Wiebking Created Popular Faces in Chicago, Friend Discloses

By N. J. WERNER

Brilliant designer and engraver of Artcraft, Century, and many other type faces did not ask popular acclaim nor prestige, preferring satisfaction of good work, well done.

After his arrival, with his father and family, Robert secured a job as basket weaver, perhaps not long, as he followed this by working for C. H. Hanson, of Chicago, as engraver from 1884 to 1892. He started in business on his own in 1893, having made connections with the Crescent Type Foundry and the Independent Type Foundry. He was in partnership with H. H. Hardinge from 1900 to 1914, during which time they started their Advance Type Foundry. In 1914, this concern was merged with the Western Type Foundry, of St. Louis and Chicago. When the latter organization was made a branch of Barnhart Brothers & Spindler in 1919, he again became an engraver, until his death, June 25, 1927.

One might say that he was “a chip off the old block,” since he followed after his father in the art of engraving letters. He once told me that his father used an engraving machine as far back as 1875, possibly in 1870, the year of Robert’s birth. Also that his father engraved a matrix, in 1882, from which type was cast by Marder, Luse & Company of Chicago. Robert engraved his first successful matrices in 1894.

It might be well here to describe the two distinct methods of using machines for engraving type faces. The earlier one was to engrave a character in relief, either in steel (then called a punch) or a special alloy of type metal of a fine grain. The steel punches were struck into copper slabs, these being then properly “fitted.” The type-metal originals were used in the electrotype process of producing matrices. The other, more recent, procedure is to cut or rout the design, intaglio, direct into copper, German silver, or a specially hard composition of metals, even steel occasionally.

The process of making steel punches has to be used by the makers of linotype and monotype matrices, so many matrices being punched with each steel original. As the type foundries rarely need but a single matrix of any character, the
intaglio-cutting method is preferred by them. In case a matrix wears out one can quickly be made after the original pattern, patterns always being kept on file.

Herman Wiebking is said to have cut matrices and cast metal type in 1878 to 1880, just before he came to the United States. I know of an engraving machine being imported from Germany for the Cincinnati Type Foundry during 1880. However, this concern appeared to have had no one competent to operate it, and it was sold in 1882 to the Central Type Foundry, of St. Louis. With it were cut the famous Geometric and Geometric Italic, followed by the eccentric Morning Glory face. The first typewriter face was also cut with it.

Later on, Gustav Schroeder, who cut many faces for Central and many other foundries, bought the machine. At that time I went into partnership with him, and we produced a number of faces by its aid, including the popular De Vinne family. (To correct the general impression that Theodore L. De Vinne was the designer of the face named after him, I would state that it was the creation of my partner, Mr. Schroeder.)

Perfects his machines

The late Linn Boyd Benten, of the Milwaukee Type Foundry, invented an engraving machine having an upright, swinging pantograph, and got a patent for it December 22, 1885. I might add here that Heber Wells, in the first half of the nineteenth century, invented his wood-type-cutting apparatus, and that one William Leavenworth, of Allentown, New Jersey, invented a wood-type-cutting pantograph in 1843.

Wiebking, during his association with H. H. Harding, who had ten years' previous fine experience in the watch-tool industry, materially raised the efficiency and accuracy of his machines (having fourteen), bringing them to a very high degree of perfection. He did the same with the auxiliary apparatus for sharpening cutters and for making of patterns for the faces to be cut. In addition, he invented precision tools and apparatus for the “fitting” of matrices (that is, the adjusting of them to the molds, in respect to height-to-paper, depth of face, alignment, thickness or set, etc.).

The two men gave much thought to construction of a type-casting machine which would produce perfect type without requiring “breaking” of jets, “rubbing” of bodies and the other former operations of “dressing,” up to the point of inspecting type and fonting it (making up desired-size packages). This machine was operated by compressed air and did not have one single cam. They succeeded in building a highly satisfactory “automatic” type-casting and finishing machine. Then they started the Advance Type Foundry, subsequently merging with the Western Type Foundry, and the improved machines were removed to the manufacturing plant of the concern at St. Louis.

One of the feats accomplished before this was to engrave a set of matrices for the fourteen-point size of the Kennerley face and cast a 400-pound font of type from the matrices in the short time of forty-one hours. Still another splendid feature was that the matrices were engraved and the type cast and shipped to the customer without a single trial proof being taken. The Kennerley face, by the way, was designed by F. W. Goudy, for whom Wiebking engraved many faces.

Designed many faces

Among the type faces designed by Wiebking were the following: Arctraft, Arctraft Italic, Arctraft Bold, Caslon Clearface, Caslon Clearface Italic, Engravers' Litho Bold, Engravers' Litho Bold Condensed, Invitation Text, Advertisers' Gothic family (regular, condensed, outline, and condensed outline), the Munder Venezian family (regular, italic, bold, and bold italic), Caslon Catalog (or Caslon Antique), Engravers' Roman, Engravers' Bold, Century Roman, Century Italic, Scotch Roman (these three being cast and named by the Western Type Foundry), and series of the Steel-Plate Goths (light, heavy, light condensed, heavy condensed, italic, outline, extra heavy shaded, light extended, and heavy extended).

Wiebking also engraved the first matrices for the Centaur face, designed by Bruce Rogers, and which was used in a booklet issued by the British Monotype Company. This booklet had a note by Rogers, in which he said in part, “the premier cutting was admirably done by Robert Wiebking, of Chicago, and although certain modifications of the design were made by him, they were an improvement on my pattern.”

Disliked freakishness

I particularly admired his skill when designing. He gave careful attention to the proper proportioning of the letters of an alphabet to another, which, it seems, the “modernistic” designers are striving their hardest to avoid.

Whatever concessions he had made to freakishness in type were never made at the expense of proportion. Nor was it his nature to be freakish. He realized the value of the standardized-alignment system and held to it, in which respect some type designers and engravers nowadays are grievously derelict.

Were I to have books printed, I would choose Wiebking’s Clearface Caslon, a face which was misnamed, as it is far from being such a crude face as the original Caslon Oldface. Secondly, I have a yen for Munder Venezian.

Wiebking did a considerable amount of matrix engraving for the Barnhart Brothers & Spindler, American, Inland, and Keystone type foundries, also for John Haddon and Company of London, as well as Stevenson, Blake and Company of Sheffield, England. He also did a great deal of matrix- and punch-cutting work for Ludlow Typograph Company. It bought an engraving machine and other equipment from him.

Wiebking engraved the twelve-point size of a face designed by Dr. George Parker Holden, of Yonkers, New York, and intended to demonstrate his ideas regarding a readable letter.

Wiebking did not confine his activities to type engraving and founding, but did various sorts of engraving.
Adolf Wiebking, a brother of Robert, now residing in Rockford, Illinois, once proudly wrote his nephew, Robert P. Wiebking, these interesting facts:

“My father cut matrices and cast up metal letters in 1878 to 1880, before he came to the United States. He cast or pressed the letters by means of a hand-press and a ladle in a rather primitive way. In this manner he made beautiful type faces and borders without the regular height type bodies. He milled the under side of the letters on a lathe and thus made letters for small metal door signs. He had constructed a somewhat complicated frame with holders and coil springs, and soldered the letters onto a metal base. The background was filled in with asphalt varnish, then dried, and the top of letters and borders polished.

“They were fancy letters and borders and made beautiful door signs. So far so good. The theory was all right, but I think he had trouble with soldering the letters onto the base plate, or it may be that he did not get enough orders.”

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**Smart Sampler Crashes the Shell of Printing Buyers**

Good printing is like good cooking in that a person is tempted to help himself to more of it. A good meal whets the appetite of a diner for future dinners, while good printing whips up a desire for the product it advertises. As you know, printing quite often is the first knowledge people have of a new article.

The similarity of the two is featured by J. J. Keliher and Company, of London. This modern, intelligent group of printers supplies its prospects with a file-pocket folder containing five printing recipes. The folder itself is of black cover paper printed in green and white, with a pocket stitched in at the right to hold the examples of printing.

Each of the five printing recipes utilizes a different stock, balanced typography, and variety of ink colors. Text comment on the paper and type used in each, directs attention to the fold, and gently suggests a perusal of the prices on the inside. Keliher sturdily informs prospects, on each layout, that cost of creating it (the copy, layout, etc.) is included in the prices quoted.

Tasteful use of rule borders and tint blocks creates a pleasing effect for the complete display, subtly hinting at the same time that no effect is impossible of achievement for such a printing house. Each piece has been produced with as much care as though for a particularly fussy customer of the house.

Perhaps the crowning effort of this business-solicitation mailing is Recipe No. 5. A brilliant orange cover (or any other color would do as well) is French-folded. Text pages are wire-stitched to the inside fold alone. This enables the prospect to open up the cover into an impressive broadside—a surprise feature in an already unusual booklet.

Aside from this last notion, the samples are no different from a thousand like them produced each year in your own plant. However, all are intelligently combined into a display of pleasing balance for the sole purpose of selling more printing. Each piece quotes an approximate price, a move smartly planned to minimize the importance of the cost in thinking of such excellence while giving information vital to the prospect.

It should be comparatively simple for printers to make up such units to advertise their own services. Perhaps you can

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**THIS STYLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>will cost approximately:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23:5:0 per 1,000 for a quantity of 2,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>28:7:0 1,000 5,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>28:0:0 1,000 15,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>0:11:7 8 1,000 12,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>0:11:6 0 1,000 15,000</td>
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<td>0:11:4 0 1,000 30,000</td>
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These costs include the creation of the recipe. Ring us up at Room 4620 any time you want a printing problem solved or you want to know the cost of any printing plan and you want to get that plan carried out well.

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W.V.

J.J. KELIHER & CO. LTD.

(111) Kingsway, W.C.1

(277) Borough High Street, S.E.1

Rules and type color spots give the piece an attractive appearance, backed by strong typography and wise choice of paper. Each “recipe” features its price