

# ARTHUR L. McCREADY, AUTHOR, EDITOR, PUBLISHER

*by Charles J.G. Verge*

Some 75 people attended the spring breakfast of the philatelic Writers Unit (an affiliated group of the American Philatelic Society) on Saturday, June 15, 1996 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. The breakfast, a semi-annual affair of the Unit, coincided with the American Philatelic Society's spring meeting at CAPEX '96. The highlight of the breakfast was the induction of Arthur L. (Mac) McCready (1892-1967) into the Writers Unit Hall of Fame. In addition to Canadian and American writers and columnists, 12 members of the McCready family also attended.



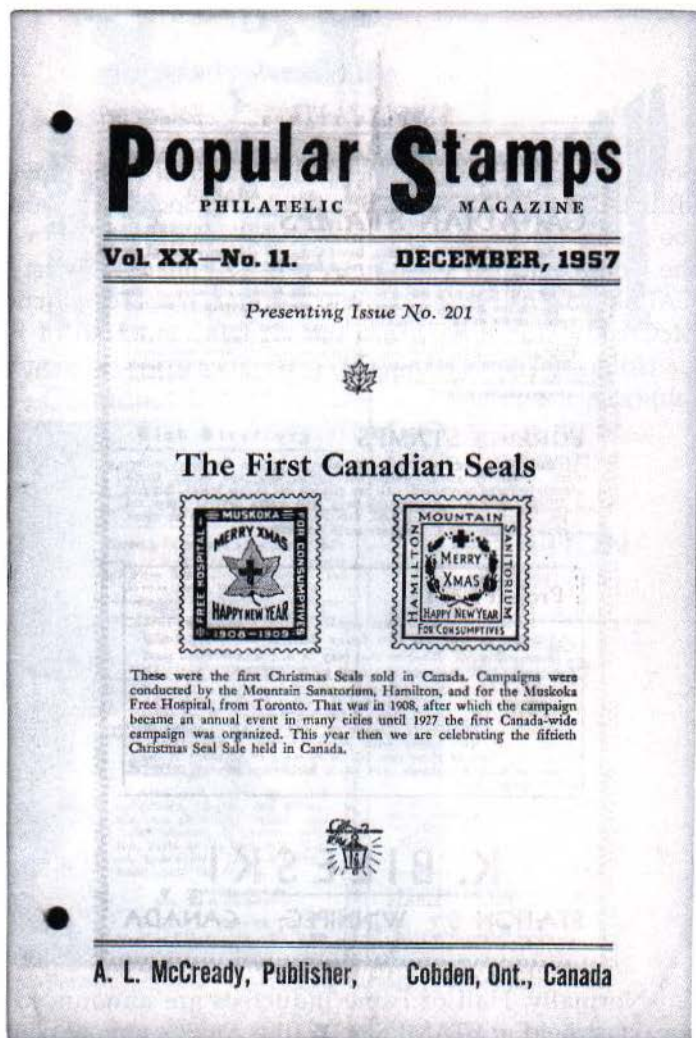
Normally, Hall of Fame inductees are announced at the Writers Unit breakfast held at STAMPSHOW, the A.P.S.'s annual convention. In this case, president Alan Warren and Hall of Fame committee chairman Barbara Mueller felt that it was more appropriate for Mr. McCready to be honoured in his own country.

Author, editor, collector, songwriter, musician are some of the many words that could describe Arthur L. McCready. He was born in August 1892 at

Chatham, Ontario and grew up near Sarnia. In 1928 he became editor and publisher of the *Cobden Sun*, retaining this position until he retired in 1958.

In 1939 he purchased the periodical that was to make him famous: *Popular Stamps*. He wrote much of it, edited it, and published it until ill health forced him to stop in 1958. At the time of his death in 1967, *Popular Stamps* was still the longest running Canadian philatelic magazine. A complete run of the 204 issues is a very valuable reference source of Canadian philately.

*The cover of the December 1957 issue of Popular Stamps. Poor health forced McCready to stop publication three issues later. At this time the journal appeared ten times per year, and normally offered 20 or 24 pages per issue. About half the content consisted of advertising. A one-year subscription cost \$1.50 postpaid.*



During his long tenure at the helm of *Popular Stamps* he also published some well known Canadian philatelic catalogues and handbooks. These were pioneer landmarks in the development of several facets of Canadian philatelic research. The most important of these are *Canadian Philatelic Literature*, *Canadian Flag Cancellations* (two editions), and *Dinky Damus Varieties*. He frequently wrote



articles on Canadian philatelic literature. This was his real philatelic love: he was a prolific researcher and collector in this area.

When McCready bought the publishing rights to *Popular Stamps*, it was little more than stamp dealer E.C. Werner's trade and price lists. In February 1941 he began editing and publishing the periodical as an independent stamp publication. Over the years he attracted most of the leading Canadian philatelic authorities and writers to his pages. People such as Gerald Wellburn, Fred Jarrett, Allan K. Grimmer, Edward Goodchild, H. Warren, K. Hale, Nelson Bond, Ed Richardson, Stanley Deaville, R.A. Odell, Aubrey Kelsey, R.A. Jamieson (under the pseudonym of Phil Atts), and many others were frequent writers or regular columnists in *Popular Stamps*.



*In addition to editing and publishing Popular Stamps, Arthur L. McCready was a pioneer in the publication of specialized handbooks on various facets of philately. At left is the cover of Canadian Flag Cancellations.*

McCready quickly turned *Popular Stamps* into a first class publication. In February 1942 he attracted the attention of the Canadian Philatelic Society, the former name of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada. The Society subscribed to *Popular Stamps* for its complete membership and arranged to use *Popular Stamps* for official Society news and notices. This partnership proved profitable to both parties. The Canadian Philatelic Society membership grew by 900% during the period of their agreement that lasted until the Canadian Philatelic Society began its own journal, *The Canadian Philatelist*, in 1947.

"Mac" McCready served on Cobden town council. He took a leading part in the organization of the Cobden Horticultural Society, and was a member of

the Grace United Church in Cobden. As well as stamps and flowers, his hobbies were Canadian banknotes, Canadian pottery, cast iron toys, and 19th century penny banks.

Phil Atts complained that McCready did not let escape any tidbit about himself in his publication. In response, in the February 1945 issue of *Popular Stamps*, McCready published the following autobiography:

So Phil Atts last issue said the Editor doesn't tell much about himself! Well, as this issue begins his fifth year at the helm of P.S. - here goes: At a very early age he was born in Western Ontario. First few years rather hazy. At age six, went to school; came home first night all beaten up, nice bloody nose, beautiful black eye - all because "Gentlemen don't fight," was mater's morning injunction. Surveying the wreck that night she revised the advice: "Gentlemen DON'T START fights - they finish them." We did - next day. Thus mothers make men; and wives make 'em or break 'em.

Never had a spare dollar - don't expect to. Raised on a farm I've seen the hogs hog around, the cows cow down, little lambzies eat ivy, as the song writer wrote. Have hoed corn and 'taters, beets and carrots. Fell in love at twelve. Criticized a school teacher at thirteen for strapping a beginner. (Remembered my own first day.) Result: fired from school for balance of term. Returned at fourteen and picked up from there. Boyhood ambitions alternately: storekeeper, train engineer (nearly said train robber), cowboy, detective, globe trotter, politician, doctor, clergyman, musician, poet, or what have you. An early forebear may have been knighted in Ireland - we doubt it. Used to hang around printing offices - finally it "took." Married at twenty-four, the neighbours all marvelled. Collected stamps when a button - succumbed again thirty years later. Am six foot, one - longest printer in Ottawa Valley - sometimes the shortest. Tried living in city - like Great Outdoors better. Started business career sweeping floors....now fifty-two - still sweeping floors. Never got anywhere.... apparently....Just holding my own.

Arthur McCready's wife Florence preceded him in death. They had three children: two sons, Howard and Arthur, both now deceased, and a daughter, Dorothy Carpenter of Boulder, Colorado.

The last words belong to "Mac" McCready: *Popular Stamps* is "a publication, the chief consideration of which, is to be a journal of some literary worth rather than a vehicle devoted firstly to the promotion of the sale of goods, or services of the publisher....We of *Popular Stamps* have no other purpose to serve other than the publishing of the journal for acceptance on its merits."

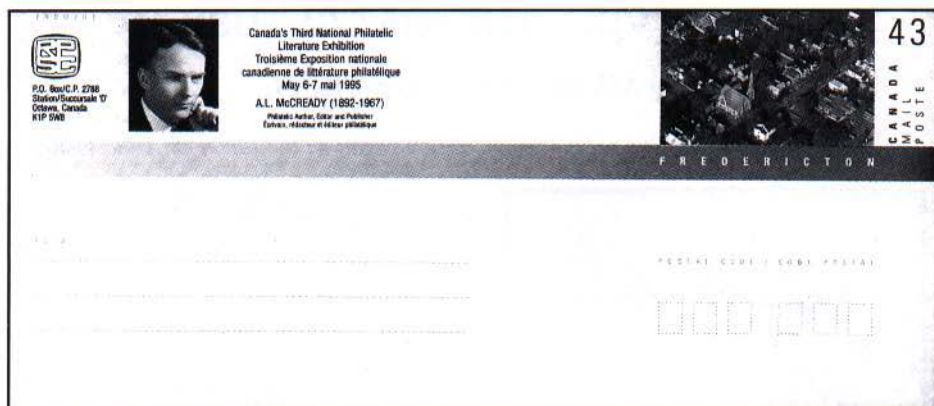
For his unflagging service to Canadian philatelic literature, to his worldwide subscribers, and to Canadian philatelists still today, the Writers Unit 30 of the American Philatelic Society placed the name of Arthur L. (Mac) McCready in its Hall of Fame.

After the induction, Writers Unit president Alan Warren presented a certificate to Mrs. Carpenter, who then shared some of her reminiscences of her father with the audience. McCready's name will also be inscribed on the Hall of Fame plaque which hangs at A.P.S. headquarters in State College, Pennsylvania.

As a philatelic footnote, McCready was honoured twice by Canada Post in its "Great Canadian Philatelists" series of commemorative postal stationery, which they produce in support of Canadian national stamp shows. The first

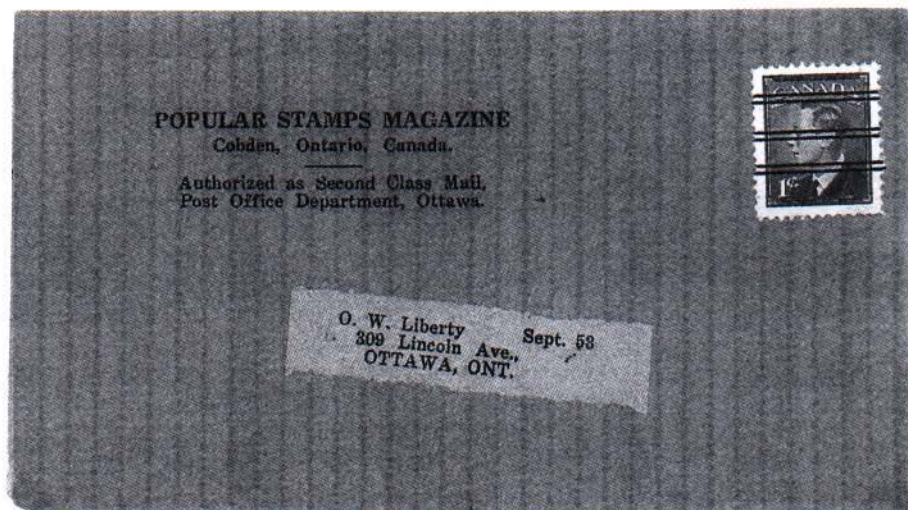


occasion was in support of Canada's Second National Philatelic Literature Exhibition in Ottawa, held April 30-May 2, 1993, and the second was for the third such exhibition, held May 6-7, 1995.



Above: Canada Post's 1995 commemorative envelope, featuring Arthur L. McCready. The 1993 version was issued in both the No. 8 and No. 10 sizes. In both years, a photograph supplied by McCready's daughter, Mrs. Dorothy Carpenter, appeared on the envelopes. Two thousand envelopes were issued at the 1995 National Literature Exhibition in 1995, and 1,000 of each size in 1993.

Below: the Popular Stamps mailing wrapper of the early 1950s.



The Second Vice President of the RPSC, Charles Verge of Ottawa is passionately interested in philatelic literature.