

## TIMELINE:

# The maple leaf

The maple tree, with its vibrant autumn colours, has always been a prominent feature of the landscape in the eastern parts of Canada. The Indigenous peoples living in these areas valued the maple tree for its sweet sap and the goods derived from it. While this remarkable tree made a distinct impression on early settlers, it wasn't until the 19th century that the maple leaf itself emerged as a symbol of national identity. From that time onwards, the leaf appeared more and more frequently, becoming the well-loved symbol of Canada as it is today.

**1834**

Founding of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste, an association celebrating French Canadian language and culture, which adopts the maple leaf as an emblem.

**1836**

The newspaper *Le Canadien* adds a wreath of maple leaves to its front page. In the editor's words, "the maple leaf has been [...] adopted as the emblem of Lower Canada."

**1848**

The literary annual *The Maple-Leaf* refers to the maple leaf as "the chosen emblem for Canada" and features a golden leaf on the cover.



Back cover the *The Maple-Leaf* literary annual, 1848  
© Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,  
University of Toronto

**1849**

A maple leaf appears on the cover page of Canada's first comic journal, *Punch in Canada*. Other magazines start to use this increasingly popular symbol, such as *The Maple Leaf: A Juvenile Monthly Magazine* (1852) and *The Illustrated Maple Leaf* (1854).





Canadian 1¢ coin from 1908, and the last penny issued from 2012.  
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## 1850

Canadian pennies feature maple leaves starting in the 1850s and, from 1876 to 1901, the maple leaf appears on all Canadian coins. The design of the 1¢ penny remains unchanged from 1937 until it is taken out of circulation in 2012.



## 1860

The maple leaf features on the badge of the 100th (Prince of Wales' Royal Canadian) Regiment of Foot and in decorations for the visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada.

## 1867

Canadian poet and songwriter Alexander Muir composes the patriotic song *The Maple Leaf Forever* to commemorate Confederation. It is widely used as an unofficial national song for decades afterwards, and remains popular in many English-speaking parts of Canada until the official adoption of O Canada as our national anthem in 1980.



## 1868

The maple leaf is included on the shields of the coats of arms granted by Queen Victoria for both Quebec and Ontario.



Coats of arms of Ontario and Québec



The current flag of the Governor General of Canada

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## 1870

The Governor General's flag is formally adopted, and features a wreath of maple leaves. The current Governor General's flag shows the crest of the coat of arms of Canada: a crowned golden lion holding a red maple leaf.





## 1899 – 1902

Canadian soldiers fighting for Britain in the Boer War in South Africa wear a maple leaf badge on their helmets.



*The cap badge worn by Canadian soldiers during the Boer War*  
© Canadian War Museum

*Canada's first national lacrosse team at the London 1908 Olympic Games*

© Team Canada



## 1908

Beginning with the London games in 1908, the maple leaf features on all Canadian Olympic uniforms. These first uniforms feature a single red maple leaf on a white background.



## 1910 – 1913

From 1910 to 1913 the Montréal Canadiens hockey jersey features a maple leaf design.

## 1914 – 1918 First World War

Canadian military personnel wear maple leaf badges and also display it on their equipment.



## 1919

In discussions leading to the creation of Canada's new coat of arms, Major-General Eugène Fiset, Canada's Surgeon General during the First World War and later Lieutenant Governor of Quebec, recommends a number of concepts for Canada's official emblem. Among his many proposals is a single red maple leaf on a white field.

*The approved design sketch for the Coat of Arms of Canada, 1921*

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## 1921

King George V grants the official Royal Arms of Canada. They feature a sprig of three green maple leaves on the shield and a red maple leaf in the crest.



## 1927

The Toronto Maple Leafs hockey team adopts the maple leaf as its logo.

## 1939 - 1945 Second World War



Many Canadian military units display the maple leaf on their badges and equipment. During the war, the Canadian Army also publishes a newspaper for its troops, called the *Maple Leaf*.



### 1957

Queen Elizabeth II wears the “Maple Leaf of Canada dress” at a state banquet at Rideau Hall. The gown has a garland of maple leaves mingled with white roses. Also in this year, the leaves on Canada’s coat of arms are changed from green to red.



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Right: The Maple Leaf of Canada Dress, designed by Norman Hartnell, 1957.

Left: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh receiving guests at a State Banquet, Government House, Ottawa, 1957.

The personal flag of Queen Elizabeth II for use in Canada  
© His Majesty the King in Right of Canada, represented by the Canadian Heraldic Authority



### 1961

Queen Elizabeth II approves a personal flag for use when she is in Canada. Modeled on Canada’s coat of arms, it features a sprig of three maple leaves.



### 1964

The Great Flag Debate. Most of the thousands of flag concepts submitted by Canadians feature a maple leaf.



The National flag of Canada

### 1965

The iconic maple leaf becomes the centerpiece of Canada’s new National Flag, raised for the first time on February 15, 1965.

