

CALGARY PHILATELIST

August 1997

Issue #25

ROYAL CALTAPEX *1997* ROYALE

THE ROYAL PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF CANADA
69th NATIONAL STAMP SHOW & EXHIBITION



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ISSN 1192-5043



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The CPS was founded in April 1922 by Dr. Edward George Mason. It is Chapter 66 of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada, Chapter 1360 of the American Philatelic Society, and Chapter 91 of the American Topical Association.

The CPS address is Box 1478, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2L6, or the Web at: <http://www.agt.net/public/tpresber/CPS.HTM>

Articles or advertisements for the Calgary Philatelist should be sent to the Editor, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. Small ads are free to paidup members of the CPS. Display ads are \$10 per full page per issue for camera-ready copy (photographs extra charge). No partial-page ads accepted.

Membership dues for the 1997-98 season are \$12, plus an initiation fee of \$5 for new members. Mail to CPS, Membership Chairman, Box 1478, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2L6.

1997-98 EXECUTIVE

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LITERACY AND THE USE OF THE POSTAL SYSTEM
by Dale Speirs

For all that literacy is considered a good thing, it is not essential to daily life for most people and through most cultures and history. A culture needs only a small percentage of literates to preserve its learning and this was true up until this century. Mass literacy is now taken for granted, but it is a relatively recent phenomenon. Even today, 60% of homes do not buy books, equipment training is done by example and verbal instruction, and the majority of people get their news from television. On the face of it, it may seem that an illiterate society would not use the mails, but this is not entirely so. There are those who manage to struggle through a few sentences, or can sign their name, or can read a few basic signs and notices. Even those completely illiterate can use the services of a scribe.

My interest in the subject of scribes came about when I was doing non-philatelic research at the University of Calgary Library, which involved going through back issues of British and American periodicals dating back to the 1700s. I kept coming across interesting references to the postal systems of the day, and one small collection I made was of articles on the scribes who wrote or read letters for the illiterate masses.



Figure 1 -
An Italian
scribe pre-
pares to
write a
letter for a
peasant girl.
From PENNY
MAGAZINE,
1833-11-9,
volume 2,
page 437

Scribes were common in England until the early years of the 1800s. One writer (Anonymous 1833) comments as follows:

"Some years ago it was no uncommon thing, particularly in those parts of London near the river, as Wapping and Shadwell, to see stuck in the window of a shop or in front of a stall, such inscriptions as 'Letters written here', 'Letters written to all parts of the World', 'A large assortment of letters on all sorts of subjects to be found within', &c. &c."

"These inscriptions, however, have been gradually disappearing with the spread of education among the people. No doubt there are still many individuals in London who cannot write, and that much remains to be done in the important branch of popular instruction; but it is equally certain that at the present day there are few families, even among the poorest, without some member of it, or without some friend or neighbour, that is qualified to carry on its limited correspondence; and thus the occupation of a general public letter-writer is going, and is almost gone, from among us in London."

Scribes continued in many other countries though. Most of the references I have found refer to the scribes of Rome, but this is probably due to the popularity of that city as a tourist destination, where authors writing for British and American periodicals were most likely to come into contact with scribes. Carrying on the above quoted account of 1833, that author writes:

"... a body of men not inconsiderable in number, and who have no other occupation whatever, gain their bread by writing letters for the poor and uneducated classes. These humble yet important functionaries ... do not, generally speaking, occupy either shop or stall, but ply their labours in the open air. Their portable establishment, or stock in trade, consists of an old rickety table, with sometimes a desk upon it, two low stools (one for the writer, the other for the customer), a few sheets of paper, some pens, a penknife made like a razor and almost as big, a still more oddly-shaped inkhorn, and a pair of spectacles, either to aid their sight or to give a grave look. Thus furnished they sit through the day, generally near to the post-office, either despatching business or waiting for it."

"... public letter-writers at Naples ... abound much more than in the 'eternal city'. In a vico, or lane, by the side of the post-office of Naples, they generally plant the desk, as they are there at hand not only to write answers but to read the letters as they arrive ... There, close to the iron-grated windows of the post-office through which the letters are delivered, the patient scrivani sit from eight o'clock in the morning til the dusk of evening."

"For a letter of ordinary length their charge is about five Neapolitan grani, or twopence English; but this is proportionably increased to ten or even to fifteen grani ... Yet with these trifling gains the scrivani contrive to live, and for the most part, to keep a family."

Thirty years later, the scribes of Rome were still a subject of comment. The engraving at right shows a scribe in 1864. The commentary on this gent was as follows (Anonymous 1864):

"In the streets adjoining the ruins of the Theatre of Marcellus, especially on Sundays after mass, motley groups station themselves near a dirty-looking man who is sheltered by a large and tolerably deteriorated umbrella. ... The public letter-writer at Rome is ordinarily an old man, dressed as a gentleman. A ci-devant black coat, not too well fitting, covers his bent body; but his mind is mostly superior to his vestments and he is confidently relied upon to give his advice and the benefit of his long experience in the conversations and discussions that take place hurriedly between him and his plebian customers on the subjects of their various misfortunes, to be duly recited and turned to graphic account in the poorly-paid document resulting from the consultation."



Eight years on, little had changed in Rome. The engraving on the next page, from HARPER'S WEEKLY of 1872, is accompanied by the remarks of the artist Sidney Hall as follows (Lawrence 1872):

"He is one of the public letter-writers (scrivani publici). Don't you see his pen and his ink-pot, and his shells and bits of marble for paperweights? What a world of wisdom there is in his face! No wonder: he is surcharged with the affairs of tribes of contadini."

One can imagine that scribes were in a privileged position to learn the intimate details of many lives. I can't help but wonder if governments employed them as spies. It would certainly be a good opportunity to learn a few things, although as against that, it is unlikely that the illiterate contadini (peasants) had many secrets worth knowing. The revolutionaries would have been literate, and hardly the type to trust their secrets to a scribe.

Figure 4: Arabic scribe. From ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, 1882-9-30, page 344.



Scribes have not vanished into the mists of history. They are still found in many Third World countries today. Mexico City has them, as the quote below demonstrates (Lake 1996).

"... we walk down to Plaza St. Domingo ... Men (mostly men) sitting outside, at electric typewriters, typing letters and documents to the dictation of their clients."

MONTBARD.

References.

- Anonymous (1833-11-9) Italian letter writers. PENNY MAGAZINE 2:436-438
- Anonymous (1864-1-16) Letter-writers and dealers in cigar-ends at Rome. ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, pp 57,66
- Lawrence, Eugene (1872-6-15) Knowledge or ignorance. HARPER'S WEEKLY 16:469
- Lake, Christina (1996 November) Mexico: Into the city. NEVER QUITE ARRIVING 5:16

Figure 3: Roman scribe of 1872





Figure 5: An engraving from ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, 1854-5-6, page 424. It shows a Spanish scribe in Seville taking dictation from an illiterate peasant woman, while another waits to have her recently received letter read to her. The scribe's sign reads "Juan Morales, Memorialista y Escribano", although one wonders what good it was in soliciting illiterate customers!

ROYAL 97
by Hugh Delaney

The Calgary Philatelic Society, in co-operation with the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada, is sponsoring the 1997 convention ROYAL CALTAPEX 97 ROYALE, at the Coast Plaza Hotel (formerly the Marlborough Inn) in Calgary, on September 19, 20, and 21.

Stamp collectors from all over North America and several other countries will be attending. The exhibition display will feature entries from all over the world. Over 33 dealers from across Canada will be in attendance, and all philatelic interests will be served. A number of specialist groups will hold meetings and seminars during the three days. Attention will be given to young collectors; the CPS will sponsor a table where young collectors can obtain stamps for a nominal price. There will be special events the first two evenings for the entertainment of all attendees, and true western hospitality will prevail.

All members of the CPS should plan to attend this major show, held in Calgary for the first time in 18 years. This project requires the effort of all. The committee working on this project for the past year and a half now require volunteers to help bring this to a super conclusion. Please contact Hugh Delaney at 255-2984 and leave your name and phone number so we can determine what work you might be able to do and how much time you can volunteer.

We need greeters, people to man the CPS booth, to hand out information to visitors, take membership applications, help set up frames and take them down, help on the Registration desk, help in assembling visitors kits, help in maintaining the relaxation and coffee room, help in making certain the resources are in place for meetings and seminars, and help in selling advertising in the special programme that will be circulated to all attendees. These are some of the ways that you can help to assure a successful show.

IN MEMORIAM: John Jarabek

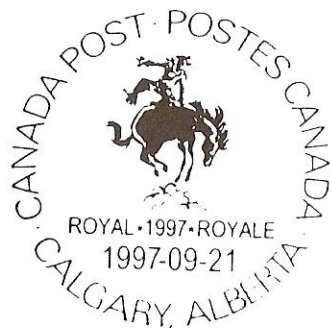
One of the CPS's longest-serving members passed away in June 1997. John Jarabek was Treasurer from 1969 to 1985 and again from 1987 to 1988. In addition, he was a familiar face on the Auction committee for many years, and helped out at the Christmas parties. He was also on numerous show committees, and did behind-the-scenes work for the club in many other capacities.

John was Honourary Life Member #11, and received the Founders' Award for service to the club in 1985.

ROYAL 97 ROYALE PHILATELY

On the occasion of Royal 97 Royale, there will be a number of commemorative items. A limited-edition pre-stamped envelope will be issued honouring Dr. Edward George Mason, who founded the Calgary Philatelic Society 75 years ago. The CPS will also be preparing a cachet for its 75th anniversary.

Canada Post will have three postmarks for the show, one for each day as depicted below. The first one depicts the Calgary skyline, with the Saddledome hockey arena in the foreground and the downtown core behind it with the Calgary Tower. The second postmark will have the logo of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada. The third one will honour Calgary's western heritage with an image of a cowboy riding a bucking bronco.



DUES ARE DUE

I am Bob Perry your new membership chairman, along with Tim Presber, who is recording all records of membership on a computer.

The dues for 1997-1998 will still be \$12.00 a year payable by June 1997 please. I will endeavor to be at both Wednesdays of the month to collect dues.

We need more new members, if you know of a fellow collector, bring them to the stamp club and enjoy the fun as I call it.

Any questions, please call me at 282 4520 or Tim at 266 2755.

As this is a volunteer stamp club, all members should endeavor to assist somewhere with the club activities.

If you are unable to attend a meeting to pay your dues, please fill in the form below and mail it with your cheque for \$12.00 payable to the CPS, Box 1478, Calgary, AB T2P 2L6.

Name: _____ Member #: _____

Address: _____



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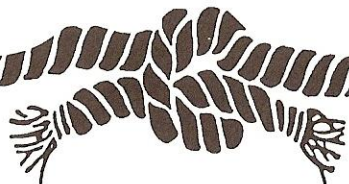
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THE FUTURE OF PHILATELY: IS THERE ANY?

by Leanteri Polvikoski

In a word, yes. But it will be dramatically transformed, and because of this transformation it will be a waste of time to devote disproportionate energy to recruiting youths into the hobby.

The Internet will not kill the postal service anymore than television killed movies, or radio killed stage theatre. It will, of course, dramatically change the postal service, just as television changed radio from fixed half-hour programmes to disk jockey prattle and music. From a philatelic point of view, the opportunities for genuinely-used stamps will continue to decline, but topicals and postal history will boom. Topicals are booming (witness the Disney stamp buy ads in LINN'S) because it is something everyone can relate to. You would have to have a very esoteric job or hobby not to find it represented on stamps. Postal history will grow because people are interested in the history of the town they grew up in, or currently live in, or visited as tourists. Postal history in the sense of the history of registered mail or usage of a particular stamp series will decline because fewer people can afford the cost of early material needed to make the collection complete. Traditional philately, whole country collecting, and worldwide collecting will always be with us but will also decline due to the difficulty of getting or affording early material.

These changes are very disconcerting to some philatelists. At a recent Calgary show there was a display of Priority Post covers, and the sniffing from traditionalists was audible throughout the hall. Yet it was the case at one time that no one collected venerable categories such as squared circles or Admiral retouches. Thirty years from now ink-jet slogans, currently despised by many, will be high-priced items. It has been remarked that a stamp collector is someone who will not buy a current stamp at face value but will gladly pay double-face from a dealer as soon as it goes off sale. Likewise, snobbery is rampant in postal history; if it isn't fifty years old at least, then it is modern wallpaper. Learned papers are published on the Jubilee issues, yet they were and still are the equivalent of Disney stamps.

Over the past few decades, much time and effort has been put into recruiting youth into philately, yet for little return. They do not stay in the hobby, nor do they seem to return years later when they are in their thirties. Yet we ignore the single richest source of new collectors: the baby boomers. The boomers are now in their forties and fifties, an ideal age to take up stamp collecting. The mortgage is paid off, the kids are mostly gone from home, and the boomers are not as athletic as they used to be. With more disposable income and time in which to spend it in, these are the people who can be attracted into the hobby. They also have the life experience that they can volunteer for committees and put their skills to use.

Forget the myth and fear about the greying of the hobby. The entire population is greying, so one must expect more chrome domes and blue rinses at the stamp club meetings sheerly from demographics. This is not to say we should ignore youth; yes, let's recruit them, but not with disproportionate energy while ignoring the boomers.

AUCTION RULES (EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 1997)

The Wall Sale (silent auction) takes place on the first Wednesday of the month, and the Floor Sale (regular auction) on the third Wednesday, or as published in this bulletin. A maximum of 150 lots will be accepted for each sale.

1) Only Life members and paid-up members may submit material for sale, and must be present during and at the end of the sale to collect monies and unsold lots. CPS will not be responsible for any money or lots not collected. Uncollected lots will become the property of CPS.

2) A maximum of 10 lots may be submitted by any member. The bid sheet must be firmly attached to the lot with room on the left side for bids. Extra lots may be entered if the Sales Manager calls for them to make up the 150 lot total.

3) Floor Sale lots are to be submitted to the Sales Manager for numbering. There is a \$3 minimum reserve bid on each lot. A 15% commission will be collected on all sales, and 25¢ on each unsold lot.

4) Wall Sale lots are placed on the tables, and must have a minimum reserve bid of \$3. A 15% commission is collected on all sales, and each unsold lot is subject to a 25¢ charge.

5) Lots must be properly described (mint, used, full set, broken set, etc.) and must show catalogue name and year used. Any defects must be indicated.

6) Lots may only be returned by the purchaser on the night of the sale and only if they are not as described.

7) No used uncanceled Canadian stamps accepted for sale.

8) Pay-out to sellers will commence when the Sales Committee has balanced cash received against cash payable.

9) While buyers do not have to be members, they are encouraged to become members.

10) Buyers must remain until the end of the sale to pay for their purchases.

11) The Sales Committee will maintain proper records of each evening's transactions, and will turn in a full report to the Treasurer prior to the next sale.

ARE YOU PAID UP?

Membership renewals after December 31 will be \$15. Proof of membership must be shown when putting any materials in for sale.

SMALL ADVERTISEMENTS

These ads are free to paidup CPS members, and will also appear on the CPS Web page at no extra cost. Mail your ads to Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7, or hand them to me at meetings. Next deadline is September 3 for the October issue.

NOTE TO INTERNET VIEWERS: Unless otherwise stated, telephone numbers are area code 403. Alberta is on Mountain Daylight Time.

FOR SALE: United States unused postage stamps at 70% of face value, payable in Canadian funds, ex. \$1 face = 70¢ Cdn. Have up to \$150 face value. Call Ernie at 288-3042.

FOR SALE: What do you need? I have mint and used Canada, USA, UN, foreign; FDCs, ship cancellations, air covers. Town cancellations on cover, paper, stamp, across Canada, mainly Manitoba west, RPOs. Call Mack at 640-2185.

FOR SALE: Ukrainian and Russian stamps new and used. Also Ukrainian FDCs and special cancels from 1991 to date. Call Andy at 236-2037.

WANTED: Used plate blocks, Centennial and before. Price individually, as a batch, or ask for my offer. Will give generous trade of MNH Canada for items I need. Call Ed Harris at 274-0021 or see me at meetings.

WANTED: Postal history of the following Alberta towns. Postmarks must be good strikes; no fragments or weak strikes please. Eckville pre-WW2 postmarks and postcards, Hespero and Pitcox any era, Evarts and Leslieville pre-WW1. Write to Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, T2P 2E7, or see me at meetings.

WHO YA GONNA CALL?

When contacting CPS officials, please check the listing on the inside front cover of each issue of this bulletin. Don't waste your time and other's dialling the wrong telephone number.

Mailing labels are prepared by the Membership Committee, not the Editor, so if you change address please send a notice to the Box 1478 address. This is the official club address. Box 6830 is the Editor's personal box number and should only be used to send ads and editorial copy. While the Editor doesn't mind passing on notes for other club officials, bear in mind that it could be two or three months before he sees them.

MEETINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

1997

June	4	.....	Election meeting
	18		Auction
August	2	.....	Deadline for August bulletin
September	3	.....	General meeting
	3		Deadline for October bulletin
	19 to 21		ROYAL 97 ROYALE
October	1	.....	General meeting
	15		Auction
November	5	.....	General meeting
	5		Deadline for January bulletin
	19		Auction
December	3	.....	Christmas party

1998

January	7	.....	General meeting
	21		Auction
February	4	.....	General meeting
	18		Auction
March	4	.....	General meeting
	18		Auction
April	1	.....	General meeting
	15		Auction
	24		BNAPS Spring Regional Meeting
	25		Stamp Day
May	6	.....	General meeting
	20		Auction
June	3	.....	Election meeting
	17		Auction

MEETINGS and AUCTIONS are at Kerby Centre, 2nd floor, 1133 - 7 Ave SW, at 730 pm. Auction lots should be in before 730 pm to allow viewing.

ROYAL 97 ROYALE is at Coast Plaza Hotel (formerly Marlborough Inn), 1317 - 33 Street NE. Details from Hugh Delaney at 255-0422.

CALGARY REGIONAL GROUP OF THE BRITISH NORTH AMERICA PHILATELIC SOCIETY meets second Wednesdays except July and August at the Museum of the Regiments. Details from Ed Harris at 274-0021.