

# When A Good Nib Is Too Big For Your Penholder

By Bob Hurford

This article was inspired by an inquiry from Joan Gooderham of Fort Erie, Ontario. She acquired a cache of Blanzy-Poure No. 2552 Cementée nibs, one of my favorites. It is sharp and very flexible, great for ornamental penmanship, plus I also like it for copperplate and engrosser's script. Unfortunately, it is also very long at one and one-half inches.

A long nib in an oblique penholder is very awkward. The point sits well off the center axis of the holder's shaft where it should be (see photo below) and forces the hand, especially small hands, into an unwieldy position. Proper strokes become very difficult.

If you have a long nib that you especially like, make the penholder fit the nib to your liking. It is very easy to do. *Warning: reforming the penholder's flange to fit a larger pen point may ruin your holder for other, smaller nibs in the future.*



Note how the point of the Blanzy-Poure Cementée in the holder at left sits well to the right of the holder's center axis. A nib left in this position is very awkward to use.

To accommodate a longer/larger nib, the brass flange on the holder must be enlarged and re-formed. A small slot screwdriver and needle-nose pliers work well. Insert the screwdriver between the layers on the flange and gradually enlarge the opening to fit the nib. Use the pliers to reshape the flange as needed.

Once the pen point is situated properly, gently pinch the flange along the sides to secure the nib.



Above: Long nibs set deep into penholders. The points are centered over the center axis of the shaft. If the portion of the nib that sticks out behind the flange is bothersome, nick it off with a Dremel-type cutter. Personally, I have found that it is well out of the way. Left is a Perry 27 and the Cementée at right.

Not too tight as it may distort the point. You may find that you will have to "tweak" the nib's position until you get it exactly where you want it. It is that simple.

If you are apprehensive about distorting a good wooden holder, use a less expensive plastic holder easily obtained from Paper & Ink Arts and John Neal. Make sure the holder has a brass flange. Old Zanerian holders had inflexible steel flanges and don't work well here.

## Excellent Long Nibs For Ornamental Penmanship and Copperplate

There have been some excellent long nibs made for ornamental penmanship and copperplate over the years. They are sharp and quite flexible. None of the following nibs listed here is still made, but they do pop up on Ebay from time to time.

Blanzy-Poure No. 2552 Cementée  
Perry 27 Elastic Pen  
Hunt 59 University Pen  
Esterbrook 453 Business & College Pen  
Esterbrook 135 Double Elastic Pen  
Spencerian #2 Counting House Pen  
Soennecken 76EF  
Gillott 601EF Magnum Quill