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Penmen From Pocatello, Idaho

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The man responsible for the success of good penmanship and good penmen from Pocatello was that nationally known penman and teacher, and fine gentleman, T. Courtney.

Mr. Courtney was born in Pa., in 1872; lived for a while in Ohio and Mich. In 1893 he attended Ferris Institute, Big Rapids, Mich. W. N. Ferris, a nationally known commercial teacher and penman started Mr. Courtney on his long and successful career as penman and teacher.

In 1894 he taught in Flint Normal School, Flint, Mich. The following year he taught at the Bliss Business College in North Adams, Mass., where he met another nationally known penman, F. L. Tower, the Strahm. oblique penholder man, Hammonton, N. J., who says "T. Courtney was a swell commercial teacher, as well as a No. 1 penman. I liked him very much indeed."

He also taught in the Bryant and Stratton College, Providence, R. I. His interest in penmanship increased as he moved higher in the field of teaching and in 1902 he became a pupil of the famous offhand penman, L. Madarasz. The Madarasz influence on Courtney was very great, and his later work bore the resemblance of the Madarasz touch.

After this course of writing he went to the Iowa Business College, Des Moines. Successively he spent some time in Chicago, the Albany Business College, Albany, N. Y., and Strayer's Business College, Washington, D. C., finally coming to Idaho in 1910 to teach penmanship in the Academy of Idaho, Pocatello, where he taught until his death in July, 1942.

Mr. Courtney loved hunting and fishing, which influenced his stay in Idaho so many years. There are few places that offer more in hunting and fishing than this State.

His very fine pen work has been the admiration of thousands, and will continue down through the years, as the College has a permanent display of his work, as well as some of that of his famous pupil, John S. Griffith, who in later years ranked with the finest of penmen.

John S. Griffith began his career as a penman around 1912, as a pupil of T. Courtney. There is hardly any doubt but that Mr. Courtney was the deciding factor in John's decision to follow penmanship by taking a course in the teaching of the subject at the finest school of its kind the Zanerian.

In the Sept. 1913 issue of The Educator there were lessons in penmanship by S. O. Smith. The work of students following these lessons was sent to Mr. Smith, who listed the names of the following students in order of merit:

M. J. Coyne, Minooka, Pa.
R. W. Carr, Middletown, O.
John S. Griffith, Pocatello, Idaho
Myers Zimmerman, Allentown, Pa.
C. H. Spryer, Pittsburgh, Pa.
A. R. Reelhorn, Corning, Calif.
S. H. Boese, Shenandoah, Iowa.

Mr. Griffith's name appears third on the list. It would be interesting to know what has become of the others.

Mr. Griffith attended the Zanerian in 1913 and 1921. A 1915 booklet by the College printed an alphabet writing by John. In the comments below the alphabet the Zanerian said - "Mr. Griffith is a skillful,

energetic, young man who is speedily pushing toward the 'lime-light' in the penmanship profession. He has a good position with Heald's Business College, Reno, Nev."

This was a very true statement of fact and prediction. His success as a teacher and penman was rapid. In 1931 he was teaching at the Englewood Business College, Chicago. In this same year the late J. A. Savage read a paper (prepared by Mr. Griffith) before the National Commercial Teachers Federation, entitled "The Objective of a Penmanship Instructor in a Private School." It was published by The Educator. This paper showed an intelligent approach to the teaching of and the long range objective of instruction or, as he termed it, the carry-over of subsequent years. To create a desire in the student to apply the principles taught in school to all his succeeding years of writing.

The ability of Mr. Griffith as a teacher and his very skillful penmanship kept him at the top of his profession. In 1932 he was Chairman of the Penmanship Round Table of the

National Commercial Teachers Federation, along with Mr. R. R. Reed (now deceased) as Secretary.

About this time there appeared in The Educator a small flourish by Mr. Griffith with the following comments - "few penmen can excel this flourish."

Mr. Griffith is now teaching accounting Chicago. He is an intelligent and thorough teacher.

The writer has been engaged in accounting and office work for years, and the need for handwriting seems to be increasing. Take a look at the men you meet - check the number who carry pen and pencil - you may be sure they're not just ornaments.

I have watched operators of all kinds of business machines who have performed wonders in the operation of the machines, only to spend hours looking for a mistake caused by someone who could not write a legible figure.

Mr. Gwin is a modest man. Otherwise he would have included his own name among Pocatello's finest.

Editor