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An Appreciation of Four Remarkable Penmen

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C. P. Zaner, E. W. Bloser, G. E. Crane, L. M. Thornburgh-four exceptional penmen who, by hard work, climbed to the top of their profession. They have been chosen as ideals by thousands of students of the fine art. In the late 90's it was my good fortune to become acquainted with them through correspondence and by following their lessons in the Penman's Art Journal and the Western Penman.

They are dead; but they live in many hearts as examples of the highest type of true manhood. They were kind and sympathetic, enthusiastic and helpful-friends that responded willingly to any favor asked of them.

Zaner, a super-all-around artist, was a noble, altruistic character. Bloser was a kindly, determined gentleman of rare talent. No one has surpassed Bloser's graceful, accurate ornamental handwriting. Crane, of handsome physique, was a supervisor of penmanship, a superior teacher of rapid calculation, an insurance man, and oil and mining prospector. His fine, artistic writing and his strong, rapid business penmanship won the praise of many critical observers. Crane taught me to punch the bag, to row a skiff on Sandusky Bay, twice a week from daylight to six o'clock, and get back home for a hearty breakfast by seven. To get up at four A. M. to watch Crane do unexcelled pen-portraiture and card writing, was indeed a rare treat to me. Thornburgh, a farm boy and ox driver, became a dynamic teacher of wonderful personal magnetism before a class. He possessed marvelous power to inspire young people to improve themselves and to strive for a higher education.

In Palmer's Cedar Rapids business school, Thornburgh and his students, Lutz and Bancroft, so he told me, originated the compact oval. A student said that he could not afford to spend so much money for paper to make spiral ovals-it required stacks of paper. Thornburgh told him to make the lines closer together and save paper. The result was the compact oval as we know it today. Many pupils now make the compact oval in beautiful designs as an intensely interesting means of acquiring the forearm movement for both business and ornate penmanship.

The ideals of these great teachers, the influence they exerted on their friends, have moved many thousands onward and upward toward success and happiness. Their departure from among us to the land of the great unknown, one at a time, not far apart, over a space of a few years, is a severe loss. Their lives have been a stirring success such as many of us are proud to emulate. Thanks to the Creator for giving us Zaner, Bloser, Crane and Thornburgh. They are with us every day.