

**Intensive Spencerian Workshop**  
**Reviewed by Ann Cobb**  
**Hendersonville, Tennessee**

We all know that success in calligraphy depends upon several factors including the correct combination of nibs and ink and paper, dedicated practice time, instruction and critique from a talented instructor, and proper exemplars.

These factors all came together in mid-January at Atlanta's Buckhead location of Binders Art Supply. Twenty fortunate students took advantage of Atlanta's Friends of the Alphabet workshop with incredibly talented instructor Bill Kemp from Albuquerque, New Mexico, leading his five-day Intensive Spencerian workshop.

Students were greeted with a notebook consisting of almost 80 pages of information, exemplars, and samples from as far back as the 1800's. Bill always provides a wonderful book for each student in each of the classes that he teaches. Bill updates his books for each class to include his most up-to-date samples and exemplars.

Students also received a beautiful nametag lettered with white ink on burgundy paper, a bag holding a dinky dip, a pipette for dispensing ink, a bottle of McCaffery's Prairie Night ink, and other items. Along with the notebook was a folder containing pre-printed guide sheets for Bill's suggested warm-up exercises, guide sheets for lower-case Spencerian letters, Spencerian capital letters, and guide sheets for smaller-size Spencerian lettering.

Guide sheets were printed on Staples Laser Paper Bright White, 98 bright, 28 pounds, item #733333. This paper is one of the best practice papers on the market today. McCaffery's Prairie Night ink was chosen for its ability to produce fine hairlines, dark black lines, yet not eat nibs as iron-gall inks do, and for its fast drying time.

Bill's background in engineering helps him to communicate correct angles for entrance and exit strokes as well as for the letter forms themselves. He emphasized the triangles of white space that are necessary in lower-case letters including **a**, **d**, **g**, and **h**, the shapes and angles of ascender and descender strokes, and the continuity of slant lines.

Class members were introduced to lower-case letters in family groups of similar strokes. Bill would introduce a group of letters, and then work with students individually making sure that each of us were practicing correctly what he had just taught. After all lower-case letters were demonstrated, Bill introduced the upper-case letters, demonstrating one or two more simple letters followed by two or three more decorative and fancy letters. Again, his procedure was to introduce groups of letters and then monitor the progress of his students.

Most of the final day was spent with students receiving individual help on any letters or combinations that where they were having difficulties, and with each student

creating a final piece demonstrating what he or she had learned during the five days. Most students worked with white ink on color paper.

Bill also asked that each of us work with a base line only drawn on our paper (no waist line or ascender line). This we learned was to demonstrate to us that because we had worked with all lines throughout the first four days, we truly did not need anything other than the base line for our finals.

As he does in all of his workshops, Bill demystified the use of the Ames Lettering Guide to quickly draw guidelines on our paper for our lettering. He also taught us to fold and cut a piece of colored paper to use for a quick envelope addressing guideline.

The title of this workshop was Intensive Spencerian. It was also intensive practice, intensive improvement, intensive friendships, and intensive fun! Thank you, Bill Kemp, for leading this fabulous workshop!