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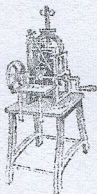
1961

A Note on the Anatomy of Type

THE PIN MARK

by

JOHN S. CARROLL



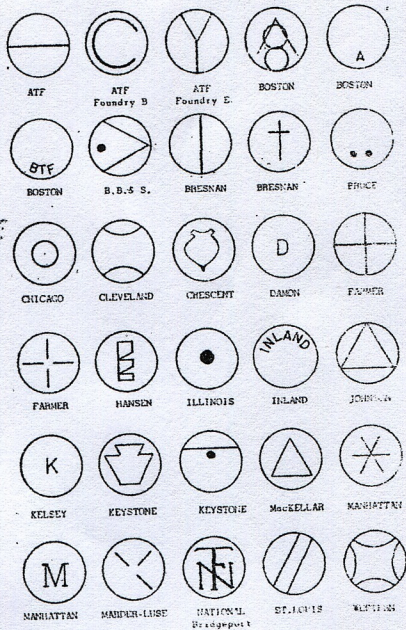
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THE PIN MARKS

OF THE XIX AND XX CENTURY



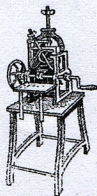


Fig. 2: The Bruce Caster

The first step in the mechanization of type casting was taken by Archibald Binny in 1811 with the invention of the "squirt pot." This simple device consisted of a pot with a piston pump in the center and a nozzle at the lower front edge. The operator simply held his hand mold to the nozzle and stepped on a pedal which operated the piston and injected a quick squirt of metal into the mold. This invention made possible for the first time, the casting of large ornamented types with perfect faces.

David Bruce's automatic caster of 1845 is a lineal descendant of the "squirt pot"—it consisted of a swinging frame to which the mold was attached, given a forward and backward motion by a cam attached to a shaft operated

by a crank. Other cams on the same shaft operated the piston and nozzle valve of the squirt pot, all in correct sequence. In effect, all this machine did was to imitate the action of the hand caster; it closed the mold, advanced it to the nozzle, injected a squirt of metal, and then moved the mold away from the nozzle and opened it to release the cast type.

The only problem to be solved in the making of such a machine was to insure that the finished type would be reliably ejected from the mold as it opened; if it stuck in the mold, the machine would be jammed. In the hand mold, the type had a tendency to stick in either the upper or lower half at random, and pointed wire tools were provided to pick the type out of the mold after casting.

In automatic casting, this would be impossible. However hand casters had long known that the type would, if it remained in the upper half of the mold, be dislodged as the mold was opened simply by its passage along the "stool"—the little projection against which the end of the matrix was registered for alignment. So, then, all that was necessary was to insure that the type would always adhere to the upper half

of the mold when it opened, and ejection would be automatic.

This adherence was accomplished in a very simple way; a short, blunt pin was inserted in the upper half of the mold, projecting a very small distance into the cavity. This pin would then drag the type with it—hence the name “drag-pin” applied to it. However, the pin penetrated the type only a very short distance, and did not prevent it being knocked loose as it passed the “stool.”

Naturally, the pin left an impression on the side of the type, and this is the familiar “pin mark” found in all types cast on pivotal casters of the Bruce type. Type founders promptly made use of this impression to “trade-mark” types of their manufacture. In the larger types, the full name of the founder was engraved in the end of the pin; in smaller sizes, a symbol or monogram of one sort or another was used, and a few of the more common symbols are shown in the illustration.

The pin mark was inseparable from machine-cast type during the period 1845-1900 and in some cases, later. It does not, however, indicate anything to the user of the type except the

name of the founder and the fact that the type was cast in some variation of the Bruce pivotal caster.

More advanced automatic casters started to appear in the late 1880's, and many of these used the body-slide form of mold, which ejected the type sideways by a purely mechanical ejector which was generally the mold body piece itself. No drag-pin was required on such casters, and the type cast in such machines contains no pin mark. These machines include the Barth, used by ATF, the Monotype composing machine which was promptly adopted for casting by many small foundries, and the Thompson Type Machine (circa 1916) now the standard foundry caster in practically all independent type foundries.

A few foundries, mainly in England and Europe, still use pivotal machines, and their type always has a pin mark. In England, the Nodis, Davis and similar casters, have *two* drag-pins, and the type shows two pin marks, in which the founder's trade mark, and the point size of the type are shown, respectively.

Showing the point size of the type in the pin impression is not a recent development, how-

ever. At the time of the changeover from the old bodies (nonpareil, brevier, pica, long-primer, etc.) to the point system, many foundry men marked the drag-pins of their new molds with the point size in numerals, so that type made to the new system could be easily distinguished from the old bodies.

In recent years, foundry men have felt a need to identify their product, for purely commercial reasons. The best system is still the pin mark, and so a number of commercial foundry men (Balto-type, Typefoundry of Phoenix, etc.) have had their Thompson casters equipped with dummy drag-pins in the end of the body slides; these pins leave the typical impression in the side of the type and are engraved with either the full name of the typefoundry or a monogram of some sort, by which identification of the product can be made. Some European foundry men using other forms of body slide machine, such as the Foucher, Kusterman, etc., also have pins fitted for the same purpose.