AN ADDRESS

by

N. J. WERNER
OF ST. LOUIS

*Originator of Standardized
Type-Face Alignment*

*"St. Louis' Part in
Typefounding"*

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"Some Thoughts about Typography"

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At a meeting of the St. Louis Club of Printing House Craftsmen, held in the American Annex Hotel, N. J. Werner, of St. Louis, read the following discourse on Typography, especially touching St. Louis.

There being here many representatives of the craft who hail from other cities, I feel like taking this opportunity to impress upon them the fact that St. Louis deserves a big spot on the typographic map. The influences that have had their origin in this city and brought themselves to bear on our art throughout the world should have due recognition.

The older ones among us will remember the once very prominent Central Type Foundry, started in 1876 by James A. St. John and Carl G. Schraubstadter, which startled printerdom by its "copper alloy" type, which was advertised to wear longer than any other type—and actually did so to a decidedly appreciable extent. Naturally this evoked imitation on the part of other foundries. During its existence the Central Type Foundry produced a large number of new faces; a few of them could possibly have been called modernistic, but the most of them were fine, practical and popular faces. It was the first foundry to cast a Typewriter font. We all recall, of course, the De Vinne faces, the regular, the condensed, extra condensed and the italic, which not only enjoyed great popularity in the United States and Canada, but were standbys in all the European countries. In the summer of 1928 I saw a

governmental decree by Mussolini, posted on a wall in Venice, which was printed in 30-point De Vinne condensed. (This poster also showed that Mussolini dates his official documents with the year of his reign, which was given as VI.)

Other great sellers of the Central Type Foundry were the Old Style Extended, the French Old Style, the different Geometrics, the Invitation Script, the Victoria, Atlanta, Washington, Jefferson, Lafayette and Hogarth faces.

This foundry was the first one to produce new display faces by the aid of engraving machinery, the Typewriter and the Geometrics being the first ones so engraved, by using the intaglio or routing method of making matrices. This method is now in world-wide use, being almost the exclusive one, superseding the old practice of cutting steel punches, which was indeed a laborious, painstaking art.

The Central Foundry was also the great push that finally put the idea of point system type bodies into a going proposition. The inventor of the American point system had a difficult time of it, trying to induce the foundries to adopt it. He got small and desultory action from one or two concerns. Concerted action came, how-

ever, when the Central Foundry announced that it would adopt point system bodies. Whereupon all the other then existing foundries couldn't follow the leader fast enough. This was in 1885. England also followed, and the point system now prevails in that country.

It should not be forgotten, by the way, that it was our Central Type Foundry which insisted on designating the improved type bodies by the number of points they measured. So we have 8-point, 10-point, 14-point, 18-point, 30-point, etc., instead of brevier, long primer, two-line minion, great primer, double english, double great primer, and the other cumbersome names once in vogue. There was one foundry which wanted to retain the "grand old names," as it called them, but the Central Foundry people had more common, practical sense.

I have on two occasions met the inventor of the American point system, Mr. Nelson C. Hawks, at Alameda, California. We congratulated one another—him for the success of the point system, me for the success of standardized type-face alignment. The genial gentleman died not long ago, being far in the '80s.

In 1889, when I functioned, by way of avocation, as editor of Mr. John E. Mangm's "Artist Printer," I published an article explaining my ideas regarding type-face alignment. The scheme I outlined would probably in time have passed into oblivion, as it was a bit radical for the type-foundries of that day, had it not been that sons of a part owner of the old Central started a new type-foundry. Being convinced of the value of my alignment proposition, they put it into use and applied it to all their

type faces, calling it "Standard Line." This concern, the Inland Type Foundry, owned by Carl, William A. and Oswald Schraubstadter, soon became a leader in its field, and through its showing the great practicability of standardized alignment, quickly had numerous followers. In fact, all the other foundries had to fall in line. Standard Line, after capturing America, has conquered England, Germany and Australia. France, Italy and Spain are still backward in type-founding enterprise, so I have never hoped for co-operation from them in the matter of face alignment.

The Inland Type Foundry brought out about thirty original type faces before it was sold to the American Type Founders Company.

After the Inland and the Central foundries were thus bought up, an enterprising young type-foundry engineer, Mr. Charles H. Schokmiller, in association with some Chicago men, started a foundry, called the Western. This concern produced a dozen or more original faces in addition to a number of copied ones. It could have become more widely known had its promoters possessed a proper appreciation of advertising. Still it was a big enough factor to compel the American Type Founders Company to purchase it and thus dispose of it as a competitor. Mr. Schokmiller built an improved type-face engraving machine for a foundry in Sheffield, England, and it fell to my lot to be sent across seas to show its type designers and engravers how to use it. This was in 1906. Before this time I once engraved a type face for this Sheffield foundry, using for copy a photograph of their design. This face was called Flemish Condensed. Last year I visited these folks, the Stevenson, Blake

& Company, letter foundry, and was astounded at the progress they had made since the installation of the small plant which I had brought to them. The very person I had taught (Mr. John E. Uttley) showed me a number of his wonderful improvements in the methods of designing and engraving.

The Inland Type Foundry some years previously sold an engraving machine to Genzsch & Heyse, a prominent type-foundry of Hamburg, Germany. Under my tutelage here in St. Louis, one of the best machinery constructions, were initiated into its use. I visited this concern in 1928, in here was the guest of my former pupils. They showed me also what great advances they had made upon the practices I had demonstrated. But we must honor St. Louis for the seeds it planted of the grand art of engraving type faces by means of machinery.

The fair sex is due some honor in the art of machine engraving. The Inland Type Foundry had the services of Miss Sarah Osborne as an operator of a machine, under my tuition, and she did most creditable work. I have never heard of any other woman being so employed.

The Inland Type Foundry started another feature with type, which was to cast all widths (or sets) to a certain number of points or half-points, with the idea of facilitating spacing and justification. Mr. Hawks, mentioned above, sprung this idea first, which I then advocated. Later on, there was too much refinement added to it, when they got to measuring by eighths of a point. This nullified its value in spacing, even though it was good foundry practice in making type casters adhere to a pre-

scribed width (or set), which in earlier days was much neglected.

Non-kerning f's and j's were a feature of St. Louis type-foundries. They were started by the Central, which then abolished ff, fi, fl, ffi and ffl in job fonts. Some of our modernists, however, appear to fancy f's and j's that hang far over the adjoining letters. That these projections (or kerns) break off easily doesn't seem to concern them. All they care for is to fatter trickery or eccentricity with the letters of the alphabet.

It is but fair to state that the first Roman face engraved by a machine was done on one invented by Mr. L. B. Benton, of Milwaukee, who was part owner of a small foundry in that city. His machine employed what is known technically as the upright pantograph, while the machines used in St. Louis had the flat pantograph. The two principles have about equal use. The upright pantograph, however, produces a certain small amount of distortion of the pattern used, due to swings from a central point, while the flat pantograph has no distortion. Were it not for machine engraving making it possible to replace worn-out punches with exactitude, the Linotype would have had a hard time getting itself established. The engraving machine and the sliding space band are the two factors that really made linecasting machines successful. And the Monotype caster also depended on machine engraving for its success.

Matrices produced through the electrolytic deposition of nickel have a certain necessary amount of use. Now, nickel is a very refractory metal to thus deposit and has given much vexation and despair to experimenters. A St. Louis citizen, Mr. Charles L. Hochstadt, finally achieved great success and has hit

upon a method of producing nickel matrices easily and so that they will stand the hardest service. He now makes them for a Chicago concern, refusing to change his residence from St. Louis to the lake city.

Whether or not it be a blessing to have the great variety of type faces now existing may be a matter for profitable debate. I may only say here that St. Louis has quite a record in new and original face production. I could relate to you the names of at least eighty type faces produced originally in our city, by four foundries. A fifth one, the oldest, the St. Louis Type Foundry, cast no original faces. I doubt if any other city in the United States, unless of course, Jersey City, can show a larger record. In early days Philadelphia was the leader. I may add that among our productions but ten per cent could be termed modernistic and even then they were but mildly so. By modernistic I mean, of course, the disreputable meaning the word has gained in late years because of the labors of freakish artists.

In mentioning this large amount of new face output in St. Louis, I wish to add this thought. In answer to the complaint, which is not new (I heard it forty years ago), that there are too many type faces I would say that if it were not for the new faces the printer would never replenish his material. Instead of wearing his type down to the third nick, as the saying goes, he would use it till its feet were gone. No printer ever thinks of replacing a worn-out font of type by a fresh supply of the same face. Never! So what can the foundries do but originate new styles and thus make the printer buy fresh type. It is the only way to get the worn-out stuff eliminated from the print shops. And even at that, it is a hard task. Printers hate to discard the old type. "A customer might come along some day and want it used on a card, letterhead or billhead." I have seen fonts that were in an office over fifty years, some that had the pinmark of the Johnson Type Foundry, which flourished before our Civil War, some dating from the era when type was sometimes copper-faced. Mayhap these fonts were awaiting our modernists who are digging into antiquity to satisfy their yen for "something different."

Still, our printers should be happier than their German brothers. They should be glad they are not doing business in Germany. While we have but one large type-foundry, and some imitative concerns who make matrices for printers who cast their own type, there are about fifteen type-foundries in Germany, each of which is busy producing new faces— and imitating one another's designs, generally with additional grotesquerie—all being possible by machine engraving. How the printers over there can keep "up-to-date" is another puzzle fully equal to the one the noted Einstein has sprung on us.

As an excuse for each new type face the German foundries produce they parade before the craft the name of some artist — as if the presentday artists amounted to a hill of beans, imbued as they generally are with modernism. As letterers our artists aren't much of a success. In that respect they match up with the usual run of sign painters, the kind that hasn't any conception of true proportions, nor, I may add, of proper spelling and punctuation.

Talking about type-face designers, I have often wondered what the shades of Ihlenberg, Jackson, West, Ruthven,

Schroeder, Phemister, Woerner (the Woerner mentioned here is not N. J. Werner) and some unknown Scotchmen—all past masters at type designing—say as they view the highly advertised newcomers in their field of art, an art in which they did the executing (that is, the punch cutting) as well as the designing. The old boys had no press agents, nor were they members of mutual admiration societies. Their employers in but very rare instances ever mentioned their names to the printing fraternity. The only names we are familiar with are Caslon, Bodoni and Garamond of long ago, and the latter-day Goudy, of whose designs I would give case-room to but two, the Kennerly and the Goudy Bold.

Coming back to St. Louis again I want to throw a bouquet on the grave of a local type designer and engraver, Mr. Gustave Schroeder, my old associate, who was employed by the Central Type Foundry. He it was that designed the once so popular De Vinne face (the credit for this is often erroneously given to De Vinne himself), in addition to other highly approved faces of former days, such as the Art Gothic, Hogarth, Atlanta, Victoria, Victoria Italic, Washington, Jefferson, Lafayette and Custer Bold. He made the patterns for the first Typewriter face. In his later years he worked for the Keystone Type Foundry, of Philadelphia, for whom he designed the Richelieu, John Hancock, Whittier, Encore and other faces. I have counted about thirty faces of his designing, a record which far outranks that of the press-agented Goudy. He was a very modest man despite all his achievements and never sought public notice. By the way, I must add that he designed, for a Chicago foundry, the Pastel face, which is used so much on the movie films for titles.

There was another modest, unadvertised man to whom I wish to give due honor, even though he was a Chicagoan. I refer to the late Robert Wiebking. He not only did remarkably good work at type designing, but accomplished much toward perfecting the art of engraving matrices by machinery. I would place him at the head of all the artisans in this field. During his last years he was a member of the Western Type Foundry organization, which cast its type in St. Louis yet sold most of it through a branch in Chicago. Mr. Wiebking had not only an intimate knowledge of designing and engraving, but also of type-casting machinery, to which he added improvements of a highly practical and economical nature.

Having thus passed in review the fine burg called St. Louis and what its type producers have done, let us turn to the topic of type use—the printers' end of the game. In this respect I will be but adding to what the speaker of the evening has brought before you. (The speaker of the evening here referred to was J. L. Frazier, Editor of the Inland Printer, and his subject was "Changing Styles of Typography and the Craftsmen.")

While it is well and good that our stores and manufacturers have special people to plan their advertising, and for these to furnish layouts to the compositors, it is also highly advisable that these specialists be imbued with sound common sense. Sad to say, this is not always the case, judging from my experience with the various layouts that come before me. As a rule they strive after the bizarre. I could tell you quite a lot

about a certain "advertising production department." One often wonders whether the idea is to sell goods or just to display kinks in typography and show how freakishly they can have advertisements set up.

It seems that a majority of the business men, while convinced of the value of advertising, have no clear or well-defined ideas of how to advertise, and before these most of the so-called ad-writers are able to do a lot of four-flushing by means of odd tricks in the use of type faces, rules, cuts and hand-lettering. If the people who hand out good money for publicity would give some time to the study of the science of advertising, most of these four-flushers would lose their jobs. Then we would have more dignified, more informative and more result-bringing advertising. Let me for one thing commend the banks, brokers and bond sellers. These gentry present their wares and make their talk about them with the aid of a plain, straightforward and dignified sort of typography. And we cannot deny that this brings all the results that are possible. It is seldom that we find one of them resorting to freakish announcements. After glancing over the pages of general advertising, with its hodge-podge of moronic efforts to produce modernistic effects, it gives one great relief to turn to the financial pages. I mean it gives a typographic relief, not a financial one—at least not at present; some of us may recall unpleasant experiences when they come to this part of the daily paper.

There has been much derision in the typographic magazines about the old-timer who exercised his dexterity at rule bending and twisting, setting lines in curves and filling white space with ornaments and curlycues. This led me to believe that these practices were taboo and that they had gone into oblivion. But no, your layout man is demanding just such typographic tricks at the present day. He makes us place rules at all sorts of angles and demands almost impossible polygons and curvings. To-day it is more difficult to curve lines than it used to be, since the leads and slugs which the printer casts on his own machines are refractory material; they break rather than bend. The old-time leads and brass strips bent easily and uniformly. Hence it is now next to an impossibility to make a curved line present a truly perfect curve. Kinkiness is ever in evidence. Only in one respect have we an advantage over the old-timer. He used plaster of Paris to keep his forms in shape and make them lift. We now use melted metal out of the Linotype pot to fill the blank spaces and do our justifying. We would indeed feel lost if we had no ladle at hand to dip hot metal. We view with the composing rule as a useful office tool.

The leading speaker of the evening said something about modernism, so I will add a few words on that topic.

When we see a modernist and a nit-wit combined in one person, we are sure to see some clownish work done by him. And, judging from the present amount of clownish typography one comes to the conclusion that we have a goodly supply of nit-wits directing the workers at our noble craft.

Why save so much consideration for the clown-artist? We should really treat him as roughly as possible. Suppose you went to a tailor to have a suit of clothes made, how would it strike you to see him dressed and made up as a clown? Suppose your waiter, your barber, your haberdasher, your tobacco-

nist, your druggist, or even your broker, came before you in costumes and get-ups that suggest the circus ring, how would you react? Would you have any relish to do business with them or have them serve you? Hardly. And that is the way I feel about it when I see a freaky ad or receive clownish printing matter, produced under the sign of modernism. I am shied off as a customer.

And when you observe on this sort of advertising matter many errors in spelling, diction and punctuation—well, it is "thumbs down" to the dealers that thus seek my patronage.

I am a firm believer in the old adage that "a thing of beauty is a joy forever." When we have found that certain forms and practices in typography are truly esthetic and hence pleasing, we should make it our religion to hold on to them and not be continuously snooting around in artists' muck in search of new effects.

That grand Nestor of Typography, Theodore Low De Vinne, once divided printing into two classes, which he termed masculine and feminine. Has this idea of sex in typography ever occurred to you? At this moment I do not recall his manner of defining these classes or contrasting them. I will therefore give you some defining of my own. I would say that masculine typography is that which is really workmanlike, is orderly, is truly esthetic, is ever presentable and is ever useful; one need never be ashamed of it or wish it were something different. Feminine typography, on the contrary, is ever changing in style, ever unstable, has no truly artistic base or proper proportions, has no regard for utility—and one is never long pleased with it. In reflecting on these distinctions one may think of clothing styles and fashions. When a man is once satisfied with a certain mode of apparel, one that he feels is befitting to him as well as generally practical, it is difficult to make him change to something else. But a woman always wants something different and will follow all the leads in fashion, no matter how idiotic they may be at times, and they will ever go to extremes. Just now women are being led back to long dresses, just as some of the printers have been led back to type faces of past centuries. I may add that we may put the college boys who affect odd clothing styles among the females; these usually are what we may call "sissies." My injunction is, be masculine, not a "sissy" in your typographic work.

My plea for eternal beauty is sometimes met by the saying that "variety is the spice of life," meaning that we must have some of the ugly as well as the handsome. For answer to this I will ask you to visit our renowned Shaw's Garden. There among the flowers you will find any desired amount of variety, yet everything you see is beautiful—in form and color. This variety need not be increased by any flowers the cubists, impressionists, futurists and modernists might wish to design and add to nature's offerings. Nor need we ask their aid to increase the supply of variety in typography. We can have a plenty by letting our inspirations be guided by the principles of beauty, proportion and harmony; not forgetting, of course, the utilitarian point of view, for typography is, after all, but one of the useful and necessary tools to maintain civilization and hold it at a high plane. I am inclined to call it the best and most necessary tool. Let us handle it properly.