

**FREE-HAND LETTERING, BEING A
TREATISE ON PLAIN LETTERING
FROM THE PRACTICAL STANDPOINT
FOR USE IN ENGINEERING SCHOOLS
AND COLLEGES**

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Free-Hand Lettering, Being a Treatise on Plain Lettering from the Practical Standpoint for Use in Engineering Schools and Colleges by Victor T. Wilson

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VICTOR T. WILSON

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FREE-HAND LETTERING.

BEING

*A TREATISE ON PLAIN LETTERING FROM
THE PRACTICAL STANDPOINT FOR USE
IN ENGINEERING SCHOOLS
AND COLLEGES.*

BY

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PREFACE.

THE student who takes up the study of lettering, as outlined in these pages, will not find it to consist of a set of copies which if reproduced carefully will give proficiency in the subject; copy work seldom yields more than a meaningless result, it does not lead to independent and creative work. Erroneous conceptions have grown out of the idea that letters are standard, that they are rigidly fixed in their forms; the truth is there are no really fixed forms. Variety will be found to some degree in all lettering; each line of it the draftsman makes is creative work.

Nor should he who undertakes the study be encouraged to think that a few hours of labor will develop proficiency. It is not an easy task, long and patient labor rightly directed will alone give that certainty of touch and judgment of values which are necessary. The student is dealing with forms having a character which can be spoiled, while apparently departing but little from the fundamental type, and which, on the other hand, can be treated with an almost infinite and

subtle variation without detracting from the result if done in the right way.

Without a measurable knowledge of free-hand drawing, wherein is derived accuracy of hand and eye and an intelligent sense of proportion, it will be found impossible, beyond the merely imitative, to do good work. The author has endeavored to treat the subject with this in view. Emphasis is laid upon attaining a proper attitude, through the development of a letter, a word or line of words by a sketch method, analogous to that used in other free-hand drawing. It is the object to cultivate the conception that all lettering is design, that any mathematical or mechanical attempt at treatment is entirely impracticable in ordinary work. Emphasis is also laid upon attaining facility in the free single-stroke letter used on working drawings, by a careful analysis of the stroking and by practical points about the handling of the pen and a description and an illustration of a variety of styles from which to choose.

The chapter upon the design of letters, which it is hoped will afford matter of interest to the thoughtful student, is not intended to form part of a regular course of study, but is for occasional reference only. It is a phase of the subject either overlooked or but slightly touched upon in books on lettering.

Attention is called to the footnotes added to a number of the plates, summarizing the chief points to be noted about them, also to the references printed under each plate, covering all the places in which each is discussed

in the text. It is hoped that this will be found a convenience in using the book for reference.

A number of authorities have been consulted in the preparation of the work, among them Prof. Henry S. Jacoby's book on "Plain Lettering," an excellent treatise; J. C. L. Fish's "Lettering of Working Drawings," containing some good practical offhand styles; "A Practical System of Offhand Lettering," by Chas. W. Reinhardt, also notable in its treatment of offhand styles and in the analysis of the stroking for the same; Frank C. Brown's "Letters and Lettering," probably the most artistic treatment of letters which has appeared up to the present time: from these the author has taken the liberty occasionally to quote. His thanks are also due to Messrs. Chas. Scribner & Sons for permission to copy some styles from the recent treatise of Lewis F. Day, "Alphabets, Old and New," and which constitutes the matter on Plate XXI.

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