

## Some Current American Pencil Names

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IT IS OFTEN NOT USEFUL to speak of pencil names *per se*, as an abstraction, since many pencils have a characteristic, such as size, color, or lead type, which accounts, at least in part, for the name.

The Eberhard Faber MONGOL 482 pencil, for instance, is a general-purpose, standard-size pencil, but it is yellow, and there is a logical connection between “yellow” and “Mongol.” Continuing with the Eberhard Faber line, we find the BLACKWING, which is black, the THINRITE which has an extra-thin lead, the ROUND GILT which is round, the HEXAROUND which is hexagon-shaped with rounded edges, the MARIGOLD which is yellow, and the TINSEL-TINT which is finished in metallic colors. In all the general-purpose Eberhard Faber pencils of the current catalog, there are only three in which there is no apparent connection between the pencil and its name: VAN DYKE, a yellow pencil, LIBERTY, a yellow pencil, and TRAFFIC, which may be scarlet, mint green, or fuchsia.

However, even these pencils show a relationship between name and nature when considered in certain frames of reference. The elegant name VAN DYKE, for instance, is borne by a pencil which is a notch above the ordinary, since it “contains an unexcelled drawing-pencil quality lead and is equipped with flat, adjustable, renewable eraser.” LIBERTY is an egalitarian pencil of “dependable quality and economy.” TRAFFIC bears the most tenuous connection between its name and its nature. It is a “durable, black-lead pencil for use in plant and factory.” The quotes are taken from blurbs accompanying illustrations of the pencils in the manufacturer’s catalog.

Mr. Ernest M. Raasch of the Joseph Dixon Crucible Company uses a five-part classification system for pencil names. I shall quote from a recent letter of Mr. Raasch:

The naming of a new product is something that comes up with astounding frequency. To give our Marketing Committee some guidance in this morass of euphemisms, I have developed five different categories of product names, with five different purposes in mind, into which most names will generally fall. These categories are:

1. *The "image" name.* The image name is a name chosen because of the favorable connotations bestowed at the conscious or subconscious level. Such a name is "Ticonderoga" which gives this pencil a connotation of Colonial heritage and hence, of quality. This type of name need have nothing whatever to do with the product, the user or the price. It is largely institutional and it is generally chosen for compatibility with advertising and packaging illustrations.

2. *The "personification" name.* The personification name involves using the name of a person — either real or fancied — to give the product further identification through association. A name like "Abraham Lincoln" would obviously carry a feeling of simple, homely but noble worth. A contrived name like "Little Joe" would enable the manufacturer to use a pleasing illustration of some likeable fellow through whom product identification would become stronger.

3. *The "end-use" name.* An end-use name is a name chosen to identify the product with a particular process or position. It is most often found at that stage in the life of a product classification known as "pioneering." At this point real brand competition has not yet begun, and the manufacturer is still attempting to show how this product can be used at a particular point. Such a name would be our No. 2020 "Order Book" Pencil, specifically designed to make manifold carbon copies of handwritten orders.

4. *The "generic term" name.* A generic term name is a highly descriptive name chosen by the manufacturer because he feels that this name may become the generic term in the same sense that most cameras are referred to as "Kodaks." An example of this type of name would be our No. 308 "Beginners" Pencil made specifically for use by beginning writers in the primary grades.

5. *The "topical" name.* A topical name is generally a short-lived name, used to capture a passing fad, or temporary enthusiasm of the populace at large. Such a name would be our 'Space Dust' Pencil which was introduced a few years ago, but fortunately has gone on to become almost a standard with us.<sup>1</sup>

Since it would be impossible for an outsider to know which names are intended as "image" and "generic," I have not attempted to assign other pencil names to these categories. However, it is possible to find other pencil names that accord with "personification," "end-use," and "topical."

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<sup>1</sup> Letter dated 23 March, 1965, from Mr. Ernest Raasch, Marketing Manager, Pencil Sales Division, the Joseph Dixon Crucible Company, Jersey City, N.J.

Those names which I have put in a "Personification" category are BALBOA, DEXTER, FAUST, FULTON, IVANHOE, OMAR, MEPHISTO and ORLOFF. FAUST and MEPHISTO, names taken from German literature, are given to pencils produced by Koh-i-noor, Inc., which traces its beginnings to Bavaria.

"End-Use" names are AUTOGRAPH, BULLETIN, SPECIAL DISPATCH, MOTIF, PATTERN, and CITATION, all used in writings producible by pencil. AUTOGRAPH, besides indicating a possible use of a pencil, refers to a specially-prepared white area on the side of the pencil capable of taking the signature of the owner.

To "Topical" category I would add SPACE AGE, CAMPAIGN, SWEEPSTAKE, and MEDALIST.

The pencil name classifications which I have concocted on my own are as follows:

1. abstract nouns
2. birds
3. colors
4. Greek
5. metallic-painted
6. music
7. occupations
8. oversize primary grade pencils
9. pinstripes
10. product name from another field
11. Roman
12. thin lead
13. top brands
14. towns
15. trees

1. Abstract Nouns: BALANCE, INTEGRITY, SPLENDOR, UTILITY, and SPEED.

2. Birds: FLAMINGO, ORIOLE, RAVEN, THRUSH, LARK, SWIFT, ROOSTER, and one dubious bird, BLACKWING.

3. Colors: BLACK FLYER, BLACK WARRIOR, BLACK-WING, BLUE LABEL, GOLD SABRE, WHITE LABEL, YELLOW JACKET, and YELLOW SPECIAL.

4. Greek: ARGONAUT, and PARTHENON.

5. Metallic painted: These pencils have a metallic, or luminous-appearing paint. Metallic-painted pencils are never, as far as I

know, of the highest quality, and may generally be obtained for 3 cents each or less. In some cases (BRILLEX, FIREFLY, GLOW-O, METALLO, MET-O-LITE, RADIOLITE, SILVER-TONE, and TINSEL-TINT), the name matches the paint. In other cases (RANCHO, TOM-A-HAWK, SNAPPY, SMART, and SWANK), it does not. Two exceptions are PLAST-O-CAP and BIG TOP, which are metallic-painted, but named for their oversize plastic ferrules and erasers.

6. Music: BANJO, BE-BOP, and MELODY.

7. Occupations: MERCHANTS, NAVIGATOR, PROFESSIONAL WRITING, TROOPER, COUNSELOR, and CALCULATOR.

8. Oversize primary grade pencils: Some (BIGGIE, GIANT, GOLIATH, HUSKY) are named for their large size. Others (STUDY, DIPLOMA, APPRENTICE, CHOO-CHOO, and TOT) are not.

9. Pinstripe: These pencils are hexagon-shaped, usually painted red, blue, green, or yellow, with thin white stripes along the ridge lines. Some of the names reflect the appearance of the pencil, but most do not. Those which do are BRITE-EDGE and TU-KOLOR. Those which do not are AMERICAN 1861-1865, CADET, RIORITA, COQUETTE, MAGNOLIA, OMAR, SWEEPSTAKE, and TORTOLA. Like the metallic-painted pencils, pinstripe pencils are never of the best quality, and cost 3 cents each or less.

10. Product name from another field: The largest category, which was suggested to me by Mr. S. H. Schapiro, Sales Manager of the Mallard Pencil Co., is one which matches pencil names with product names from other fields. Examples are BUD (beer), CADILLAC (automobiles), DELCO (automobile batteries), ELDORADO (automobiles), MOHICAN (short-wave radios), METROPOLITAN (automobiles), KOH-I-NOOR (diamond), BLUE JAY (corn plasters), SENATOR (cigars), SILVER-TONE (a Sears, Roebuck and Co. trade name for radios, phonographs and television sets), ST. JOSEPH (aspirin), SWANK (jewelry), TREND (detergent), VAN DYKE (cigars), VELVET (tobacco), ZEPHYR (automobiles), BOURBON (whisky), UNIVERSAL (motion pictures), and MERCEDES (automobiles).

11. Roman: CERES, VESTAL, FORUM, and SENATOR.

12. Thin lead: Pencils with thin lead which bear a name descriptive of the lead are KOH-I-THIN, THIN-LINE, THINRITE, and SLEND-O-LINE.

13. Top brands: These pencils are each the best one produced by a single manufacturer, as reflected in the manufacturer's advertising: BEN FRANKLIN, BLACK FLYER, CEDAR-KING, COLUMBUS 1492, INVADER, MIRADO, MONGOL, PARK AVE., SELECT, TICONDEROGA, VELVET, WRITING, and ZEPHYR. It is a tradition that top quality pencils be yellow. The Koh-i-noor company claims to have started this custom in 1890, with the Koh-i-noor drawing pencil. Among the "top brands" above, BLACK FLYER is merely the round black form of COLUMBUS 1492, which is hexagon and yellow. Both are made by A. W. Faber Co. Likewise, ZEPHYR is purple, has thin lead, and is manufactured by the Wallace Pencil Co., which also manufactures the yellow INVADER. All the rest of the "top brand" pencils named above are yellow.

14. Towns: BERKELEY, ARCO, and FAIRMOUNT.

15. Trees: CEDAR-KING, CEDAR-QUEEN, CEDAR-PRINCE, MAGNOLIA, and SEQUOIA.

Mr. L. Wilson Salisbury, advertising manager of the Eagle Pencil Company, gives the following history of MIRADO:

MIRADO is the result of circumstances beyond our control. As a yellow finished writing pencil, it was named for the Emperor of a "yellow" race, the Mikado of Japan. Then, with Pearl Harbor, all Japanese names became instantly unpopular, so we instantly printed a bar across the top of the K. We like the newer name. We'll keep it.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Raasch, of the Dixon Company, gives the following background on early naming practices:

... the Dixon Company was the first pencil company to make a quality pencil with an American name. Prior to that time, it was generally believed in this country that all good pencils came from Europe and therefore had to carry European names. The name Ticonderoga (an American Indian word meaning "rippling water sounds like tinkling bells") was chosen for the very reason that it was a departure from European naming, and was in itself one of the truly American names in this country.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated 1 April 1965.

<sup>3</sup> Letter dated 23 March 1965.

Colored bands on pencil ferrules indicate the manufacturer:

- Red: Eagle Pencil Co., Danbury, Conn.
- Gold: Eberhard Faber, Wilkes-Barre, Penn.
- Silver: Wallace Pencil Co., St. Louis, Mo.
- Green and yellow: The Joseph Dixon Crucible Co., Jersey City, N.J.
- Black (ten black stripes lengthwise): Empire Pencil Co., Shelbyville, Tenn.
- Green: Venus Pencil Co., Hoboken, N.J. (drawing pencils)
- Blue: Venus Pencil Co. (writing pencils)
- White: Blaisdell Pencil Co., Bethayres, Penn.
- Walnut: A. W. Faber, Jersey City, N.J.
- Orange: Koh-i-noor, Inc., Bloomsbury, N.J.
- Brown: "wild," can be used by any manufacturer.

The names HERALD SQUARE and BOURBON are the property of F. W. Woolworth Co., and may be made by any pencil factory, but only with authorization from Woolworth.

Duplication of pencil names is avoided in two ways: 1) by registration with the Government, and 2) by consulting a book currently in the hands of the Dixon Company in Jersey City. The book represents an unofficial arrangement maintained by cooperation among the pencil manufacturers in this country. It contains all the pencil names submitted to the keeper of the book during the past fifty years. The keeping of the book is the part-time duty of one person, and the book is passed from one pencil company to another every few years: "It is customary, in the pencil industry, to have only the better known and most widely promoted brand names registered with the Government, while all other names, both active and inactive, are registered with the trade association."<sup>4</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Pencil names may vary from the logical to the arbitrary.

One result of my research is the discovery that America lacks manufacturers of pencil lengtheners. The only pencil lengtheners that I know of are made in Bavaria, and in this country are handled by Koh-i-noor, Inc.

Approximately ninety per cent of the pencil names I have collected contain a liquid consonant (l, m, n, or r). It would be interesting to compare the sales records of liquid and non-liquid pencil

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<sup>4</sup> Letter dated 23 March 1965, from Mr. Raasch.

names. If liquids in the name make the pencil more attractive to the customer, then the name "Elementary" should be the ideal pencil name, since it contains not only all the liquid consonants, but has them in alphabetical order! Such names are not common, although two that come to mind are "Salamander" and "Elee-mosynary."

There is no relationship between name and pencil quality. ROYAL, for example, is not intended to be a pencil of highest quality; in fact, it sells at a low price. The best quality pencils have a colored band on the ferrule. Colored bands other than brown generally indicate a high quality pencil. Among brown-banded pencils, the quality may vary.

Colorado State University

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#### ANNOUNCEMENT

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