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1800s Postman on horseback delivers mail to provincial family – from a 1866 print from a painting by Frederick Goodall, engraved by Edward Goodall.

Sans serif Bishop Marks from 1673

Jon Melton of emfoundry.com

→

What are Bishop Marks?

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Hello, I'm Jon Melton…

Bishop Marks are a hand-struck bisected circular <u>date</u> **stamp** from the 17th Century

that was applied to all post up to the introduction of pre-paid adhesive labels…

and the reason we call these labels 'stamps' – ever since the introduction of the 'Penny Black' in 1840.

→

The first Bishop Mark date stamps known as Type I from 1661-1673 were of Serifed type. Type I **'A'** from 1673-1713... were unserifed.

... (left is an example Type I Serifed from 1668, and Right Type IA San-serif from 1706.

→

1660-63

Henry Bishop our First Postmaster-General

They were introduced following the 'Restoration of the Monarchies' and the 'farming' out of the Post in 1661 – by our First Postmaster-General…

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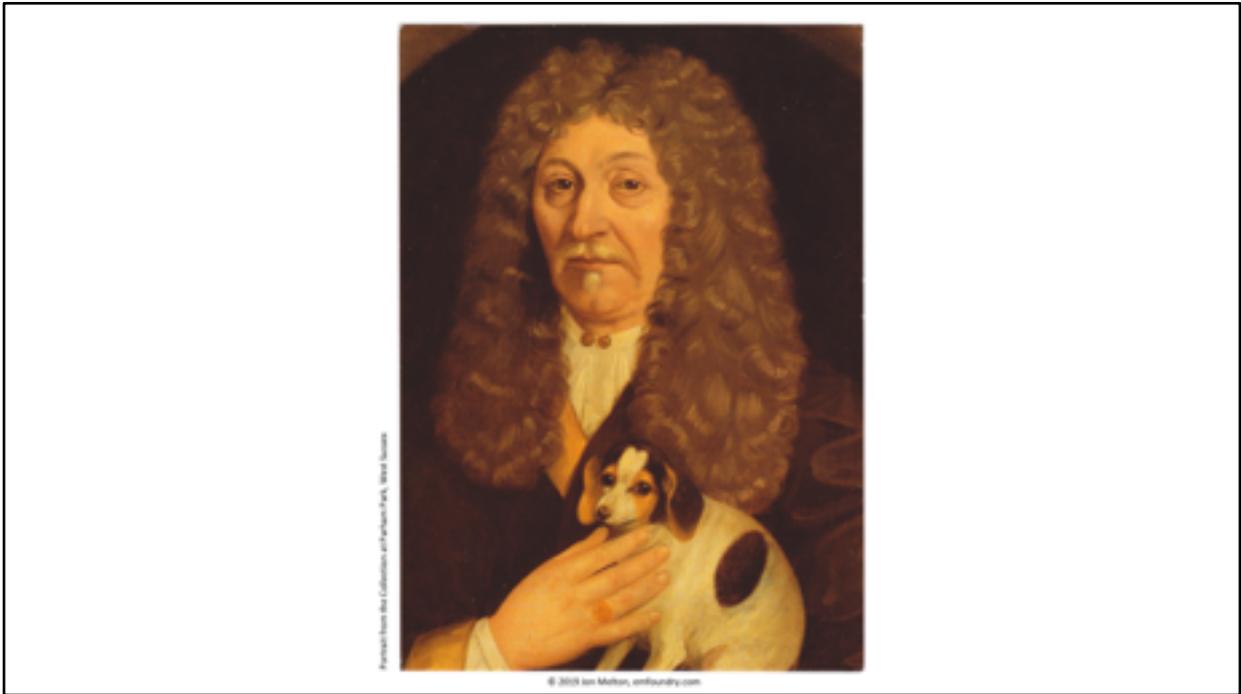
Colonel Henry Bishop (1611-1691), originally confirmed as 'Master of Running Messages' on 14th August 1660, – he was appointed as the first Postmaster-General by a Royal Proclamation dated 16th January 1661.

Seen here on a vintage postcard of his portrait, in the collection at Parham Park in West Sussex.

→

An Advertisement from His MAJESTIE'S *Post-office.*

"*To prevent delays, a stamp has been created which, affixed to each letter, indicates the day and month in which it arrives at the office, so that no courier dares to keep a letter on the way from one post office to another.* "

Henry Bishop

Advertised in *Mercurius Publicus* in April 1661, the weekly publication of the edicts of The King.

He introduced the first date-stamp in the April 1661, in answer to accusations of unwarranted postal delivery delays,

but probably also to stem the individual profiteering by those employed to collect and deliver post.

All post from England and Wales was 'town' or route postmarked and went to London,... Edinburgh in Scotland and Dublin in Ireland. When it was date-stamped with the fee penned in ink that was to be charged upon delivery before it was distributed via our post roads.

→

http://www.ilcollezionista.bolaffi.it/2013/02/il-bishop-britannico-il-primo-bollo-postale-del-mondo/

The London International Stamp Exhibition, 9-16 July, 1960.

There was a Commemorative Sheet issued for The London International Stamp Exhibition of July 1960. Marking the Tercentenary of his appointment.

This sheet shows the majority of the early Date Stamps as san serif, and using what becomes a <u>standard</u> two-letter abbreviation for the Month: 'FE' for February; 'MR' March; 'AP' April; 'MA' May; etc.

AND using the <u>Classical</u> Roman alphabet 'IV' for June; 'IY' July; 'AV' August... (and although not shown 'IA' for January).

→

?

Research question:

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Given the huge numbers of existing examples of serif-less 'Bishop Marks' as they are known by Philatelists...

– why have type historians seemingly ignored these examples of printed sans serifs; believing that printed sans serifs are from the 19th Century?

Particularly because the early examples, known as 'Type I' **(1),** are in <u>metal</u>, and that moveable-type date numbers were developed in Scotland in the late 17th Century,

This idea evolved into... ingenious and complex metal type sets within cancel-date stampers of the 19th century - which by this time are almost exclusively in **sans serif** type.

Incidentally the collecting of envelopes with postmarks is called *Philometry!*

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Incidentally the collecting of envelopes with postmarks is called *Philometry!*

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HANDSTRUCK STAMPS (ENGLAND AND WALES)   17

England and Wales

GENERAL POST
London Date Stamps

(a) General.
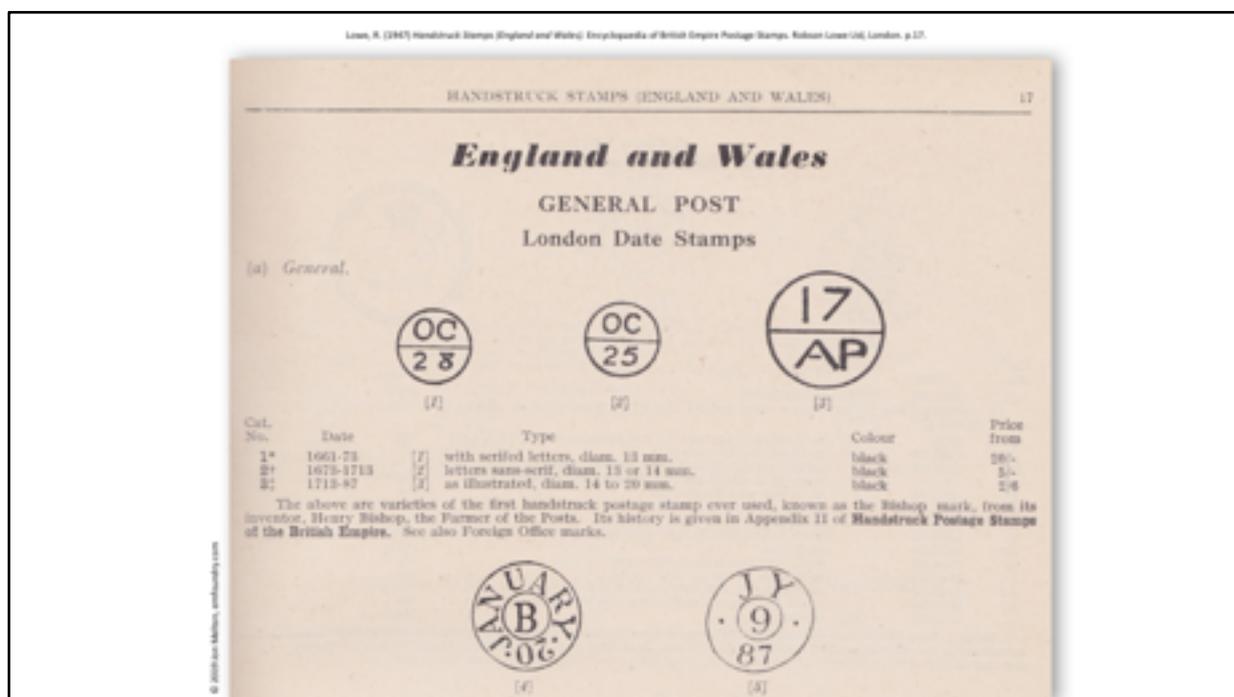
Following the introduction of san serif date stamps in 1673, known as 'Type IA' **(1A)**,…

the numerical 'day' is switched to the bottom of the bisected stamp and the two letter month abbreviation to the top in 1713, which are referred to as 'Type II' **(2)**.

The stamps then get larger and there is much variation within the letterforms, and the impressions suffer from under-inking or greater ink squash…

– but principally date-stampers remain serif-less right up until 1787-8…

→

Lowe, R. (1947) *Handstruck Stamps (England and Wales).* Encyclopaedia of British Empire Postage Stamps. Robson Lowe Ltd, London. p.17.

© 2019 Ian Melton, aimfoundry.com
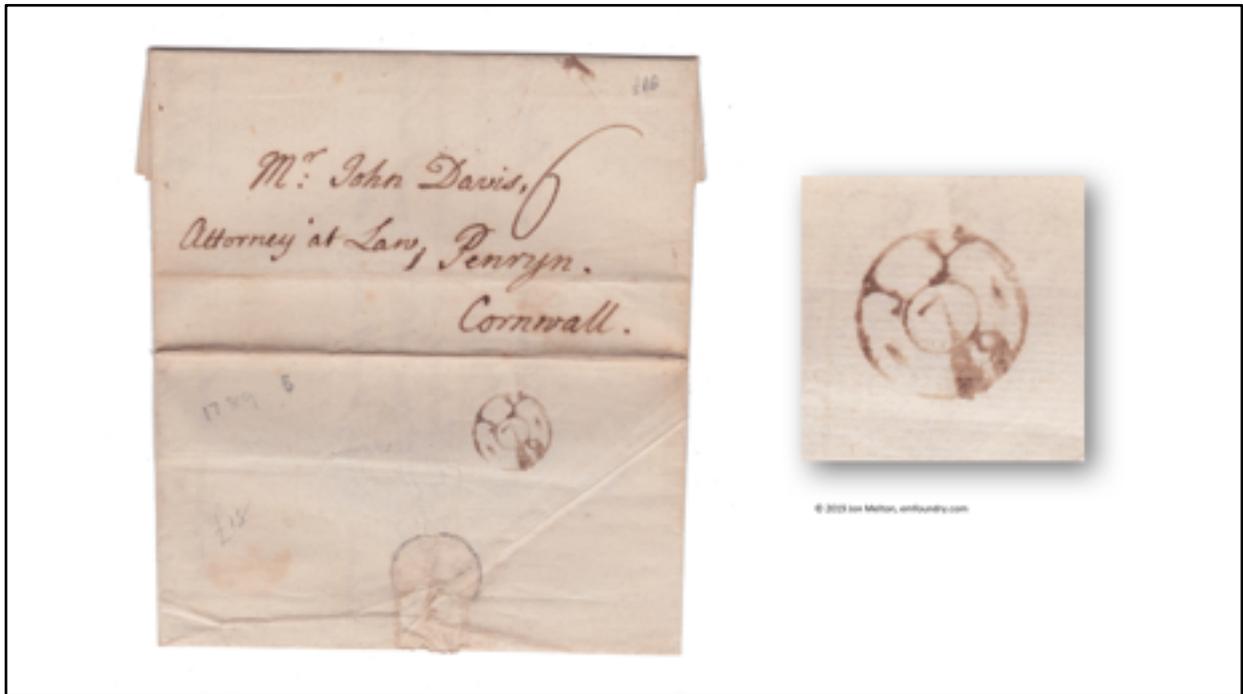
...when they became serifed once more, and the General Post Office starts experimented with serif letterforms in the round.

With date stamps becoming a little more reminiscent of the round cancel-date franking system we recognise today.

→

"Probably all the stamps... ...were cut in boxwood, new every day. Wooden stamps were said to admit of the most rapid work and so were used for evening (stamping) duty, when there was great pressure, until after 1857." Robson Lowe.

This Type II **(2)** Bishop Mark in sans serif is of February 1702. Under-inked so stamped twice, it clearly shows a letter without serifs but with flared stroke modelling.

Many of the 18th Century sans serif Bishop Marks display a variety of letterform styles ranging from lineal strokes to vestigial or flared serifs.

→

This under-inked example without detrimental ink-squash provides an accurate outline of a flared stroke serif-less letterform.

The 'M' and 'R' of March are normally seen ligatured on Bishop Mark date stamps, and the caps of 'A' and 'P' of April and the 'M' and 'A' of May were combined.

I'm also currently exploring the possibility that town-stamps (which were almost exclusively in serif type) such as 'OXFORD' seen here – utilised moveable type held in a stamp head such as this 19th century ebony and brass stamper?

→

There are a number of examples of 18th Century stamps which retain **serifs**, this example from 1763 put me in mind of the flared stroke letterforms which appear on Roman Brick and Tile stamps.

→

© 2018 Courtesy of Lara 7890

…some were even a mixture of serif-less date figures and serifed month letters!

So what did early 17th and 18th Century date-stampers look like?

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Well, I'm yet to find an original but…

19th Century ink postage stampers with turned wooded handles looked like this. And I suspect earlier 18th century ones would have looked similar but with a <u>round</u> stamp head?

This is a post-due '6d TO PAY UNPAID POSTED' stamper from the late 19th Century using sans serif type.

17th century ones may of course looked like plain Wax Seal Stampers? Such as these…

→

© 2013 Ian Melton, emfoundry.com

This is an early trade card of the18tC engraver David Deuchar (1743-1808) the kind of business establishment that would have cut stamps for the General Post Office in Edinburgh.

But some philatelists believe that the post office workers cut their own stamps, – which given the specialist nature of cutting desk seals, stamps and intaglios - **I question**?

→

A reprint of 1890 from the *Complete works of David Deuchar,* first published in 1803. David Deuchar was a prolific engraver and etcher in Edinburgh around 1780.

The Scottish Post Office in Edinburgh stamped Bishop Marks from 1693 onwards but retained serifed type in the original form with the month abbreviation on the top.

Following the amalgamation of the British Post Offices in 1707 they began to stamp in 'RED'. This late 1797 Bishop Mark example, is dated 'FE' 11 in serif for 11th of February – the stamp shows a misaligned top to bottom half.

Ever 'canny' the Scots utilised a moveable two-part stamper from the late 17th Century. It had a reusable 'Month' top part which could have a separate numerical day added each morning!

Presumable to save the cost of having new stampers cut quite so regularly as in England.

→
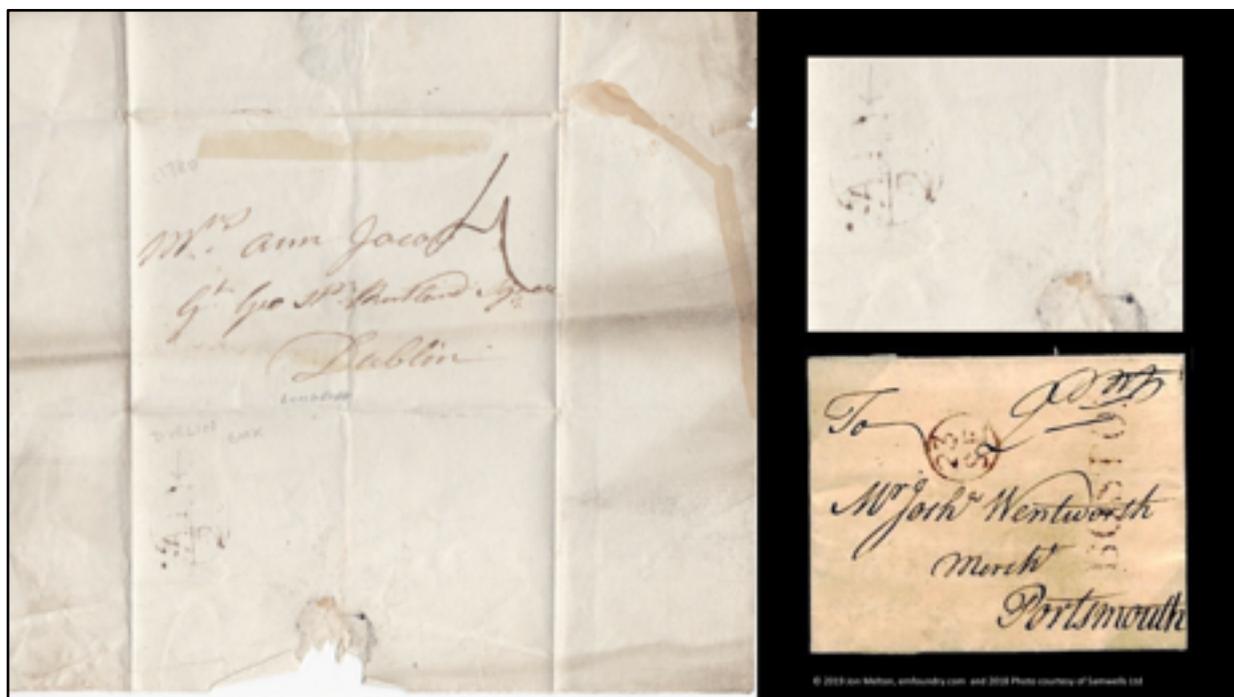
Bishop Marks were also used in Ireland from 1672 and some images of 17th Century examples show the use of a **vestigial** or near **serif-less** a year before the first serif-less ones were used in England.
So sans serif date stampers may have been 'informed' by those from Ireland? But the Dublin mark above from 1780 is clearly serifed.

Sans serif Bishop Marks were eventually used in the 'colonies' in New York from the 1760s. The above sans serif Bishop Mark from the colonial period is dated the 23rd September 1773 on a letter sent from Boston Massachusetts to Portsmouth in New Hampshire.

→

1673-1787/8

Why create Serif-less date-stampers?

→

Why were serif-less Bishop Mark date-stampers introduced in England? And why did they dominate for over a hundred years from 1673 to 1788?

One theory may be that the smaller early **serifed** stampers introduced by Henry Bishop that were in metal and that the serifs clogged with ink.

When date stampers were introduced in the 19th Century to cancel the adhesive labels we call 'STAMPS' - the General Post Office used Cleaning Brushes.

These are from the 20th Century – so Ink 'clogging' seems to have been an ongoing issue.

As these brushes are large!

$\rightarrow$

© 2020 Joe Melton, emfoundry.com
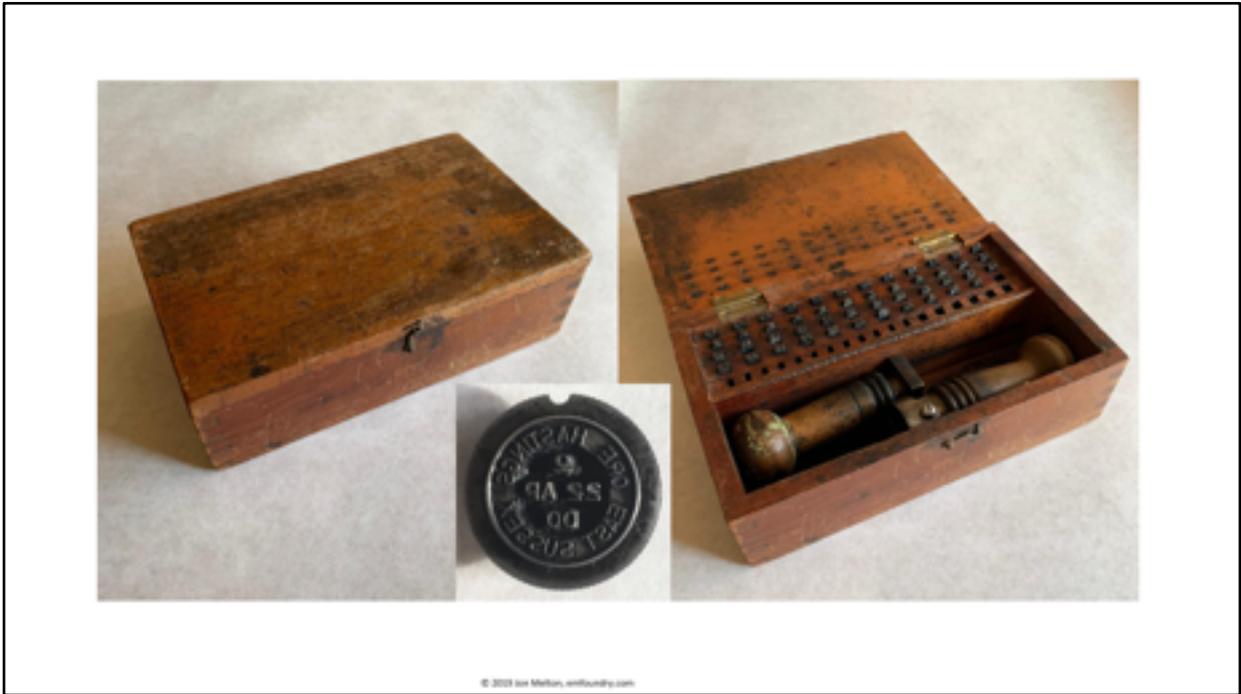
You can find late 19th and Early 20th Century <u>Post Office date stamper sets</u>.

These have movable metal type held within a detachable 'head' and used the same two-letter month abbreviations as the first Bishop Marks.

By the 20th Century sans serif type certainly has become the face that represents our Postal Service.

This is a Mid 20th Century GPO Date Stamper box set with a later matrix for ORE HASTINGS EAST SUSSEX set to 22 AP (April) [20]00.

→

ORIGINS

of date stamps.

→

Serif-less date stampers were introduced during the tenure of **Henry Bennet** the 1st Earl of Arlington, in 1673. He was appointed the Fourth Postmaster-General in 1667. Previously as an Ambassador abroad concerned with foreign affairs and the 'Dutch Threat', – he may have developed a sensibility for the 'Classical Revival' and may have been aware of Republican Roman serif-less inscriptions. And perhaps it was felt that that the *Bishop Mark* should share an affinity with Ancient Rome.

But I suspect that it (more likely) reflects a respect for Rome's Empire infrastructure, of communication, and the use of a courier system called the ***Cursus Publicus***. A relay system of staged posts adapted from the ancient Persians, with the delivery of 'official' correspondence believed to have been copied from the third dynasty Egyptians (c.2778 BC) who's court officials marked communication with stamped red and blue hieroglyphs which translate as "In the name of the living king, speed!"[1]

Incidentally the first examples of a postmark in Europe come from Venice in Italy. They are from the early 14th Century with penned instructions imploring the postal officials **not** to delay state correspondence using the Latin: *'Cito citossisme, volantissisme'* (Quickly, very quickly, very fleetingly), similar to our term 'post haste' from the 1530s, with the word 'poste' referring to the stabling of horses and relays along the route.

By the 16th century the French were endorsing their mail *'en diligence'* (with speed and care)… The first hand-struck (stamper) postmarks were from Milan in the early 15th century, which had the city coat of arms and a warning of torture: *'Sub pena furcarum'* (under penalty of the forks).[2]

The Romans used lead 'Bullae' seals to ensure important dispatches were only read by the recipient. Many of these Bullae denote the sender, be it from a Legion, a General or the Emperor himself. This one 'AVG' 'N' (top right) is from Emperor Nero. A system of ceramic and lead seals continued to be used through the Byzantine into the medieval period, right up to the 19th Century on cloth bale 'goods' - so that they arrived un-tampered, and complete. Many have the year stamped, and 19th Century examples principally used sans serif type.

But like Roman Brickstamps they also utilise many forms of serif-less, near lineal to vestigial, to full-serifed letterforms… with the sans serif varieties **no-doubt** making the cleaner impression!

→

¹ Foley, J. (1993) *The Guinness Encyclopedia of Signs & Symbols*. Guinness Publishing Ltd, Enfield. England.

² Harm, R. (2015) *Nuusbrief. Facts and Feats: The Postal Service*s. Stellenbosch Philatelic Society:
 https://stbphilatelic.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/sfvapr2015.pdf

Also:

Mackay, J. (1988) *The Guinness Book of Stamps*. Guinness Publishing Ltd, Enfield. England.

500BC – Roman Postal System:
https://bathpostalmuseum.org.uk/500bc-roman-postal-system.html

Cursus Publicus:
https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cursus_publicus

ETRVSCA

The font.

→

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So, I've been studying serif-less examples of Bishop Marked letters, and there would have been countless numbers of these sent through the post.

→

All original and all sans serif, in order to inform my current typeface project which was presented at ATypI18 in Antwerp.

→

John Soan[e] 1753-1837

© Sir John Soane's Museum, London. Photo: Hugh Kelly

A typeface that is based upon Sir John Soane's use of serif-less titling on his architectural drawings since 1779…

→

© Sir John Soane's Museum, London. Photo: Hugh Kelly
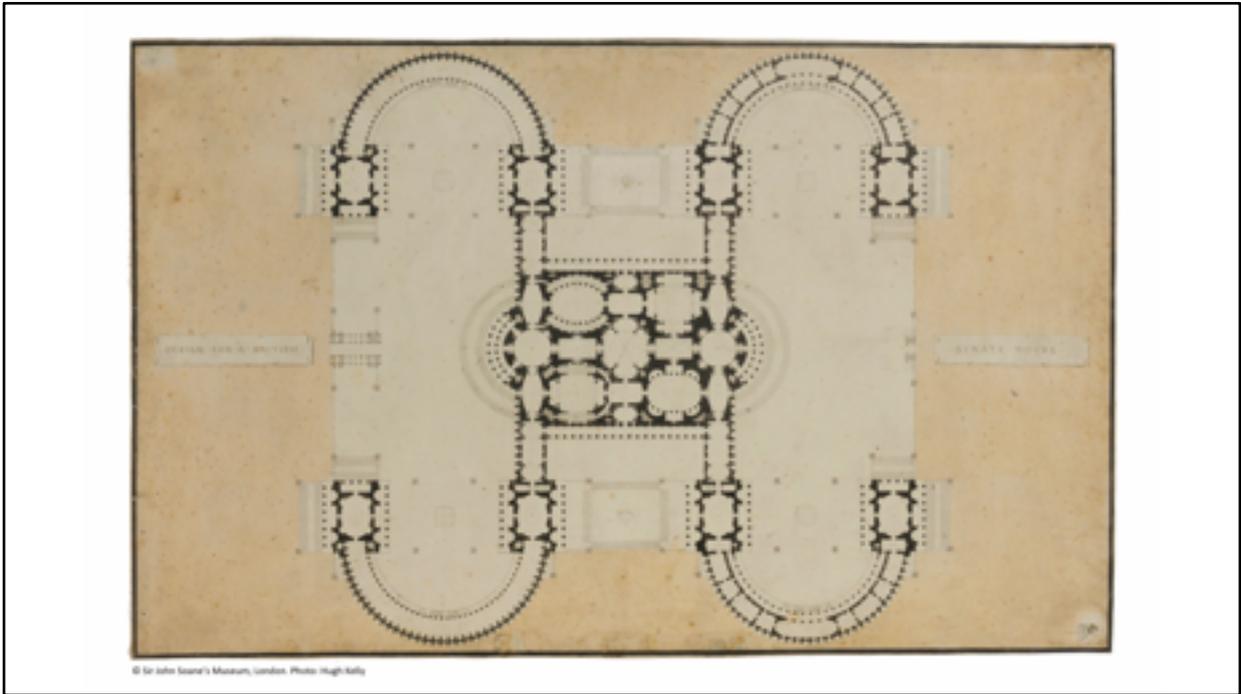
The earliest example of this was Exhibited at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition of 1779.

Exhibit number '308' consisted of: a section, elevation and... the Plan drawing above which included two distinctive title blocks rendered as Roman stone *tabula ansata* (which are architectural writing tablet motifs).

→
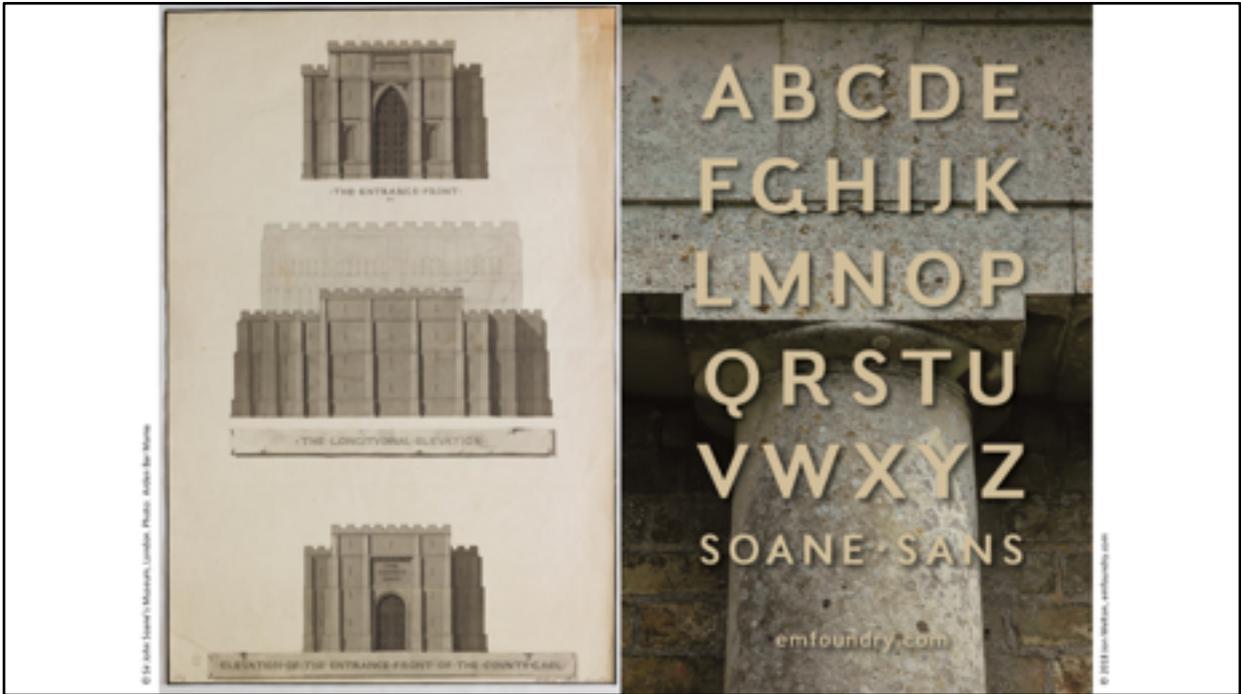
I have produced a display weight sans serif developed from Soane's drawings...

→

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With the caps derived from an inscription on a pair of gate-houses at Langley Park in Norfolk c.1790, which is likely Soane's earliest and possibly only serif-less inscription still in existence today!

The Soane style of serif-less letterforms have a wide 'T' based upon a square, a near full circle 'O', equilateral 'V' and bullets between the words. It uses V as 'U' and an I as J that has a very subtle of vestigial curve.

→
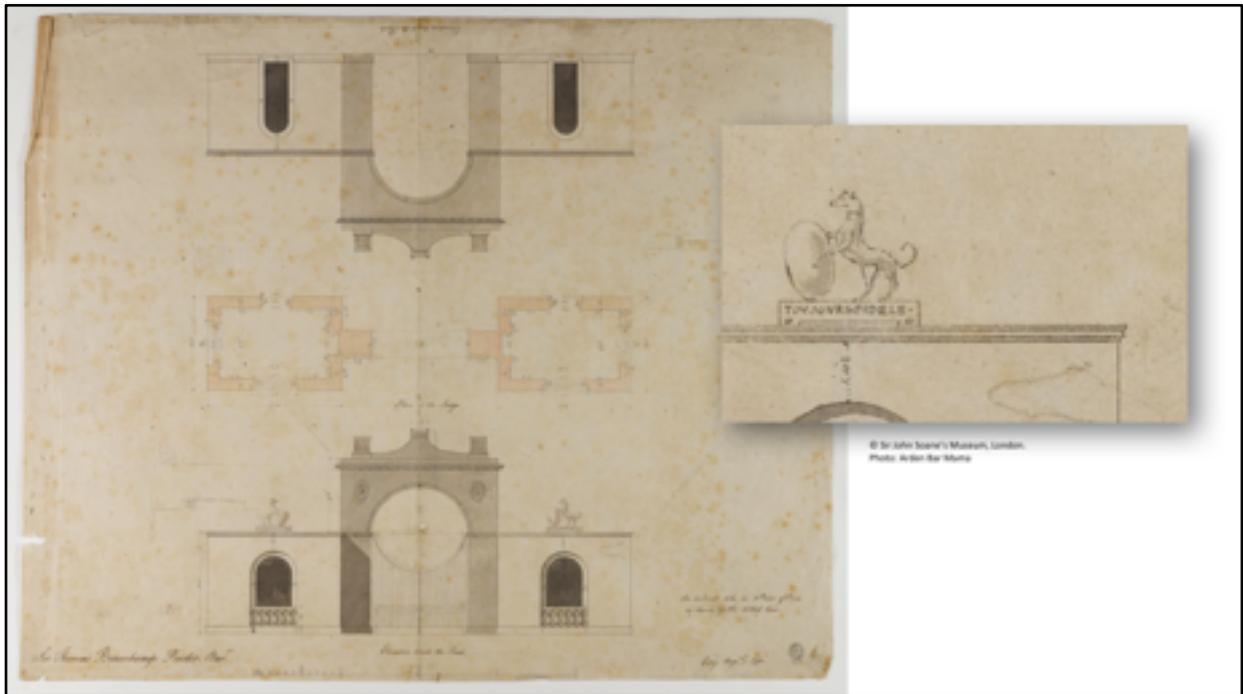
From 1784 onwards John Soane slowly promotes his serif-less letterforms on his drawings, and above is an elevation drawing for the gate-house 'Lodges' at Langley Park.

The South Lodges elevation is dated 1790, and has a pair of stone Greyhounds depicted with the inscription of the Beauchamp Family motto: TOUJOURS FIDELE (Always Faithful) rendered on the plinths beneath dogs with shields. The commissioned designs for Langley Park began as early as 1784 and were eventually completed by 1793.

I have a chapter on *The serif-less letterforms of John Soane* being published by Liverpool University Press in 2020.

→
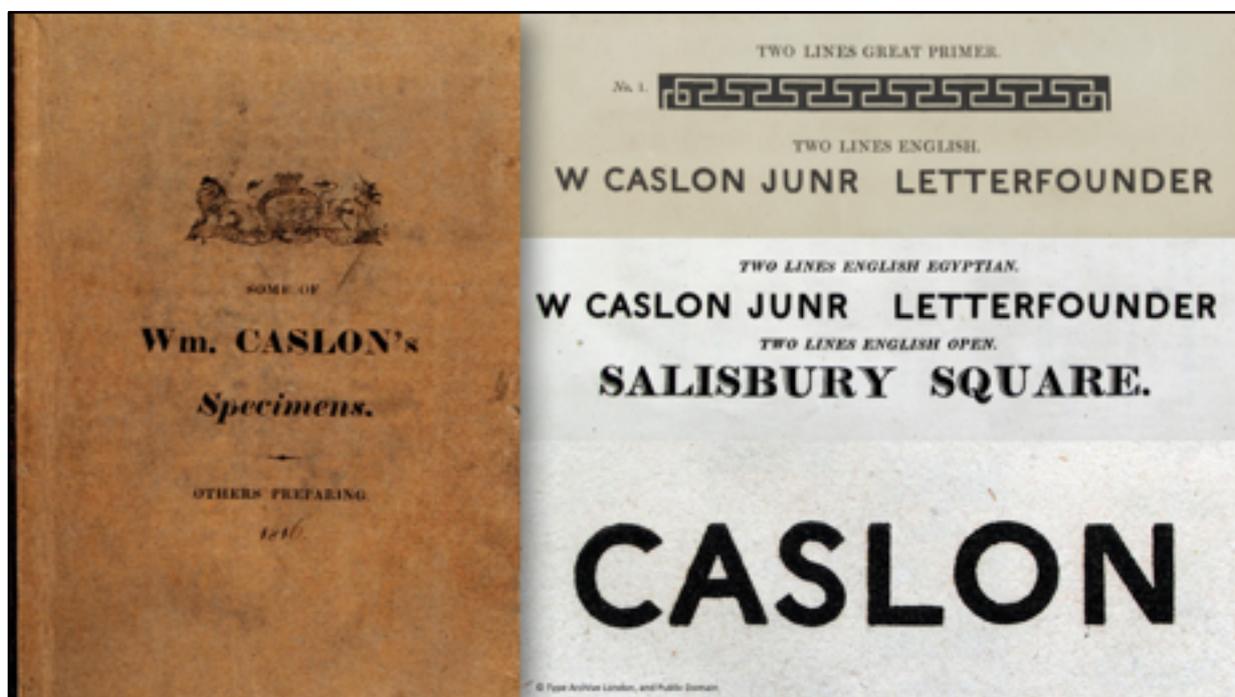
I am generating a font family that represents the **source** of the earliest known Sans Serif metal typeface of William Caslon IV (the 4th), recorded in his type specimen book of 1816. It was named 'Two Lines English Egyptian" and was only available in CAPS. The size 'Two Lines English" was used for titling.

Some page-sections of this specimen book have recently been analyses and dated by John A. Lane as potentially printed, as early as 1812.

→
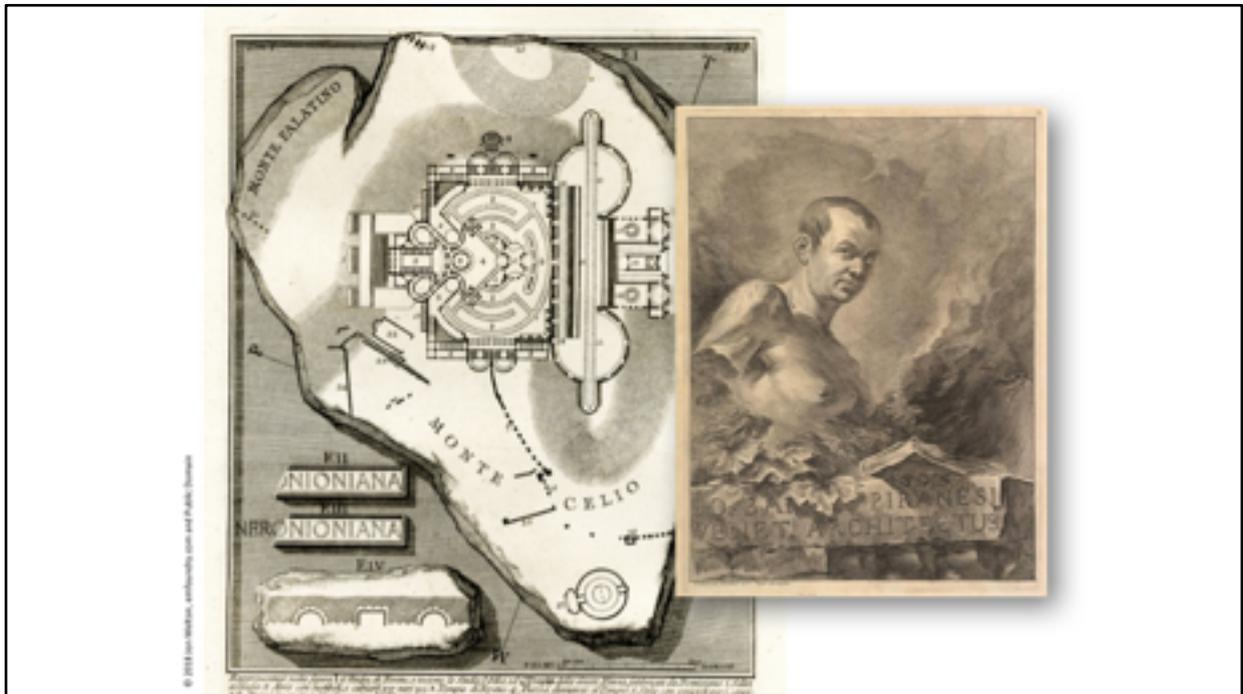
My ATypI18 Antwerp lecture identified the title blocks on **Piranesi's** engraving *Pianta del Ninfeo di Nerone*, from *Le Antichita Romane* of **1756,** as the source of Soane's inspiration for his titling on architectural drawings.

I wont go into what the ONIONIANA blocks are here. But if you would like to view my ATypI lecture *'True Source of the sans'* – then its on YouTube…

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iz5X9my_X5Q

→

Tom.I. (Volume I.) [Tav].XLI (Plate.41)

Soane's owned a copy of *Antichita Romane*, seen here with **Pate.41 (**Tav.XLI) under a magnifier.

Soane's edition was from 1776, rebound as '*Opera de Piranesi'*. The book and plates are confirmed as being the 'first printing' of 1776 because later reprints included Tom.I. (Volume 1)
at the top left on each plate from 1778-9 onwards.

→

'These volumes much disfigured by spots etc previous to 1837 GB'

George Bailey (1772-1860), first Curator of the Sir John Soane's Museum.

© 2018 Jon Istefian, courtesy of the Sir John Soane's Museum.

The edges are severely stained on this book where one holds the page of **Plate.41** (Tav.XLI), reflecting a huge amount of handling by a significant number of readers.

Indeed, George Bailey, Soane's pupil and the first curator of the Soane Museum from 1837, commented in the front of the book about its heavily foxed condition.

We don't know when Soane aquired his copy of *Antichita Romane* but the plan of the Nimphaeum of Nero was by far the most studied.

Studied by countless improvers, apprentices and assistent architects to Soane before his death in 1837.

This was clearly seen to be a MOST important engraving? And the significance it possesses – is the serif-less letterforms!

→

I now believe - that by adding in the serifed 'E', Piranesi is arguing that the Romans added serifs to the lineal characters of the Etruscan alphabet?

THUS counteracting the Greco-Roman debate of the mid-eighteenth century… that Roman architecture was directly informed by that of the Greeks.

He therefore retains architectural authority by demonstrating that Roman Inscriptional letterforms evolved from the Italian Etruscans?

→
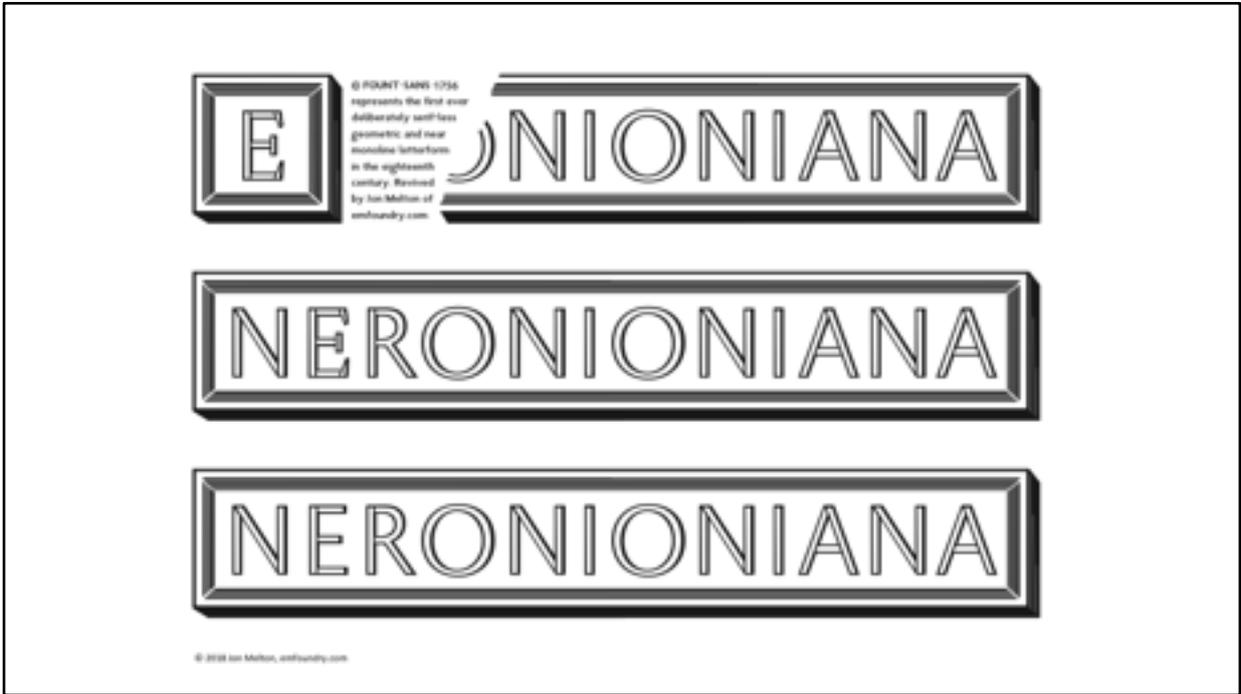
But this interchange of adding and removing serifs does provide me with opportunitiy for a super family. One, with and without component serifs…

→

…possibly some Piranesi Open Shaded Initials. But like Piranesi's ONIONINA, it will eventually be developed into a family of serif-less, vestigial and serifed Roman forms.

Incidentally, the Romans generated a 'G' by adding a small vertical stroke to the 'C' of their original or archaic Latin Alphabet which was in turn derived from the 21 letters of the Etruscan Alphabet

– and I wanted to mirror this in my typeface which is similar to the capital 'G's that Soane and his understudies used in their Titling on drawings.

→

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Latin_script
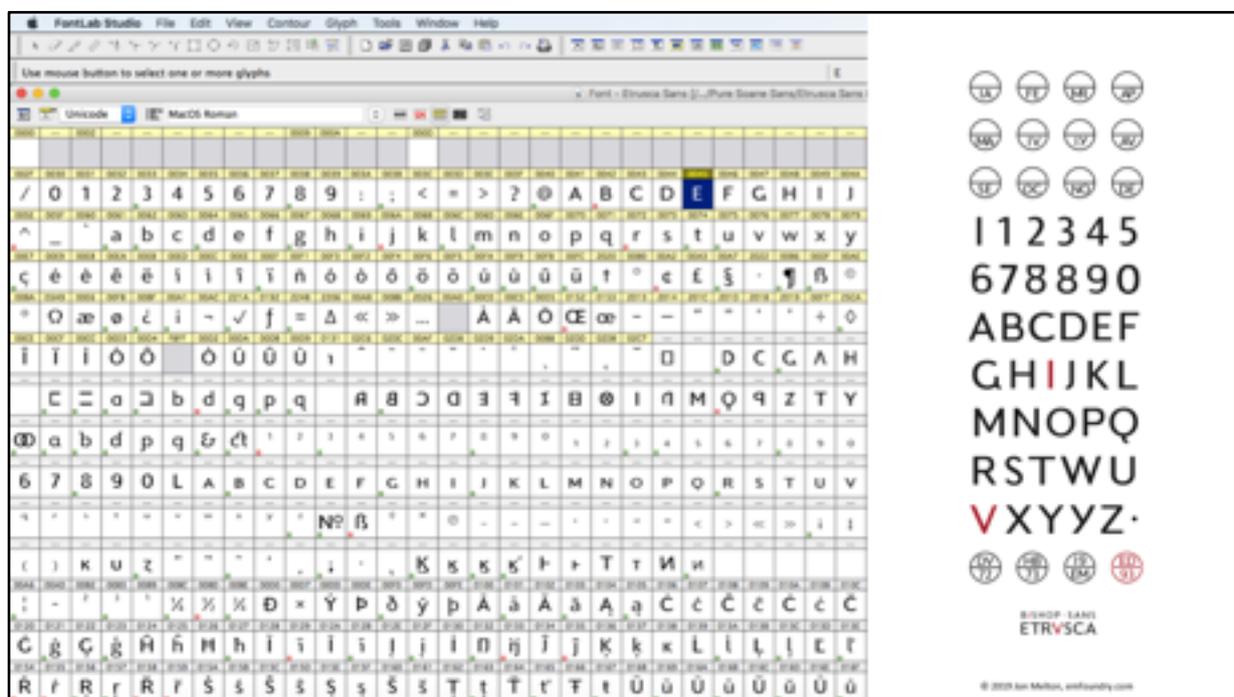
San serif Bishop Marks have now informed the development of a 'Book Weight' of Soane's sans...

and a typeface family has been established, which is now called ETRVSCA, – given that the Etruscan Alphabet is proving to be the **origin of our Sans Serif** typeface today.

→
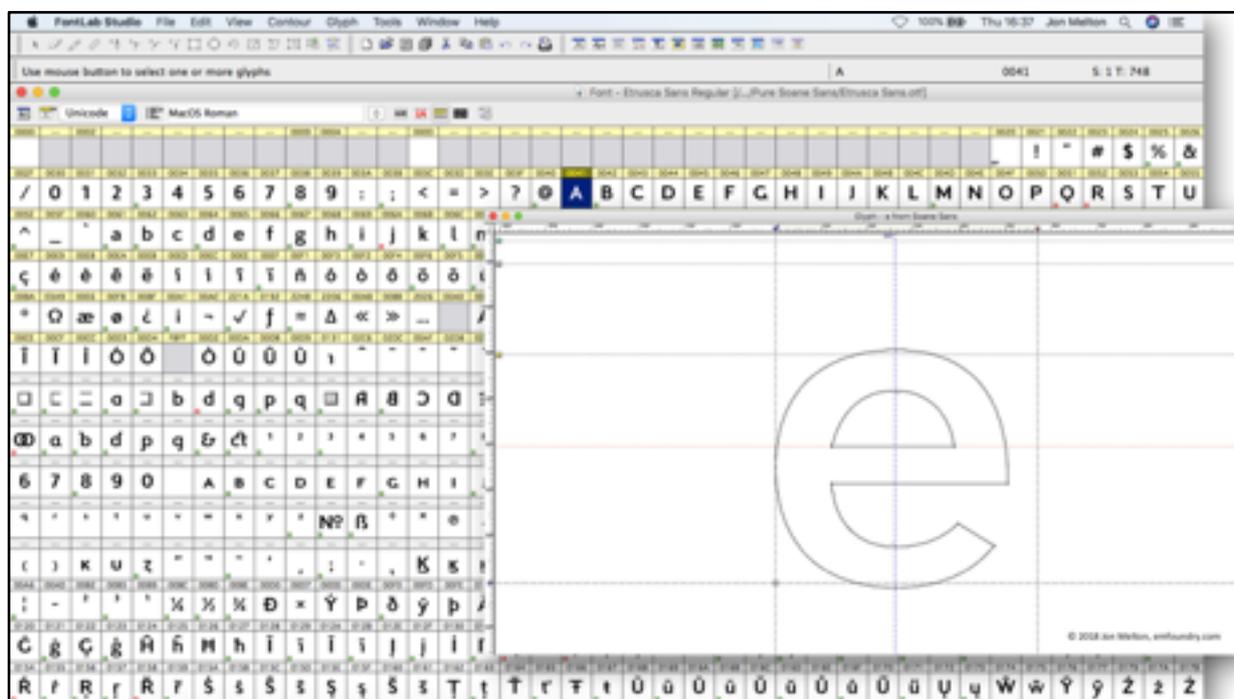
The font ETRVSCA is progressing well and includes Open Type and Contextual Alternate features, and now comprises of Latin, Greek and Etruscan sets…

– and it is my hope to complete the font in two weights relatively soon within a research Sabbatical. With Soane's letterforms becoming a bold or 'Display' weight, and the finer forms found in Bishop Marks becoming the 'Book' weight.

But any help or advice you can give me on how to script my Bishop Marks date glyphs let alone how to manage a font with an Etruscan, Greek and Latin alphabet, will be greatly received?

→

I 1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 8 9 0
A B C D E F
G H I J K L
M N O P Q
R S T W U
V X Y Y Z ·

Do other examples of a prolific use of serif-less roman letterforms exist within the late 17th and through 18th Century?

Have Bishop Marks left their 'mark' upon the early Grots of the 19th Century?

How should type design software be utilized to generate 365 consecutive date glyphs, without providing one for each?

Which font distributers might be interested in distributing this historical revival of our primal sans serif when its complete later this year?

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Forum Questions?

→

Visit: www.emfoundry.com

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