

A BRIEF STUDY OF AUTOPOINT FOUNTAIN PENS

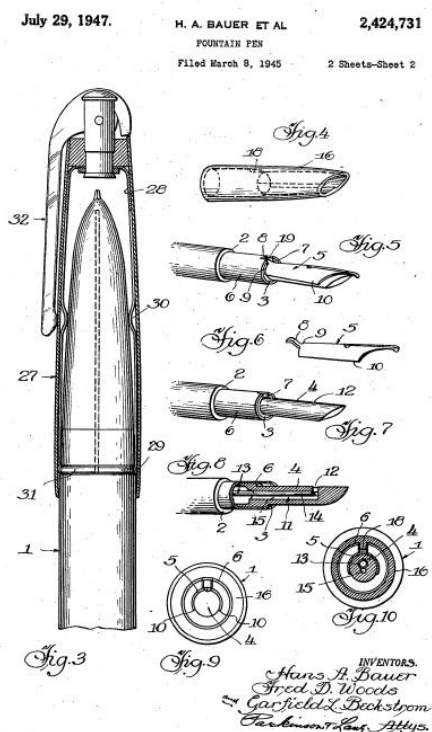
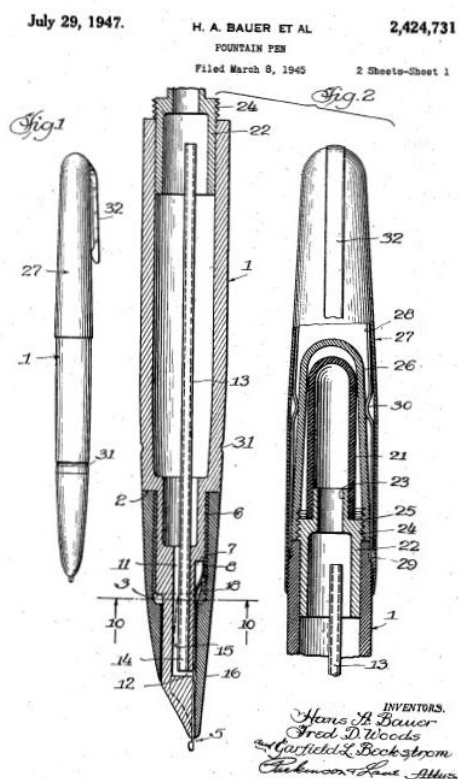
Autopoint produced fountain pens in the late 1920's and again in the mid-1940's. It also produced the Realpoint fountain pens. And some of the "late 1920's" fountain pens have "Welty" imprints and/or nibs. So this is but one of four separate essays, each about one of these four different topics.

AUTOPOINT FOUNTAIN PENS PRODUCED IN THE MID-1940'S

The fountain pens Autopoint Company produced in the mid-1940's are somewhat of an enigma. There are few of these pens apparently available, and of course none of the few I possess exactly matches the patented fountain pen.

Autopoint applied for a fountain pen patent on 3/8/1945, which was granted on 7/29/1947 and was assigned patent number US2,424,731A. As you know, by mid-1945 Laszlo Biro and the Eversharp Company were already trying to sell ballpoint pens to the "early adopters" of the masses, and those early ballpoint pens were apparently warmly welcomed. People apparently traded in their fountain pens for the "new, revolutionary" ballpoints (and/or probably just threw away their high-maintenance fountain pens). So after being patented in mid-1947, it's somewhat likely that few of the new "mid-1940's" Autopoint fountain pens could probably be sold, and accordingly, they remain pretty hard to find.

That fountain pen, as patented, was essentially a "bullet shaped" pen at both ends, with a top mounted, spring loaded pocket clip and a screw on cap. Below are two of the drawings filed with that patent application (sheet #1 on the left, sheet #2 of 2 on the right).



Don't get too "married" to the patent drawings, though. In my experience the most important takeaways are the picture of the posted pen, on the far left side of drawing #1, the spring loaded pocket clip, at the top of drawing #2, and the hidden nib with the dotted lines from the section to the tip of the nib cover, inside the cap in drawing #2. Frankly, Autopoint patented at least 8 or 10 different "pieces" of the "mid-1940's" fountain pen and the related pencil, during the 1940's. Many of those patents related to the spring loaded pocket clip(s), and various "matched" pencil designs and mechanisms, etc. Autopoint even patented a similar fountain pen with completely different internals in the early 1950's, but it too doesn't match the 1940's fountain pens which I've located and collected.

I only have a few of the "mid-1940's" Autopoint fountain pens. For starters, here's the logo which was used on a fancy cardboard presentation box in which at least some of the Autopoint fountain pens of the "mid-1940's" were sold. The image below was taken of the top surface of an actual, used cardboard presentation box. (Kudos for this set's acquisition, to Al Kahn, the "equipment man" for the former Kahn family owned Wearever Pen Company, and a long time pen friend and sophisticated fountain pen collector.) This pen set was acquired just as you see it below, as a matched set in a very fancy "coffin" presentation box. While the top has been ripped off the base, and the red ribbon originally over both instruments has been ripped loose, this set and box is in superb condition after the approximately 70 years since it was manufactured.



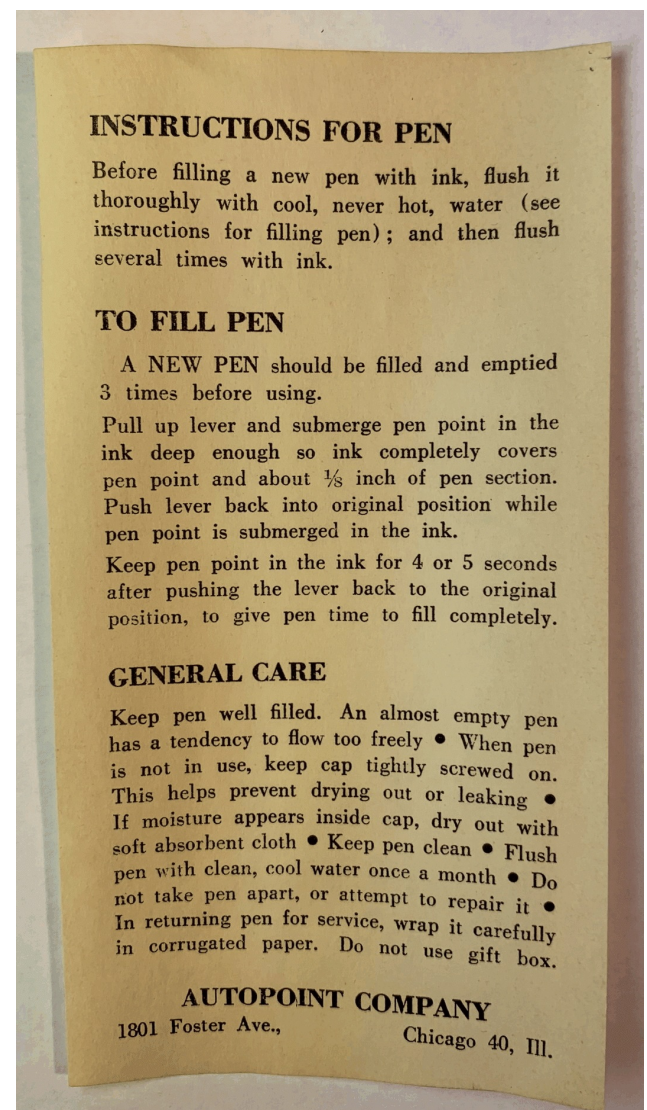
The Autopoint logo on the above presentation box top is substantially identical to the logo used on the presentation boxes for the "late 1920's" Autopoint fountain pens, except that the phrase "The Better Pen" was deleted, and the simple word "Trademark" was used in its place, on the "mid-1940's" Autopoint fountain pen boxes. The above Autopoint "script logo" which was printed on the top of the box was also inscribed on the cap lip of the "mid-1940's" pens.

And here's a picture of the inside of the coffin box, with the fountain pen and mechanical pencil set in their respective places, though the red ribbon that was originally over top of the instruments is torn off.



Note that both fountain pen and pencil are imprinted "Security" on the barrels. Not sure what that means, but it may have indicated that this set was not to be offered for sale. Also, each instrument is inscribed with "Security" on the barrel, but each in a different direction.

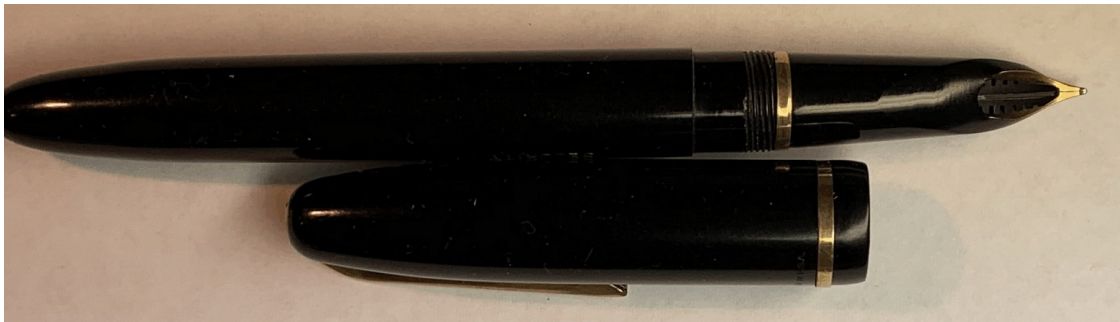
At right is a picture of the pen use and filling instructions that came with this set.



The mechanical pencil included with this set is a pretty common model, nicely matched the fountain pen, and was probably sold separately far into the 1950's - so I won't go into much detail about it. But the pen breaks most of the rules or concepts set forth in the patent. Here's a picture showing some more details about the fountain pen.



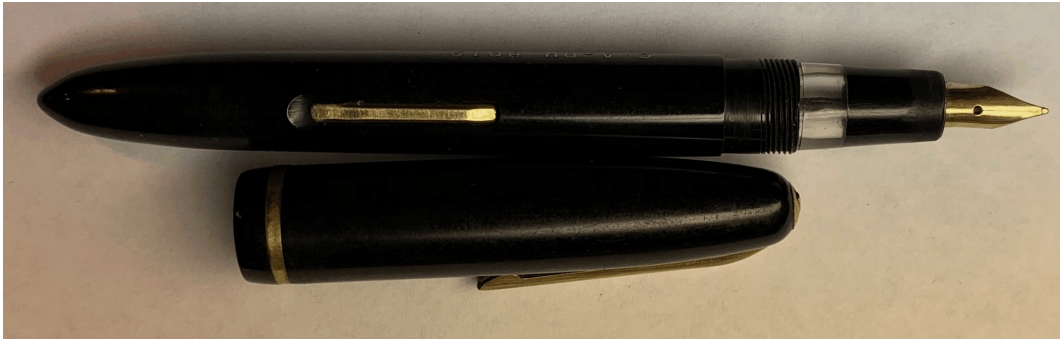
Here's a similar picture, but with the feed turned up.



Yes, first of all note that it's a lever filler- far different than the bulb filler in the patent drawing. On the other hand, it does have a mostly hidden nib, like the patent drawing. And there's an odd groove down the centerline of the fingertip section, just like the patent drawing. Of course, the pen has the spring loaded pocket clip, as per the patent drawing. The furniture certainly appears to be gold filled. And the fountain pen is imprinted "Autopoint" (in the same script font as on the top of the box), "Pat'd", "Made in U.S.A.", just above the cap band. Oddly, the matching pencil of the set has no imprints whatsoever.

This isn't the only "mid-1940's" Autopoint fountain pen in my arsenal. I suspect that Autopoint was experimenting with various innards, etc. for this fountain pen, while they awaited the grant of the requested patent.

Here's a picture of a similar "mid-1940's" Autopoint fountain pen, with the nib up.



This example has the same lever filler as the "Security" imprinted model above, but has a section with an ink view window, and a nib which is exposed rather than being hidden. The picture below merely shows the same pen with the feed up. Note that this pen barrel looks identical to the first example, down to the barrel threads. After that this example is totally different.



This example is also imprinted "Autopoint" (in the same script font as on the top of the presentation box of the first example), "Pat'd", "Made in U.S.A.", just above the cap band. And the name "C. A. Du Bois" is engraved on the barrel, and the block letters are filled in with gold paint. The exposed nib has no visible imprints of any kind, though it certainly appears to be 14K.

We may never know whether this particular pen was identical to the first example, and some repairer later changed out the section and nib, or whether the good folks at Autopoint were simply trying to perfect a less expensive, perhaps easier to use section and nib.

The "battle" for further information and details of these "mid-1940's" Autopoint fountain pens isn't necessarily over. Susan Wirth (may she RIP) often talked about the various models of this particular pen that she had collected, many with metal caps. So whoever succeeds to her pen collection, at least this part of it, may well be able to supplement our collective knowledge.

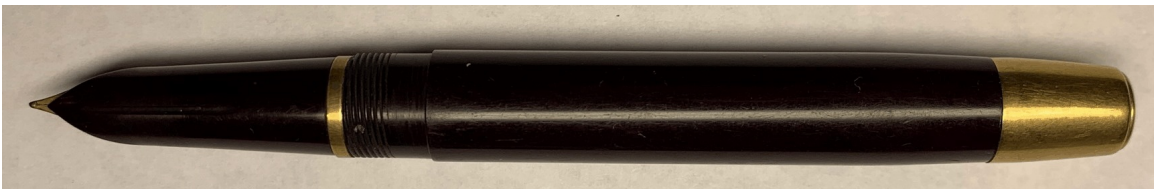
Were there some **IMPOSTERS?**:

With all due respect to Autopoint, it would seem that either 1) another company produced Autopoint's "mid-1940's" sections and covered nibs, or 2) Autopoint licensed someone else to produce sections and covered nibs substantially identical to their "mid-1940's" sections and covered nibs, or 3) Autopoint sold some of their "mid-1940's" sections and covered nibs to other pen companies/assemblers. Why that conclusion? Well, take a look at the following sets of pictures.

Below is a picture of a Webster fountain pen. For what its worth, note that Webster was also located in Chicago, Illinois. This Webster is imprinted on the barrel "Webster Favo=Rit", "Made in U.S.A.", "- Pat. Pend -".

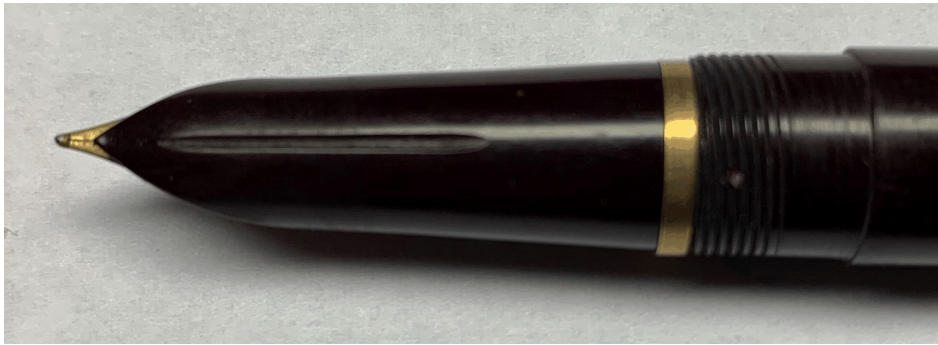


At first blush this fountain pen is totally different than Autopoint's "mid-1940's" fountain pens. Note the "feathering" at the top of the pocket clip, on the sides - this will be important later. For what it's worth, the above Webster pen has a metal screw off blind cap, and is a plunger filler.



However, and very interestingly, check out the left hand side of the above picture, showing the bottom end of the barrel. From where the barrel is reduced down in diameter, through the threaded part of the section, past the narrow gold filled band, and over the covered nib, this pen is identical to my first example of Autopoint's "mid-1940's" fountain pens.

In fact, take a close look at the enlarged view of the covered nib in the picture below, on the next page. This Webster fountain pen even features a shallow trough on the top of the covered nib, and it's virtually identical to my first example of Autopoint's "mid-1940's" fountain pens.

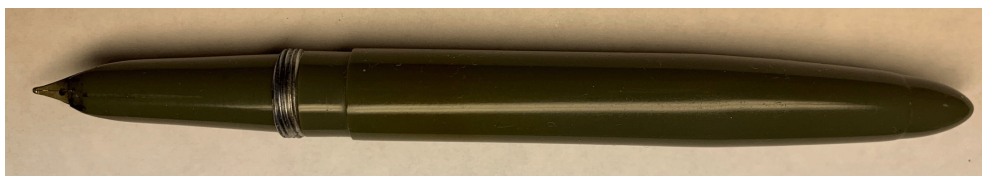


The above final picture of this first Webster fountain pen example makes me wonder who made this section and covered nib, and for whom?

The second possible “imposter” is a completely different, likely later model of another Webster. You can see the imprint on the barrel, which reads simply “Webster”, “Made in U.S.A.”. It also has “Webster” imprinted on the top of the pocket clip. And this model has the “feathering” at the bottom of the pocket clip, rather than the top of the clip, like the last example. For what it’s worth, the cap is marked “1/10-10K gold filled” around the cap lip. And the pen has an aerometric filler.



Below is a picture of the same pen, with the cap removed. The section and covered nib are virtually identical to the above Webster pen, except this model has no gold ring below the section threads, and the threads are made of white metal, not plastic. The second picture shows the shallow trough on the top of the covered nib, just like the above Webster pen example.



If two examples of possible “imposters” weren’t enough, the “Tower” pen set box which contained the above second Webster fountain pen example also contained another “no name” fountain pen. Here’s a picture of the third possible “imposter”, with it’s cap on. Note that the pocket clip of this “no name” pen matches the second Webster example above, but isn’t imprinted with the name of the pen company and is a silver color cap rather than being gold filled. There’s also no name inscribed on the barrel, although the aerometric filler inside is identical to the second Webster example.



Here’s a picture of the “no name” pen with the cap removed. Don’t the threads, the section and the covered nib appear substantially identical to the other Webster examples above?



To facilitate your comparison, here’s a close up of this “no name” pen’s section and nib, along with a close up of its feed. Don’t those sections and covered nibs look identical to the Autopoint “Security” example above?



So I have no definite answer as to how the same “business end” of the first “Security” example of Autopoint’s “mid-1940's” fountain pen is the same as some Webster and other, “no name” fountain pens.

But I can make an educated guess. I’d guess that because the two Webster examples with the “look alike” sections and covered nibs both have aerometric fillers, I suspect that they are later models, produced after Autopoint stopped selling its short-lived “mid-1940's” fountain pens. Perhaps Autopoint sold those parts to Webster and others, or just licensed their production to those pen companies.

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. I pledge to take more time, hopefully in the not too distant future, to better photograph the various sizes, colors and other features of these hard to find pens, pencils and accessories, and thus provide a substantial upgrade to this document.

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 . I'm always happy to provide proper attribution for material which expands this content. Error correction is always also appreciated.

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