

“Workshop Hints – Lettering”

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□ LETTERING:—Outside of the general proportions, there is no one thing, more essential to the beauty of a piece of monumental work than the lettering—and it is a sad fact that there are, comparatively speaking, but few first-class letterers in the United States to-day. This, in a measure, can be accounted for from the fact that a great deal of lettering is done by piece work and the workman is rewarded for his labor by the amount, rather than the quality, of work he turns out.

A few hours stroll through any of our large cemeteries will convince any one that there is no standard or general type followed; but that each piece of lettering bears the earmarks too plainly evidenced, that the workman who drafted and cut them had but one idea in view, and that was, how many can I finish in a day?

Nor is it the workman alone, who is to blame, for in the scramble to secure orders and the ruinous prices obtained for work at times, the proprietor must see to it that only the cheapest class of lettering is done.

Lettering to be really artistic, must be grouped and arranged with due regard to space, balance, and general conformation. Care should be exercised in subordinating the less important parts of an inscription. How many we see where the words born and died are made larger than the name of the person commemorated.

By space in an inscription is meant the grouping of a given amount of letters to the best advantage, and a few hints are not out of place here.

As a rule, leave more blank space below your inscription than above, or in letters parlance keep above the center.

Never have two lines of letters in an inscription of exactly the same length if it can be avoided as this serves for balance and makes the reading of same intelligible at a glance.

If you have a short name that requires prominence, employ block headers, or the more modern forms of open faced letters. Avoid the extremely heavy bars to obtain wide space as they not only make ill proportioned letters, but to the artistic eye show too plainly that they are employed simply to

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fill space with no regard to proportions. Very pleasing effects may be produced in a line of letters by commencing each word with a large cap and the balance finished with small caps, as example:

JOHN LOUIS FLETCHER.

As to ornamentation to fill space, great caution should be observed and unless the letterer is a past master in this branch of work, and a fine draughtsman his efforts are liable to take on the grotesque and ruin what would otherwise be a very acceptable piece of work.

One practice which letterers should avoid in particular, is the painting, or as some call it "enameling" of their work, it is only a cheap subterfuge to cover up poor workmanship and the sooner it is relegated to the past the better.

There are many different methods of spacing lettering. Some workmen are governed largely by the eye, others space from left to right straight across, the most acceptable and accurate method I have ever found was to space each way, left and right, from a center line. In other words, I commence my first line by counting my letters and spaces, dividing this by two, and thus find the center letter of that line. By this means the workman gets the correct positions for his letters the first time he spaces, and is not liable to crowd or open as the case

may be, when he spaces entirely across from left to right. Punctuation should be rigidly observed at all times and the best inscription ever executed, if improperly punctuated would be condemned if this important feature was neglected.

I will touch on one more feature in this article and that is draughting letters in a circle or in a serpentine. We see many letterers who draught around a circle parallel to the center vertical, this should never be done, they should always be laid out from the radius of the circle which can always be obtained from the center and is a very simple operation when once learned. I have seen many workmen botch their work because they did not understand this principle of draughting.

There is a decided demand for an improvement in the standard of monumental lettering and the workman who perfects himself in its intricacies will have the call.

EXPERT.

Satisfy Yourselves that our prices are reasonable, no trouble to answer. Wm. C. Townsend.

A. Marnock & Co., of Quincy, Mass., have a consignment of stock monuments of foreign granites on the way. Dealers are requested to write them for a stock sheet.

Dealers take no risk in ordering Cross Bros. paste, for they fully guarantee it in every case. If you have never tried it send for a quart.

Our foreign work will please you, so will our prices. Swingle & Falconer, Importers, Quincy, Mass.