

I started off with a type specimen of a fairly typical sans-serif wood type face (from Rob Roy Kelly's book on American Wood Type).

A B C D E F

G H I J K L

M N O P Q

R S T U V !

W X Y Z &

Gothic. First shown by Leavenworth, circa 1837, in a condensed style, and shown by George Nesbitt in this style in his 1838 specimens. Lowercase and figures are

missing. This heavy style of Gothic was not cast by American typefounders until very late in the nineteenth century.

Then I traced the letters into vectors, making slight adjustments here and there where I thought it was appropriate.

I'm not stuck with this face as a formal base, and may even design an alphabet myself from scratch; but for sketching purposes, the bold simplicity of this face makes it easy to work with.

A B C D E F

G H I

M N O P

R T U

Next, I extracted the counterforms.



Thus, if the forms are combined, you essentially get a solid rectangle.



But, when the forms are broken apart, you have an interesting assortment, or palette, of typographic forms with which to work:



Some things I'm considering about the technical development of the font:

I noticed that there are many recurring or similar shapes...



and I'm wondering to what extent I should systematize the design (to reduce the number of irregular pieces needed).

I'm also trying to figure out how I should handle the spacial relationships of each letter's counter forms in context with each other (gray areas represent the recessed, non-printing 'shoulder' of the block)...

keep them all together?



break them into separate blocks?



or maybe something in between?



In either case, I'm pretty sure I would like to have some counter forms mounted on rectangular block, so they can stand up on their own under printing...



as well as having peg-like pieces which could be inserted into hollow counter forms of other blocks.



I'm imagining the actual final physical printing blocks being somewhere in size between 12-line (2 inches tall):



and 24-line (4 inches tall):



For simplicity's sake, I may only end up producing a small set of characters at first (maybe 6–12 letter / counterform sets?). The top contenders are currently R, E, G, B, T, Q, O, Z, X, and maybe an ampersand (&) for fun.

The ability to not only print the letters, but also their counterforms allows for some fun plays with figure-ground ambiguity...



and color, etc.



And that's only using each counterform paired with it's parent letterform, in a linear row; I have only just begun to experiment with Frankenstein form combinations, overprinting possibilities, non-linear composition, etc



I hope to do most of my experimentation by actually printing the physical wood blocks.