

Script in the Copperplate Style: Engrosser's Script

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Historical Perspective on Engrosser's Script

This beautiful form of pen art is essentially an American twist on the old English Roundhand script so wonderfully represented by Bickham's *The Universal Penman*. It is important to note that Roundhand was a form of handwriting. The English Writing Masters of old, from ~1570-1800, used a narrow flat edge quill to produce the Round hand script found in the *Universal Penman*. The handwritten exemplars were transferred to a copper plate by the master engraver using an instrument known as a burin to ready them for printing. In some cases, such as George Bickham, Sr., the penman and the engraver were one in the same person. The engraver could correct any inaccuracies in the written page by using his engraving burin. This transfer of hand penned script to the copper plate would eventually give rise to the name Copperplate for this general style of shaded script. In fact, it has become the term used in modern day calligraphy circles for an entire range of shaded script. The earliest usage of the term 'Copperplate' that I have come across is from Sir Ambrose Heal's monumental 1931 volume entitled *English Writing-Masters*. Though use of the term as applied to English Roundhand script it likely predates 1931.

Sometime in the mid-late 1800's, penmen attempted to simulate the script produced by the burin of the copperplate engraver. This gave rise to one of its names, Engraver's script. Since it was also used extensively to engross documents, the name Engrosser's script is also used. In fact, The Zanerian Manual attributes three names to this script: 1) Roundhand, 2) Engrosser's script and 3) Engraver's script. This script evolved with slower, deliberate strokes that are analogous to ductus in text lettering.

An important distinction is that unlike the previously mentioned English Roundhand, Engrosser's script is NOT handwriting. Rather, it is an art form involving the drawing of letters and has been described by experts as 'engraving on paper'. Interestingly, the production and availability of the flexible steel pointed pen and oblique penholder made Engrosser's script possible.

I would like to make one last note of clarification regarding terminology. As I previously stated, the term used in modern calligraphy describe most styles of shaded script is Copperplate. In my opinion, classifying the English roundhand script of George Bickham and

the English writing masters of old (circa 1570-1800) with that of the CP Zaner and EA Lupfer era obscures the real differences between the script styles.

Requirements for the Art:

The Oblique Penholder

Anyone wishing to attempt this script should purchase a good oblique penholder. This penholder places the nib at an angle relative to the staff of the pen thus facilitating shade formation. Using a straight holder will cause one of the nib tines to drag producing a jagged edge. The best penholders have an adjustable metal flange to accommodate personal writing styles.

Ink

There are currently several high quality inks currently being manufactured for pointed pen work. The flow characteristics of good ink should allow for fine hairlines and thick shades. IAMPETH members Angela Welch, Neil McCaffery and Brian Walker are making the best inks for fine hairlines. A good choice for practice is Tom Norton's Walnut Drawing Ink. All the inks listed work right out of the bottle.

Instructional Text

I consider The Zanerian Manual to be the best instructional book for Engrosser's script ever published. For further instruction, please see my instructional series published in *The IAMPETH Penman's Journal*. All my articles are no available online at www.iampeth.com

Paper

My personal recommendation for practice is Kodak's Brite White 24 pound inkjet paper. I also use preprinted guidelines placed beneath my paper rather than ruling the paper with a pencil. Guidelines are available for print out on my web site at <http://www.zanerian.com>. For practice I recommend guidelines of either 1/4" or 1/2" line spacing with a slant angle of between 52-55 degrees.

Nibs

This is an area of much frustration. The best points are the vintage nibs such as the Gillott Principality, 303 and 604EF or Spencerian No. 1 or Esterbrook A1, 356, 357 and 358. However, they are almost impossible to find. Of the modern nibs, Leonardt's Principal and Walker Fine Writer nibs should be on you list followed by the Hunt 22B and Gillott 303.

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The Exemplars


**Engrosser's Script: Fundamental
Forms for Lower Case Letters**

A B C D E F G H



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**Engrosser's Script Exemplar
Lower Case Letters**



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Group 1

Fundamental Form Combinations →

A
B
C

↓

Resultant Letterform

Group 2

Fundamental Form Combinations →

A
B
C

↓

Resultant Letterform

Group 3

Fundamental Form Combinations →

A
B
C

↓

Resultant Letterform

Group 4

Fundamental Form Combinations →

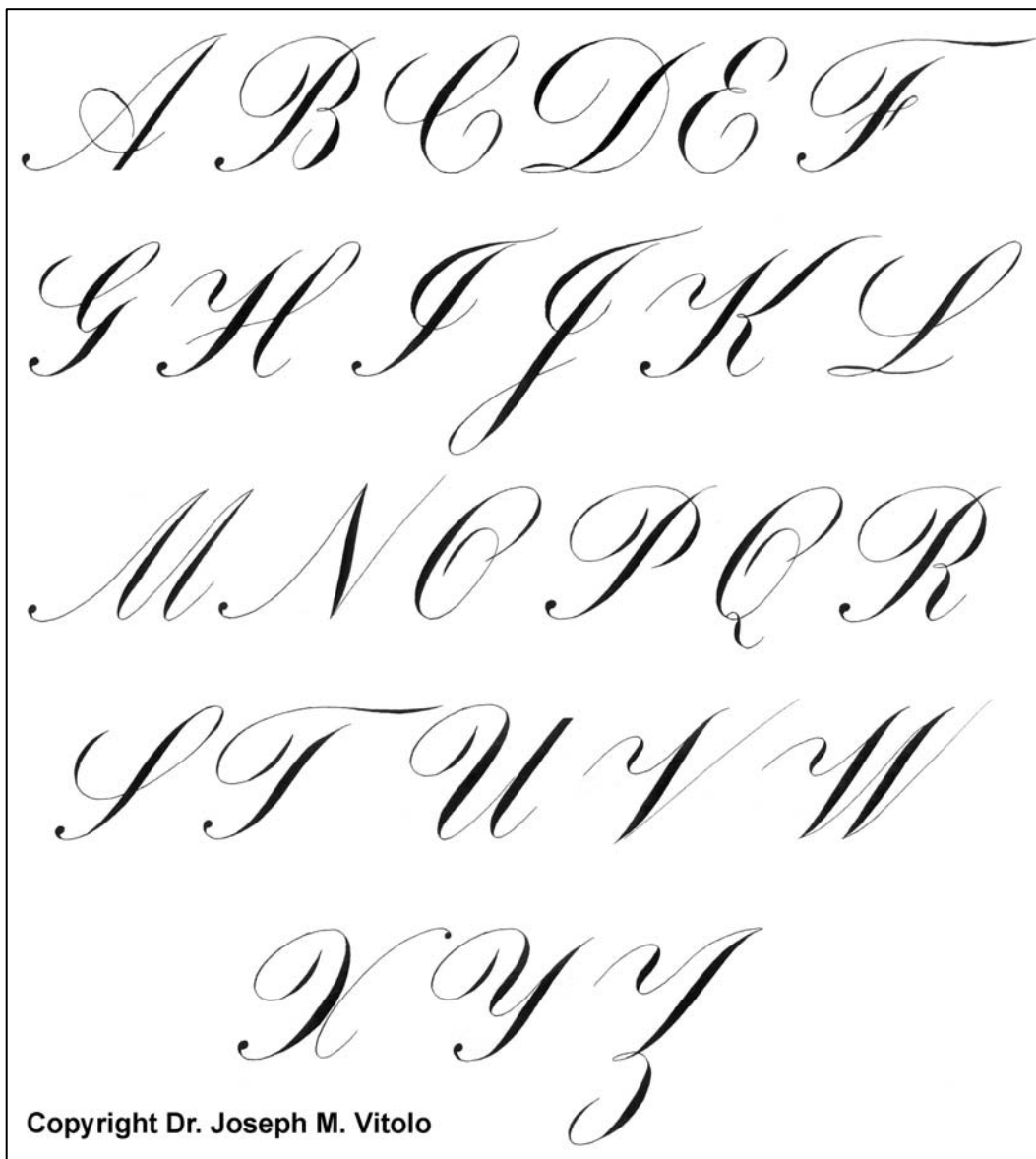
A
B
C

↓

Resultant Letterform

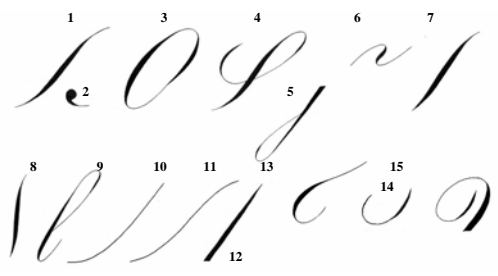
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Engrosser's Script Exemplar Upper Case Letters

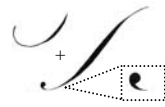


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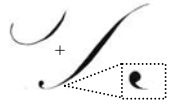
Engrosser's Script: Fundamental Forms for Upper Case Letters



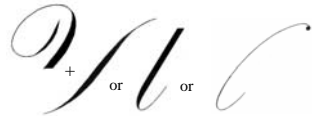
Upper Case B, P, R



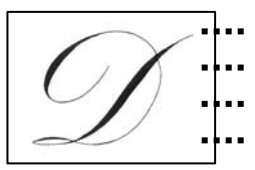
Upper Case F, T



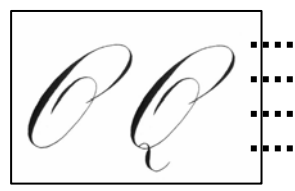
Upper Case U, Y, X



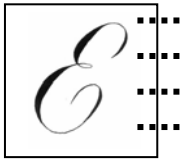
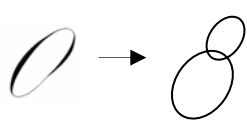
Upper Case D (a transitional form)



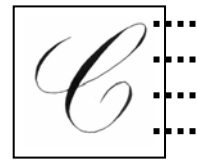
Upper Case O, Q



Upper Case E (first oval transitional form)



Upper Case C (second transitional form)



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Upper Case G, L, S



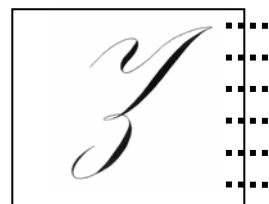
Upper Case H, K



Upper Case V, W



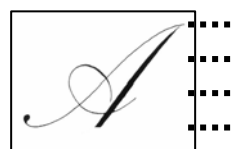
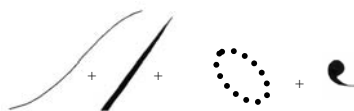
Upper Case Z



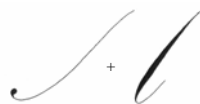
Upper Case I, J



Upper Case A



Upper Case M



Upper Case N

