

The following bio was taken from the autumn 1995 edition of The IAMPETH Newsletter. Mr. Williamson past away in 1997.....Joe Vitolo

Walter S. Williamson, Jr.

As a businessman, bookkeeper, salesman, office manager and Master Penman for over thirty-three years, Walter's interest in penmanship was not always evident. But the seeds were planted in high school with a course in mechanical drawing. Even then he knew he wanted to step up from this endeavor to design and create, perhaps through architecture, which he planned to pursue in college.

After graduation and four years of mechanical drawing he went into the plastics business where he designed tools and dies for corporations for a year. He went on to work as a surveyor for the Hamilton Township in New Jersey. It was surveying that increased his desire to reach beyond the limits of mechanical drawing toward the fine arts and business.

He applied to an engineering firm as a draftsman, but was hired to supervise an office as Document Control Officer. This opportunity laid the foundation and understanding of the operation and building of a business.

As a supervisor, he was introduced to the penmanship business by the owner of an offset printing company. In October of 1962, he started his business, and the following April he left the engineering firm to devote himself full time to the art of penmanship.

For the next eight years he served his apprenticeship on his own, and studied with master penmen, including the late Earl H. McGhee. McGhee was the owner of E.H. McGhee Engrossers of Trenton, NJ and one of the founders of IAMPETH.

Original masters for reproduction were Walter's first glimpse of handwriting and engrossing by a master in the craft. He then visited another craftsman in engrossing, illuminating and calligraphy. This craftsman would become Walter's mentor, and was guided throughout his apprenticeship and eventually be put in contact with others in his field. During these apprentice years, Walt traveled extensively to pursue his craft.

Upon completion of his apprenticeship in 1971, Walter focused on his business and introduced new concepts while establishing client relationships. New designs and creations emerged that would set his work apart from that of his colleagues.

In the four years to follow, Walter not only continued to practice on his own, but designed various service awards, creeds and oaths for organizations that represent the Freedoms Foundation in Valley Forge, PA. These include The Boy Scout Oath, The Jaycee Creed, and the Civitan Creed, all of which are on permanent display at their respective headquarters.

After enlarging his business from a one-man operation to a staff of six, he had a month long exhibit that gained the attention of local, county and state officials. Another exhibit in 1983 propelled his business and recognition to the national level.

Through this recognition and his reputation, Walter has been the subject on numerous national articles and appearances on television programs. He has also hosted two local television programs based on his craft and business.

Walter Williamson is a rare breed of lettering artists capable of producing artwork in all facets of the lettering arts. When he joined IAMPETH in 1970, he was considered the youngest Master Penman in the world according to the members. Walter continues to serve our organization through his workshop presentations, kindly and instructive advice to would be penmen, and he is a past president as well.