

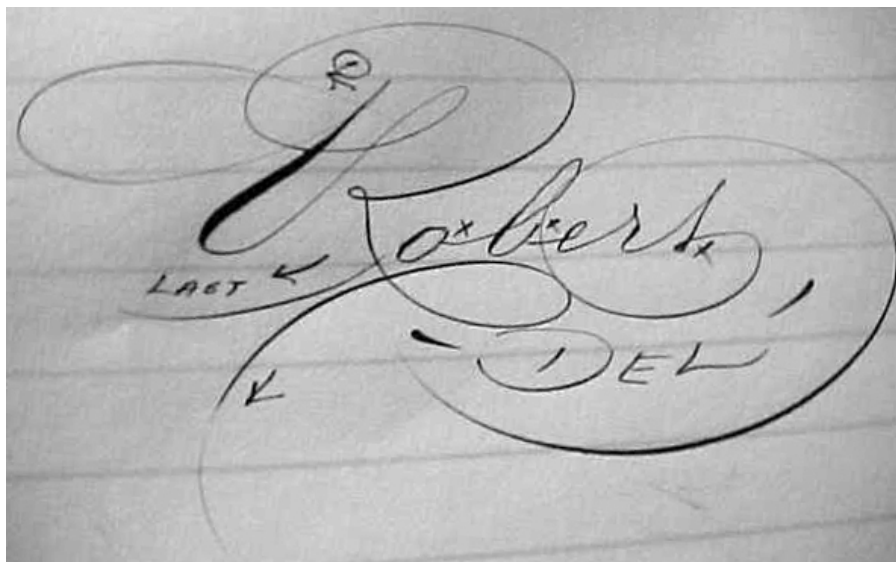
Lessons in Ornamental Penmanship (Part 6)

By Del Tysdal

As posted to the Ornamental Penmanship Group on Yahoo

Compiled by Dr. Joseph M. Vitolo

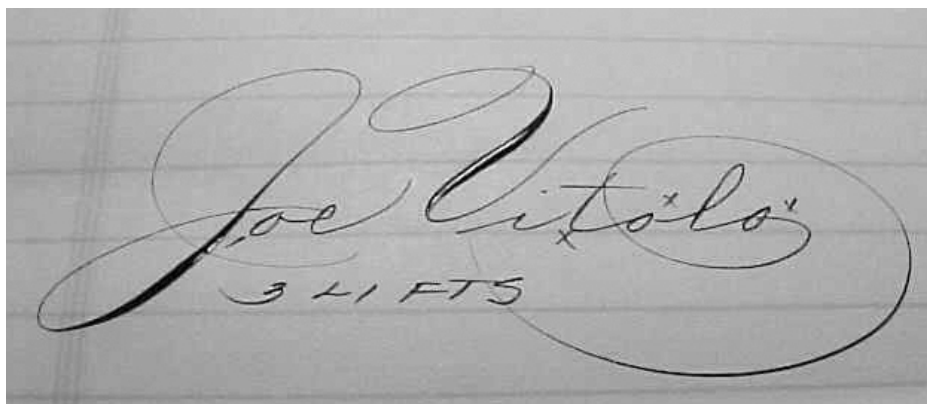
How I Penned 'Robert': A difficult 'R' in Robert until you have done it 300 times



How to write Joe Vitolo

I am posting an image of the name 'Joe Vitolo' showing the pen lifts that I did use. Nevertheless, the signature took less than 10 seconds, if that.

Pen Lifts: Joe Vitolo, only 3 lifts



OP signatures, how to

Janine asked me to describe in more detail how the signatures are done. OP the old way was done with arm motion (movement). The forearm rests on the desk top with maybe an inch or two of elbow off the edge. The nib hits the paper as does the little finger nail. Nothing else rests on the paper or table top.

Think of an orchestra conductor who flails his arms around and around and about. Now put his right arm on the podium and put a pen in his fingers. The arm still swings about but in a more limited range, an inch or two (even less), rather than a foot or two. Or think of standing at a blackboard and using your arm to write. Then sit down at a desk and do the same as at the blackboard, only smaller.

The signatures are NOT drawn. They are written. If the pen draws the lines, the lines will be kinky from the finger or arm jiggles and jaggles of various nerves. The pen nib moves with controllable speed, not super fast and certainly not slow at all (some others do slow, but they get the shakes in the lines).

A signature should have balance. Lines that cross each other should be at 90 degrees, perpendicular to each other, but if parallel not close enough to cause the eye discomfort. Lines to close together in the same plane cause the eye to shudder. Keep parallel lines some distance apart if you use them. Get the swinging lines to cross perpendicular as the eye can read the separation with ease. Try not to make a mouse nest of lines as they make signatures hard to read.

You need, or should have, a bit of quick reflexes. You cannot create this reflex; you either have it or you do not. Madarasz was said by Brownfield to have 'quick reflexes'. Brownfield thought he had the same. This means that in doing writings with speed the eye may see a coming 'snag' and the mind quickly corrects the arm to make the proper figure without even thinking about what is occurring.

A lot of signatures I write with no thought as to what the combination will be. I just 'wing' it. Other times my mind's eye has a view of the end result and how it all fits together. The old fashioned way to write signatures is to do repeat combinations of letters, ABC, ACB, BCA, BAC, CAB, CBA. After you do hundreds of these you will be good at it. I started in 1967.

After hundreds of these are done, the arm itself creates its own 'muscle memory' (as Warner C Brownfield stated to me in 1967 and 1968). The redundancy of practice creates a memory in the arm. When things are flowing good for me, my arm has a smoothness that I can just feel and the confidence to do more of the same.

Another answer about signatures

The caps are all usually connected with no lifts if possible. Unless of course a cap has needed lifts like 'T F'. The old timers would spend hours trying to figure out how cap letters could be connected without lifts.

Madarasz and F B Courtney were teachers for A N Palmer in Cedar Rapids, IA in 1893. They were both 'scratching' the nibs on adjacent tables. FBC did a signature that he was superbly proud of. He tossed the signature over to Madarasz and said to the effect 'match this in a day's of practice.' Madarasz did a quick signature and tossed it back and said to the effect 'match this in a year's practice. W C Brownfield told me this story in 1967 or so. Might be true.

Thin ink and faint lines, Madarasz

W C Brownfield also told me this story: Madarasz found out that some folks were reproducing and selling his pen work in books. To prevent this he would lighten his lines to near faint with water so that the lines would not photograph (or whatever) so easily. Also when his Gillott Principality #1 or Zanerian Fine Writer nibs wore out he would then use those nibs for heavy shaded script until the entirely wore out.

To answer questions from OP Group members Janine and Nan about 'Muscle Memory'

The 'muscle memory' comes from pages of practice (both sides).

The forearm rests and moves on the table top. The flab of the underarm has slots of give for the movement. The old whole arm movement was when the arm is entirely off of the table. I seldom use that style other than for doves and eagles.

I use Musselman Perfection #1 nibs, just as Joe Vitolo uses for Copperplate.

One fellow in a class asked me how I learned to write OP. I said that I had worn out 3 kitchen tables. He said 'there are not enough of them for me.' But after 3 days and a ream of paper he was pretty good at it. I did travel and teach OP for a year or so and got reasonably good results in a three day deal. One fellow in Columbus OH was amazing and he did not ever do it before.

Lightness of line or 'hairlines' comes from faster movement of the nib on paper and just lightness of touch. If the little finger slides on the paper, its level is like a float level in a carburetor. As the little presses down ever so slightly the fingers and hence the nib will rise up.

Remember this--10 pages, both sides.