

## **EARLY LISTO MECHANICAL LEAD PENCILS- - - AND THE ELUSIVE LISTO FOUNTAIN PEN**

This essay is dedicated to my father, J. Richard Stauffer. As the electrical engineer in an electrical contracting business, he did “take-offs” from blueprints and then prepared estimates of the materials, labor and overhead necessary to complete each electrical construction project. As he worked through each page of the project blueprints, he marked lengths of conduits and cables and wires with separate colors as he added them to the running total of his estimate, so he could see at a glance which parts of the overall work he’d already “taken off” and included in his estimate. The pencils he used were early 1950’s Autopoint “utility model” pencils, with an open eraser at the top. Many of them were “mottled” burgundy, each had a different color of lead, and there were a number of them with black leads for writing up the estimate. When I departed for the University of Delaware, I “liberated” one of his mottled burgundy Autopoint pencils and took it with me. It survived a tour of duty in Korea, and many years spent with various accounting firms. I still have that pencil and use it frequently.

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So I didn’t start out as a Listo collector. Rather, I am a long-term, serious collector of the pencils and fountain pens of Autopoint (and its sub brands Realite and Realpoint). I just happened to purchase a really good-looking mechanical pencil at an antiques and collectibles show, with an “accommodation” pocket clip marked “Listo”. It turned out to be a genuine, very early Listo oversize mechanical pencil.

I was initially attracted to that Listo pencil because the steel end of its writing tip happened to have a strong resemblance to the “grip-tite tip” patented and manufactured for many decades by Autopoint/Realite/Autopoint (if this nomenclature seems confusing, just read the “Autopoint Realite Beginnings” essay on [vintageautopoint.com](http://vintageautopoint.com)). The more I studied Listo Pencil Company and its products, the more similarities with A/R/A that I noticed. For example, in about 1920 Charles Edwin Wehn labored in Alameda, CA to design and produce an improved mechanical lead pencil. Similarly, in about 1920 Charles Rood Keeran labored in Chicago, IL to design and produce “a better pencil” (one of A/R/A’s advertising slogans). Both pencil companies experimented with, then produced mechanical pencils using new types of materials for the barrels of their pencils. Listo chose Du Pont pyralin, which it called “Listolite”. A/R/A chose to utilize bakelite. Both companies used small slits in the metal writing tips of their mechanical lead pencils to grip the lead firmly as the pencil was being used. Listo’s metal writing tip had 4 small slits, while A/R/A’s had 3 small slits. A/R/A patented its writing tip as the “grip-tite tip”. Much later Listo referred to the patented writing tip on their mechanical grease pencils as a “grip-type sleeve”.

A little bit about the Listo Pencil Corporation's history. According to Greta Dutcher and Stephen Rowland's 2009 book "Alameda": "Active since its inception in 1921, the Listo Pencil Corporation, which invented the grease marking pencil in 1936, was a family business. Charles Edwin Wehn was president and manager, and for a time, his brother Emory was in sales, and his daughter Isabel was a stenographer. In the early 1920s and 1930s, the family resided at 1629 Alameda Avenue, and the company's plant was located at 1716 Park Street. A new plant was built at Union Street and Clement Avenue in 1951. The patented 1620 marking pencil is still being produced today by the Listo Corporation, along with pens and injection-molded plastic parts."

In his book "The Pencil: A History of Design and Circumstance" (1989), published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., Henry Petrosky (page 269) remarks why Charles Edwin Wehn decided to make an improved pencil:

"New companies started up specifically to market inexpensive pencils. In 1919 Charles Wehn, a pencil salesman, saw a demonstration of an unbreakable, imitation tortoise-shell comb, and he got the idea of making pens and pencils out of the stuff, which he found out was Pyralin, a new material made by Du Pont, and which was much less expensive than the hard rubber or metal that was being used. He designed the pencil "for tomorrow", something lightweight, balanced, colorful, and inexpensive. By 1921 Wehn had opened the Listo Pencil Company, named after the Spanish word for "ready", in Alameda, California, and Listo mechanical pencils became available for as little as fifty cents."

NOTE BENE: as we move on to review various images of Listo items, please note that many of the images are from my personal Listo collection, some images were published in 1923 or prior such that the copyright has already expired, and many images are presented with the full cooperation of and written permission from the Listo Pencil Company, the copyright holder. Footnotes have been provided at the end of the essay indicating the various image sources and permissions, and specific permission to utilize certain images has been provided with those images when presented herein.

▼Figure 1. Note 3. The picture below, from *The Du Pont Magazine*, Vol. XVI, November/December 1922, No. 6, page 17 may well be what convinced Mr. Wehn to utilize Du Pont pyralin for his new Listo mechanical pencils, which he referred to as Listolite.

# PYRALIN

The material of a thousand uses.



## *Ease of Manufacture Means Longer Profit*

PYRALIN comes in rods, tubes or sheeting in hundreds of colors and color-combinations. It can be blown, stamped, machined or pressed. Its possibilities are practically limitless as a material for making novel playthings.

Because of the ease with which Pyralin can be fabricated, articles made from it are especially profitable. Because of the beauty of Pyralin, these are easily salable.

More than 5,000 different articles are now made from Pyralin. Can you use it in your products?

Samples and complete information upon request.

E. I. DU PONT DE NEMOURS & CO., INC.

*Pyralin Department*

ARLINGTON, NEW JERSEY

BRANCH OFFICES

Boston  
Chicago  
St. Louis



New York  
San Francisco

BLOWN

STAMPED

MACHINED

MOLDED

Digitized by Google

▼Figure 2. Note 3. In that same issue of *The Du Pont Magazine*, at page 18, is a picture of various beauty items made from pyralin.

**IVORY**  
*Pyralin*

NO wonder that Pyralin toilet-ware is such a favorite gift. Its dainty beauty seems to express the very spirit of Christmas; its useful and lasting qualities make it doubly welcome. The gift may be a complete set of twenty-five pieces or it may be just a few articles, for all designs are standard, easy to match at the leading stores any time, anywhere.

E. I. DU PONT DE NEMOURS & CO., Inc.  
Pyralin Department  
ARLINGTON, NEW JERSEY

Look for the Name "Pyralin" on Every Article for dressing table and travelling bag—your assurance of life-long service.

THE articles illustrated are of Ivory Pyralin, Du Barry pattern—also made in Shell Pyralin and Amber Pyralin, with or without exquisite decorations in colors. Then there is the charming La Belle pattern and the popular Plain pattern. Descriptive booklets on request.

Further, in that same issue of *The Du Pont Magazine*, at page 14, the Company highlighted Listo Pencil Corporation's efforts to make pencils with pyralin, which Listo referred to as "Listolite".

## "Listo"—The Pencil Made of Pyralin

**T**HE mechanical pencil, long regarded as just a novelty, has proved its true worth as a writing instrument. One manufacturer is said to have produced twelve million pencils of this type in 1921 and the volume of the business in dollars exceeded that done by one of the country's largest typewriter concerns. In the vest pockets of millions of business men you'll find evidence of the abiding popularity and daily use of pencils of this kind.

Presumably every reader knows what bulk materials are used in pencil making. Wood, of course, predominates. It is asserted that one billion wooden pencils are made in the United States each year. Among other materials used are paper, rubber, casein products, lacquered and enameled base metals, silver and gold. But how many know that Pyralin has been found to be an ideal material for this use?

The Listo Pencil Corporation, of Alameda, California, is using Pyralin tubing stock to make pencil barrels. Listo in

Spanish means "ready." The Listo pencil is an every-purpose pencil that is always ready for use. It differs from other mechanical pencils in two important points: First, the mechanism for keeping a sharpened graphite point exposed to the writing surface is operated by a turning device at the center instead of at the end of the pencil. This is an exclusive feature, which gives the pencil perfect balance. Second, it is said to be the only pencil made of Listolite, the manufacturer's trade name for Pyralin.

The center turn was patented in 1919. A year was spent in perfecting the pencil in all its details. The selection of the proper composition material for the barrel was made with great care after a study of all materials available. Pyralin, or Listolite, was chosen because it possessed all the qualities sought for—light weight, durability, flexibility, color variations without end, a permanent, velvety finish that has been found to improve with use, and one that absorbs moisture.

A number of office stationery publications chronicled the formation of Listo and its progression into the pencil business. Prior to founding Listo, Charles E. Wehn was a salesman for the Joseph Dixon Crucible Company, according to the May 26, 1917 issue of the *American Stationer and Office Outfitter*. In fact, a lengthy article in the June, 1916 issue of *Graphite* reported that Charles E. Wehn had been a salesman for that company since 1910. By 1920, according to the October 1, 1920 issue of the *Bookseller, Newsdealer and Stationer*, "The Listo Pencil Company, 230 Brannan Street, San Francisco, Cal., is preparing to place a new mechanical pencil on the market." The December 29, 1921 edition of *Geyer's Stationer* indicated that "Charles E. Wehn is making in Alameda, Cal, the "Listo", a new mechanical pencil, two special features of which are said to be the location of the propelling mechanisms in the center of the pencil instead of at the end, and the manufacture of the pencil itself from a light flexible compound that is said to make the pencils scarcely heavier than wood." *The American Stationer and Office Outfitter* reported in its April 29, 1922 edition that the Listo Pencil Company of Park Street, Alameda will be changing its name to the Listo Pencil Corporation, and will be a million dollar concern, according to papers filed by Charles E. Wehn, president of the company.

Listo's pencil business continued to evolve. The March 3, 1923 issue of the *American Stationer and Office Outfitter* reported that "The H. S. Crocker Co. has just done the printing and boxing of the pencil exhibit which the Listo Pencil Co. is using for dealers' display purposes. The Listo Pencil Co., with factory in Alameda County, is a California corporation which is beginning to expand its scope." And, according to the April 28, 1923 issue of the *American Stationer and Office Outfitter*, "The H. S. Crocker Co., Inc. has been giving a window to featuring the Listo Pencil, manufactured by the Listo Pencil Corp., of Alameda, Cal. The pencils are made of Listolite, a material the makers of which say it is non-breakable."

To put a little further perspective on the emerging Listo Pencil Corporation, the first trademark that it registered was simply the typed word "LISTO" (a non-serif font). It claimed that the first use of the trademark in commerce was on 10/28/1921. The registrant was the Listo Pencil Corporation, 2406 Eagle Avenue, Alameda, California. In 2018, after the initial trademark protection had expired, Listo refiled an application for the same trademark, this time with a serif font, again indicating that the first use was on 10/28/1921.

▼ Figure 3 is a list of the Listo patents I found, and some pertinent information about each:

<u>Patent No.</u>	<u>Item/Process</u>	<u>Date Filed</u>	<u>Date Granted</u>	<u>Inventor</u>
US1302999A	Pencil	December 3, 1918	May 6, 1919	Charles E. Wehn
US1388536A	Pencil	February 9, 1920	August 23, 1921	Charles E. Wehn
US1461299A	Shaping Materials	March 4, 1922	July 10, 1923	Charles E. Wehn
US1505452A	Pencil	April 21, 1920	August 19, 1924	Wehn/Larsson
US1541085A	Pencil	July 31, 1923	June 9, 1925	Charles E. Wehn
US 1625513A	Pencil	April 19, 1924	April 19, 1927	Charles E. Wehn
US1826266A	Pencil	February 19, 1929	October 6, 1931	Charles E. Wehn
US1912674A	Pencil	May 25, 1931	June 6, 1933	Charles E. Wehn
US2017555A	Mechanical Pencil	October 30, 1934	October 15, 1935	Charles E. Wehn
US2092037A	Mechanical Pencil	September 9, 1935	September 7, 1937	Charles E. Wehn
US2274311A	Mechanical Pencil	May 5, 1941	February 24, 1942	Charles E. Wehn
US2287364A	Mechanical Pencil	October 6, 1941	June 23, 1942	Charles E. Wehn
US2460323A	Mechanical Pencil	July 6, 1946	February 1, 1949	Charles E. Wehn
US2844125A	Pencil Tip	April 25, 1955	July 22, 1958	Charles Emory Wehn

Note that, in the above table, the founder of Listo - Charles Edwin Wehn - was the inventor for many of the Company's early patents for mechanical lead pencils, but the actual patent documents simply listed the inventor as Charles E. Wehn. Listo's founder died on October 26, 1958. His son Charles Emory Wehn was born on September 16, 1916, and is clearly listed as the inventor on the last patent granted per the above table. I have no way to know which "Charles E. Wehn" filed some of the later "mechanical pencil" patent applications. Also, the early patents relate to mechanical lead pencils. Patent number US2274311A was the first to specifically mention heavy lead or crayon type mechanical pencils, and such "grease pencils" became the Company's primary product beginning in about 1942.

▼Figure 3. Note 3. This is an ad which appeared in the *Oakland Tribune*, Oakland, California, on December 4, 1921. This establishes the formal name for Listo's early mechanical lead pencils as "Center Turn" pencils.

**"LISTO" FOR CHRISTMAS**

Listo pencils have arrived just in time for the holidays. They are tall, fine-looking fellows, well proportioned and good mixers, who hold their own in any company. They're really so superior in a natural sort of way that the minute you make their acquaintance you'll want them as your friends for life.

Listo pencils come in several colors—color that can't wear off, or fade or tarnish. Like a meerschau- pipe, the finish improves with use.

A distinct novelty, moderately priced, 75c to \$1.50 each, at your dealer's.

It's an Eastbay product.

**LISTO "CENTER TURN" PENCILS**

▼Figure 4. Note 3. This is an ad which appeared in the *Oakland Tribune*, Oakland, California, on December 11, 1921. This reinforces the fact that Listo apparently chose to sell its products through a number of businesses, including drug stores, gift shops, stationery stores, etc. (Also apparent from my research is the relative dearth of catalogs and brochures published by Listo.)

THE NEW EASTBAY

**“Listo” Pencil**

**FOR CHRISTMAS**

**The New Eastbay “LISTO” PENCIL  
solves Your Christmas Worries**

**SOLD HERE**

EDGAR H. BARBER CO. ....	1431 Broadway
F. W. BLOTE. ....	463 14th
BOWMAN DRUG CO. ....	Four Stores
H. C. CAPWELL CO. ....	14th and Clay
GIFT SHOP ....	564 15th
OSGOOD DRUG CO. ....	Two Stores
SMITH BROS. ....	472 13th
ROBERTS TECH. SUPPLY SHOP. ....	42nd and Broadway

Factory Phone

Alameda 923

▼Figure 5. Note 3. This ad was published in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, San Francisco, California on December 15, 1922, and notes the special Listo pencils available as gifts for women, having both ribbons and gold filled bands and “bow”.

**Gifts for Women**

**Listo Pencils**  
with colored 48-inch ribbon and 20-year guaranteed gold-filled bands and bow. In specially attractive gift boxes. Regular value \$2.50.

**\$1.67**

**Perfect Point Pencils**  
On beaded chain . . . . . **67¢ and 82¢**



▼Figure 6. Note 3. This ad was published in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, San Francisco, California on December 14, 1923, and particularly notes the use of DuPont’s pyralin to construct Listo’s mechanical lead pencils.

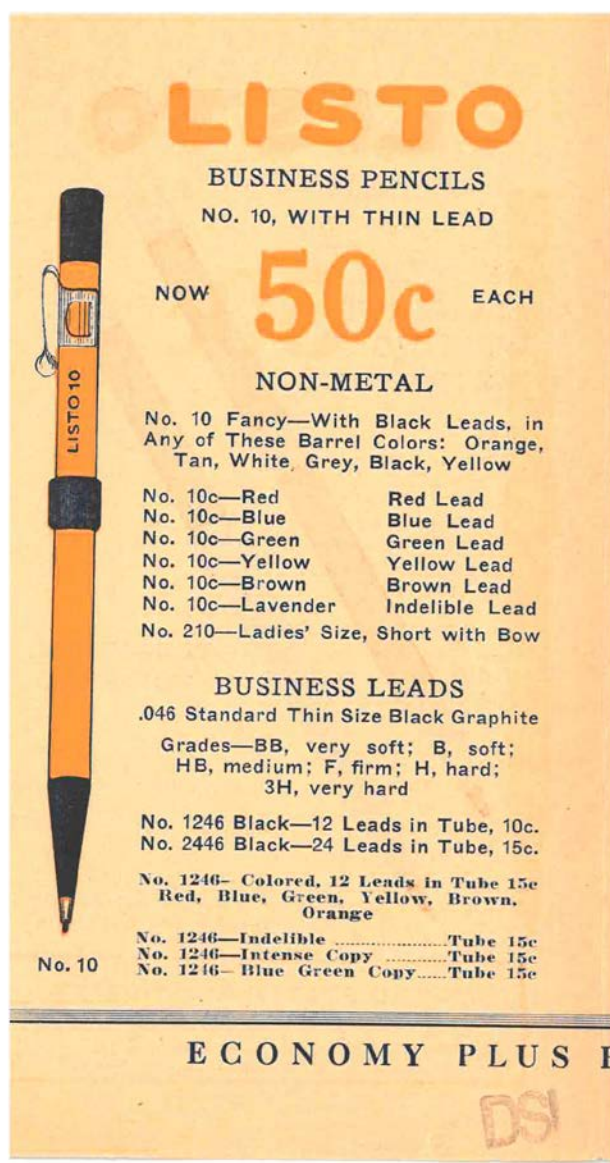
Pencil Pleasure  
**LISTO**  
Pyralin Pencils

**THE “CIRCA 1922” BROCHURE:** Although these Listo brochures aren’t dated, I believe this 4 page folded brochure - Courtesy of the Smithsonian Libraries, Washington, D.C., and presented with their specific permission, as well as that of the Listo Pencil Company, the copyright holder - is the earlier of the two brochures in my possession. I’ll arbitrarily refer to it as the “Circa 1922 Brochure”.

▼Figure 7. Note 1.




▼Figure 8. Note 1.



The "Circa 1922 brochure" continued.

▼ Figure 9. Note 1.



**LISTO**

**BUSINESS PENCILS**  
NO. 5, WITH HEAVY LEAD

NOW **50c** EACH

**NON-METAL**

No. 5 Fancy—With Black Leads, in Any of These Barrel Colors: Orange, Tan, Grey, Black

No. 5c—Red	Red Lead
No. 5c—Blue	Blue Lead
No. 5c—Green	Green Lead
No. 5c—Yellow	Yellow Lead
No. 5c—Brown	Brown Lead
No. 5c—White	White Lead
No. 5c—Lavender	Lavender Lead

No. 105—Ladies' Size, Short with Bow

**BUSINESS LEAD**  
.076 Heavy Size Black Graphite

Grades—5B, very soft; 2B, soft; HB, medium; 3H, very hard.

Colors—Red, Blue, Green, Yellow, Brown, White, Orange, Lavender.

No. 1076—10 Leads in Tube, 15c.  
Indelible Leads, Purple, Red, Blue.

No. 1076-1—10 Leads in Tube 25c.

No. 5

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**HAND COMFORT**

▼ Figure 10. Note 1.

#### IMPRINT SERVICE

On Listo pencils, made up either in the standard or special color combinations.

Roll type process—permitting the use of as many lines of copy, to be imprinted around either barrel, as will reproduce in a die  $\frac{7}{8}$ " by  $1\frac{1}{2}$ ".

Service charge, only, flat, per order, in addition to quantity prices on pencils:

Lettering only, standard type - \$2.00

Facsimile or special emblems - \$5.00

Die stamping process—limited to one line of 18 letters in length. Service charge \$2.00 per order, in addition to quantity cost of pencils. Facsimile or emblem dies at cost.

Engraving individual names:

Each 25c                      Repeat of same 15c  
(Limit 14 large or 18 small letters.)

Pencils may be assorted No. 10 with thin lead or No. 5 with thick lead.

Printing prices are net. Pencil and lead prices are subject to quantity discounts.

LISTO PENCILS are made up of a feather light composition that attains a high lustre through handling. Non-metal, non-rigid unbreakable. Many beautiful color combinations.

Notes and observations about the “Circa 1922 Brochure”: The two “center turn” mechanical lead pencils shown in Figure 7 feature longitudinal grooves or veins on the barrel and turning knob. Whether that may just have been a planned feature or whether some pencils were actually manufactured that way, I have never seen a Listo mechanical lead pencil with longitudinal grooves or veins on the barrel. Also, the brochure doesn’t mention what the center knob does or is designed to do, nor does it provide a distinctive name for the Listo pencils.

The two basic models featured in this brochure, No. 10 with .046” standard black leads, and No. 5 with .076” heavy black business or “checking” leads, are the two most common Listo mechanical lead pencils I’ve encountered. Although only orange barreled pencils are pictured in this brochure, the brochure offers a wide variety of barrel and lead colors, along with other “special” colors and with optional imprinting and engraving. The several very early Listo patents were quickly filed to protect Listo’s developing vision of mechanical lead pencils, but these “center turn” models were ultimately protected by Patent No. US1541085A filed on July 31, 1923 and granted on June 9, 1925. A portion of that patent drawing is pictured below.

▼Figure 11, Note 3.

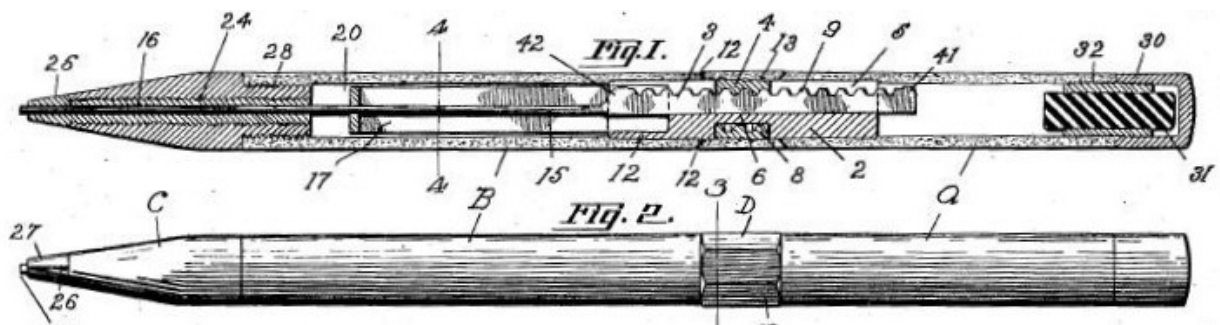


Figure 12. Note 3. This advertisement was published in The San Francisco Examiner, San Francisco, California on November 6, 1924. It features a Listo No. 5 “center turn” mechanical lead pencil, which would have .076” diameter lead according to the “circa 1923 brochure” (although the lead in the pictured pencil looks more like .046” lead, based on the different sizes of lead depicted around the edge of the target).



**THE “MID-1920s” BROCHURE:** On the internet I found an 8 page, undated Listo brochure that was obviously published later than the “Circa 1922 Brochure” pictured in Figures 7 through 10 above. I’ll arbitrarily refer to the brochure below as Listo’s “Mid-1920s Brochure”.

▼Figure 13. Note 1.



Note that this newer brochure, on the middle panel in Figure 13 above, essentially includes the same two pencils with longitudinal grooves or veins on their barrels which are pictured in the earlier 4 page brochure, at Figure 7. Also, above the two grooved or veined pencils, at the very top of the page, Listo continues to refer to these type mechanical lead pencils as “center turn” pencils. Finally, the right hand panel of Figure 13 above, which was intended to be the cover page of the brochure when folded, features a new but unidentified model of Listo’s “center turn” mechanical lead pencils, with gold plated bands both right above and right below the turning knob.

▼Figure 14. Note 1. The “Mid-1920s Brochure”, continued.



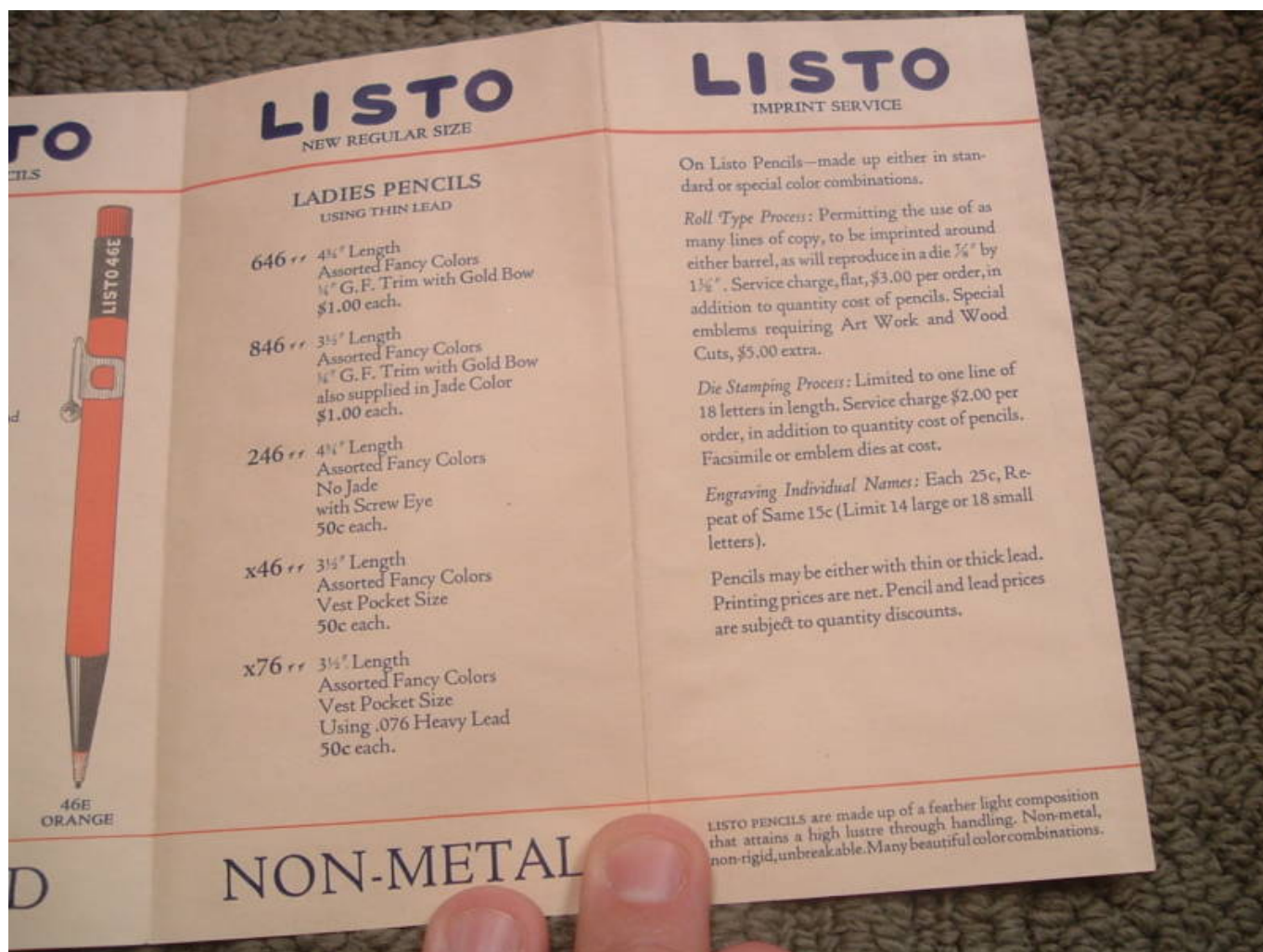
These 2 pages of the “Mid-1920’s Brochure” are substantially identical to two of the pages in the “Circa 1922 Brochure”, at Figures 8 and Figure 9, above, albeit for a price change here and there, and a change to the model number of the ladies’ size heavy lead pencil.

▼Figure 15. Note 1. The “Mid-1920s Brochure”, continued.



The “Listo Oversize Pencils” featured on the above two panels of the “Mid-1920’s Brochure” in Figure 15 are also apparently new models of Listo’s mechanical lead pencils. Note that they are not Listo’s customary “center turn pencils”, but instead turn at the very top of the barrel, to advance the lead. Also, the 746 Jade model on the left above has no eraser, while the 46E Orange model on the right features an open eraser at the top.

▼Figure 16. Note 1. The “Mid-1920s Brochure”, continued.



The left hand, full panel of Figure 16 above indicates that Listo now offers 3 different ladies' model pencils (instead of the 2 models in the brochure at Figures 8 and 9), and two new vest pocket model pencils. The right hand panel of Figure 16 above is virtually identical to the similar panel in the “Circa 1922 Brochure”, at Figure 10.

Thus Listo's “Mid-1920s Brochure” adds a number of new pencil models to those featured in the earlier “Circa 1922 Brochure”, including a new model with gold bands on both sides of the turning knob, the several different new oversize models, the new vest pocket models, and some changes to the ladies' models.

▼ Figure 17 is a summary of the key measurements and more detailed descriptions of the various Listo mechanical lead pencils in the “Mid-1920s Brochure”, as pictured in Figures 13 through 16 above.

1. Listo No. 10 is a slim “center turn” pencil about 5-1/2” long and about 5/16” thick, which used “thin” .046” lead, in a wide variety of barrel colors, lead colors, and lead hardness, including a “ladies’ size, short with bow”.
2. Listo No. 5 is a slim “center turn” pencil about 5-1/2” long and about 5/16” thick, which used “heavy” .076” lead, in a wide variety of barrel colors, lead colors, and lead hardness, including a “ladies’ size, short with bow”.
3. Listo oversize pencils are featured with a “top turn” mechanism, about 5” long and 3/8” in diameter, in orange with black trim. Model 46 used .046” lead, while Model 46E added an eraser. Model 76 used .076” lead, while Model 76E added an eraser.
4. Listo oversize pencils are featured with a “top turn” mechanism, about 5” long and 3/8” in diameter, in jade with black trim. Model 746 featured .046” lead, while Model 746E added an eraser. Model 776 used .076” lead, while Model 776E added an eraser.
5. Listo ladies’ pencils for .046” leads are described in the following models: Model 646, 4-1/4” in length, in assorted fancy colors, with 1/4” gold plated trim with gold bow. Model 846, 3-1/2” in length, in same colors and trim as Model 646, but also offered in jade. Model 246, 4-1/4” in length, in the same colors as Model 646 but with no jade and with a screw eye. Model x46, a vest pocket pencil 3-1/2” in length, in same colors as Model 646 but no fancy trim. Finally, Model x76, a vest pocket pencil, was offered just like Model x46, but used .076” lead.



◀Figure 18. Note 3. This advertisement was published in *The San Francisco Examiner*, San Francisco, California on December 24, 1924. It illustrates what appears to be a full length pencil, likely for .046" lead, with the gold bands above and below the turning knob. That model was featured on the cover of the "Mid-1920s Brochure", at Figure 13, but the model number wasn't identified (but it is likely a Model No. 20; see Figure 33, *infra*, and Figure 18A, just below). The other pencil illustrated is a ladies' model and is most likely a model 846, 3-1/2" in length, in assorted fancy colors, with 1/4" gold plated trim (2 bands of 1/8" each) and gold "bow" at the top.

Interestingly, the publication date of this ad makes it very likely that the undated "Mid-1920's" brochure at Figures 13 through 16 was published prior to this advertisement, or at about the same time as this ad was published, since the "Mid-1920's" brochure didn't contain a picture of the ladies' model 846 "center turn" pencil, but only a description of that model (and it probably took some time to have a "cut" of that model prepared and ready for publication).

▼Figure 18A. Note 3. This ad appeared in the Magazine of Art published in April, 1924. It establishes the availability of and price for the Listo Model 20 Pocket Checking Pencil.

LISTO

NON-METAL

Colored Checking Pencil

*"Friendly to the Hand"*

**L**ISTO COLORED CHECKING PENCILS are real economy and convenience pencils. ~~They eliminate breakage and sharpening,~~ which make Listo Pencils a great time and money saver.

The colored lead is protected by the Listo Metal Point and it will not break from ordinary use.

Listo Pencils are flexible, properly balanced and are made in many pleasing, permanent colors.

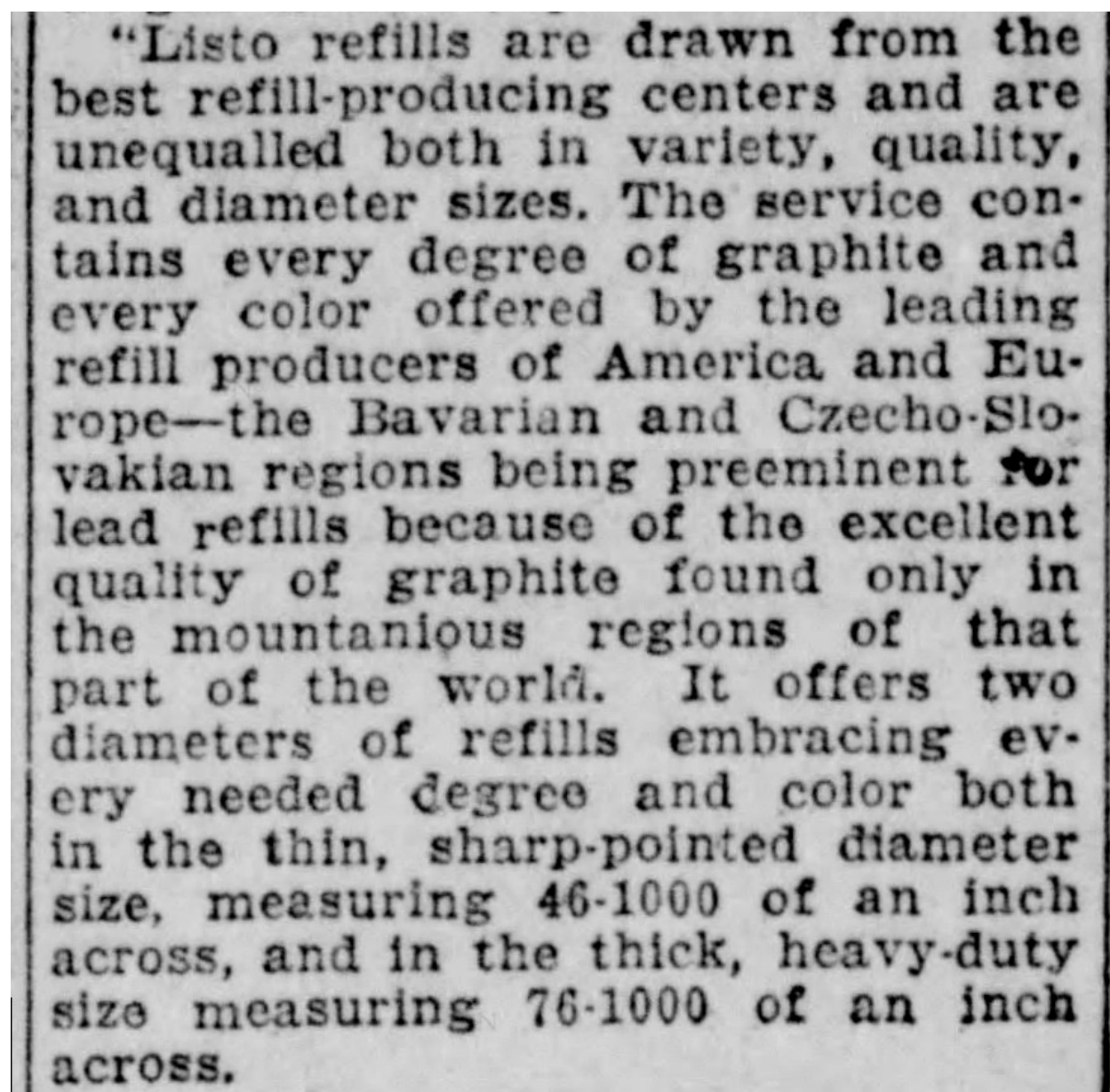
<u>Listo No. 5 Desk Checking Pencil,</u>	
each . . . . .	\$0.60
<u>Listo No. 20 Pocket Checking Pencil,</u>	
each . . . . .	1.00
<u>Listo 076 Colored Leads (10-lead</u>	
<u>tube) . . . . .</u>	.15

Red, Carmine, Blue, Green, Yellow,  
White, Black, Brown and Indelible.

Listo Pencil Corporation  
Alameda, Calif.

LISTO

▼Figure 19. Note 3. The text below is part of an advertisement run in the Monroe News-Star, Monroe, Louisiana on August 5, 1925 by F. F. Hansell and Brothers, Ltd. who sell and distribute Listo pencils. This part of the advertisement extols the virtues of the (largely) European refill leads offered by Listo, in the two different diameters supplied in those years.



“Listo refills are drawn from the best refill-producing centers and are unequalled both in variety, quality, and diameter sizes. The service contains every degree of graphite and every color offered by the leading refill producers of America and Europe—the Bavarian and Czecho-Slovakian regions being preeminent for lead refills because of the excellent quality of graphite found only in the mountainous regions of that part of the world. It offers two diameters of refills embracing every needed degree and color both in the thin, sharp-pointed diameter size, measuring 46-1000 of an inch across, and in the thick, heavy-duty size measuring 76-1000 of an inch across.

Figure 20. Note 3. This advertisement was published in The San Francisco Examiner, San Francisco, California on January 11, 1926. Of course it touts the features of Listo mechanical lead pencils. But to get the special deal, you have to fill in the name of your dealer. It thus appears to be soliciting the names of dealers that Listo might contact to help sell its products.

**hand Comfort**  
non-metal  
non-rigid  
pencils  
**50¢**

**SPECIAL OFFER**  
**6 DOZEN**  
**Listo Black Leads**  
*And A Genuine*  
**LISTO PENCIL**  
*with your name engraved*

-----  
Print your name here  
Send Only **\$1.00**  
Full Price  
Prepaid

-----  
Your Dealer's Name, Please  
**LISTO PENCIL CORP.**  
Alameda, California

**LISTO**

► Figure 21. Note 1. This advertisement was clipped from the June, 1927 issue of *Boys Life*. After a diligent search, this is one of the only “mainstream” advertisements that I’ve been able to locate for Listo “center turn” pencils. I made it as large as possible so you could take in the details. The picture in the advertisement illustrates a “Listo (Model) 10” imprint with a plain “folded over” chrome pocket clip, without any imprint, just like the Model No. 10 in the Listo “Circa 1922 Brochure” at Figure 8 and just like the Model 10 in the “Mid-1920’s Brochure” at Figure 14. However, neither of those brochures listed specific “color combinations” as being available (like early Ford cars, you could have a Listo pencil with a variety of barrel colors, as long as the trim was black). But by June, 1927 this Listo advertisement is offering the public a “Choice of these [eight standard] color combinations.... and many other combinations, school colors, etc.” So clearly this advertisement also suggests that the “Mid-1920’s Brochure” was published sometime prior to June, 1927. And just like in the “Circa 1922 Brochure” and the “Mid-1920s Brochure”, the Listo Model No. 10 is still only 50¢ per this advertisement, even made up with a new variety of color combinations and having the purchaser’s name engraved!

# LISTO

## SPECIAL OFFER



This attractive Listo pencil with your name engraved sent prepaid for only

## 50c

*Choice of these color combinations:*

Orange & black	White & red
Yellow & blue	White & blue
Red & black	White & green
Grey and red	White & black

Many other combinations, school colors, etc. *State your wishes.*

Listo pencils are the original unbreakable pencils. The material of which they are made is now in use by many of the high-priced pen makers.

They are light and give utmost writing comfort. Thousands of Listo pencils are in the Nation's largest Industries, rendering a service of all-day, untiring, writing economy.

*Every Pencil Guaranteed.*

## LISTO

**Pencil Corporation**  
Alameda, California

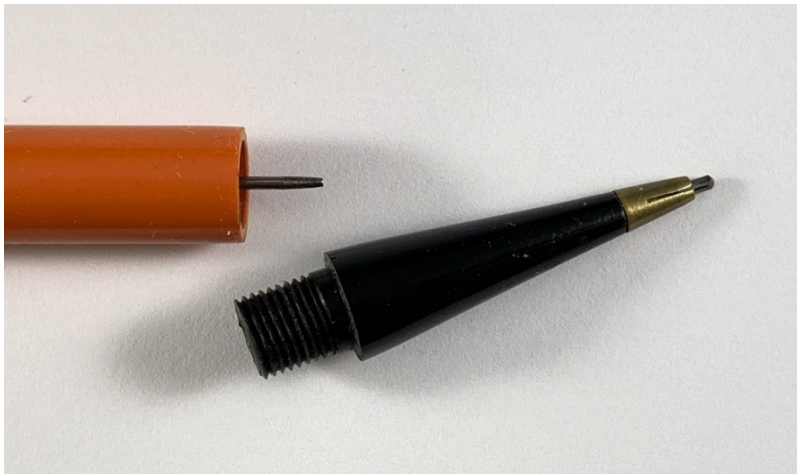
Now on to some examples of actual Listo mechanical lead pencils.

**MY FIRST LISTO PENCIL** ▼ Figure 22 is a picture of the impressive, first Listo mechanical pencil I acquired.



It's an oversize orange pencil with a round barrel, black trim at both ends and an open eraser. It is 5-1/4" long, without the eraser, and is 3/8" in diameter. The metal writing tip looks like plain steel, but the pocket clip is gold plated and has a stylized "L" with the "isto" in a smaller font which rests on top of the extended bottom stroke of the "L", aligned to be legible for a right handed user. The black eraser holder is longitudinally imprinted "LISTO" in large block letters, from the barrel toward the eraser, suitable for a right handed user, with no contrasting paint fill. Turning the eraser holder clockwise, when viewed from the top, extends the lead; the lead does not retract, but rather is held firmly in place by 4 small slits in the steel writing tip. Just like the vast bulk of Autopoint pencils, the eraser holder has to be turned "backwards", and the lead pushed against a solid surface, to force it back into the writing tip. The "4 small slits" specifically attracted me to this pencil, since they closely resemble Autopoint's patented "grip-tite tip" which has 3 small slits to enable the metal writing tip to hold the lead firmly in place.

▼ Figure 23 is another picture of the same Listo pencil, with the fingertip section unscrewed so that a new piece of lead can be inserted. The thin rod that advances the lead goes up through the



center of the barrel, and connects to the eraser holder. The spare leads are stored in a space inside the orange barrel, right above the threaded end of the top of the black fingertip section. To replace the lead, you simply back up the lead advance rod by turning the eraser holder counterclockwise, unscrew the black fingertip section, drop the new lead into

the hole in the top of the fingertip section, screw the black fingertip section into the orange barrel, then turn the eraser holder clockwise until the lead advance rod contacts the top of the new lead, and pushes it out of the end of the writing tip. Note particularly the slit at the small end of the steel writing tip, which is one of the four "slits" which grip the lead fairly tightly.

Based on the Figure 17 listing of Listo model numbers, descriptions and measurements, clearly the first Listo mechanical pencil I acquired, as pictured in Figure 22 above, is a Model No. 46E. It is oversize, has a “top turn” mechanism and an eraser, and uses .046” diameter lead. The eraser holder on this pencil is imprinted with the Listo trademark (just Listo, all in capital letters) running up the eraser holder toward the eraser, so it may be read by a right handed user. However, the extra-long length gold plated pocket clip with a Listo imprint on my oversize Listo pencil isn’t pictured or mentioned in Listo’s “Mid-1920s Brochure” at Figures 13 through 16. Rather, all of the slim size and oversize pencils in that brochure featured the standard chrome “short, flat front, folded over, ball end” pocket clip Listo has used for many years, even currently on its mechanical grease pencils.

Observation: I’m neither a patent attorney nor an experienced patent researcher, so I can only suspect that the difference between “3 slits” and “4 slits” at the end of the pencils’ writing tips must have been “patentably different”. Autopoint filed the patent application for its “3 slits” “grip-tite” tip on 6/4/1921, and patent No. US1542449A was granted on 6/16/1925. Listo filed at least two different patents for its “4 slits” tips, including one filed 2/9/1920 and granted as No. US1388536A on 8/23/1921, and one filed 7/31/1923 and granted as No. US1541085A on 6/9/1925, which specifically mentioned that the (lead) “chuck is split longitudinally... frictionally engaging the lead”. So both companies were working on “slitted metal tips” at the same time, and both companies manufactured and used such “slitted metal tips” in their mechanical pencils for many years.

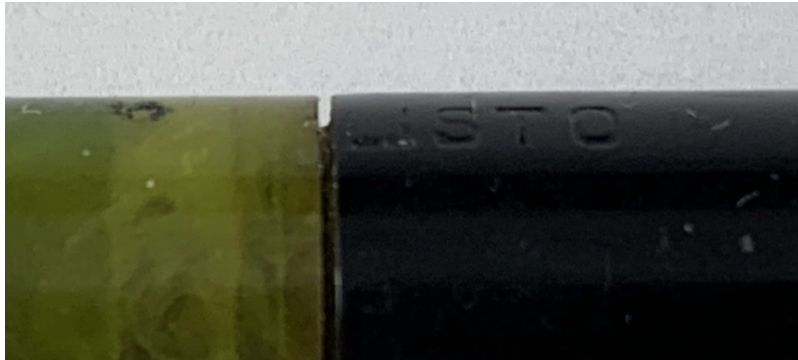
I subsequently acquired two more oversize Listo pencils. Here’s a picture of the other orange one. The last line of the imprint reads “Atlas Casualty Company”. This pencil is dinged up at the top of the barrel, where the pocket clip literally sank into the barrel material at several places, and which pocket clip is now missing. This one has no eraser, and so is a Model No. 46. It does not have a visible Listo trademark imprint on the black “top turn” knob. ▼ Figure 24.



And here's a picture of my jade oversize Listo pencil. This pencil is also dinged up a bit where the pocket clip should be. And it is a Model 746, per Figure 15. The leading number "7" is exclusive to Listo oversize pencils with a jade barrel. ▼ Figure 25.



Below is a close up of the simple Listo trademark imprint which appears on the black "top turn" knob. Look closely at the top left corner of the black knob. ► Figure 26.



▼ Figure 27. This is the only Listo Model No. 10 slim size "center turn" pencil for .046 lead which I have that almost exactly matches the orange one pictured in the "Mid-1920's Brochure" at Figure 14. It is just about 5-1/2" long, and 5/16" in diameter. It is orange (technically a "Model No. 10 Fancy"), with black lead, writing tip, paneled turning knob, and lead reservoir cover. It is imprinted "LISTO", "PATENT" and "10" longitudinally around the pencil just above the paneled turning knob, with no paint fill in the letters. The imprint reads from the turn knob toward the top of the barrel, as appropriate for a right handed user. And it has the typical "folded over" plain chrome pocket clip without any imprint, but note that the sides of the clip are "rounded down", which differs from the Model No. 10 per the "Mid-1920's Brochure" at Figure 14. Note also that the black writing fingertip section of this Model 10 blends smoothly into the orange barrel.



Just a quick word about Listo “center turn” barrel imprints. Normally there are 3 of them, including “LISTO”, “PATENT” and “10” (i.e., the model number). After examining all of the pencils in this article, it is clear that these imprints were not consistently applied. Some pencils were imprinted above the turning knob, and some below the turning knob. The depth of the imprints ranges from barely visible with a magnifying glass, to “looks like it got hit by a truck”, even when comparing the 3 different imprints on a particular pencil. In some cases one of the 3 imprints was simply not applied. It certainly appears that different workers applied some of the imprints, possibly at different times, and that the press or other device used for the imprinting had different working pressures. I’ve noted the imprints as carefully as possible, to optimize the identification of the various models.

▼Figure 28. Below are five Listo Model No. 10 slim size “center turn” pencils for .046 lead from my collection, which vary from the “Mid-1920s Brochure” description. Each has a small groove in the fingertip section, and a small outward bulge there. Also, the 3 pencils with pocket clips have “rounded sides” chrome clips which are imprinted with a Listo inscription that is legible for a left handed user, and features a stylized “L” with the “isto” in a smaller font which rests on top of the extended bottom stroke of the “L”. As is apparent, there are two pencils which feature a single color barrel with black trim, and two advertising pencils which have different colors for the top and bottom of the barrel and coordinating or contrasting trim. The last pencil is wildly different, with a brown and cream mottled barrel and brown trim pieces. Each of these pencils has the “LISTO”, “PATENT”, “10” imprint around the barrel, just below the turning knob. Because these pencils vary from the “Mid-1920s Brochure”, they were likely produced subsequent to that brochure’s publishing.



► Figure 29. Here is a close up of the stylized, underscored imprint on the pocket clips in Figure 21 (note the rounded down sides of the clip, next to the “Listo” imprint).



▼ Figure 30. The next 5 pencils are Listo Model No. 5 slim size “center turn” pencils from my collection. They have the same length and girth of the Model No. 10 pencils, but use the .076” larger diameter “checking” leads. The first 4 pencils have fingertip sections that blend smoothly into the barrel, while the 5<sup>th</sup> pencil has a groove and a bulge there. The Listo/patent/5 imprint is above the turning knob on the first 4 pencils, and below the turning knob on the 5<sup>th</sup> pencil. The first 2 pencils appear to be the standard colors, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> pencils were probably special ordered to be made entirely in the same color, and with the same color leads. Note that the steel end of the writing tips of the first 4 pencils are much shorter and thinner than The Model No. 5 pictured in the “Mid-1920s Brochure” at Figure 14. The steel writing tip on the 5<sup>th</sup> pencil matches the Model No. 5 picture in the “Mid-1920s Brochure” at Figure 14, but the “bulge” in the fingertip section does not, and this pencil was produced in a “special” color. Thus none of these pencils exactly matches the Model No. 5 description in the “Mid-1920s Brochure” at Figure 14, and so they probably were produced somewhat later.



► Figure 31. Note also in the group of 5 pencils in Figure 30 above that the front portion of the (left handed) pocket clips on the first 4 pencils appear to be formed of a flatter material than the pocket clips of the first group of Model No. 10 pencils, in Figure 28. Here's a close up of the "revised" pocket clip. I'm pretty sure this represents an evolution in the pocket clip design.



▼ Figure 32. Here's a picture of 4 more Listo Model No. 10 slim size "center turn" pencils from my collection which vary further from the "Mid-1920s Brochure" in Figure 14. All 4 pencils have the groove and bulge at the top of the fingertip section. And all 4 pencils have long, elaborate pocket clips which are tightly fastened on to the barrel. Interestingly, the first 2 pocket clips are chrome, and the third and fourth pocket clips are gold plated. The first, third and fourth pocket clips have a small "Made in USA" at the top, and a vertical imprint of "LISTO" in block letters of decreasing size. The 2<sup>nd</sup> pencil's pocket clip is inscribed with a small "LISTO" imprint, with a grooved border around the entire circumference of the pocket clip. The first 3 pencils have the 3 line Listo imprint below the turning knob, aligned for a right handed user. The 4<sup>th</sup> pencil has the 3 line Listo imprint above the turning knob, aligned for a left handed user. Finally, the bottom part of the barrel of the second and third pencils feature a lot of connected, diamond shaped knurling clearly of different lengths, so the pencils are easier to hold firmly. These Model No. 10 pencils vary significantly from those described in the "Mid-1920s Brochure".



**CAUTION:** The “center turn” pencils in Figure 32 above may well be out of chronological order. While each of the pencils in Figure 32 above is a “center turn” Model No. 10, and the production of that model apparently persisted for a long time, their pocket clips are certainly novel. Subsequent to posting an earlier version of this essay, I found an additional example with a different pocket clip that also needs to be considered, since it has an “off the known charts” pocket clip.



◀Figure 32A. Note 2. This is a 5-7/16” long, 5/16” in diameter Listo mechanical lead “checking” pencil (same diameter as a Model 10 Listo center turn pencil). It also has a visible “ring” around the barrel end of the writing tip, just like the pencils in Figure 32. However, it has no imprints whatsoever, a very unusual pocket clip, and it advances lead from the top, not from a center turn knob.

In my next Listo essay, about their mechanical grease pencils, I found a similar looking grease pencil (below) in part of an advertisement published in the *Daily World* newspaper, on October 8, 1947, in Opelousas, Louisiana. Granted, the pencil in the ad is a grease pencil with a different pocket clip, and a different writing tip. However, it has a similar turning knob at the top, and the turning knob is “slimmer than the barrel”, just like the yellow checking pencil at left. I’d venture a guess that the yellow pencil at left was produced sometime about 1945 or 1946, effectively a predecessor of the grease pencil below.



▼Figure 32B. Note 3. This pencil features a lot of connected, diamond shaped knurling on the bottom part of the barrel. Based on the middle two pencils in Figure 32, it has the longer amount of knurling. It also appears to be a chrome pocket clip, just like the second pencil from the top in Figure 32. It's thus very likely that this pencil's pocket clip is also a "border clip". If you look carefully, you'll note that the imprint is "Owl Grill" and "Merry Xmas 1935".



That puts a date of manufacture on this particular Model 10 style pencil. I've already noted the relative dearth of Listo brochures and catalogs, and of advertisements with pictures. I have no dated evidence whatsoever of Listo's "center turn" mechanical lead pencils after 1927, except for the one above, in Figure 32B. So I would simply venture an educated guess that Listo continued to produce its "center turn" pencils for many years after 1927, but relegated them to a sort of lower line, less expensive model pencil.



◀Figure 32C. Note 3. This is an oddball example of an early Listo “center turn” mechanical lead pencil. Clearly it has the same gold plated pocket clip as the lower two pencils in Figure 32, *supra*. And it has the same knurling on the lower part of the barrel as the middle two pencils in Figure 32, *supra*, and the pencil in Figure 32B, *supra*. However, and most importantly, it’s the only listo “center turn” pencil that I’ve ever observed with an “open” eraser. So I intentionally wasted some space on this page to provide a picture of this very unusual Listo mechanical lead pencil.

Like the Mummers Parade, now we move on to the “fancies”.

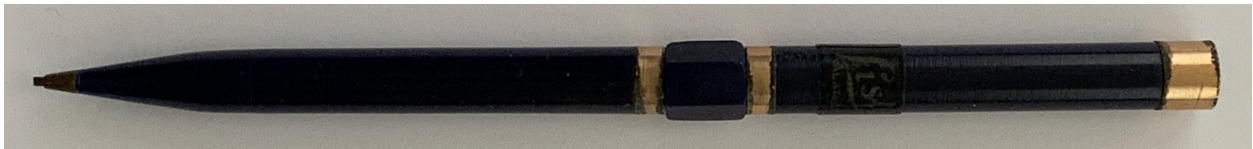
▼Figure 33. The next 3 pencils all appear to be Listo Model No. 20 slim size “center turn” pencils from my collection. These pencils are the same diameter as the Model No. 10 pencils, but are 5-7/8” long. The first 2 pencils are for the .076” larger diameter, “checking” leads, and their barrels are imprinted with (model) “20”. The third pencil is for .046” lead, and its barrel is imprinted simply “Patent”. All 3 pencils have fingertip sections that blend smoothly into the barrel, and have substantially identical fingertip sections (ignoring their lead size). All 3 pencils have a 1/8” gold plated band mounted both above and below the turning knob. And all 3 pencils have the 3 line Listo imprint on the barrel, placed above the turning knob and aligned for a right handed user. The first pencil has a gold plated pocket clip, which is more “flattened”. The second pencil has a chrome pocket clip with the “rounded” edges. The third pencil has a clip which has the “rounded” edges, which looks like it may have been gold washed, but the gold wash has mostly worn off. The pocket clips of the first and third pencils are imprinted with a Listo inscription that is aligned for a left handed user, and features a stylized “L” with the “isto” in a smaller font, and rests on top of the extended bottom stroke of the “L”. The middle pencil has the typical “folded over” plain chrome pocket clip without any imprint, and the sides of the clip are “rounded down”. (Please note that Listo pocket clips are completely interchangeable among its various “slim size” mechanical lead pencils. So without having a brochure or catalog or an advertisement subsequent to the “Mid-1920s Brochure”, there is no way to determine whether these Model 20 pencils were actually offered with any of the various pocket clips pictured here). My guess would be that the 3<sup>rd</sup> pencil below is the “gold plated bands” (unknown) model pencil pictured on the cover of the Listo “Mid-20s Brochure” at Figure 13, since that pencil appears to utilize “standard size” .046” diameter lead.



▼Figure 34. The next 3 pencils are all Listo Model No. 18 slim size “center turn” pencils from my collection. These pencils are the same diameter and length as the Model No. 10 pencils. All 3 pencils are for the .046” lead, and utilize a single color for the entire pencil. The top and bottom pencils are all black, and the middle pencil is a very dark blue. All 3 pencils have fingertip sections that blend smoothly into the barrel, and identical steel tips. All 3 pencils have a 1/8” gold plated band mounted both above and below the turning knob. The first pencil is imprinted “Imperial Coal Corporation” with its logo, on the top half of the barrel. The 3 line Listo imprint on the first pencil is placed above the turning knob and is aligned for a right handed user. The 3 line Listo imprint on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> pencils is placed below the turning knob and aligned for a right handed user, portions of which can be seen if you look closely, in the picture below. These models may not have had a pocket clip, since there are no marks on them from where a pocket clip would have been placed. There is no picture or description of the Model No. 18 in the mid-1920s brochure at Figures 13 to 16, so they were likely produced later also.



▼Figure 35. This first slim size “center turn” pencil, below, is the crème de la crème of my collection. It is a Listo Model No. 13, with the original label/sticker on the top half of the barrel and in perfect condition. You can just make out the black sticker with white writing, on the black barrel of this pencil. This Model No. 13 is about 5-3/8” long, and 5/16” in diameter. It has two 1/8” gold plated bands, one on each side of the turning knob. It also has a 1/4” gold plated band at the very top of the barrel, and no lead reservoir there or cap for access to same. It also has the standard Listo 3 line imprint on the barrel, above the turning knob and aligned for a right handed user, but the model number is hidden by the label/sticker. The top of the blue fingertip section of this Model 13 pencil blends smoothly into the barrel. There is no picture or description of the Model No. 13 in the brochure, so they were likely produced later also.



▼Figure 36. Below are two close up pictures of parts of the sticker in Figure 35 above. It reads “Listo” with an underscore under the rest of the letters, formed by the bottom of the “L”, underneath that “Alameda, California”, then “No. 13”, and then “\$1.50”.



Some time ago a Listo pencil was sold on eBay which was identical to the three gold plated bands Model 13 above, except that it had a gold plated “bow” at the top with which to suspend it from a necklace, ribbon, etc. (same as the “bow” on the ladies model in Figure 30, below). See Figure 38A, *infra*.

▼Figure 37. Note 2. The ladies model Listo slim size “center turn” pencil below is about 4-1/4” long, including the top “bow”, and 5/16” in diameter. It has two 1/8” gold plated bands mounted both above and below the turning knob (2 times 1/8” equals 1/4”, as described in the “Mid-1920s Brochure”, at Figure 16), and a gold plated “bow” at the top with which to suspend it from a necklace, ribbon, etc. The top of the black writing tip of this pencil blends smoothly into the barrel. Both “LISTO” and “PATENT” are inscribed on the barrel, above the turning knob, aligned for a right handed user, but there is no imprint anywhere on the barrel for the model number. I suspect that this is a Model No. 646, as artfully described in the “Mid-1920s Brochure” at Figure 16.



▼Figure 38. Note2. The Listo ladies model slim size “top turn” pencil below is about 3-3/4” long and about 5/16” in diameter, and the barrel color is jade which is semi-translucent. It has a single 1/4” wide gold plated band mounted at the top end of the barrel, just below the top turning knob, which is knurled with groups of 5 wavy lines all around its circumference, and a gold plated “bow” with which to suspend it from a necklace, ribbon, etc. The top of the black writing tip of this pencil blends smoothly into the barrel. The black top cap of this pencil is simply imprinted “LISTO”, aligned for a right handed user; the rest of the usual imprint, the word “PATENT” and the model number, are not inscribed anywhere on this pencil. This pencil is an advertiser, and is painted in bright red translucent ink “Garden City GLASS Company, San Jose, Calif. I suspect that this is a Model No. 846, as artfully described in the “Mid-1920s Brochure” at Figure 16.



▼Figure 38A. Note2. This final ladies' model "center turn" Listo pencil is the most elaborate of them. It has the three gold bands like the Model 13 at Figure 35, *supra*. And it also has the gold plated "bow" at the top with which to suspend it from a necklace, ribbon, etc. (same as the "bow" on the ladies model in Figure 38, above). I have no further information on this Listo pencil, since the image came from a public source and no further information was provided. However, I suspect that the overall length, without considering the "bow", is the same as the Model 13, or 5-3/8" long, and that it is the same 5/16" in diameter as Model 13. It may not be the greatest example of this model, but it is certainly the only one I've ever come across.



**FOUNTAIN PEN and MATCHING PENCILS?** Fountain pen, you say? Matching pencils? Well, I found a picture of the elusive Listo fountain pen and its matching mechanical lead pencil on the internet, but only after an exhausting search.

▼Figure 39. Note 1. The picture below is allegedly from a circa 1930 Union Hardware Metal Co. catalog. Page 3301 of that catalog, at the bottom of the page, features a Listo fountain pen and pencil set, in a presentation box (see below). The set is described as “The Friendly Pencil and Pen. Made of durable mottled composition in well blended colors; 14-k gold pen point. Gold plated clip on pen and pencil. Pencil has removable cap with rubber eraser.”



**Listo**

The Friendly Pencil and Pen. Made of durable mottled composition in well blended colors; 14-k gold pen point. Gold plated clip on pen and pencil. Pencil has removable cap with rubber eraser.

NO.	Color—Mottled	Cat. List SET
1721-45-MB	Marine and Black .....	\$3.00
1721-45-BW	Black and White .....	3.00

Put up in attractive gift box, velvet lined.

▼Figure 40. Note 2. Here's a picture of perhaps the best match to that description and picture. The black and pearl Listo pencil below is about 5" long and about 3/8" in diameter. It has a removable top cap, with a (missing) rubber eraser underneath and a lead storage reservoir. The gold plated, ball end pocket clip appears to be the "Z type" clip, and is imprinted with a small "Made in USA" at the top, and a vertical imprint of "LISTO" in block letters of decreasing size. The mechanism isn't working perfectly, but appears to be of the "propel-repel" type. I believe this is a Model No. 363 pencil, based on comparisons with others in the public domain.



▼Figure 41. Note 3. This cream and bronze Listo pencil is very similar to the pencil in Figure 40 above, except that features a clearly different "border" pocket clip with a very small "LISTO" imprint. It is not described as one of the available colors of pen and pencil sets in Figure 39.



▼Figure 42. Note 2. The next apparent "fountain pen matching" pencil, pictured below, is absolutely identical to the one in Figure 40 above, except for the top metal eraser cap. The black and pearl mottled finish, the pocket clip and imprint, the working "propel-repel" mechanism on this one – all look the same. However, the top metal eraser cap is completely different, and is marked "14 K G.F.". The "propel-repel" mechanism is a bit tight, but otherwise works just fine. Right now I can't get the top metal cap off, but I suspect it covers an identical eraser holder and lead reservoir as on the first pencil, above. The eraser cover on the pencil in Figure 40 above is made of some almost vinyl type or thin celluloid material, and so it could easily have broken and been replaced with this ill-fitting metal cap from some other pencil.



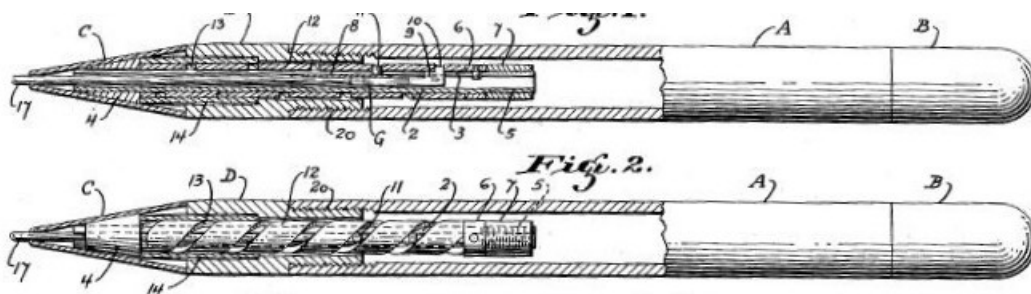
▼Figure 43. Note 2. The final Listo “fountain pen matching” pencil, pictured below, has features that are substantially identical to the pencil in Figure 40. The eraser cap is the same but for the color, and the barrel diameter is the same but is engraved “Elmer L. Koster”. Of course, this one has the Marine and Black mottled finish. And this one has a pocket clip which is longer and is fastened with “side tabs” to the barrel. However, the primary difference is that the bottom end of the barrel of this pencil appears to have been chopped off, and an additional section added between the shortened barrel end and the metal writing tip. And there’s a reason for that.



▼Figure 44. Note 2. Below is a close up of the entire working “propel-repel-expel” mechanism of this pencil, which simply unscrews from the barrel. The mechanism still operates by twisting the barrel while holding the metal tip of the pencil, but the entire operating mechanism is able to be readily removed, cleaned, repaired or replaced.



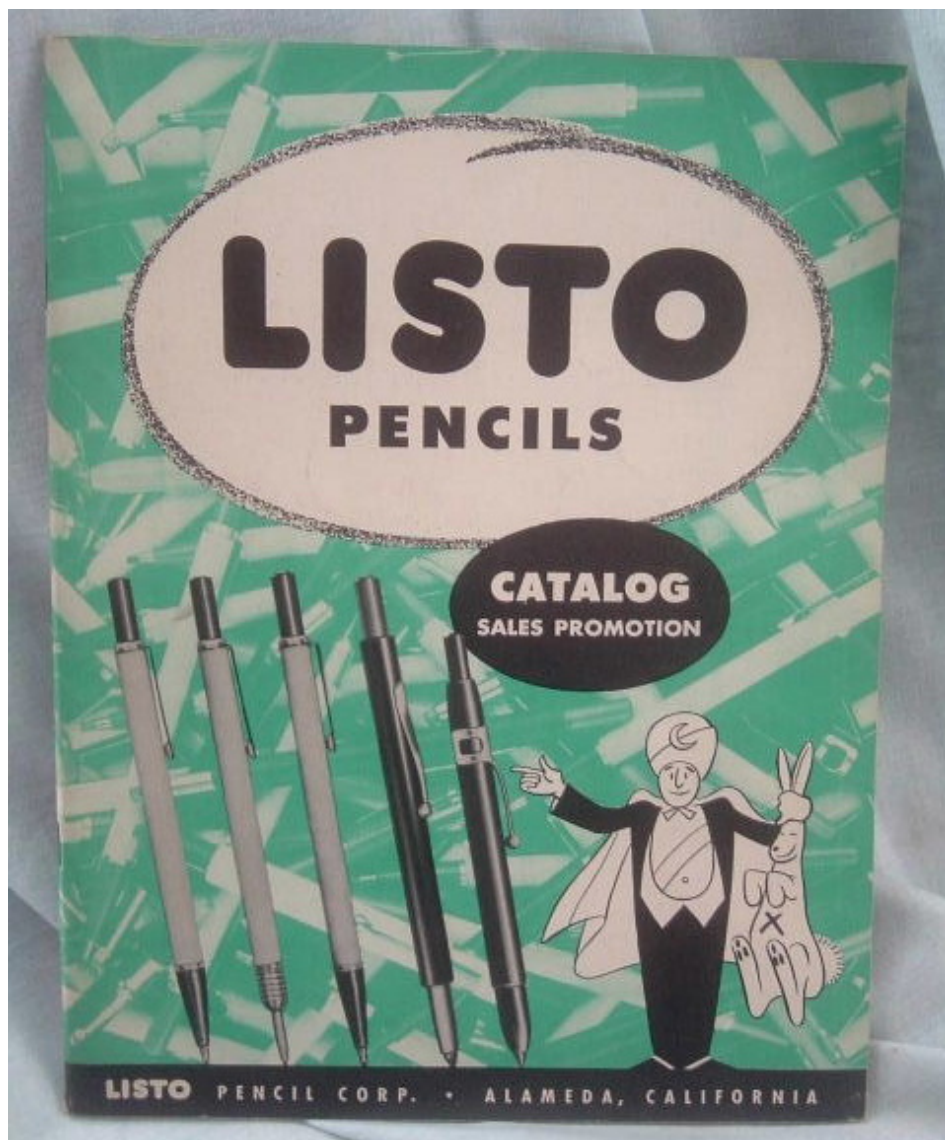
▼Figure 45. Note 3. This mechanism was part of patent number US1912674A which was granted to Listo on June 6, 1933. Upon a closer inspection of the marine and black pencil in Figure 43, I found that the original patent number for this pencil - 1912674 – is actually engraved along the far side of the pocket clip, aligned for reading by a right hander. Below is an excerpt from that patent drawing.



▼Figure 46. Note 3. The following announcement was published on September 24, 1933 in the *Oakland Tribune*, Oakland, California. I firmly believe that this announcement concerns the pencil patented June 6, 1933, illustrated in Figures 43 and 44 above. I found nothing else that referred to the “Listo Controler”, but the June 6, 1933 patent grant would certainly make Listo want to publicize the completely new mechanical lead pencil, for which the entire mechanism is able to be readily removed, cleaned, repaired and/or replaced.



▼Figure 47. Note 1. (The next several images are several sample pages from an alleged 1949 Listo Pencils catalog which, as usual, is undated.) This is the cover of the 1949 Listo Pencils catalog. By 1949 Listo's "slim size" pencils now feature longer pocket clips, which are also differently shaped (as will be seen in the subsequent detailed images from that catalog). And while the catalog cover depicts three similar "slim size" pencils to the left of the page, the middle one is a "dart shaped" pencil which uses .046" lead, the one on the left appears to be a checking pencil which uses, .076 "heavy" lead, and the one on the right appears to use a "thicker than .076" lead. The fourth pencil from the left appears to be a variant of the first three pencils on its left, with a completely different pocket clip and style of writing tip, and might be a checking pencil.



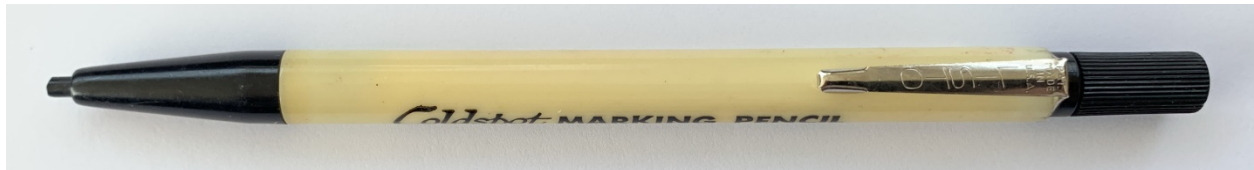
▼Figure 48. Note 1. This is another page from the 1949 Listo Pencils catalog. This picture better illustrates the newly designed, longer pocket clips with a metal “washer top”, on the 4 pencils on the left of the picture.



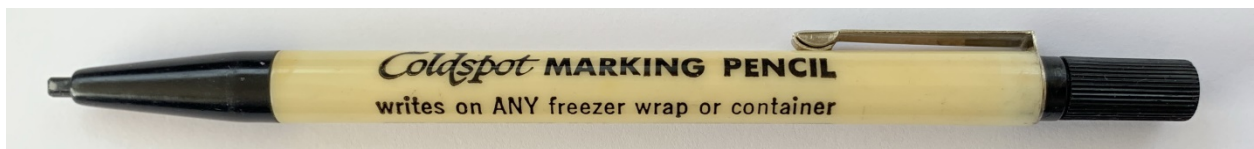
▼Figure 49. Note 1. This image, another page from the 1949 Listo catalog, has been expanded as large as possible to best illustrate details of the various types of pencils available in 1949. It is easy to see that this particular year must have been one of transition for Listo Pencil Company, since this catalog featured pencils of several different barrel styles, with several different pocket clip styles, and which accepted at least 3 different lead sizes. For example, the second group of 3 pencils from the left of the page below appears to be the same as the first 3 pencils on the left side of Figure 47, and they appear to be checking pencils. The fourth group of 3 pencils from the left side of the page appears to be the same “dart-like” .046” lead pencils as the second pencil from the left side of Figure 47. The fifth group of 3 pencils from the left side of the page may well also be regular .046” lead pencils, although the quality of this image makes it difficult to identify those pencils with certainty.



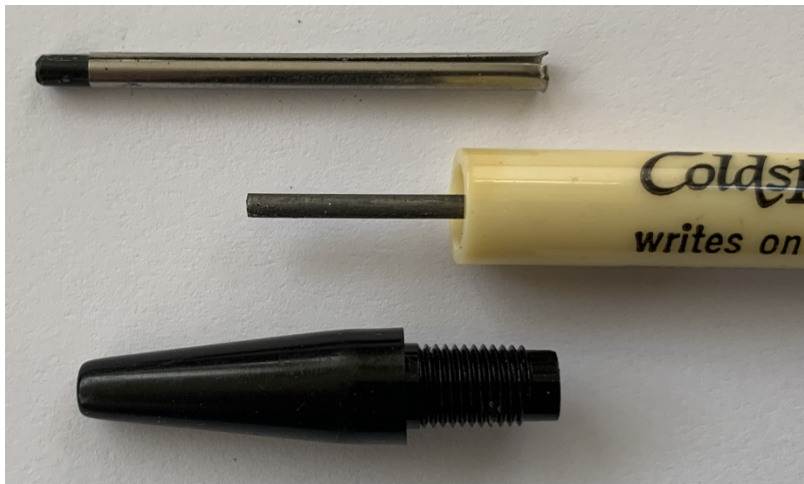
▼Figure 50. Note 2. This is a close up example of the newer style of pencil pocket clip, as featured in the 1949 Listo catalog. The pocket clip has “Listo” imprinted in slanted block letters, reading down the face of the pocket clip. Note that this “special” marking pencil has a black section above the pocket clip and below the turning knob, rather than a shiny metal “washer” above the pocket clip like the ones featured in the 1949 catalog, at Figure 48 above. It also has no metal ring between the barrel and the writing tip. This pencil is about 5-1/4” long, and just about 3/8” in diameter. (Editor’s note: This “marking” pencil probably should have been included in the “Listo Mechanical Grease Pencils” essay, but was placed here since its lead is so relatively thin, at .118” in diameter.)



▼Figure 51. Note 2. This particular marking pencil was imprinted with advertising for the Listo Pencil Company, “hawking” its usefulness as a marking pencil able to write on freezer wrap or containers. It’s possibly a “salesman’s sample”.

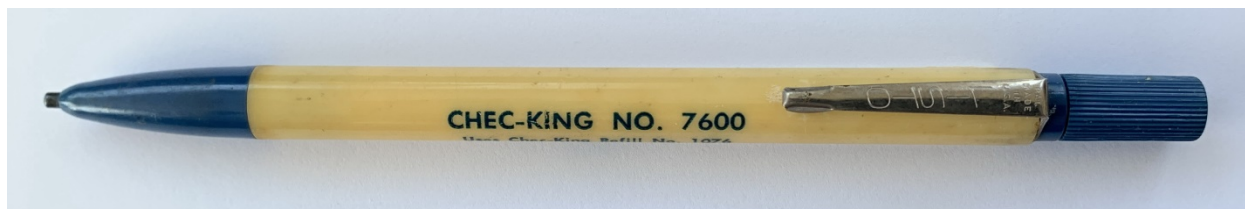


▼Figure 51A. Note 2. This marker has a steel rod that pushes out the special about .118” diameter lead. The metal insert at the top is slit lengthwise, and flared at the top. It apparently serves to make the diameter of the lead more precise, to extend the wear of the writing tip, and to better hold the lead in place. Also, it probably made the black plastic writing tip far easier to manufacture. The metal insert and lead get pushed into the top of the



black writing tip, and the writing tip gets screwed into the barrel of the marker. The mechanism is “propel” only. Turning the knob clockwise extends the lead.

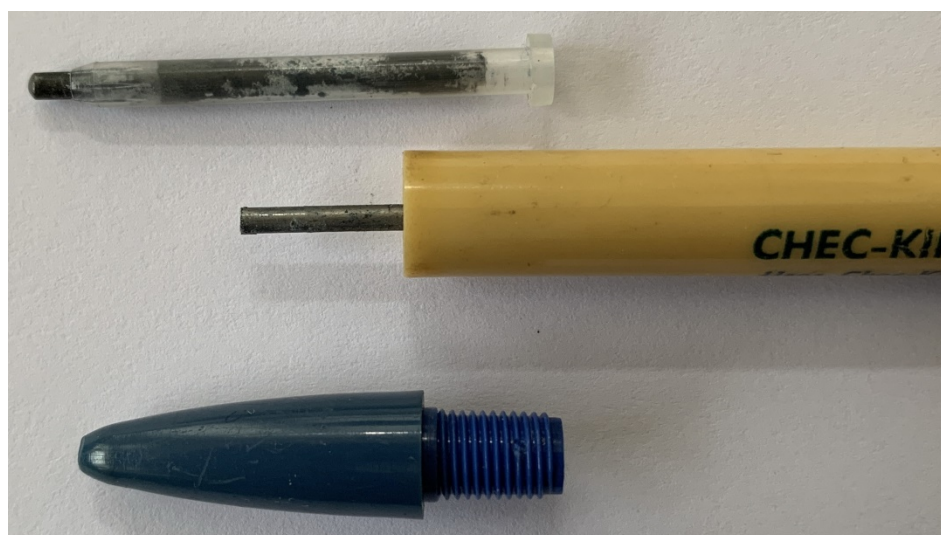
▼Figure 52. Note 2. Similarly, Listo designated this checking pencil as the “Chec-King No. 7600, imprinted on what is most likely a “salesman’s sample”.



▼Figure 53. Note 2. By rotating the barrel a bit in this image, you can see that Listo even provided special lead refills “No. 1076” for this checking pencil. Presumably the “Model 1076 refill” refers to the diameter (0.076”) of the lead used in this pencil.



▼Figure 53A. Note 2. This checking pencil advances the lead in much the same manner as the marking pencil in Figure 51A, *supra*. However, the steel rod goes into a clear plastic (rather than metal) lead holder, which has internal slits near its tip – where the lead emerges in the image below – to better hold the lead firmly in place. The barrel end of the clear plastic lead holder is flared out, so the lead holder stays at a fixed place in relation to the blue writing tip. You load the lead and assemble the pencil in exactly the same way as the marking pencil at Figure 51A, *supra*.



▼Figure 53B. Note 2. This is an additional pair of checking pencils similar to the one in Figure 52, *supra*. However, one of them is especially noteworthy – at the top below – since it is imprinted around the top of the barrel, near the pocket clip “Listo 7600”, and below that “King-Check”, and since that particular method used by Listo has sometimes, in the past, indicated the very first production of a new model. Although this black and white checking pencil is a bit dirty, it is otherwise in nice condition, and its lead is still perfectly pointed. While the similar checking pencil on the bottom is less remarkable, it does have an uncommon white writing tip, and does show the new pocket clip with “Pat.”, “Made in USA”, and the “slanted upward to the right” “Listo” imprint quite clearly. Both pencils are about 5-1/4” long, and just about 3/8” in diameter. And the steel rod, writing tip and lead holder look exactly like the checking pencil in Figure 53A.



▼Figure 54. Note 2. Here’s an example of the “dart shaped” Listo mechanical pencil which uses .046” lead, as pictured on the cover of the 1949 Listo catalog at Figure 47, above. It has the same pocket clip as the checking pencils in Figures 50 to 53B, but it also has a shiny metal “washer” at the top of the pocket clip, and the “turning knob” has no longitudinal grooves.



▼Figure 55. Note 2. By rotating the pencil 90 degrees, you can more of the imprint.



▼Figure 56. Note 3. Here's an example of another one of the pencils illustrated on the cover of the 1949 Listo catalog, on the far left side of Figure 47. It has the "new style" pocket clip with the metal washer at the top above the pocket clip and at the base of the barrel, it appears to use .046" lead, and it has a top turning knob without grooves. It also has a plastic fingertip section with a metal writing tip.



▼Figure 56A. This is an example of a substantially identical pencil as in Figure 56 above, but it has a mother of pearl barrel worthy of note, and a slightly better view of the new style pocket clip. It also appears to be a checking pencil. Presented here with the permission of Dr. Ibrahim Abou-Saad, Associate Professor of Economics at Lone Star College (TX).



▼Figure 57. Note 1. Here is a Listo leads box which originally held 12 wooden tubes of early checking or .076" diameter leads, with the cover off and placed above the open box of the tubes of lead. The checking leads came in various degrees of hardness, and the cover of this box is very lightly marked .076", "black", and "BB" (i.e., 2B). Each wooden tube is about 1-11/16" long, about 1/2" in diameter, and holds 10 leads each about 1-5/16" long. The little man holding the "center turn" pencil indicates that this box of leads was likely manufactured early in the Company's existence.



Figure 58. Note 2. Here is a group of wooden tubes of Listo leads, having the same dimensions as those above in Figure 57, and illustrating the wide variety of leads which were packaged into these early slim wooden tubes. The middle two tubes both contain checking or .076" diameter leads, but one contains 5B (very soft) leads and the other contains 2B leads. Both of the middle tubes feature the early picture of a man holding a "center turn" pencil (on the other side of the labels). The top tube holds grease pencil or "china marking" leads, and has a checkered top (on the other side of the label), just like the bottom tube. The bottom tube of leads contains .046" "standard" or "thin" leads, and illustrates the checkerboard pattern used at the top of later Listo lead tubes, probably post-1940.



▼Figure 59. Note 2. Below is an unusual container of four inch long grade "B" leads, in .046" diameter. Most early Listo mechanical lead "center turn" pencils used very short leads, since the leads were inserted at the rear of the screw off fingertip section. These four inch leads were thus presumably made primarily for the "fountain pen matching pencils" in Figures 40 through 42 above.



Then the unexpected happened. I was traveling cross country on the “little country roads”, and stumbled upon a sizeable flea market that I seldom visited. I walked in, expecting nothing. And that made it pretty interesting. One of the “smalls” vendors had a tray full of wooden tubes of Listo’s “drafting leads”. (Drafting leads you say. Did Listo produce drafting pencils?) Anyway, at least at some point Listo must have termed some of their leads “drafting leads”. Here’s what those wooden tubes with paper labels looked like, with the 3 tubes turned so you can see all of the writing. ▼Figure 59A. Note 2.

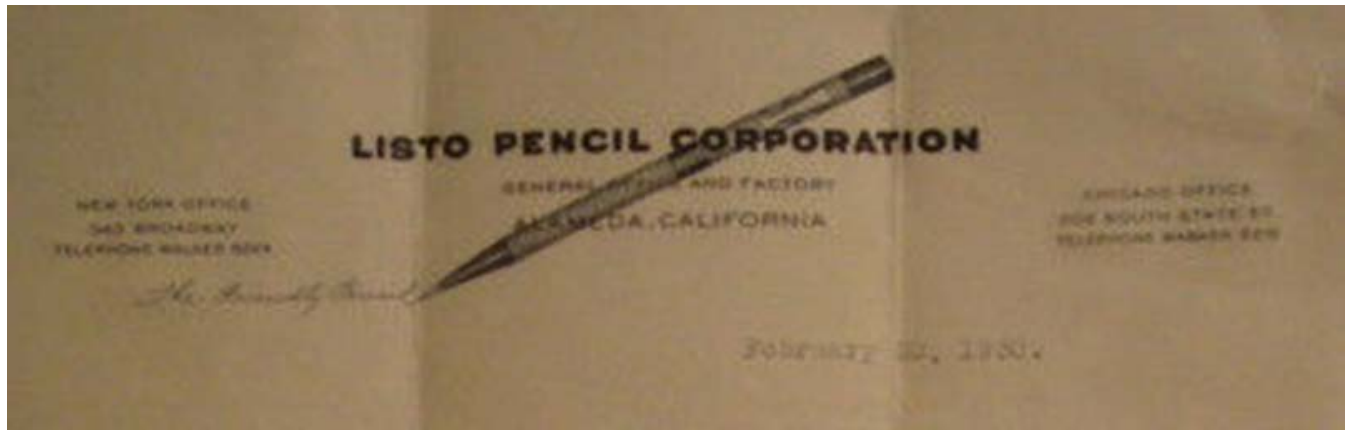


▼Figure 59B. Note 2. This image shows the “hardness” of each tube of “drafting leads”, which varies from H to 4H.

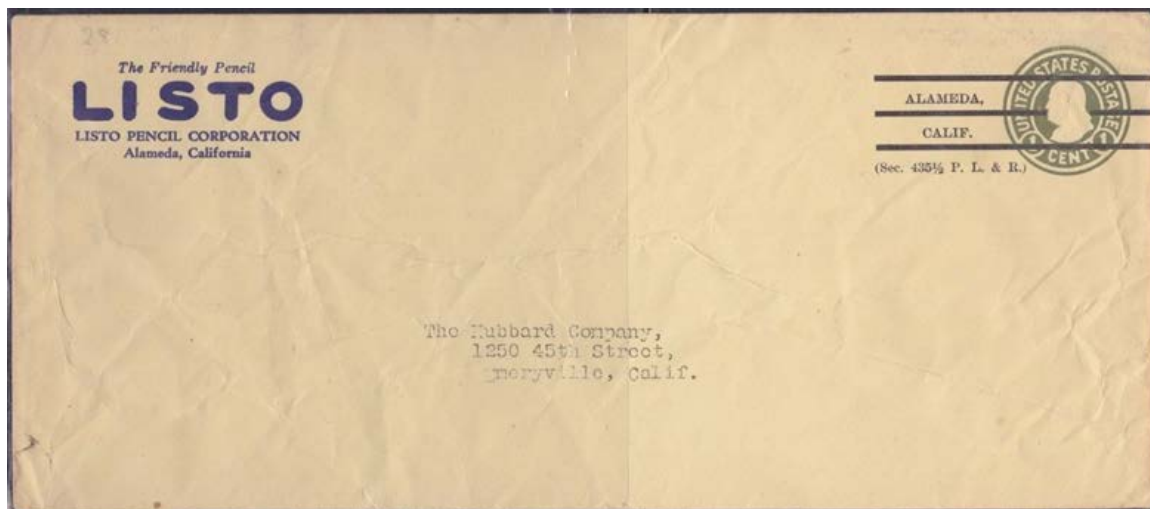


I found these 3 tubes sealed, and I’m keeping them that way. But I was able to examine the same leads in another wooden tube in the vendor’s tray that had already been opened. I suspected that these “drafting leads” may have been prepointed. However, on close examination none of the leads in the open container were prepointed, but were blunt at both ends. Their only apparent distinction is their hardness, and their possible rarity.

▼Figure 60. Note 1. Below is a blurry excerpt from Listo Pencil Corporation’s letterhead dated February 20, 1930. It features a “center turn” pencil that appears to be writing “The Friendly Pencil”.



▼Figure 61. Note 3. This is an example of a precanceled business envelope used by Listo, featuring the same Listo logo and slogan as the letterhead in Figure 60 above.



## **OTHER EARLY LISTO MECHANICAL LEAD PENCIL PRODUCTS**

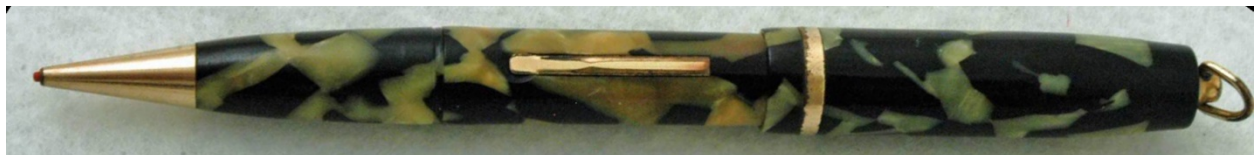
▼ Figure 62. Note 3. Listo also produced a “Diablo” model, a relatively inexpensive combination mechanical pencil and fountain pen. Some commentators have indicated that Listo may only have assembled and sold these combos. The red Listo Diablo below is illustrated with the cap off, and features a warranted nib with a lever filler and a ball end pocket clip.



▼ Figure 63. Note 3. The pencil section of the green and pearl Listo Diablo below has been removed, to show the eraser normally hidden in the barrel.



▼ Figure 64. Note 3. Here is a Listo Diablo in in black and pearl which features a ring top instead of a pocket clip, and a cap band.



Listo may also have produced a mechanical lead pencil with writing tips at both ends (termed a “twinpoint” model by Autopoint). At this point I know that several examples of these pencils exist, but I have no pictures of them to share yet.

**MANAGEMENT NOTES** President and founder Charles Edwin Wehn passed away on October 27, 1958, according to a clipping from the *Oakland Tribune*. He died of a heart attack aboard his boat at Walnut Grove. His survivors include his wife, Mrs. Isabel R. Wehn; two daughters Mrs. Douglas G. Stuart of Alameda and Mrs. William E. Garrison of Healdsburg; a son, C. Emory Wehn of Alameda, and four grandchildren. The current president of Listo Pencil Corporation is Patrick C. “Rick” Stuart, the fourth generation leader of the Listo Pencil Company, whose assistance has been invaluable.

**THE START OF THE END OF LISTO MECHANICAL LEAD PENCILS** Alas, at least for conventional mechanical lead pencil collectors, Charles E. Wehn ultimately started working to develop the mechanical grease pencils which we now know and appreciate as the Company’s current primary product. Listo filed patent No. US2092037A on September 9, 1935 and it was granted on September 7, 1937. The second paragraph of that patent application includes: “The object of the present invention is... to provide a pencil which is adapted to receive a removable sleeve containing a lead, crayon, or similar marking material...” As evidenced by the Listo’s 1949 catalog (Figure 47 et seq.), Listo continued producing mechanical lead pencils for a significant number of years, even after starting to produce mechanical grease pencils. But over time the company’s production was completely shifted over to mechanical grease pencils, and mechanical lead pencils simply disappeared from the landscape.

As I wrap up these thoughts about the Listo Pencil Company and its mechanical lead pencils, I notice some additional similarities between Autopoint/Realite/Autopoint and Listo. Both companies probably have 10 or fewer employees at the date of this writing. Both companies occupy a small but specific niche in the overall market for writing instruments. And both companies have persevered for a hundred years.

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This is a relatively quick compilation, far from completely researched – particularly due to the relative dearth of available Listo Pencil Company catalogs, advertisements and brochures. I’ve based many of the above comments and pictures on the various pencils and ephemera in my personal collection. I’d hope that posting this essay will elicit some additional insight and further evidence of these hard to find early Listo mechanical lead pencils. If you have additional information, pictures or ephemera that you’d be willing share so it could be added to the appropriate place in 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 also appreciated. Please note that all images, text and other content on these pages are copyrighted, and may not be reproduced in whole or in part without the express written permission of the author or copyright owner. 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.

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THE NEXT LISTO ESSAY IN THE SERIES IS TITLED  
“LISTO’S MECHANICAL GREASE PENCILS”,  
AND IS POSTED ON THE HOME PAGE  
OF [VINTAGEAUTOPOINT.COM](http://VINTAGEAUTOPOINT.COM).

**Footnotes:**

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