

Title:

The War Of High Quality Writing Instruments - The Fountain Pen

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588

Summary:

High quality writing instruments have been around for centuries and continue to exist; from the first pencils in 1584, to the quill pen, to the reign of the fountain pen from 1925 to 1940.

These high quality and highly functional writing instruments were being made around the world in beautiful styles and with an elegance and class not previously seen in a writing instrument.

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Keywords:

pens, fountain pen, writing instrument

Article Body:

High quality writing instruments have been around for centuries and continue to exist; from the first pencils in 1584, to the quill pen, to the reign of the fountain pen from 1925 to 1940.

These high quality and highly functional writing instruments were being made around the world in beautiful styles and with an elegance and class not previously seen in a writing instrument.

The early fountain pens were not effective at providing a consistent and even supply of ink. You would have either too much ink which caused blots or too little which caused skips.

In 1870 Waterman developed a 3 channel feed which meant the ink flow was controlled during writing, making the pen a choice as a portable writing instrument. Today collectors refer to these pens as eyedroppers because of how they were filled.

Eyedropper pens leaked because the caps didn't fit really secure and the joint became worn from use, so in 1907 Waterman came up with a solution. It worked

like a lipstick tube with a barrel that twisted and a point that could retract into the barrel. It was called the safety pen. These pens remained popular well into the 1920s.

Parker and Sheaffer developed their own advancements; Parker with the button filler and lever filler, and Sheaffer with similar systems that also included what was called a blind cap.

During the war the pen market continued to grow at an incredible rate. Pens were made from ebonite or vulcanite, which was a hard rubber material that was very easy to work with. Pens were decorated with engravings, swirls of color, wood grain, and even mottled colors. Black was the most popular base color but sometimes other colors were produced, especially red. The high quality pens had 14k solid gold points and gold pocket clips.

Men's pens were had a clip, while ladies were slightly smaller and had a ring top so they could be attached to a chain, a vest pocket, or a watch chain.

But competition was fierce and quality writing instruments were everywhere, so to stay competitive the manufacturers were forced to produce a pen that had fashion appeal. So along came pens such as the Duofold with its striking red orange colors, Bakelite, tortoise shell, and horn.

Sheaffer introduced a line of pens in 1924 that were made from celluloid which were an instant hit even though they were expensive. Within 5 years they were the #1 selling pen. Celluloid was available in unlimited colors and patterns which made it perfect for the Art Deco times and styles.

Many of the pen manufacturers ran into trouble during the 1930s but Parker, Wahl-Eversharp, Waterman, and Sheaffer all kept their heads above water and Parker did especially well.

In 1932 Parker introduced a vacuum filler system which eliminated the need for an ink sack. Parker continued to work towards new innovations and in 1941 introduced the fast drying Parker Superchrome ink which required some design changes to their pen.

Sheaffer created two filling systems; the touchdown and snorkel which remained popular into the 1960s. In fact just recently they have been reintroduced to the market. Waterman introduced the disposable cartridge for the fountain pen and perfected it during WWII. But the final achievement in fountain pens belongs to Parker who in 1956 introduced the capillary filling system.

High quality writing instruments have been demanded by civilization for

centuries. It's interesting to follow the changes in design that have occurred over the centuries and what we once considered high quality, compared to what we now consider high quality writing instruments.