

Taken from The American Penman, September 1907 edition. There will be two reference images posted in the next two messages.

Joe Vitolo

Ornamental Writing

By W. C. Henning

In the practice of ornamental writing as well as in business writing, your movement should receive the first consideration. In order to produce delicate lines, graceful forms and pleasing and artistic effects, there must be an absolutely free and unrestrained movement of the arm on the muscular rest just below the elbow. The muscles and cords of the arm, in the shoulder and in fact throughout the entire body, should be in a relaxed condition. This condition depends a great deal upon correct position and the correct manner of holding the pen. With the head resting on one shoulder and the resulting curve in the neck, a crooked spinal column and grapevine twists of the legs around the rungs of the chair, it is useless to attempt to accomplish anything in ornamental writing. The position used for business writing is essentially the same used in ornamental.

Gracefulness, delicacy and contrast in light and shaded strokes are the main essentials of ornamental writing, and it is the harmonious combination of these that makes it worthy of the name of the time it takes to write it and the space which it occupies. If it lacks these, it is not ornamental, and is absolutely useless; yes, worse than useless, as it disfigures whatever it is written on, and is as obnoxious to the eye as discords in sounds are to the ear.

Let your forms be simple and plain. In simplicity there is beauty, and it is in such forms that the highest degree of skill can be shown. A mere jumble of lines means nothing. It is not artistic any more than a barnyard chorus is musical and it is much less interesting. Every line should, mean something. You should be able to analyze your own writing and explain the object of every line used. A piece of ornamental writing should be, like any other real work of art; nothing can be added or taken away without impairing to some extent its beauty, Such skill originates in the head and is transmitted to the hand by faithful practice.

Below is illustrated the inverted oval with two simple modifications, and its use in several of the capital letters. This is a splendid form to begin with and furnishes enough material for a month's practice. Study the contour of each one of the forms before attempting to make it. This one thing keep in mind: The arm must be set in full motion before the pen touches the paper and the line picked up "on the wing" as we might say. There must be no slacking of motion until the letter or form is finished and the pen is off the paper.

This form contains what is called the snap shade. This is produced by a quick release of the pressure on the pen near the base line and lifting the pen off the paper before stopping

the motion of the arm. When this method of making the shade is acquired it will leave the widest part, at or near the base line and the end of the shade pointing horizontally to the left.

The shades in ornamental letters are not made by heavy drags of the pen but by a springy action and a lively motion. Keep in mind the suggestion "snap-shade" and with intelligent practice you will acquire it.

The oblique penholder and a rather fine and flexible pen should be used for this style of writing. The lighter the hand and the more delicate the touch the finer and more flexible the pen which can be used.

The Palmer No. 2 pen is used by many professional penmen. The accompanying illustration shows the correct position of the arms and hands and the manner of holding the pen which should be observed during all practice.

Bear in mind that the use of the oblique penholder is for ornamental writing and that it should never be used for business writing. Ornate writing and business writing don't mix well.