is presented on 12 square pages, 3 to a row. The subheading at the top right of each page summarizes the story line presented on that page.

References: (Download here: https://bit.ly/SickKids_refs)

1. Jean Wang, "Unlisted varieties of Hospital for Sick Children KEVII postal cards", *Postal Stationery Notes* Oct 2018;29(2):19-20.
2. Jean Wang, "Varieties of the Hospital for Sick Children Style 5 private order postal cards", *Postal Stationery Notes* Aug 2024;33(3):21-24.

The Toronto Hospital for Sick Children's Early Christmas Appeals

The Sweetest of All Charities

Purpose: This exhibit illustrates the Hospital's early Christmas appeals and how they changed over time to reflect the Hospital's growth as well as a changing society.

Scope: The exhibit includes both appeal material (campaign booklets, letters and illustrated covers) and donation acknowledgement post cards. The exhibit covers a key period of growth and transformation for the Hospital under the leadership and influence of newspaper magnate John Ross Robertson, and concludes shortly after his death.

The Hospital: Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children was founded in 1875 by a Ladies' Committee led by Elizabeth McMaster, as a Christian charity run by women providing care for sick children.

In 1883, Robertson funded construction of a Lakeside Home on the island (shown at right), where many of the Hospital's patients convalesced over the summer months.

Robertson formed a Board of Trustees to run the Lakeside Home, and in 1891 the Trustees assumed financial and governing responsibility of the Hospital from the Ladies' Committee. In the same year, the Hospital moved to a new building on College Street (shown below), where it operated until it relocated to its current site on University Avenue in 1951.

The need: All children in Ontario in need of treatment were admitted regardless of their parents' ability to pay. Although funded in part by government grants and paying patients, in its early years the Hospital solicited and relied heavily on public donations.



Lakeside Home for Children on Toronto Island c1908, Henry Garner (Leicester, England) Living Picture Post Card series, divided back, halftone printing. Imported by A. H. Cooper, Toronto.



Hospital building on College Street c1909, Henry Garner (Leicester, England) Living Picture Post Card series, divided back, halftone printing. Imported by A. H. Cooper, Toronto.

Treatment: Following an introduction of Robertson and examples of appeal material, the exhibit provides an in-depth survey of donation acknowledgement cards, which were crucial to the success of the campaigns. Material has been carefully selected to illustrate the social history.

Importance: This exhibit is the only significant assembly of the Hospital's early mailed fundraising material and cannot be easily duplicated, if at all. The Hospital was the only user of private order post cards for charitable fundraising.

Research: The exhibitor's analysis of the collected material, supplemented by research at the Hospital's archives, has enabled identification of new varieties and different printings of private order post cards as well as new insights into the scope of donations.

Rarity: Very little early appeal material exists. Detailed census information is included for all private order post cards shown, ranging from unique to at most 18 examples known; fewer than 150 cards are known in total.

Plan of the exhibit

1. Christmas spirit
2. Fundraising appeals
 - 2.1 Booklets and illustrated covers
 - 2.2 Appeal letters
3. Thanking donors
 - 3.1 Early acknowledgement post cards
 - 3.2 Private order post cards
 - 3.3 Transition to regular issue post cards

Historical text

Philatelic and related text

Auxiliary text

 Original research

Items of which **1 or 2 examples**
are known are boxed in red

Copies are reduced to 75%

Census numbers are reported based the exhibitor's 10+ year collection, online auctions, the Hospital archives and a comprehensive survey of collectors of this material.