

Taken from Studies in Pen Art by WE Dennis (AN Palmer Company 1914).....Joe Vitolo

### Old English

This is one of the most beautiful and useful of all alphabets, and, no doubt, one of the most difficult. There are several ways of making it. To pencil the letter carefully, outline it with ink, and then fill in, is a decidedly amateurish way for general Old English lettering. A better way, after laying out the letter carefully in pencil, is to rule in all the straight strokes with a pen as wide as the strokes of the letter, then put on the diamonds, curves, etc. using a fine pen, of course, for the hair-lines and retouching. This, while all right for finished work, is slow. The practical way to make Old English is simply to locate the letters with a pencil, then with the broad pen or quill, corresponding in width to the letter, clip them out at one stroke, putting on the spurs usually with a narrower pen. This is a quick, effective, although difficult, way to turn off Old English. As much retouching and trimming up may be done afterwards as is desirable, but in lettering for profit it should be the aim to make the different parts of the letters with one stroke and not use valuable time in endless retouching and truing up.

In this specimen an effort was made to produce as perfect an alphabet as possible to serve as a model of good forms; but an absolutely perfect alphabet cannot be made and probably never will be, for what would seem perfect to one, according to his conception of the letter, would not be so in the eyes of another of equally good taste and skill. This being the case, then, the best way is to study all good Old English alphabets, and select the particular things you like best. In this manner one does not become a mere imitator, but develops a style and individuality of his own.

In the alphabet on the following page each letter was penciled out very carefully, and then with a broad quill pen the letters were made in ink. After that considerable time was spent in lining up and retouching where there appeared any chance for improvement. This mode of procedure, as before stated, is not a practical way to do Old English; but it may be well enough for practice, to train the eye and acquire as good a conception of the letter as possible.