

## McCaffery's Ink



Due to the chemical nature of iron-gall ink, McCaffery's black ink will actually appear as a grey-black or grey-blue when used from a new bottle. It will darken a bit as it dries. After a few weeks or so the ink will considerably darken, and a black precipitate of the ink will collect in the bottle. For best results, stir the liquid ink and precipitate for 20-30 seconds (a coffee-stirrer works well) before you dip your pen point to begin writing. When the surface of the ink in the jar lowers by 1/4" or so (due to usage or evaporation), add the equivalent of several full eyedroppers or 1 teaspoon of water to the ink. Stir thoroughly so the precipitate, ink and water will mix well. The ink is now ready to use again. A little water added to the ink once in a while is good maintenance. If, however, you neglect to do this for a number of months, the ink will thicken and it will be difficult to produce fine hairlines and smooth strokes. When the ink-level of the jar decreases to only one-half of the jar's depth, add enough fresh McCaffery's ink from another jar into the half full jar to bring the ink level back up to about 1/4" from the top of the jar.

### McCaffery Inks Recreate Penmanship of the Golden Age

In this manner you are always mixing old and new ink together. Such care is well worth the effort; this ink is a faithful reproduction of the favored ink recipes used during the Golden Age of Penmanship. Once the ink has matured in the bottle (1-2 months on average), it is capable of producing exquisite hairlines and crisp, dramatic shades.

### Normal Occurrences You May See

The pigments of McCaffery's inks are natural and organic in composition. As such, every so often it is not uncommon for you to find a slight growth of mold upon the surface of the ink inside the jar. Another "surprise" may be that when you open a jar, you notice that a dried "ink skin" has formed over the surface of the ink. I have also observed that from time to time when I open a bottle of Brown Ink, a thick, brown sludgy material seems to have settled in the ink. Take heart and don't panic! Your ink is fine. In fact, these occurrences are usually a sign that the ink itself is maturing. These phenomena are natural and do not harm, contaminate or dilute the ink. Just take a coffee stirrer, popsicle stick or similar item and lift the mold, dry skin or sludge out of the jar and into the trash. Once this is done, use a new stirring stick and stir the ink again. The ink is now ready to use.

### When Restoration Efforts Fail

If you find that, due to neglect, evaporation, excessive dust or whatever, the ink in your jar is extremely thick, gooey, gritty or has a very unpleasant odor, it is probably best to throw the bottle away and start with a fresh bottle. Just do it – you will be glad you did.

Michael Sull '08

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