

THE ANATOMY OF LETTERING BY WARREN CHAPPELL

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OF
LETTERING



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PART I

TOOLS OF LETTERING THEIR CARE AND USE

LETTER FORMS have always been influenced by the tools with which they were made. The brush in the East, the chisel and the quill or reed in the West have determined how the symbol concept was rendered. We are interested in the chisel as it helped in the shaping of the Roman alphabet, but the quill and reed had the most direct influence on letters as we know them today.

Probably the major contribution of the chisel is the serif, the utility of which is immediately apparent when we incise a letter in stone. When the two cuts of an incised line are made, the finish is quite naturally weak. The simplest procedure is to come into the line at right angles; this relieves any tendency toward optical thinning of the verticals, and allows the finishing cut to be made more easily. Because they were utilitarian, these serifs became an integral part of the letters, and were a beautiful adjunct.



The quill and reed are basically flat writing edges, and for convenience steel pens, serving the same purpose, may be bought in various