Alphabets

The HUNT BROTHERS

SIXTY ALPHABETS

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by

W.Ben.Hunt and Ed.C.Hunt

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PREFACE

The predecessor of this book, FIFTY ALPHABETS, was so well received that the authors devised ten more alphabets to enlarge the scope and helpfulness of this new edition. This, of course, made necessary a change in the title.

In answer to a popular request, but without abrogating the authors' own opinion as expressed at the bottom of page 9, an analysis of the Roman alphabet, slightly modernized, has been added. This geometric analysis will be found helpful by architects, draftsmen, and others.

The few minor changes that have been found necessary, outside of the additions made to the book, it is hoped, will increase the usefulness of this specimen book on lettering.

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SIXTY ALPHABETS

The Latin alphabet, which is learned so painfully by every child at the outset of its education, and which is used so constantly and casually by the average man, is a treasure of incalculable value. Scientists who have traced its origin to obscure beginnings in Asia, tell us that it developed slowly during many centuries, and was used successively in primitive forms by various nations of Asia Minor. The Greeks vastly improved it and beautified it, and the Romans gave it the definite organization and form which it has retained to this day. Even though the Roman Empire decayed and disappeared, the alphabet, as one of the great heritages of Rome, has continued to live and to march on wherever civilized man has gone. As Dr. Martin Sprengling[1] points out in a recent study, the Roman alphabet has been carried along successfully by the empire-building ambitions of nations, by the wide-flung zeal of the Christian Church, and by the newer and even greater forces of business and science. All the mighty forces of civilization have been aided, and in some ways, have been transcended by the spread of the alphabet. It is at present the vehicle for recording human thought in the civilized world, except in rapidly diminishing portions of Asia and Southern Africa.

The world-conquering qualities of the Latin alphabet grew out of its clearness, simplicity, orderliness, and generally fine qualities of letter formation. More than any other type of writing, it is virile, closely unified, and adaptable, and has those qualities which, for the lack of a better term, we designate as classic. Any extended comparison of Latin letters with those of the rapidly decadent alphabets of Asia and Africa will reveal its beauty and charm and will clearly indicate the reason for its longevity and growth.

LETTERING IN MODERN LIFE

The vast use of printing in modern life has not reduced the importance and the widespread use of hand lettering. In fact,

[1] *The Alphabet: Its Rise and Development*, The University of Chicago Press, 1931.

lettering from the simplest one-line alphabet, which the mechanical draftsman uses, to the richest illuminated letters, which the professional artist employs in some beautiful memorial, is relatively in greater demand at the present time than it has been during any period since the invention of printing. In every branch of modern printing, particularly in the finer forms of advertising; in books, and other branches of the graphic arts; in science, religion, and education; in governmental and other branches of public life—in all of these human activities, fine writing and artistic lettering are essential needs. In numerous situations and on frequent and important occasions, printing and its homely sister, typewriting, must give way to properly convey the thought and spirit of the writer; to catch the attention and hold the interest of the reader; and to properly represent the dignity and importance of the message or record which is to be made.

THE CHOICE OF AN ALPHABET

From a study of alphabets and lettering it is possible to learn much of the life and history of a people. To appreciate the truth of this statement, it is necessary only to study the classic severity of line of the Greek alphabet, the pleasing readability and force of the Ancient Roman, the decorative flourish of the Persian characters, the heavy stolidity of the modern Russian and the modern German, the loving care which is exhibited in the ecclesiastical style of initial capitals, and the extreme efficiency and legibility of the popular American letters of today, which are little more than speedball lettering. Alphabets are a reflection of the daily life and character of a people.

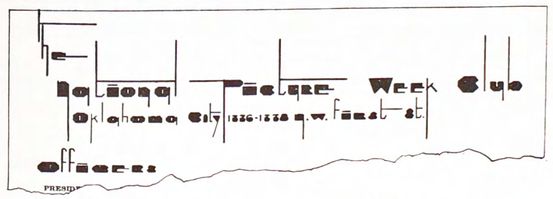
Consistency of style and character is important in all lettering, whether the artist is designing the inscription for a cathedral, or the lettering for an envelope stuffer. All lettering must be essentially in harmony with the subject matter of the message and the type of the audience to whom the message is addressed. When a commercial letterer prepares a furniture brochure to be sent to architects, he will hardly think it consistent to use a modern Russian letter. Rather, he will use ecclesiastical-style initial capitals in color, with old Gothic lower-case letters or Trajan Roman letters. Somewhere in the layout there will probably be a need for using an old architectural outline Roman letter. But again, if the artist

is preparing a circular or a booklet advertising woodworking machinery, he obviously will not use ecclesiastical-style alphabets, even though this machinery is to be used by church-furniture manufacturers and is intended to rough out ten angels at a time. The subject matter of these two kinds of advertising literature is different; the effect which each piece is striving for is different.

This entire book might be devoted to the problems of achieving effects in lettering and of expressing ideas in suitable styles of lettering. Most letterers do not seem to realize that type and lettering create the atmosphere, are the background against which the author's ideas—be he poet, philosopher, or advertising copy-writer—move and make their point. And the artist is the scene painter on whom rests the job of achieving this correct atmosphere. Here is where he needs to know the history of the alphabet he is using, not only for suitably consistent decoration, but for the best alphabet to express the idea—details that will pull the piece out of the sea of mediocrity.

THE LETTERER'S JOB

All lettering begins with the author or the man who orders a piece of work. Obviously, if the man who starts the idea in the first place could indicate to the artist the letter style that expresses his feeling and idea, the entire piece would have more consistency and be better looking and more effective for its especial purpose. There is a tendency among students of lettering to create an original alphabet for every job. This commendable ambition must be repressed as its only result is a conglomeration of styles from



An example of poorly designed alphabet

which the artist gains no benefit, and which delays the acquiring of a working knowledge of good lettering. The Latin alphabet and its

cousins, the Gothic forms, are based upon definite symbolic adaptations of geometric figures, and have in time acquired basic constructive elements. Radical departures from the true forms of the alphabet result only in freakish oddities of very limited use. It is best for the beginner to frankly face the limitations of form of the Latin alphabet and to develop beauty in his lettering by correct use of the inherent forms with only such changes as his personality and skill, and the requirements of a given piece of work suggest.

Quite as bad as extreme striving for originality in lettering is the use of geometric analysis of letters and of hard-and-fast construction and spacing. There is little beauty in letters made with the compass and straightedge on quadrille-ruled paper. Spacing, which is the bugaboo for all beginners, is difficult when lettering an entire page, a mass of copy, or a long heading. In mass lettering some of the words may have to be drawn out, some condensed. Only observation and training can guide the letterer in spacing. Try to avoid having the spaces between words fall directly under one another. These form gaps or rivers and will be very apparent in the finished job.

Lettering must usually fit a given space. It should first be sketched in lightly with pencil for approximate spacing. Top and bottom guide lines are then drawn to indicate the proper height of the letters. Perpendicular or slant lines, as the case may be, should also be drawn lightly with pencil as a further guide.

After the letters of a given piece of work are sketched it will be well for the beginner to pencil in all the details before proceeding to ink them in.

Rounded letters like "O" and "S" should always go a little above and below the guide lines. Likewise the tops and bottoms of all letters when they come to a point, such as the "A," "V," and "W." Here again only the seeing eye can tell. If these letters do not go above and below the lines, they will appear smaller than their neighbors.

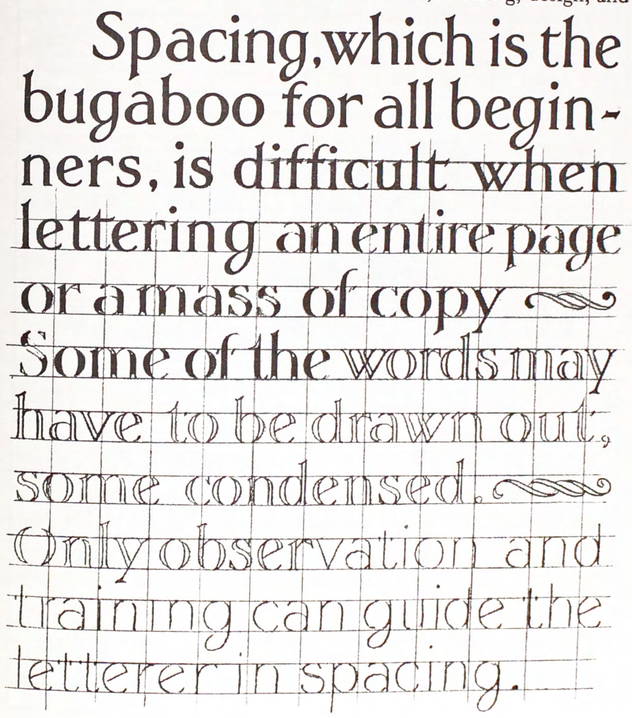
The pen or brush to be used will, of course, be governed by the size and sharpness of lettering desired. Pens range from the No. 290 and crow-quill for very fine work, the No. 303 and ball-point for medium, to the speedball pens for the larger lettering. Brushes can also be obtained in various sizes and shapes to fit the job at hand.

Some artists find it easier to outline and fill in letters, and others

finish each letter as they go along. It is only a matter of which way each man can do his best work. Lettering is not machine work, and there is no fixed rule as to the manner in which letters are drawn. Most strokes can be made naturally in only one way, and these need not be discussed here. Individuality is a characteristic of lettering as well as of any other art production.

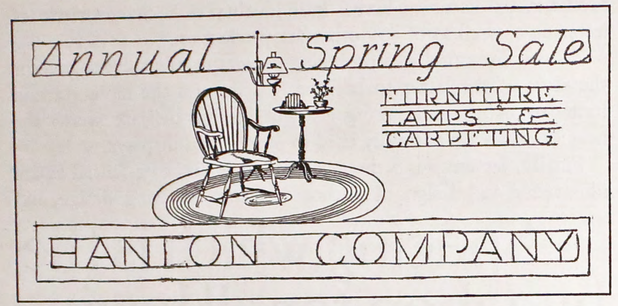
As was indicated in a preceding paragraph, the subject governs the style of the letter to be used. Script and the more graceful forms of light-face lettering are suitable for delicate work; the heavier styles are naturally used in posters and displays.

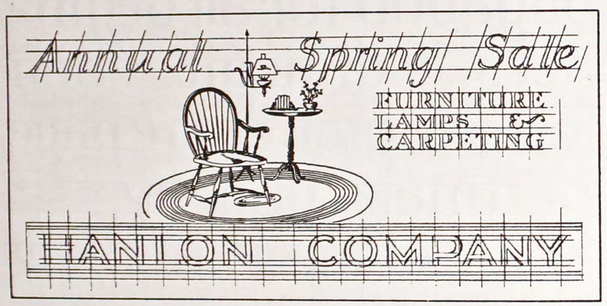
Finally, lettering is a distinct art and is just as essential as are illustration and design. The three elements, lettering, design, and

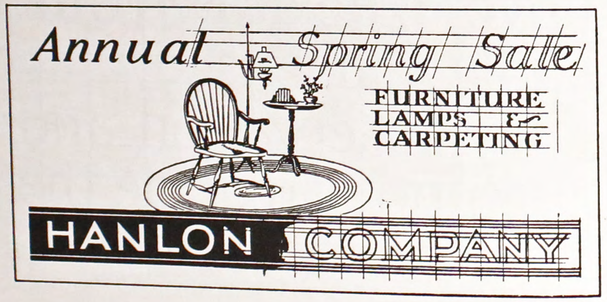


illustration, especially in the graphic art, are all bound together to convey thought successfully.

A study of the following plates will perhaps illustrate more clearly the necessary steps as outlined in the preceding paragraphs.







The Strokes Used in Drawing Single Stroke Alphabet

THE ALPHABETS

The plates in this book include sixty distinct alphabets, chosen especially for their general usefulness and adaptability. The alphabets may be used for a wide variety of purposes, from the simplest explanatory legends to the most elaborate illuminated memorials and the snappiest of advertising layouts. Practically each of the alphabets permits of wide variations in execution and use, according as the needs of the letterer and his taste may determine. Each alphabet is complete on a page. The explanatory notes have been limited to a few facts of the origin of the letters and suggestions for correct use.

SIXTY ALPHABETS

SINGLE STROKE LETTERS

The three alphabets in Plate 1 are the customary types for mechanical drawing. An ordinary ball-point pen works best for these letters, and a speedball pen for heavier lettering.

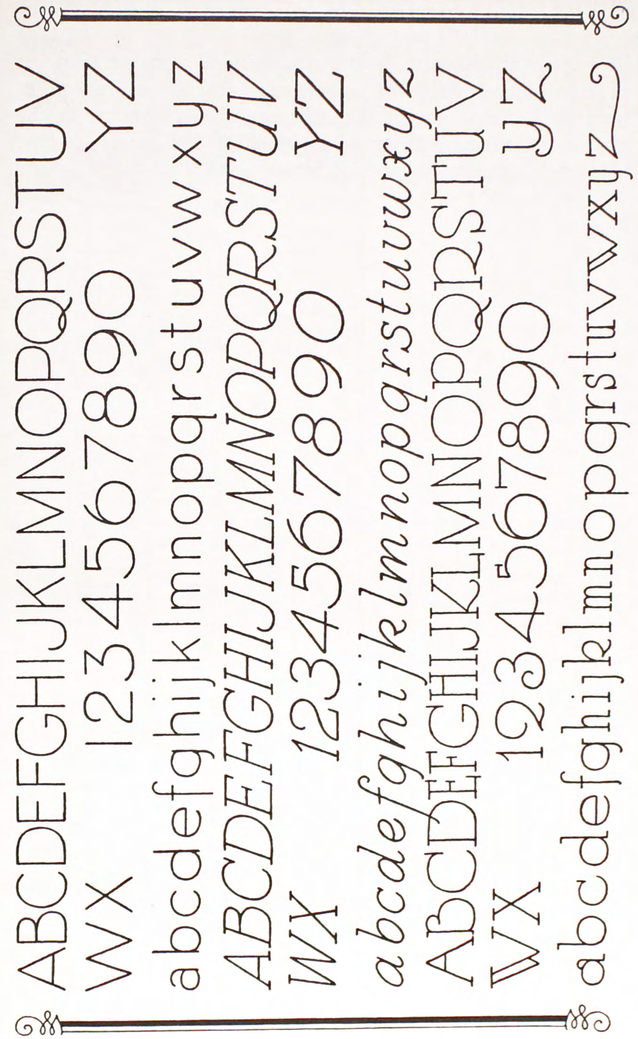


PLATE 1. SINGLE STROKE LETTERS

ARCHITECTURAL LETTERING

The apparently simple one-line Architectural alphabet (Plate 2) provides almost unlimited opportunity for the expression of personality. Any one of the light modifications shown in the plate may be used with gratifying results. The letters are best adapted to architectural and mechanical work.

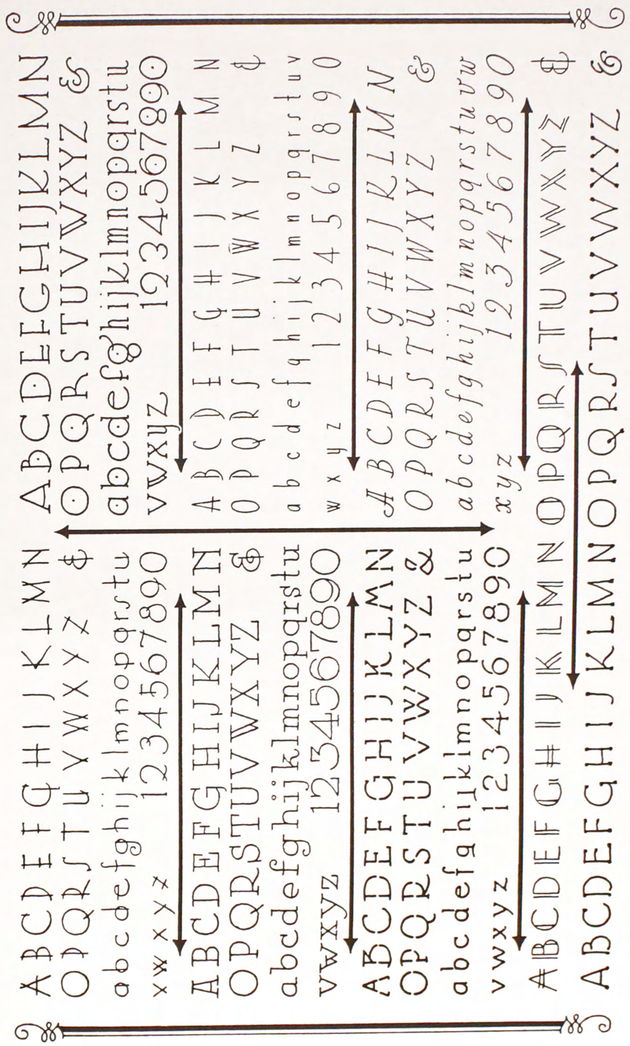


PLATE 2. ARCHITECTURAL LETTERING

ARCHITECTURAL OUTLINE ROMAN ALPHABET

The letters in the Architectural Outline Roman Alphabet (Plate 3) are based on old Roman inscriptions in stone, and are used mainly for architectural work. They also do well for titles and book covers, and look equally well when used in solid color.

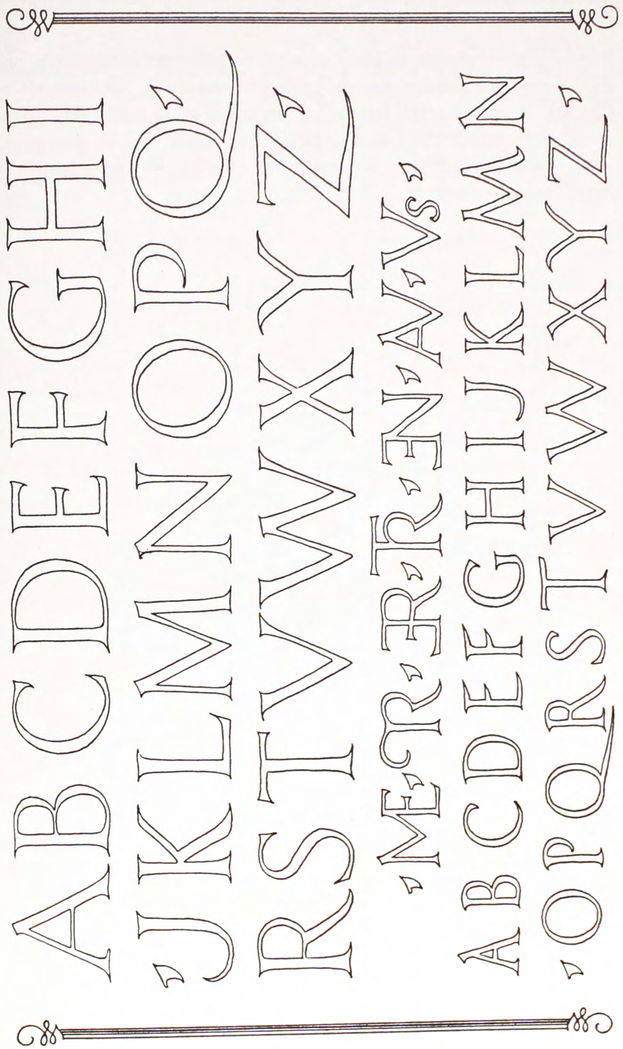


PLATE 3. ARCHITECTURAL OUTLINE ROMAN ALPHABET

THE TRAJAN ALPHABET

This alphabet, shown in Plate 4, is taken from the inscriptions on the base of Trajan's Column in Rome, erected about 100 years after Christ. These beautiful letters are always in good taste. They are useful for architectural work, title-pages, book covers, for page lettering, and wherever conservative lettering is wanted. The letters may be condensed or expanded as desired.

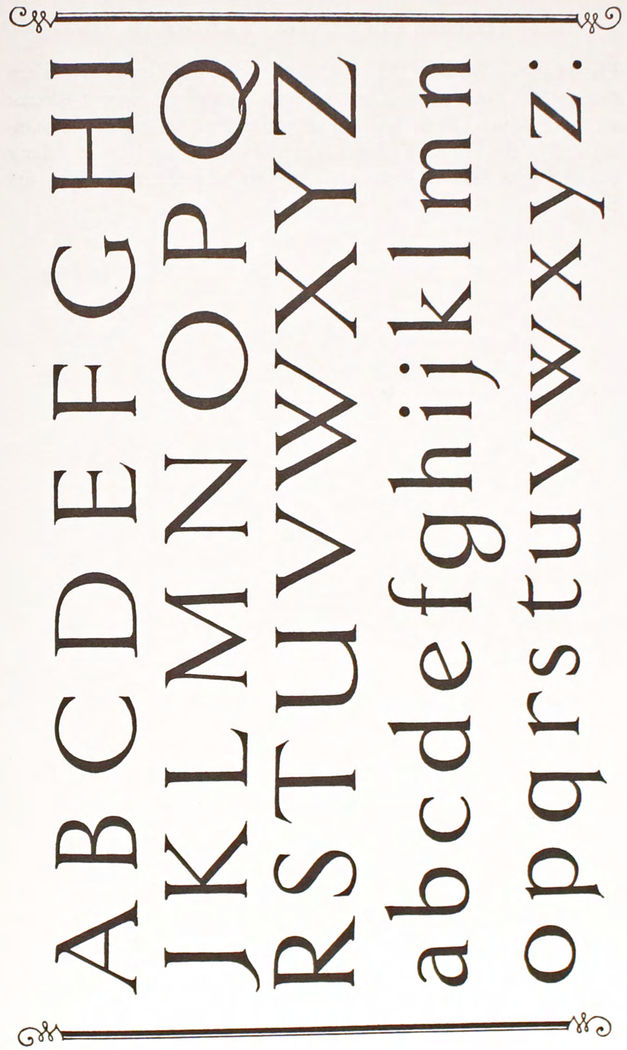


PLATE 4. TRAJAN ALPHABET

ENGRAVERS' ROMAN LETTERS

Plate 5 shows the alphabet which is the accepted Roman of modern times. It is not a modern letter but is taken from ancient Roman sources. Much can be written about its uses, which can be summarized in the printer's adage: When in doubt, use Roman. Many modifications may be derived from this and the two alphabets preceding it.

ABCDEFGHI
JKLMNOPQ
RSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz&

PLATE 5. ENGRAVERS' ROMAN LETTERS

ORNAMENTAL ROMAN ALPHABET

The alphabet in Plate 6 is rather ornate with a touch of Gothic curves. The capital letters may be used for initials either boxed or alone. The letters are not appropriate for mass or page-work lettering in which legibility is a factor.

ABCDEFGHI
JKLMNOPQ
RSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz

PLATE 6. ORNAMENTAL ROMAN ALPHABET

HEAVY MODERN ROMAN

This alphabet (Plate 7) is a modern adaptation of the original Trajan. When it is used as shown here, it looks well in mass or page lettering. The contrast between the light and the shaded portions of letters may be increased without detracting from its gracefulness.

ABCDEFGHIJK
LMNOPQRSTU
VWXYZ&R
abcdefghijklmno
pqrstuvwxyz~
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

PLATE 7. HEAVY MODERN ROMAN

OLD-ENGLISH ALPHABET

"Old English" is the most abused of all alphabets. Extreme care should be taken when drawing these letters, as they are easily distorted. The letters in Plate 8 form a beautiful alphabet and may be used for a great many purposes—headings, covers, titles, greeting cards, diplomas, etc., and for illuminated work. The capital letters should never be used to letter entire words or sentences.

PLATE 8. OLD-ENGLISH ALPHABET

ARCHITECTURAL OLD ENGLISH

The alphabet in Plate 9 is particularly adapted to stone cutters and wood carvers. The curves have been straightened wherever practicable in order to simplify cutting.

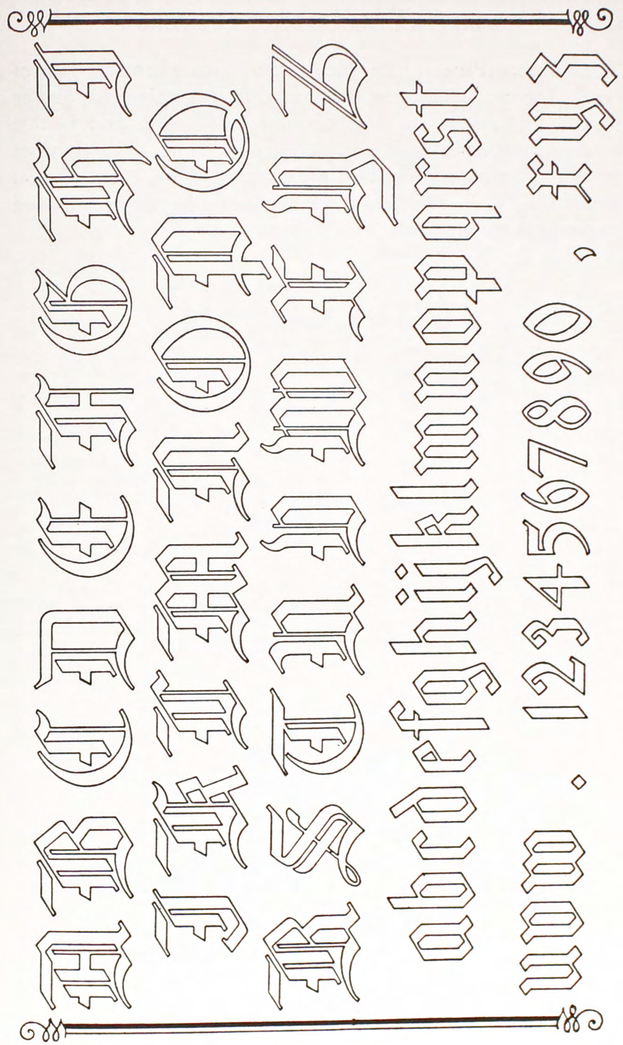


PLATE 9. ARCHITECTURAL OLD ENGLISH

OLD-ENGLISH GOTHIC LETTERS

These letters (Plate 10) are drawn from an early hand-cut font of type. The capitals may be illuminated for beginning chapters or paragraphs. As in the case of most Old-English and Gothic lettering, this alphabet is suitable for mass work. The alphabet lends itself especially well to ecclesiastical work. The capital letters I, K, V, X, Y, Z, and the lower-case r have been supplied to complete the alphabet.

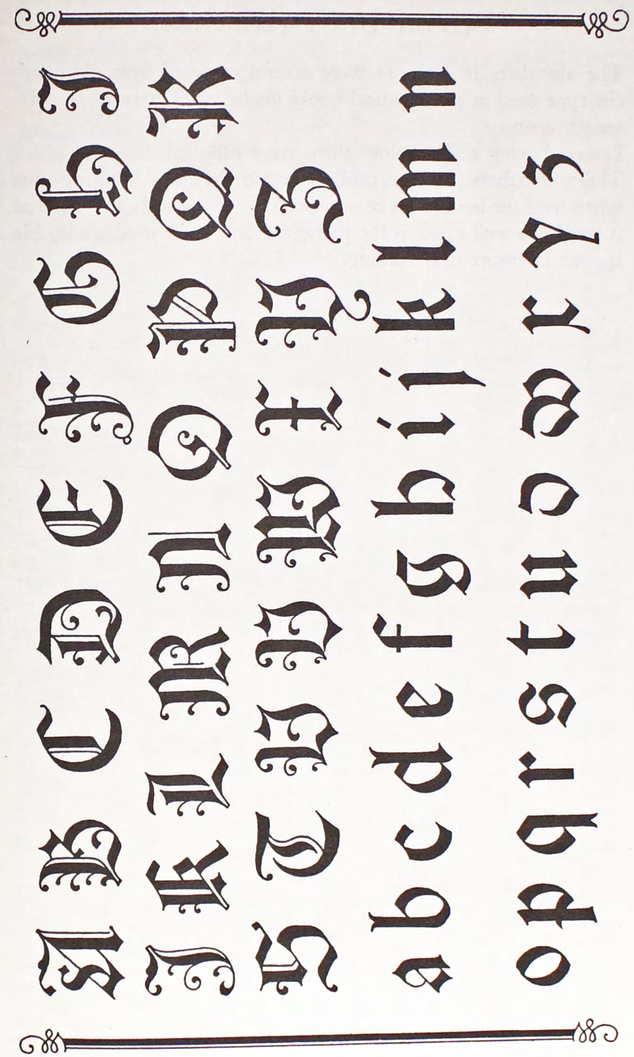


PLATE 10. OLD-ENGLISH GOTHIC LETTERS

OLD HAND-CUT TYPE FACES

The alphabets in Plate 11 were carefully copied from old hand-cut type used in ecclesiastical books in the early part of the sixteenth century.

Letters having a dot below them were supplied.

These alphabets are beautifully adapted for mass lettering, but when used for book titles or where only a few words are required it would be well to see if the particular caps to be used are legible enough to insure easy reading.

PLATE 11. OLD HAND-CUT TYPE FACES

OLD-GERMAN ALPHABET

The alphabet in Plate 12 is derived from a hand-cut type used by Melchior Lotther, of Leipzig, in 1536. It will go well for ecclesiastical work in which mass lettering is wanted. Very few, if any, liberties should be taken with these letters. The letters W, X, Y, Z, could not be found in the book consulted and have been drawn in the spirit of the other letters.

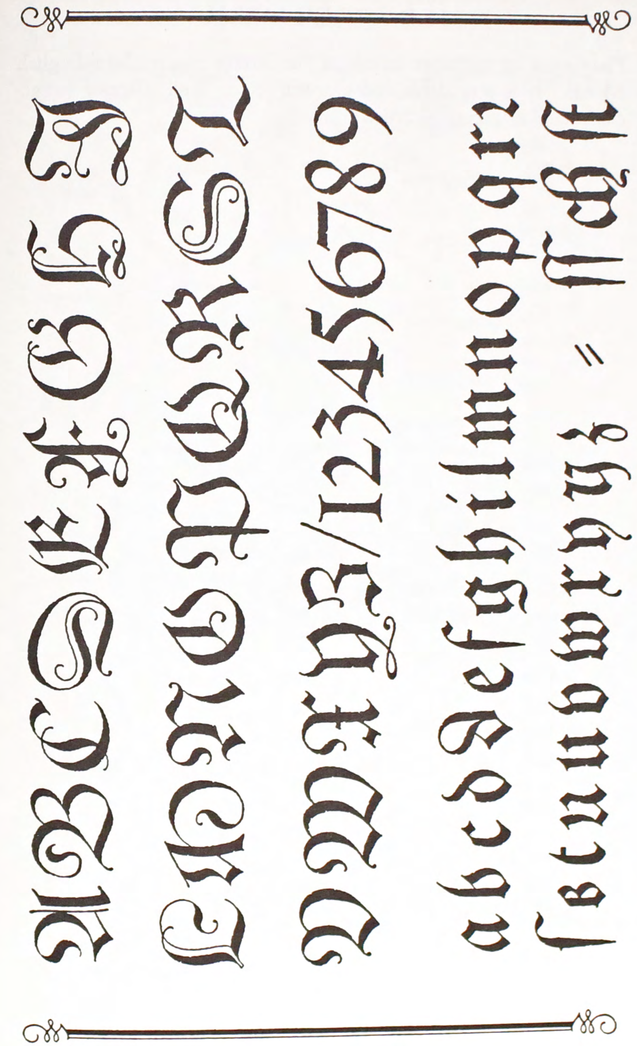


PLATE 12. OLD GERMAN ALPHABET (Lipsiae 1536 Ex Officino Melchioris Lottheri)

Plate 13 is an alphabet based on the letters in a modern English Missal. It is a readable and graceful letter, well adapted for ecclesiastical or greeting-card work.

PLATE 13. OLD-ENGLISH MISSAL

GERMAN UNCIAL GOTHIC

Both capital and lower-case letters of this alphabet (Plate 14) are presented. The capitals may be used for initials and illuminated letters. This alphabet is suited for ecclesiastical, greeting-card, and manuscript work.

PLATE 14. GERMAN UNCIAL GOTHIC

ORNAMENTAL INITIALS

The letters in Plate 15 are a modern interpretation based on Old English.

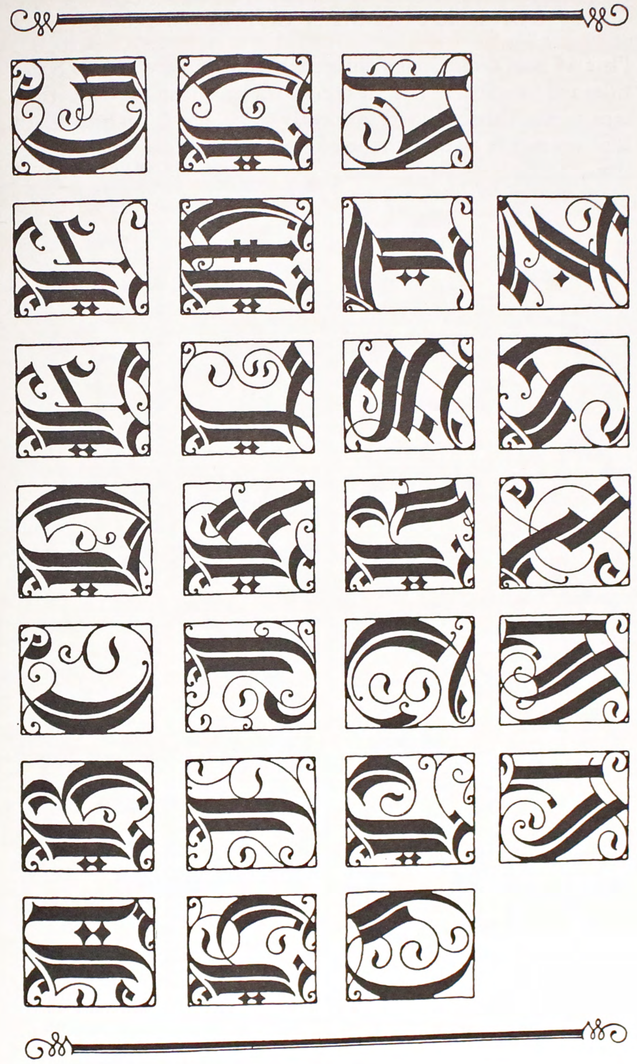


PLATE 15. ORNAMENTAL INITIALS

MODERN GERMAN GOTHIC CAPS

Plate 16 is an ornamental alphabet which looks very well in book titles and for initial letters. It is more readable than the old gothic caps which, although used frequently alone, are difficult to read. Liberties may be taken with these letters to simplify or to elaborate them.

PLATE 16. MODERN GERMAN GOTHIC CAPS

BLACK INITIAL CAPITALS

Plate 17 is an ornamental "initial" alphabet which may be combined with Old-English lower-case letters.

PLATE 17. BLACK INITIAL CAPITALS

ROMAN ITALIC ALPHABET

This conservative letter (Plate 18) may be used almost anywhere to emphasize a word or to draw attention to a point.

ABCDEFGHIJ
KLMNOPQRS
TUVWXYZ&
abcdefghijklmno
pqrstuvwxyz

PLATE 18. ROMAN ITALIC ALPHABET

ROMAN SLANT ALPHABET

Hand-cut type examples of the sixteenth century are the inspiration for the alphabet in Plate 19. It is a very graceful letter with which liberties may be taken, such as extending the swings of the letters K, R, and Q.

ABCDEFGHIJK
LMNOPQRSTUV
XYZ & Æ &
abcdefghiklmnopq
rstuvxyzafict & is
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

PLATE 19. ROMAN SLANT ALPHABET

MODERN ROMAN ITALICS

This is a modern adaptation of Roman Italic and may be used in magazine, trade, and newspaper advertising for titles, captions, and subheads. It can also be used to good advantage in group lettering (Plate 20).

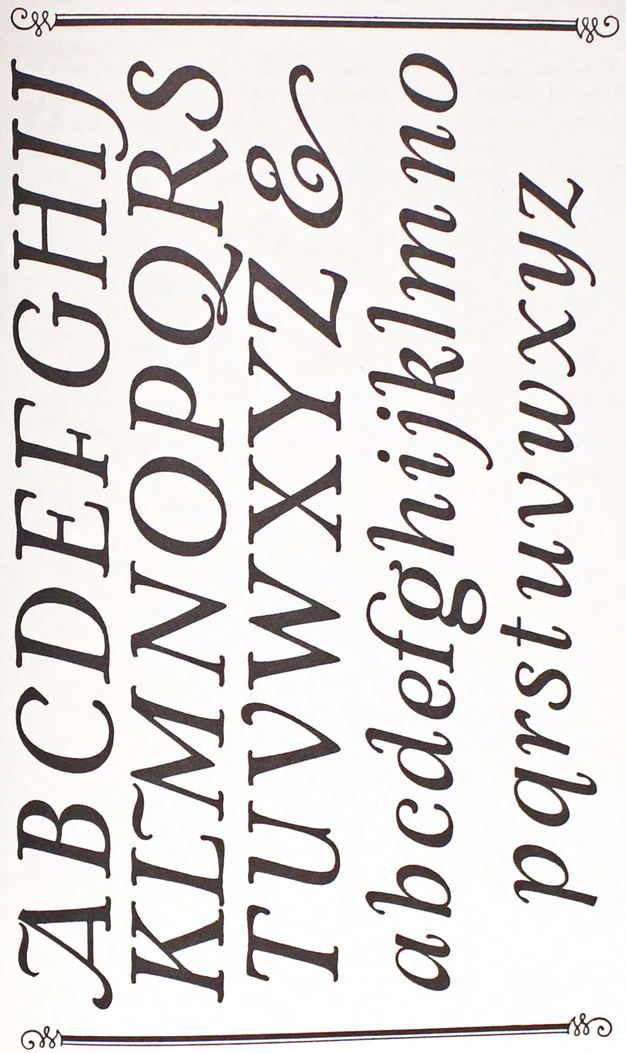


PLATE 20. MODERN ROMAN ITALICS

FREE ROMAN ITALICS

The Free Roman Italics in Plate 21 are a heavier letter than the Modern Italic and lend themselves well to modifications. The upper serifs on the letters B, D, etc., and the swings on the K, R, Q, etc., may be elongated for further decorative values. This very flexible alphabet will go well in mass lettering.

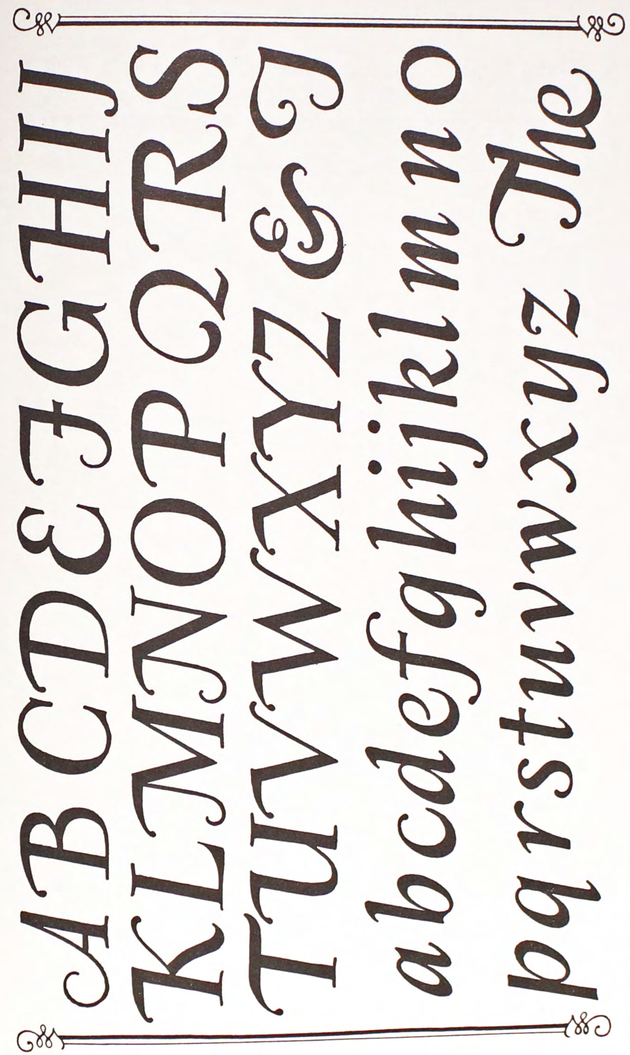


PLATE 21. FREE ROMAN ITALICS

MODERN ITALIC LETTERS

A graceful letter is shown in Plate 22, which adapts itself to many modifications. It is good for catch lines, or captions, in advertising. It can be drawn quite heavy without detracting from its good qualities.

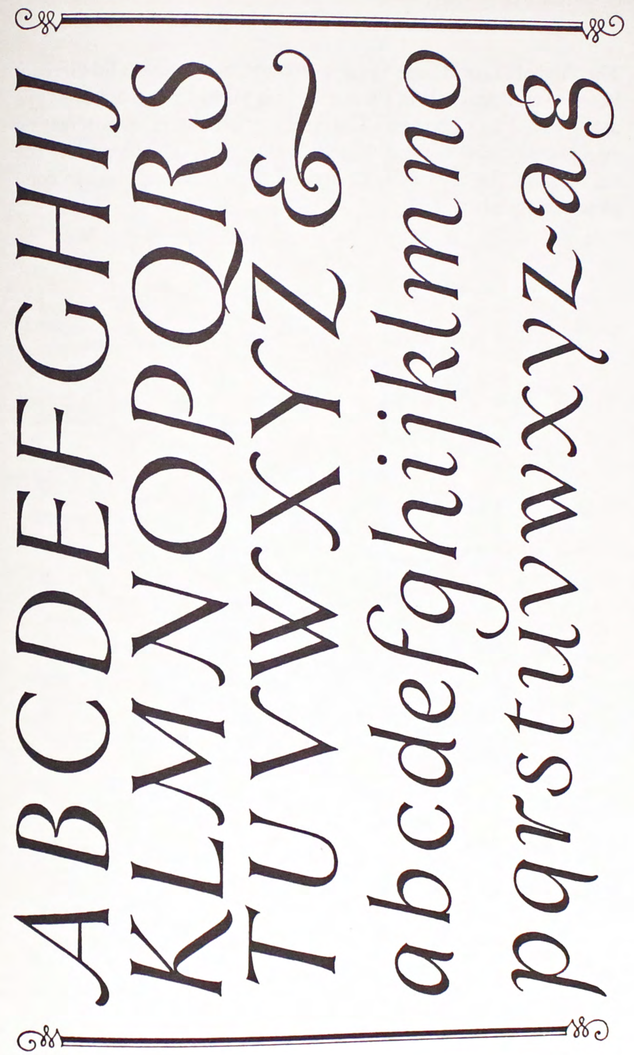


PLATE 22. MODERN ITALIC LETTERS

LATIN ALPHABET

The alphabet in Plate 23 is a companion to the Old-German lettering and numerals in Plate 12. It is taken from hand-cut type used by Melchior Lotther. The combination letters are interesting examples of abbreviations copied by the early printers from the old scribes. The capitals J, U, and W have been supplied to complete the alphabet.

A B C D E F G H
I K L M N O P Q
& R S T V X Y Z. J U W
a b c d e f g h i k l m n o p q r s
ſ t u v x y z = ã æ ꝺ ꝯ ꝺ̃ ꝺ̈ ꝼ ff ffl ij ſſ ſſi ſſl ſſ̃ ſt ſtſ ſtſi ſtſl ſtſ̃ ſtſ̈ ſtſ̃ ſtſ̈ ſtſ̃ ſtſ̈

ANCIENT GREEK ALPHABET

The Greek alphabet in Plate 24 is interesting as well as graceful. The vertical upper-case letters may be used with either the vertical or the slant lower-case letters.

PLATE 24. ANCIENT GREEK ALPHABET

ENGRAVERS' SCRIPT

The Engravers' Script illustrated in Plate 25, is a graceful letter formerly used mainly for announcements, headings, etc. It is at present being used quite extensively in general advertising.

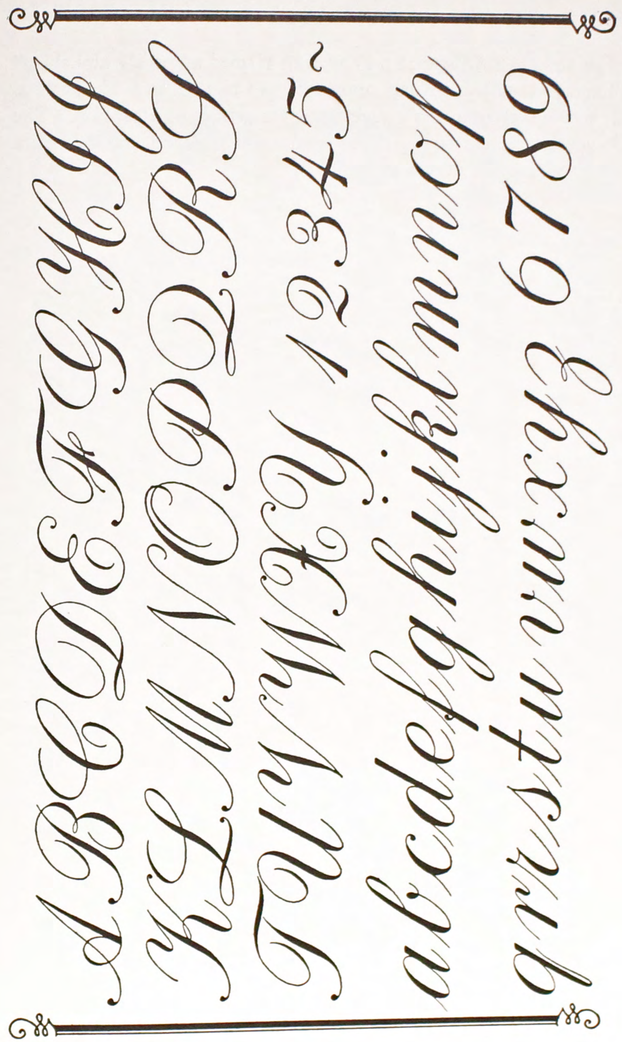


PLATE 25. ENGRAVERS' SCRIPT

BOLD SCRIPT

The alphabet in Plate 26 may well be termed a "utility alphabet." Thousands of trade names and logotypes have been made with it. It serves well in modern advertising for attracting attention. The lower-case letters may be drawn separately or joined, and the entire alphabet may be drawn vertically.

PLATE 26. BOLD SCRIPT

FRENCH SCRIPT

French Script as developed in Plate 27 appears frivolous when compared with the standard or classic Roman and Italic alphabets. It is well adapted for announcements, invitations, greeting cards, etc.

PLATE 27. FRENCH SCRIPT

MODERN FRENCH SCRIPT

This alphabet (Plate 28) is an adaptation of French Script and is useful for captions in magazine advertisements. It adapts itself to wide changes in construction, weight, and height.

PLATE 28. MODERN FRENCH SCRIPT

ORNAMENTAL FRENCH SCRIPT

The highly ornamental alphabet in Plate 29 permits of no end of liberties. The usual procedure in developing a line from this alphabet is to first draw the lettering in a conservative manner and then add the swings. It is well to remember that if the swings are not graceful, they had better be left off. These letters are usually drawn with a flat pen or brush.

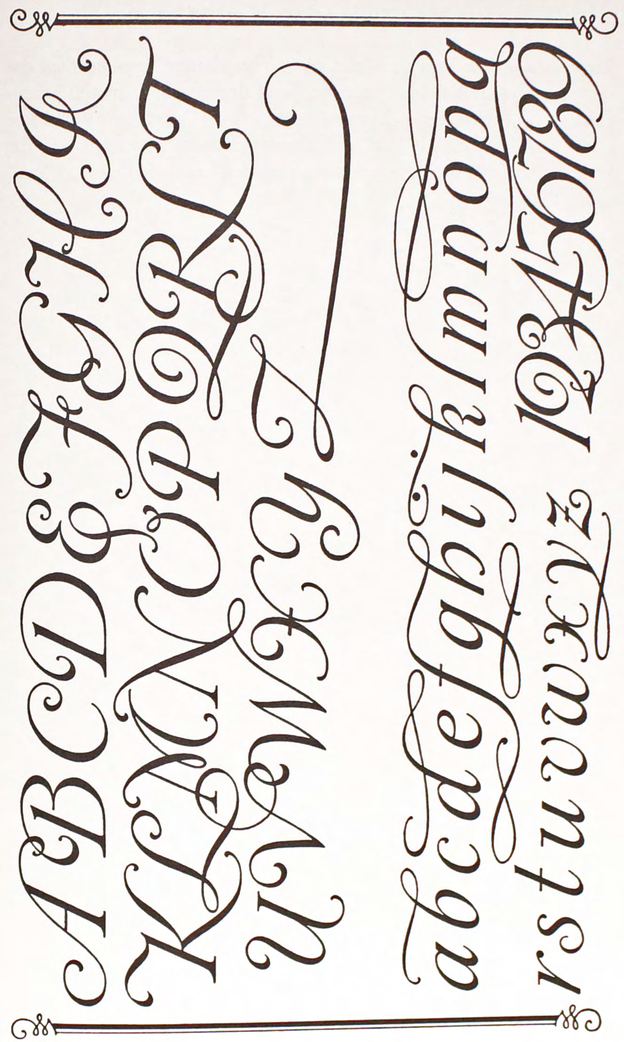


PLATE 29. ORNAMENTAL FRENCH SCRIPT

MODERN ORNAMENTAL ITALICS

Here is another flexible alphabet. The shaded strokes may be increased somewhat in weight without detracting from the gracefulness of the letter. Many liberties may be taken with the swings and serifs. It is a fine letter for light, airy captions for jewelry, ladies' wearing apparel, children's apparel, gift wares, etc. (Plate 30).

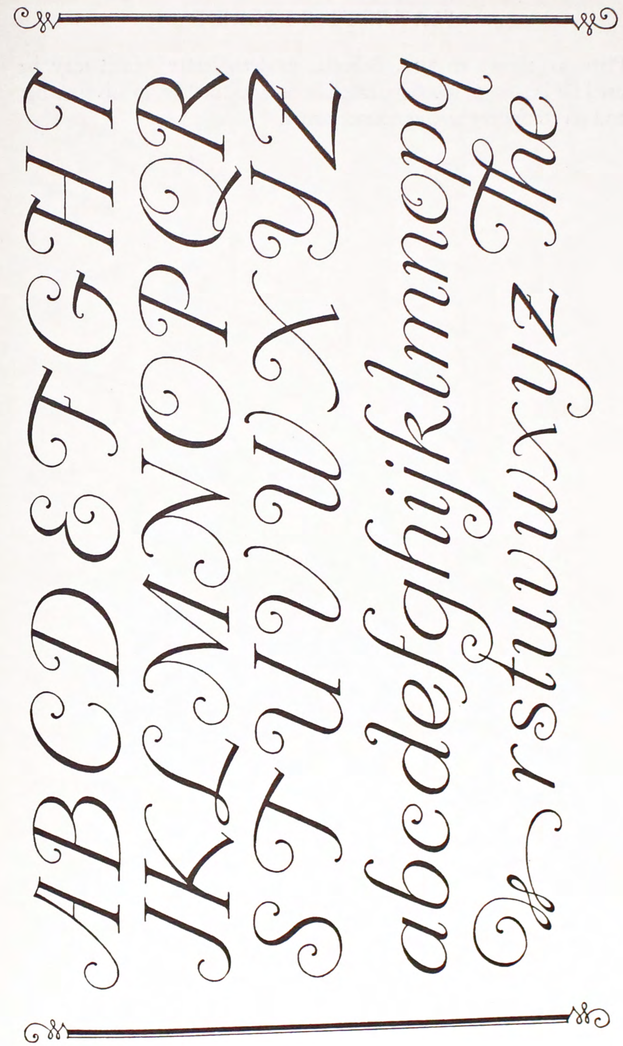


PLATE 30. MODERN ORNAMENTAL ITALICS

PROPERTY OF
Chicago Board of Education
CHRISTIAN FENGER HIGH SCHOOL

FLAT-BOTTOM SCRIPT

Plate 31 shows an airy, delicate, modern letter which may be used for headings, footings, catch lines, and the like, in advertising, and on stationery and announcements.

PLATE 31. FLAT-BOTTOM SCRIPT

MODERN ADVERTISERS SCRIPT

A popular letter with a hundred uses and almost that many deviations. It is very flexible. May be drawn with a flat-nib pen or a flat brush. (Plate 32)

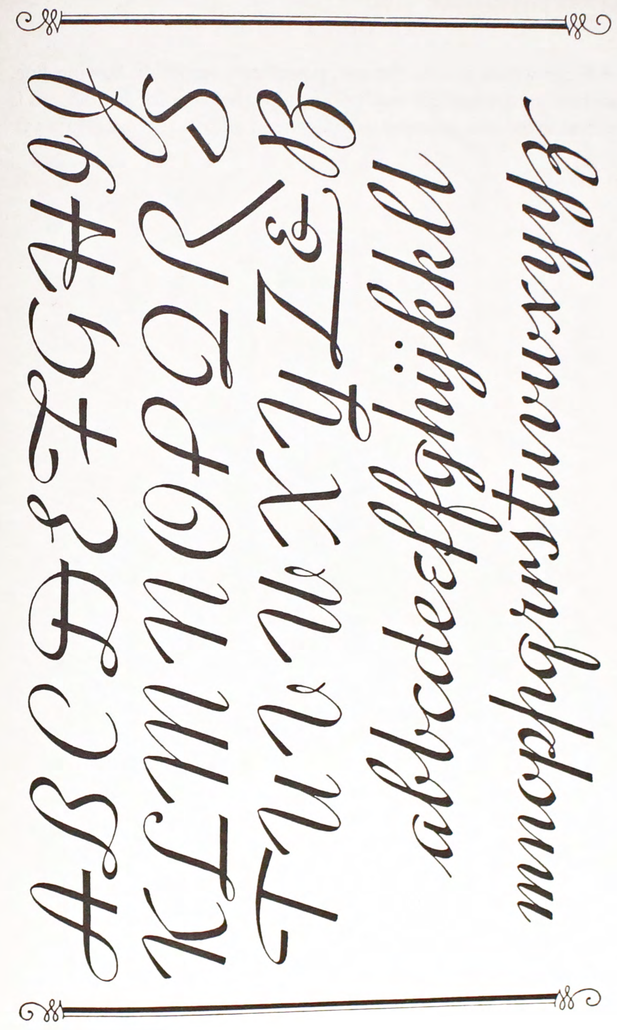


PLATE 32. MODERN ADVERTISERS SCRIPT

SPEEDBALL SCRIPT

A letter which arrests the eye, possesses a smoothly flowing line, and can be drawn very easily. The alphabet is quite flexible and is a time-saver in a newspaper and general ad layout work (Plate 33).

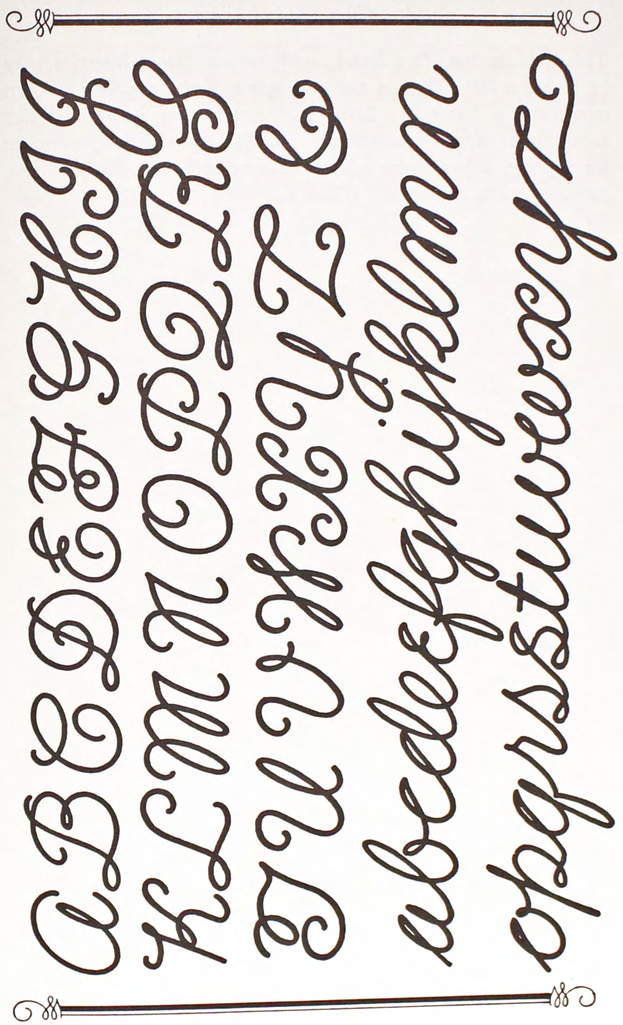
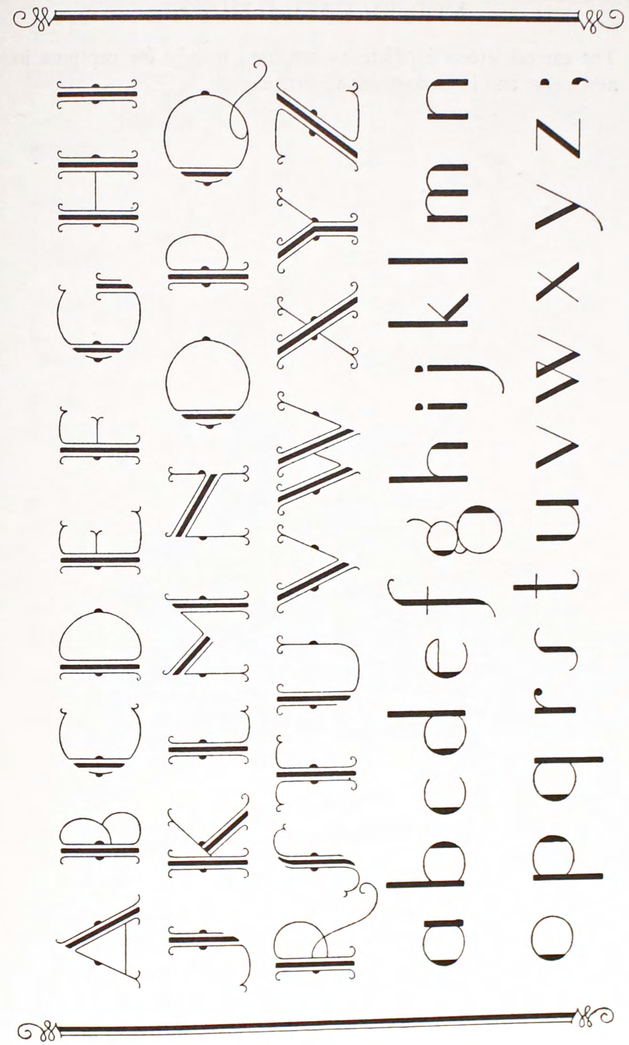


PLATE 33. SPEEDBALL SCRIPT

MODERN ALPHABET

This delicate light-face letter, with which many liberties may be taken, reflects some of the best spirit of the so-called modern movement in lettering. Lower-case letters may be treated like caps where only a few words are used. The alphabet is appropriate for jewelry, ladies' wear advertisements, etc., and for captions, running heads, and titles (Plate 34).



MODERN ALPHABET

PLATE 34

MODERN CAPS ALPHABET

The capital letters in Plate 35 are used mainly for captions in newspaper and in trade-paper advertising.

PLATE 35. MODERN CAPS ALPHABET

MODERN ROMAN ADAPTATION

Plate 36 shows a modern Roman alphabet which is easy to space and therefore easy to use. It is suitable wherever legible lettering is wanted for headings, titles, letterheads, captions, logotypes. It also is very legible in mass lettering. The caps alone may be used with good success.

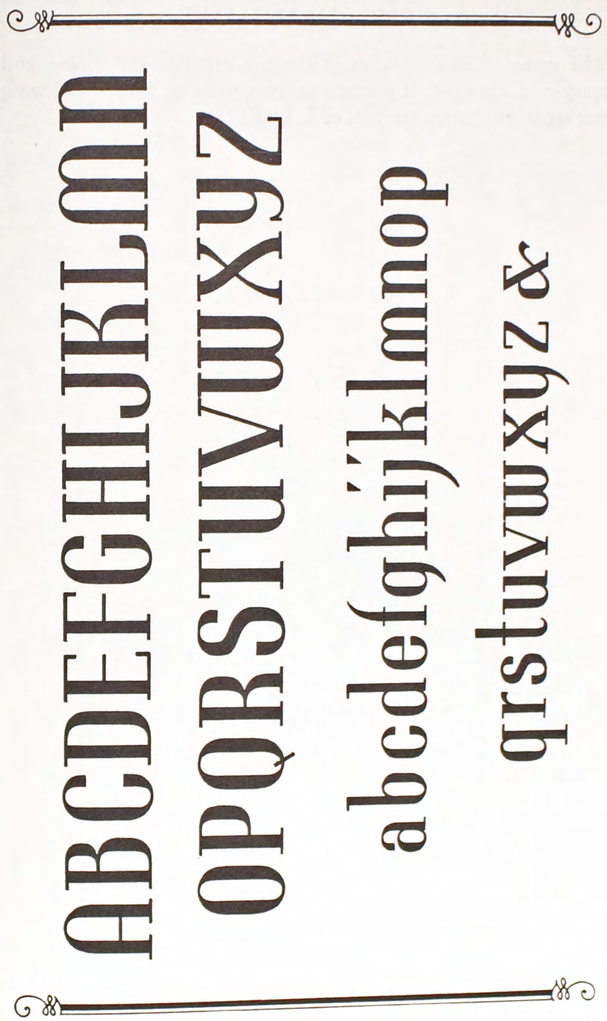


PLATE 36. MODERN ROMAN ADAPTATION

SPEEDBALL ALPHABET

The name of this alphabet (Plate 37) suggests the means and manner of drawing. It permits many variations, such as drawing out serifs, elongating the tails of K, Q, R, etc.

ABCDEFGHI
JKLMNOPQR
STUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmno
pqrstuvwxyz
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

PLATE 37. SPEEDBALL ALPHABET

MODERN DISPLAY LETTERS

This is a modern, decorative poster or display letter. The fourth line shows several effects which may be obtained in both upper- and lower-case letters. The letter is widely used for newspaper advertising (Plate 38).

PLATE 38. MODERN DISPLAY LETTERS

MODERN SPURRED GOTHIC

Plate 39 shows an alphabet to be used where legibility and neatness are desired. It can be drawn heavier or lighter, or in outline and color. It is excellent for poster work.

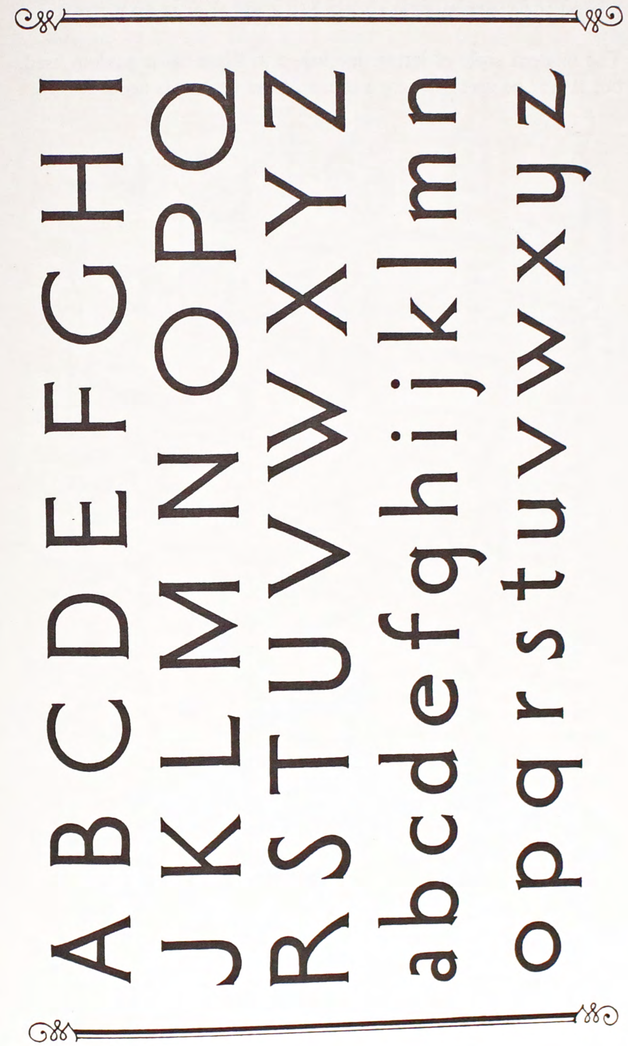


PLATE 39. MODERN SPURRED GOTHIC

ALPHABET WITH PERSIAN CHARACTERISTICS

The modern style of letter developed in Plate 40 is seldom used, but it will be useful where a touch of the Orient is needed.

PLATE 40. ALPHABET WITH PERSIAN CHARACTERISTICS

IRREGULAR GERMAN POSTER

As shown in Plate 41, this letter adapts itself well to poster work. This same letter formation in a lighter face works out well for large group lettering and titles of a rugged character.

ABCDEFGHI
JKLMNOPQ
RSTUVWXYZ
1234567890

PLATE 41. IRREGULAR GERMAN POSTER

MODERN GERMAN POSTER

This letter (Plate 42) is used mostly for poster and sign work. It may be drawn with serrated or smooth edges with equally good results.

As an eye-catcher it works well in a word of few letters in newspaper and trade-paper advertising.

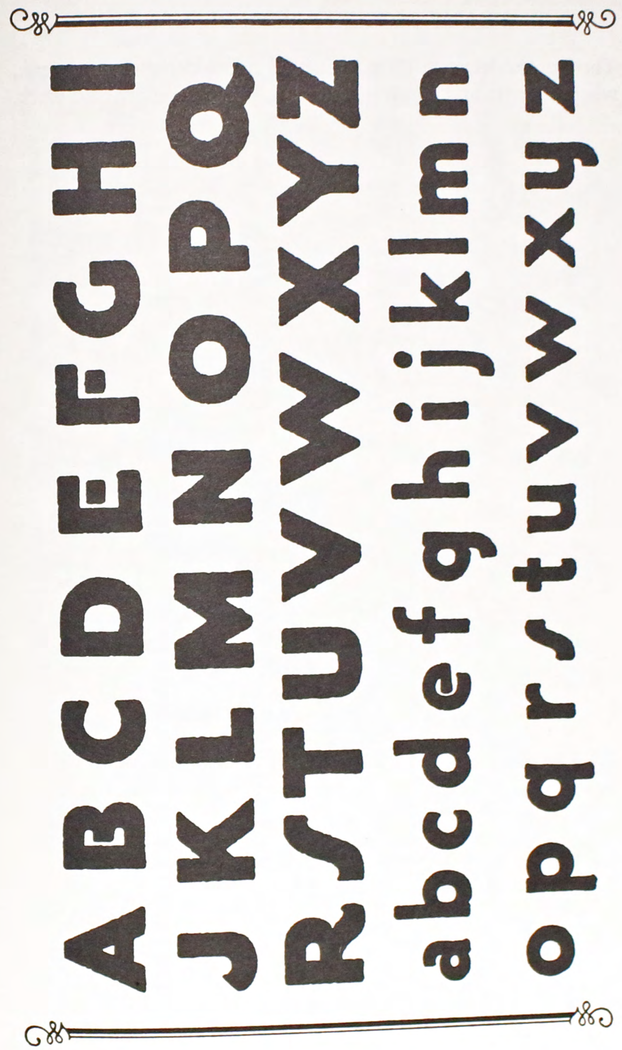


PLATE 42. MODERN GERMAN POSTER

HEAVY MODERN ROMAN SLANT

The graceful letter in Plate 43 is used for posters, headings, etc., where strength and punch is desired. It is fine for show-card work.

ABCDEFGHIJ
KLMNOPQRS
TUVWXYZM
abcdefghijklmnop
qrstuvwxyz
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

PLATE 43. HEAVY MODERN ROMAN SLANT

MODERN GERMAN BOLD

This is a poster letter which permits of many variations in treatment (Plate 44).

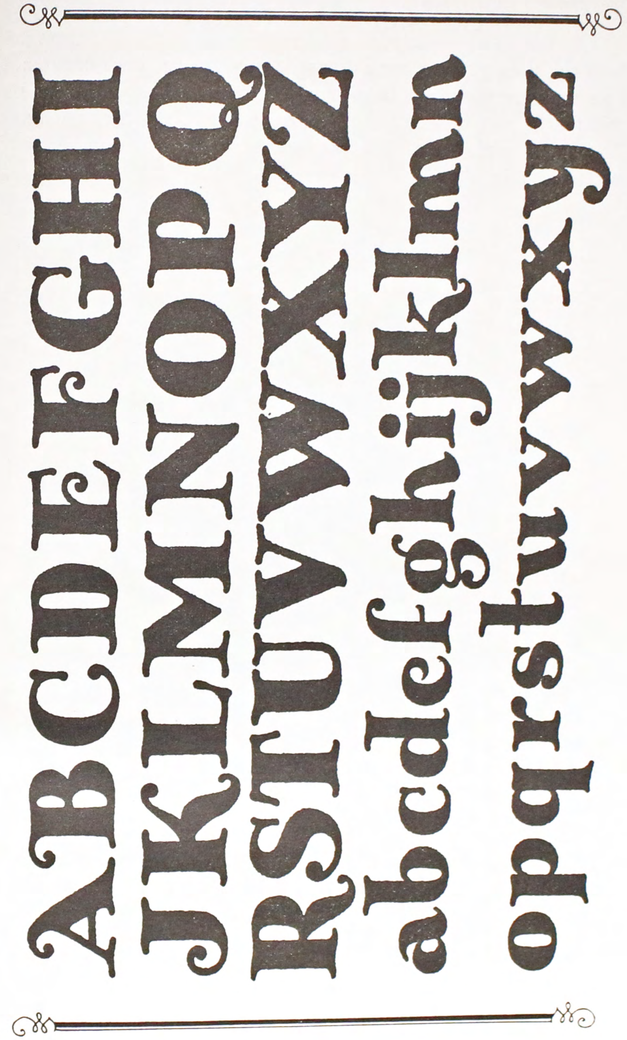


PLATE 44. MODERN GERMAN BOLD

TWO MODERN ALPHABETS

Both the alphabets in Plate 45 may be used for headings or catch lines for advertisements, titles, etc. They go well together, the bold for the main caption and the lighter face for secondary matter. The lighter alphabet also works out nicely for page and mass lettering.

PLATE 45. TWO MODERN ALPHABETS

Being so very bold, the style of lettering shown in Plate 46 should only be used for short names or captions. It is used mainly to attract attention in newspaper, trade-paper, and magazine work.

PLATE 46. MODERN RUSSIAN LETTERS

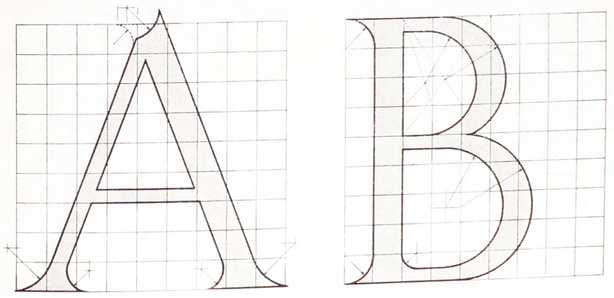
GEOMETRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE
ROMAN ALPHABET

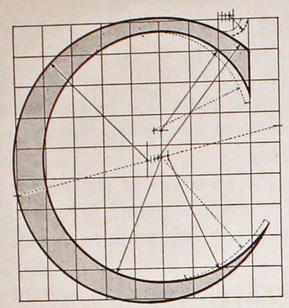
GEOMETRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROMAN ALPHABET

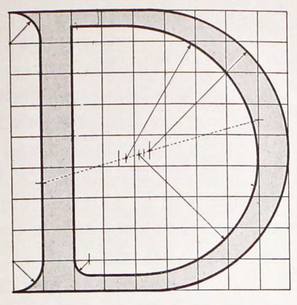
Architects, artists, and draftsmen frequently are called upon to lay out the lettering for inscriptions to be used on buildings, memorials, bronze tablets, and the like.

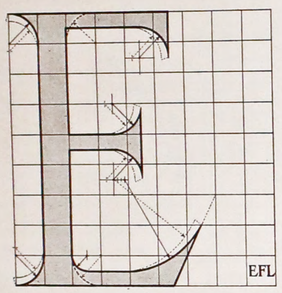
For work of this kind, the geometrical analysis of the Roman alphabet will be found helpful. The letters analyzed have been modernized to some extent, but in the main, adherence to the fine Old Roman has been aimed at.

The individual letters may be drawn with pointed or squared serifs. This may be done by merely moving the centers from which the various radii are drawn as shown on the letters C and E.





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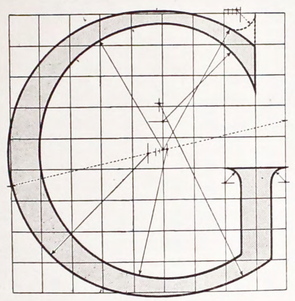

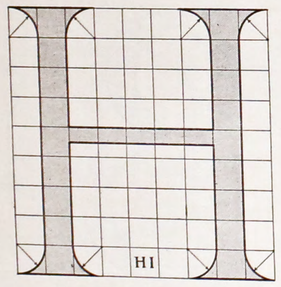
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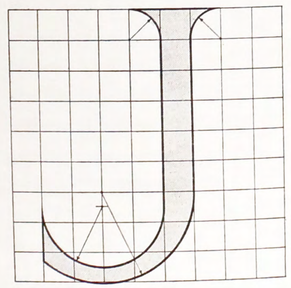

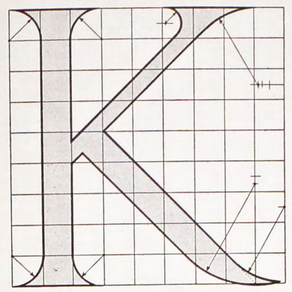

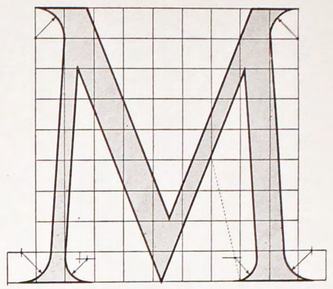

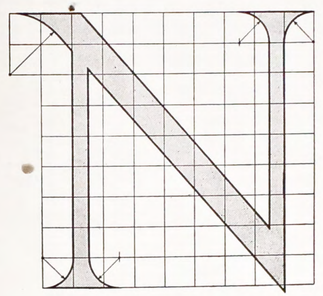

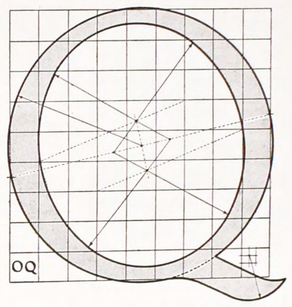
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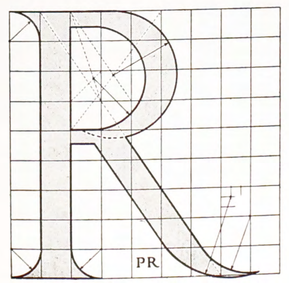
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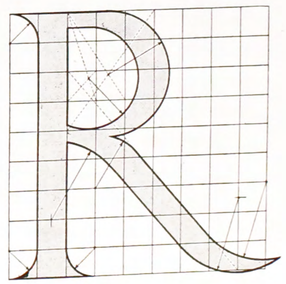

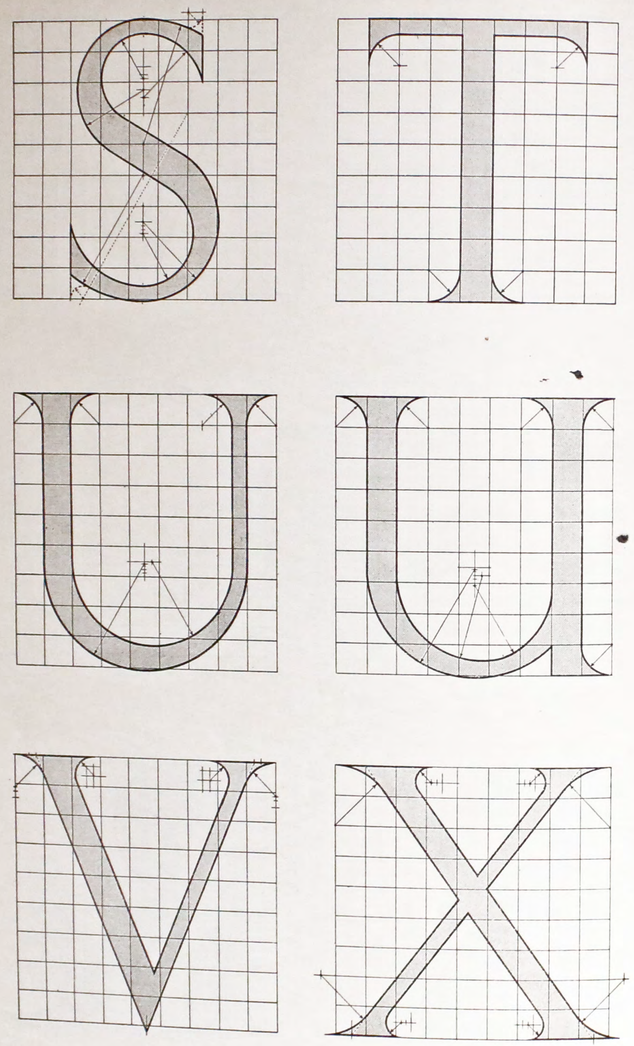

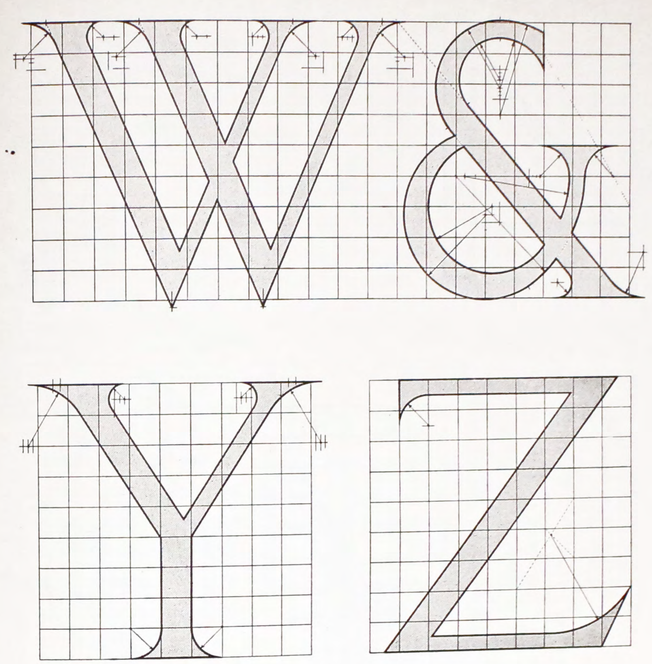

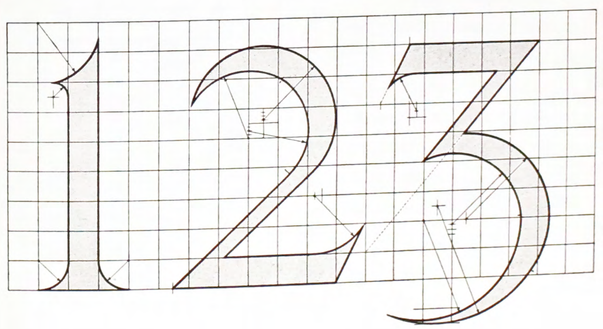

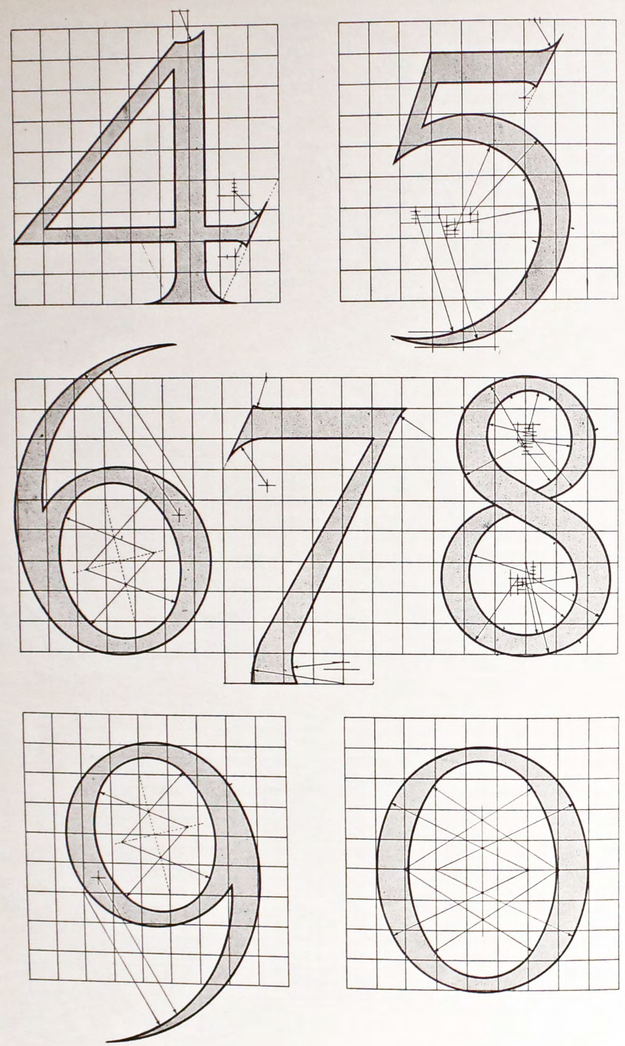

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