

## A BRIEF STUDY OF AUTOPOINT FOUNTAIN PENS

Autopoint produced fountain pens in the late 1920's and again in the mid-1940's. It also produced the Realpoint fountain pens. And some of the "late 1920's" fountain pens have "Welty" imprints and/or nibs. So this is but one of four separate essays, each about one of these four different topics.

### AUTOPOINT FOUNTAIN PENS PRODUCED IN THE LATE 1920'S

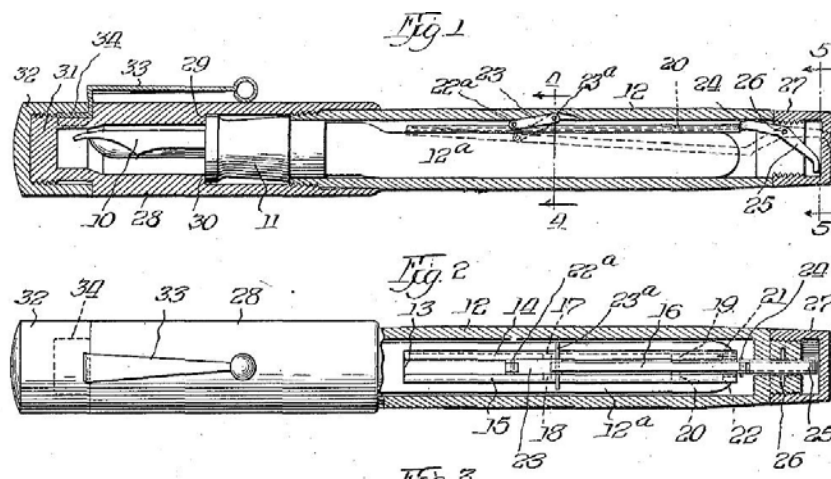
Autopoint applied for a fountain pen patent on 12/5/1927, which was granted on 10/29/1929 and was assigned patent number US1,733,780A. As you know, the infamous "stock market crash" began to unfold in early October, 1929. So after being patented, few of the new Autopoint fountain pens could probably be sold under those circumstances, and accordingly, they remain pretty hard to find.

For starters, here's the logo which was used on the cardboard presentation boxes in which the Autopoint fountain pens of the "late 1920's" were sold. The image is somewhat "distressed" since the picture was taken of the top surface of an actual, used cardboard presentation box.

*Autopoint*  
*The Better Pen*

The "better pen" hyperbole was likely typical of the times, and was similar to "The Better Pencil" also used by Autopoint in its advertising during those years. The above "script logo" on the top of the box exactly mirrors the imprint used on the pocket clips of these pens (more details about that, below).

The fountain pen, as patented, was essentially a flat top pen with a "lever under a blind cap" or "tab" filling mechanism. Below are two of the drawings filed with that patent application.



For purposes of quickly identifying Autopoint fountain pens produced in the “late 1920's”, look for the unique “lever under a blind cap” fill mechanism, as clearly shown on the far right side of in Figure 1 above. Here’s a close up view of the “lever under a blind cap” on an actual Autopoint fountain pen. It has substantial width, and is not a simple flat “tab”.



The blind cap screws off, and the lever is moved from side to side to compress, then release the sac.

All of the “late 1920's” Autopoint fountain pens apparently also have a distinctive domed cap top and blind cap, more distinctive than in the above patent drawing. Note that the very outer edge of the blind cap in the above picture is flat, and that the “dome” area is inset slightly toward the center of the blind cap.

Here’s a picture of the typical cap of one of the “late 1920's” Autopoint fountain pens.



This picture shows that the end of the top cap is also “domed”, just like the blind cap. Further, as shown above in the above picture the “late 1920's” Autopoint fountain pens featured 2 thin cap bands, mounted just above the cap lip. And the pocket clips for the 2 larger size pens, as pictured above, are ball end clips imprinted with “Autopoint” in a script font (just like the imprint on the presentation box).

Note that the above patent drawing shows a “Parker Duofold style” cap top which unscrews to hold a readily removable “L-shaped” pocket clip in place. That feature apparently didn’t make it to the vast bulk of pens actually manufactured. Rather, most of the pens produced have a more traditional one piece cap, with an “L-shaped” top to the pocket clip that is slid into place during assembly, and held there by the inner cap - just like on the black pen cap above. Presumably the clip held by the inner cap was ultimately easier and cheaper to manufacture and assemble.

Most of these Autopoint fountain pens feature a barrel imprint like this (the Welty imprints on, and the Welty nibs in, some of these “late 1920's” Autopoint fountain pens are discussed in a separate essay).



All of the “late 1920's” Autopoint fountain pens that I’ve seen have good quality, gold filled furniture.

The “late 1920's” Autopoint fountain pens were produced in 3 different sizes. The “oversized” model is about 5-1/2" long, and the barrel is just over 1/2" inch in diameter. “Oversized” models came with either a #6 or a #8 gold nib, which was inscribed simply Autopoint (in script, and in an arc over top of the rest of the imprint), 14K, and the nib size. The “standard” model is about 5" long, and the barrel is just less than 1/2" in diameter. “Standard” models came with a #4 gold nib, similarly inscribed. The “ladies” model (a ringtop) and the “vest pocket” (with or without a pocket clip) model are about 4-1/2" long and the barrel is just less than 1/2" in diameter. Those models came with a #2 gold nib, similarly inscribed.

Here's a picture of the 3 relative sizes of the "late 1920's" Autopoint fountain pens, showing 4 of the "styles" in which they were produced.



The larger "oversized" and "standard" models pictured to the left above feature similar but differently sized pocket clips, inscribed with the "script Autopoint" logo. The shortest size was produced in 3 separate styles, including a vest pocket model with a shorter but identical pocket clip, a vest pocket model having no pocket clip (both pictured above, on the right), and a lady's model with a ring top (no picture provided).

The colors produced, at a minimum, include black and pearl, black and green pearl, blue and bronze pearl, creme or tan with black veins, and solid black.

Matching pencils were produced in various sizes and colors, to match the fountain pens, and were offered with varying pocket clips, and without a pocket clip.

Here's a poor but quick picture of a group of "late 1920's" Autopoint fountain pens and pencils, illustrating some of the colors and styles.



There are intentionally 4 examples of the "standard size" black and green pearl pens, to illustrate what I view as manufacturing variations. The pen on the far left is the same as the other 3 to its right, but the cap bands and cap top clearly don't line up with the others, even though the cap is screwed on tightly. And all 4 show different bright spots of pearl, in varying quantities. The next two pens are both "vest pocket" models, which came with a pocket clip (the black and green pearl) or without a pocket clip (the creme with black veins). The next two Autopoint mechanical pencils clearly match both the length and color of the four fountain pens on the far left. While I don't have any identifiable "matched sets" of fountain pens and pencils in my collection, there are collectors who do, and so Autopoint clearly offered these as fountain pens and pencils as matched sets, as well as single items. The gray pen on the far right is definitely an "outlier", explained further in the accompanying "Realpoint" fountain pens essay.



Here's a second poor but quick picture of a group of "late 1920's" Autopoint fountain pens and pencils.



Starting at the far left, there's an "oversize" blue and bronze pearl fountain pen, along with two examples of pencils that would have accompanied the two smaller sizes of blue and pearl fountain pens. Note that the mechanical pencils have domed top caps, just like the fountain pens. Also note the differences in the pocket clips of these two mechanical pencils - the one on the left is just like the fountain pen pocket clips, but the one to the right has a "center ridged" clip with a different tip which is attached to the pen differently (more cheaply, I believe, and likely denoting later production). Then there's a black and pearl "standard" size fountain pen, along with two examples of pencils that would have accompanied that size black and pearl fountain pen. Next there's a black "standard" size pen, and a black "vest pocket" size pen with no pocket clip.

The final item in the above picture is an Autopoint mechanical pencil with a “tail”, as designed for a desk set. I strongly suspect this pencil is from a later period of time than the “late 1920's” Autopoint fountain pens (I just need to do some additional research). Similar pencils have also been found by Jonathan Veley, with a flattened tail section that can be used as a letter opener. Obviously the existence of these several “tailed” pencils raises the question whether Autopoint ever produced a fountain pen with a tail, for a desk set. (I’m not currently aware of any such pens.)

In a slightly different way of looking at these pens, I’ve taken some pictures of some of the Autopoint fountain pens in my collection in groups of similar items, with their respective “colleagues”. This first picture is of the black fountain pens and mechanical pencils. Putting them together in a display tray allows the different lengths and widths to be more easily understood.

Here we have black Autopoint fountain pens, in the three different sizes. The oversize pen on the left is 5-1/2" long, the standard pen in the middle is 5" long, and the vest pocket pen (without a pocket clip or ring top) on the right is 4-1/2" long. Note that the pencil "matching" the smallest size fountain pen has a ridged pocket clip, completely different than the fountain pen pocket clips. This may indicate later manufacture.





Here we have blue and bronze Autopoint fountain pens, again in the three different sizes. The oversize pen on the left is 5-1/2" long, the standard pen in the middle is 5" long, and the ring top pen on the right is 4-1/2" long. Note that the pencil "matching" the smallest size fountain pen again has a ridged pocket clip, completely different than the fountain pen pocket clips. This may indicate later manufacture.



Pictured here are black and pearl Autopoint fountain pens, in the two larger sizes. The oversize pen on the left is 5-1/2" long, and the standard pen to its right is 5" long. Note that the first pencil, which "matches" the smaller fountain pen in overall length, has a pocket clip which mirrors the pocket clips on the both pens to its left, although its clip is mounted somewhat lower. The pencil on the far right appears to be "match" the vest pocket size fountain pen (none pictured here in black and pearl), and has neither a pocket clip nor a ring top - nor any evidence of same ever having been mounted. Oddly, the placement of the two gold-filled bands on the larger pencil closely aligns with the cap bands on the larger pen, and so do those of the smaller pencil.



## A FINAL FLOURISH

The **OUTLIER**: All of the above comments, pictures, etc. relate to the usual and customary “late 1920's” Autopoint fountain pens. But there’s always an outlier.

The highlight of my Autopoint fountain pen collection is an oversize Autopoint fountain pen exactly like the patent drawing far above, at the start of this essay, in the black and pearl finish. The top of the cap is threaded and is removable, to access and remove/replace the pocket clip. That removable portion of the top cap is plain black, as is the blind cap. And the two gold-filled cap bands are thicker than the two cap bands on the vast bulk of Autopoint fountain pens actually produced. The pocket clip on my example is not original, and may have been lost somewhere along the way, since it now sports a “washer clip”, perhaps from a Parker Duofold or some foreign made pen. It also has no barrel imprint. I strongly suspect that this particular example is either one of a kind, or one of a very limited number of examples, probably produced prior to the patent grant - while Autopoint was deciding exactly how to manufacture and assemble their new fountain pen. (Many thanks for this acquisition to long time pen friend and collector Tom Heath.).

Here’s a picture of the big zebra Autopoint “outlier” fountain pen, closed. Note the wider gold filled (?) cap bands, as well as the plain black cap top and blind cap.



This is the big zebra Autopoint “outlier” fountain pen, with the end caps off. Note the “domed” cap top and blind cap, and the threaded top end of the cap.





This final picture of the big zebra Autopoint “outlier” fountain pen is a closeup of the section and honkin’ big #8 nib. Note that the “Autopoint” imprint on the nib isn’t presented in an arc over the “14K”, like the production models, but is imprinted straight across the top of the nib.



Only time will tell, hopefully with information from other collectors, whether the above “outlier” is truly one of a kind, or is simply the very earliest production of the “late 1920's” Autopoint fountain pens.

---

This is just a quick compilation, far from carefully researched. I’ve based the above comments and pictures on the various pens and ephemera in my personal collection. This essay is part of 4 separate but related essays intended to capture basic information about the fountain pens and accessories which the Autopoint Company produced over a period of years. I’m sure that posting this essay will elicit some additional insight and further evidence of these hard to find fountain pens. (Some of the Autopoint fountain pen “duplicates” in my collection will certainly pop up in the related essay about Autopoint fountain pens with “Welty blood in their veins”.)

If you have additional information, pictures or ephemera that you'd be interested in having added to these pages, please don't hesitate to contact me at [jimstauffer@gmail.com](mailto:jimstauffer@gmail.com) . I'm always happy to provide proper attribution for material which expands this content. Error correction is always also appreciated.

Please note that all images, text and other content on these pages is copyrighted, and may not be reproduced in whole or in part without the express written permission of the author. Personal use of this content, however, is absolutely and cheerfully permitted. And you can freely make links to this web site from other web pages.

James R. Stauffer ©2019.08.06