

Patrick Breen, Donner Party journal, October 11, 1846, to March 1, 1847; and George McKinnis, Jr., report of Donner Party return, April 20, 1847

### Journal of a Sufferer

Truckee Lake [later known as Donner Lake], Nov. 20. — Came to this place on the 31st of last month; went into the Pass, the snow so deep we were unable to find the road, and when within three miles from the summit, turned back to this shanty on Truckee Lake. Stanton came up one day after we arrived here; we again took our teams and wagons and made another unsuccessful attempt to cross in company with Stanton; we returned to the shanty, it continuing to snow all the time. We now have killed most part of our cattle, having to remain here until next spring, and live on lean beef without bread or salt. It snowed during the space of eight days with little intermission, after our arrival here, though now clear and pleasant, freezing at night, the snow nearly gone from the valleys. — 29. Still snowing, now about three feet deep. . . . killed my last oxen to-day; gave another yoke to Foster; wood hard to be got. — 30. Snowing fast, looks as likely to continue as when it commenced; no living thing without wings can get about.

Dec. 1. — Still snowing, wind w.; snow about six or six and a half feet deep; very difficult to get wood, and we are completely housed up; our cattle all killed but two or three, and these, with the horses and Stanton's mules, all supposed to be lost in the snow; no hopes of finding them alive. — 5. Beautiful sunshine, having a little, looks delightful after the long storm; snow seven or eight feet deep. — 9. Commenced snowing about 11 o'clock. . . . Took in Spitzer yesterday so weak, that he cannot rise without help, caused by starvation. Some have a scant supply of beef; Stanton trying to get some for himself and Indians; not likely to get much. — 17. Pleasant. Wm. Murphy returned from the mountain party last evening; Balis Williams died night before last; Milton and Noah started for Donner's [camp] eight day ago; not returned yet; think they are lost in the snow. — 20. Clear and pleasant. . . . Charles Berger set out for Donner's; turned back, unable to proceed; tough times, but not discouraged; our hopes are in God. Amen. — 21. Milton got back last night from Donner's camp; sad news. Jacob Donner, Samuel Shoemaker, Rhinchart, and Smith, are dead the rest of them in a low situation; snowed all night. . . . Began this day to read the "Thirty days' prayers." Almighty God grant the requests of unworthy sinners; — 24. Rained all night and still continues; poor prospect for any kind of comfort, spiritual or temporal. — 25. Offered our prayers to God this Christmas morning; the prospect is appalling but we trust in Him. — 27. Snow nine feet deep; wood growing scarce; a tree when felled sinks into the snow and hard to be got at. — 30. Charles Berger died last evening. . . . — 31. Last of the year; may we, with the help of God, spend the coming year better than we have the past, which we propose to do if it is the will of the Almighty to deliver us from our present



40 William Keith  
Donner Pass, 1850

An open spread from *O California, Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century California Landscapes and Observations*. Jack Stauffacher's design for this book was used as the model for the examples presented in the following demonstration article. The original type for the book was Kis-Janson. Stauffacher reset the type for the examples in this article using Adobe Garamond.

# Forgotten Characters: *An Adventure in Typographic Navigation*

*Text by Sumner Stone*

*Typography by Jack W. Stauffacher*

*The typography in this article differs from the rest of the magazine because it was specially prepared as a demonstration of the principles it talks about. The purpose of the article is to explore the use of small capitals, old style figures and other "forgotten" characters. The typeface is Utopia, designed by Robert Slimbach.*

A typographer is the person responsible for taking an author/editor's raw text – a private, rough, amorphous, hard to read manuscript – and transforming it into a public, finished, well-formed, legible document. The typographer represents the interests of the reader.

Since the advent of desktop design and desktop publishing, the designer is increasingly responsible for all typographic decisions. Indeed, anyone who is producing documents with a personal computer and laser printer has, knowingly or not, taken on the responsibilities of the typographer. To paraphrase Pogo, we have met the typographers and they are us.

The knowledge about how to accomplish the transformation from raw to cooked, from private to public, from rough to finished, however, does not consist of a set of rules or algorithms. Typography is a complex and subtle craft which, like cooking, must

be learned by doing. A recipe is only as good as the cook who is using it. This article and its examples, therefore, have been designed as guides and references, not formulæ.

Making clear distinctions in the various levels or hierarchies of the text – through the use of typographic conventions which indicate different modes, voices, or levels of emphasis in the text – is one of the primary tasks of the typographer. The most common mistake of beginning typographers is to overdo these typographic indicators. If the signage is too gross, it tends to distract the reader and actually disrupt the smooth flow of reading. Orchestrating the proper balance between unity and diversity is the craft of both the typographer and the type designer. Like good music, the properly balanced presentation of the text should be a harmonious blend of loud and soft, treble and bass, fast and slow.

There are, of course, many aspects of typography which must be considered in order to approach this ideal. The use of small capitals, old style figures (also known as lowercase figures), ligatures and other characters which may have been "forgotten" are just some of the factors to be considered.

In order to demonstrate the use of small capitals and lowercase figures, Jack Stauffacher created the typography for a set of samples based on his design of the book *O California*, published by Bedford Arts, Publishers in San Francisco.

*Raw manuscript:*

Truckee Lake [later known as DONNER LAKE], Nov.20,1846--Came to this place on the 31st of last month; went into the Pass, the snow so deep

*Regular capitals, lining figures, em-dash, no ligatures:*

Truckee Lake [later known as DONNER LAKE]. Nov. 20, 1846 — Came to this place on the 31st of last month; went into the Pass, the snow so deep we were unable to find the road, and when within three miles from the summit, turned back to this shanty on Truckee Lake. Stanton

*Small capitals (letterspaced), lower case figures, en-dash, ligatures:*

Truckee Lake [later known as DONNER LAKE]. Nov. 20, 1846 – Came to this place on the 31st of last month; went into the Pass, the snow so deep we were unable to find the road, and when within three miles from the summit, turned back to this shanty on Truckee Lake. Stanton came up



Design for chapter opening, regular capitals, regular figures, em-dashes, no ligatures.  
Adobe Garamond, main text 13.16 (point size.leading), 31 picas ragged, display 19 pt. italic, legend 9.10, 10 picas.

## *Journal of a Sufferer*

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Final design for chapter opening with small capitals, lower case figures, en-dash, ligatures.  
Type specifications are the same as above.

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### **Marginalia**

9.11 point italic, 10½ picas, ragged, lining figures on left, old style figures on right. The lining figures dominate the example on the left. Use of old style figures maintains the appropriate balance. It creates a texture which is harmonious with the main text. The old style figures also generally use less space.

*A summary of the Los Angeles Directory for 1875 showed the following classifications: 107 carpenters, 72 fruit dealers, 50 attorneys-at-law, 43 blacksmiths, 33 printers, 32 physicians and surgeons, 30 boot and shoe dealers and makers, 30 butchers, 28 teachers, 27 saddle and harness makers, 23 upholsterers, 23 house and sign painters, 22 clergymen*

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tals), which are optically about the same size as the x-height of the lowercase letters, was used for this purpose. The weight of these small capitals is designed to harmonize with the weight of the lowercase.

Since the advent of phototypesetting, a smaller point size of the normal capitals has sometimes been used for this purpose. These artificial small capitals, however, generally look too light and too narrow compared to the surrounding text, as can be seen in the accompanying illustration.

The letters that we use today can be traced directly back to Roman forms, but the numbers we use cannot. We call them Arabic numerals because they arrived in Europe in the 11th century via the Arabs who then occupied Spain. In fact, it is probable that they originated in India.

The forms of the numerals that we use, therefore, come from a completely different writing tradition. Any type designer will tell you that drawing them so that they look harmonious with the alphabetic characters remains a challenge to this day.

We are used to seeing numerals (typographers like to call them figures) that are all more or less the same height as the capital letters. These are called lining figures and are actually fairly new in the history of typography. Until the nineteenth century, figures were designed to be much more like lowercase characters with ascending and descending parts. We currently call these old style or lowercase figures. When used in upper and lowercase text, they look much more harmonious than lining figures. A series of lining numbers in the middle of a text tends to pop out in the same way as a word set in capitals. As with small capitals, sometimes a smaller point size of lining figures is used in order to imitate old style figures. These figures also look too light.

Typographic conventions which indicate different modes in the text create the need for more characters and more styles for each character. We all learn some of these typographic conventions in school. For example, we all know that proper names are supposed to begin with capital letters (*unless you are e.e. cummings*). Other conventions depend heavily on technology. For example, typewriters generally do not offer the user italic or bold versions. Underlining is generally used for emphasis.

Generally the typographic conventions for a particular work are set by the decisions about the treat-

ment of the main body of text. For example, the most important typographic structure in the book we are using as an example is the main text shown in the design for the chapter opening for *Journal of a Sufferer*. The first thing to note is the line length and leading. The lines are relatively long, so even though the Adobe Garamond has a rather small x-height, they have been liberally leaded. The leading of the legend has been chosen to harmonize with the overall density of the main text. The use of small capitals and oldstyle figures helps the numbers and names to achieve the appropriate level of visual importance in the text. Although these differences may appear slight, their effect is multiplied by their repeated usage throughout the book. The cumulative impact is considerable.

Having set the style for the main body of text, these conventions will also apply to the other sections of the book which surround and support the main text such as the table of contents, captions, marginalia, folios, list of artists, bibliography and index. The treatment of some of these is shown in the accompanying examples.

The purpose of these typographic conventions is to help the reader navigate through the text. They are signposts, indicators which provide more information to the reader in the interests of a smoother journey.

Sumner Stone is Director of Typography at Adobe Systems and designer of the ITC Stone family of typefaces.

Jack W. Stauffacher is proprietor of the Greenwood Press in San Francisco.

## Artists

9.11, 16 picas, ragged, lining figures on left, old style figures on right.

Arthur William Best 1859–1935

*Born near Petersboro, Canada, Best moved to San Francisco in 1895.*

Albert Bierstadt 1830–1902

*Born in Solingen, Germany, and brought to America by his parents at 2, Bierstadt first journeyed into the West in 1859 with the government survey expedition led by Colonel Frederick W. Lander. He studied in Rome and Düsseldorf for 4 years. He made two additional western journeys, including California, in 1863 and in 1871–73. His heroic, grandiose paintings of America's natural beauty awakened a sense of national pride. He is referred to as "the founder of the Western school of landscape painting."*

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## Index

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Black Bart (bandit), 53

Borglum, John Gupton de La Mothe, 87

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## Bibliography

9.11, 16 picas, ragged, regular capitals, lining figures on left, small capitals, old style figures on right. The information in the example on the left is overwhelmed by the capitals and lining figures. On the right the small capitals and old style figures make a better reading line. The emphasis of the x-height helps to maintain a constant clarity.

BAIRD, Joseph A., Jr. *The West Remembered: Artists and Images, 1837–1973*, San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1973.

DAWDY, Doris Ostarander. *Artists of the American West: A Biographical Dictionary of Artists before 1900*, Vol. 3, Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press, 1985.

HARRISON, Alfred C., Jr. *William Keoth: The Saint Mary's College Collection*, Ann Harlow, ed. Moraga, California: Heart Art Gallery, Saint Mary's College, 1988.

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