

Early Autopoint Logos: An Approximate Timeline

Charles R. Keeran was an early 1900's visionary and entrepreneur, engaged in the mechanical pencil and fountain pen business. He was the inventor of the Eversharp mechanical pencil, and had personally created that pencil company together with the business name and the related trademarks. He apparently initiated and coordinated the purchase of the Boston Safety Fountain Pen Company for Eversharp. But he was essentially forced out of the Eversharp organization sometime in 1917.

The Earliest "Sans Serif Block Letters" Imprint

I have no idea exactly when Charles R. Keeran began experimenting with mechanical pencils having a wooden barrel and a metal lead advancing mechanism, in contrast to the metal mechanical pencils manufactured while he was at Eversharp. However, I do know that some of the very early, hard to find wooden barreled Autopoint pencils have an Autopoint logo impressed near the top of the wood barrel in block letters with a sans serif font. This logo was probably used only for a short period of time while Keeran began experimenting with manufacturing the wood barreled pencils. I found no record that this early logo was ever registered as a trademark. While I personally have no example of this particular logo in my collection, I have a friend who has a nice example of the wood barreled Autopoint pencil with the "sans serif block letters" logo in his collection, so I do know they exist.

The Earliest Trademarked, "Serif Font Block Letters" Imprint



On July 30, 1918 Charles R. Keeran filed a trademark application with the U. S. Patent and Trademark Office for the "serif font block letters" Autopoint trademark. That trademark was registered by the USPTO on April 15, 1919, consisted of "words, letters and/or numbers in stylized form" and was assigned registration number 0125149. The first use in commerce claimed for the "serif font block letters" logo in the trademark application was claimed to be July 15, 1918.

The early filing of this trademark illustrates Keeran's vision. While he was apparently busy designing and making some pencils as early as the July 15, 1918 date alleged to be the first commercial use of the mark in the trademark application, it was not until about the spring of 1920 that Autopoint was formally organized as a corporation.

The April, 1920 edition of *Typewriter Topics* announced the organization of the Autopoint Pencil Co., 362 Grand Avenue, Chicago, Ill., and its selling company, the Autopoint Sales Co., First National Bank Building, Chicago. "It (Autopoint Pencil Company) is the outcome of plans formulated some time ago by a number of former members of the organization of the Wahl Co., of Chicago, manufacturers of the well-known Eversharp Pencil. The more prominent men in the new company are: C. R. Keeran, inventor of the Eversharp Pencil and others: W. E. Gerry, former Eversharp sales manager, and W. E. Smith."

The May, 1920 edition of *Typewriter Topics* trumpeted the “New Autopoint Pencil”. The pencils illustrated included a wooden barreled model selling for 50 cents, and it has the “serif font block letters” Autopoint imprint.



The pencil below better illustrates how the “serif font block letters” logo was actually impressed into the top of the wood barrels of early Autopoint mechanical pencils.



This picture courtesy of Roger Veley

Autopoint’s use of the “serif font block letters” logo was apparently very short-lived, from about July 15, 1918 to sometime in the fall of 1920.

The “Underscore” Imprints



I could find no evidence this trademark was filed with the USPTO, despite the claim within the logo. And the subsequent trademark registered by Autopoint contains no backward reference to the registration number for this trademark. The tagline “The World’s Greatest Pencil” seems

typical of the hyperbole used to sell fountain pens and mechanical pencils at the time. This detailed imprint could not possibly have been legibly imprinted on the barrel of a mechanical pencil, and so was likely designed only for use in “paper” advertisements.

For example, by the end of 1920 Autopoint had designed and produced enough early mechanical pencils that they could be offered as “premiums” in a 1921 cigar catalog. The clipping below from that catalog indicates the number of certificates required to “earn” a free Autopoint pencil, and features the early underscore logo at the top left.

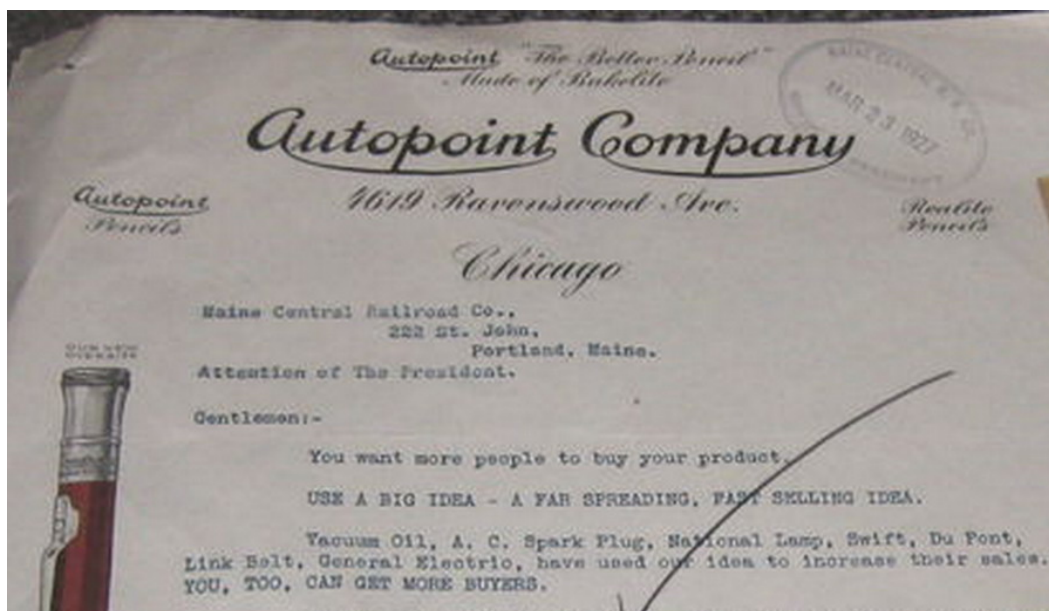
Article No.	Description	Certificates Required
1059	Wood Barrel, Black.....	35
1025	Silver Plated, Plain Polished.....	110
1027	Gold Filled, Plain Polished.....	225

In contrast, this is how the “underscore logo” appeared when it was actually imprinted on early Autopoint mechanical pencils. Note the early single word “Patented” used in conjunction with this logo, when imprinted on the pencil ferrules below.



Autopoint used the “underscore” logo from about the fall of 1920 until about November 1, 1926. Note that the stock of pencils manufactured with the underscore logo could have persisted for a number of years subsequent to the implementation of the next trademark. Indeed, all but one of the pencils illustrated in the “March 1927” brochure posted on Bob Bolin’s excellent Autopoint web pages (http://www.unl.edu/Bolin_resources/pencil_page/) still carry the “underscore” logo. Only the double ended Autopoint pencil illustrated at the bottom of the price list in the brochure is imprinted with the newer “script” logo.

The letterhead below with the somewhat evolved “underscore logo” was received by the Maine Central Railroad on 3/23/1927, near the end of use of the logo. Autopoint was most likely using up its stock of old stationery in these mass mailings to “The President” of various prospective customers. Note the many times the “underscore logo” appears at the top of the letterhead, and on the pencil ferrule, and that even the word “Company” was similarly underscored by this date. Also note the new tag lines at the top of the letterhead: “The Better Pencil” (rather than “The World’s Greatest Pencil”) and “Made of Bakelite”.



The “Script” Imprint with Tag Line

Autopoint
The Better Pencil

On January 20, 1927 the company filed a trademark application with the U. S. Patent and Trademark Office for the “script” Autopoint trademark with “The Better Pencil” tagline. That trademark was registered by the USPTO on May 15, 1928, consisted of “words, letters and/or numbers in stylized form” and was assigned registration number 0242098. The first use in commerce claimed for the “script” logo in the trademark application was November 1, 1926. Like the last trademark, this imprint was likely designed primarily for use in “paper” advertisements.

The “script” logo was utilized for a relatively long time. Here’s an example from the very bottom of a mechanical pencil advertisement in the 9/20/1937 issue of Life magazine.



This is how the “script” logo appeared when it was imprinted on Autopoint mechanical pencils. The image is from a 13 page pamphlet referred to as the “1930 Catalog” posted on Bob Bolin’s excellent Autopoint web pages. Notably, all of the pencils illustrated in that catalog feature the new “script” logo except for the several examples of how Autopoint pencils can be imprinted with personalizations and with advertising.



The “script” logo above was utilized from about November 1, 1926 until July 7, 1945.

The “Changed Font Script” Imprints



On July 7, 1945 the company filed a trademark application with the U. S. Patent and Trademark Office for the “changed font script” Autopoint trademark. That trademark was registered by the USPTO on April 9, 1946, consisted of “words,

letters and/or numbers in stylized form” and was assigned registration number 0420387. The first use in commerce claimed for the “changed font script” logo in the trademark application was November 00, 1926. Unlike several others, this imprint included no tag line.

A close comparison of this “changed font script” trademark with the last preceding registered trademark indicates that Autopoint really just extended the protection for its trademark, by registering a new but very similar mark. The new trademark is presented with a slightly different font (note particularly the start of the letter “n”), and the width of the letters is a bit thinner than the predecessor mark. I suspect this was Autopoint’s idea of “modernization”, to keep up with current trends in the industry. This “changed font script” logo was used from about July 7, 1945 through about December 14, 1953.

The “Slant A Script” Imprints



On December 14, 1953 the Cory Corporation filed a trademark application with the U. S. Patent and Trademark Office for the “slant A script” Autopoint trademark. That trademark was

registered by the USPTO on September 14, 1954, consisted of “words, letters and/or numbers in stylized form” and was assigned registration number 0595056. The first use in commerce claimed for the “slant A script” logo in the trademark application was claimed to be June 1, 1938. This registered trademark also included no tag line

In 1951, the Cory Corporation, a Chicago company, had purchased Autopoint from Union Carbide. In my opinion, that acquisition basically ended the “collectible” period of Autopoint pens and pencils. The pencil quality went rapidly downhill, and the number of peripheral products was increased compared to the pencils produced. So I’ve furnished the details of this trademark primarily to be able to mark the end of Autopoint’s use of the “changed font script” logo.

A Final, Interesting Imprint



This imprint looks like a simple adaptation from the 1927 “script” logo used for mechanical pencils. It certainly appears that the artist just trimmed off the “cil” from the “script logo” tagline then being used. Like some others, I saw

no evidence that this mark was ever filed with the USPTO. I found this imprint on a box that originally held one of Autopoint’s hard to find early 1930’s fountain pens with the “lever under a blind cap”, and on the filling instructions that came with that pen box. But further details of the Autopoint fountain pens will have to be a story for another rainy day.....

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