

CE Hatten

Engrossing Work

The State Department's muster penman is adept at an ancient art.

John E Booth, Washington

URGENT among the official diplomatic documents which a new President is called upon to Issue are consular exequatur. and recently Charles E. Hatten of this city has been turning his finely trained hand to inscribing a number of these for Mr. Eisenhower. Each exequatur, a formidable and impressive notice measuring nineteen by twenty-four inches and given to all foreign consular officials assigned to the United States, signifies the President's recognition of the mission.

Mr. Hatten's inscribing of exequatur comes in the course of his duties as senior engrosser of the Department of State. He is it practitioner of the art of hand lettering an art that flourished during the Middle Ages and today is carried on by an ever-dwindling but dedicated hand of experts.

MR. HATTEN'S meticulous Find graceful script embellishes official documents of the Department of State special correspondence of the President to heads of state and invitations to official functions Invitations to dinners, luncheons and receptions given by the Secretary of State and high Department of State officer-% take a good part of his time. In addition to filling in the engraved invitations with the proper name. date time and place. Mr. Hatten does the envelopes and seating charts. too. At the height of the .social season he moves right over to the White House to help summon kings. princes. ambassadors. the great and near great. to the Presidential table.

Whatever his assignment, Mr. Hatten in well aware that a misspelled name could sour the most adroit of diplomatic overtures: turn to wormwood the banquet chef's most inspired creation. It is testimony to his accuracy as well as to his artistry that affairs of state have never suffered from a slip of his hand. He takes special pride in his work, too in the knowledge that the invitations and documents he has inscribed are official records or treasured mementos in every part of the land and every corner of the earth.

Mr. Hatten became fascinated with the art of the engrosser as a youth when a member of the profession set up a street stand in his home town of Lafayette Ind for the production of elegant hand-lettered calling cards.

Thus inspired he began studying penmanship. He learned how to elaborate on Old English and Roman styles, which are basic to all lettering. He learned how to draw a perfect "o" freehand, a feat he still regards as a prime test of his skill. He learned to perfect his letters by drawing them in sections his "h" for instance, takes eight separate strokes. He learned the subtleties of shading, the relationships between width and height of each letter, the intricacies of joining letters gracefully. In short, he learned those combinations of skills which transform writing into an art form.

ON his first job he chanced to see in a magazine devoted to penmanship an example of the work of Adrian B. Tolley, then engrosser at the White House. In accordance with a practice among engrossers he sent Mr Tolley an example of his own work and asked for a sample of Mr. Tolley's in return. Mr. Tolley obliged, and not long afterward recommended Mr. Hatten for a job with the Federal Home Loan and Bank Board.

In 1941 Mr. Hatten joined the Department of State and he has been there since, excepting for a three-year wartime hitch in the Navy he served in New Guinea, Australia and the Philippines. In those days he kept his hand in by engrossing Shellback Certificates traditionally presented to those crossing the Equator for six hundred of hip shipmates on a naval transport.