

Parker Pens

Now, at first glance, this *does* seem to be a rather off-the-wall topic, I admit. *But*, it's a name that struck an immediate chord with me as soon as I saw the cover shown here. *Why?* Because it's a name I grew up with...a familiar part of my memories and my culture. As a student, I went through *loads* of pens, of course, and when I came across a Parker pen, I knew I had the *crème-de la crème* of pens! It sounds as if I'm doing an advertisement for the company, but it's true—That's the way I remember them—they felt right; they wrote great!

These days, as a teacher, I *still* use loads of pens, but I don't seem to see the Parker name anymore. Of course, I don't really have time normally to even bother looking. And, Parker pens would be just a tad bit more expensive than the one that make it through the school system (which are purchased in bulk)...So, just who's responsible for these little wonders?

"George Parker, the founder, had previously been a sales agent for the John Holland Gold Pen Company. He received his first fountain pen related patent in 1889. In 1894 Parker received a patent on his "Lucky Curve" feed, which was claimed to draw excess ink back into the pen body when the pen was not in use. The Lucky Curve feed was used in various forms until 1928.

From the 1920s to the 1960s, before the development of the ballpoint pen, Parker was either number one or number two in worldwide writing instrument sales. In 1931 Parker created Quink "quick drying ink" which eliminated the need for blotting and led to the development of the most widely used model of fountain pen in history (over \$400 million worth of sales in its 30 year history) the Parker 51. Manufacturing facilities were set up over the years in Canada, United Kingdom, Denmark, France, Mexico, USA and Argentina. Parker pens were frequently selected (often as favorite pens of the signers) to sign important documents such as the World War II armistices, and commemorative editions were sometimes offered.

In 1976 Parker acquired Manpower just as the temporary staffing market was surging. In time Manpower provided more revenue than the pen business. A 1982 spinoff, Sintered Specialties, Inc., became SSI Technologies, a manufacturer of automotive sensors.

A management buyout in 1987 moved the company headquarters to Newhaven, East Sussex, England which was the original location of the Valentine Pen Company previously acquired by Parker. In 1993 Parker was acquired by the Gillette Company, which already owned the PaperMate brand, one of the best-selling disposable ballpoints. Gillette sold the writing instruments division in 2000 to Newell Rubbermaid, whose own Stationery Division, Sanford, became the largest in the world, owning such brand names as Rotring, Sharpie, Reynolds as well as Parker, PaperMate, Waterman and Liquid Paper. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parker_Pen_Company]

So, Parker pens are still around, even after almost 120 years... Somehow, in this turbulent world...that makes me feel a little better!

