



# Goudy

## American Master Craftsman

FROM HIS HUMBLE BEGINNINGS AS A BOOKKEEPER IN BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS, FREDERIC W. GOUDY ATTAINED INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR PRODUCING SOME OF THE FINEST TYPEFACES IN HIS DAY. BY WARREN WINDOW

Born March 8, 1865 in Bloomington, Illinois, Frederic W. Goudy was raised in the small prairie town of Shelbyville, Illinois. In his youth Goudy worked as the high school janitor and assisted the town's leading paperhanger. Guided by an old worn copy of a Bruce Foundry specimen book, Goudy cut his first typeface from a roll of flowered wallpaper. ¶ At the age of 18 he graduated from Shelbyville High School and soon

took a job as a bookkeeper for his father's real estate office in South Dakota. He continued bookkeeping after he moved to Minnesota in 1887 and later moved on to Chicago to work as a clerk in a bookstore. Dissatisfied with the quality of print in the books he sold, Goudy began to read every available book on typography and visited veteran printers for a hands-on education.

In 1895, with Lauren C. Hooper, a Chicago English instructor, Goudy established the Camelot Press and briefly printed a magazine called Chapbook. It was during this time that Goudy produced his first typeface "Camelot," which he sold to the Dickinson Type Foundry for \$10. Going bankrupt within a year, Goudy resumed working as a bookkeeper, and in 1897 married a fellow bookkeeper, Miss Bertha M. Sprinks. Bertha later learned how to set type by hand and became an expert typesetter, assisting Frederic in his work.

In 1903, with the partnership of Will H. Ransom, Goudy founded the Village Press in Park Ridge, Illinois. An essay by William Morris was the first book he printed. In 1908 Goudy designed his first significant typeface for the Lanston Monotype Machine Company, commonly known as Goudy Light. Unfortunately his building burned to the ground that same year, destroying all of his equipment and designs. The Village Press was rebuilt in Forest Hills, Queens. While at Forest Hills, Goudy earned his worldwide reputation as a type designer after he sold eight new typefaces to the famous Caslon Foundry in England. In 1911, Goudy produced his first "hit," Kennerly Old Style, for an H.G. Wells

anthology published by Mitchell Kennerly. His most widely used type, Goudy Oldstyle, was released by the American Type Founders Company in 1915, becoming an instant classic. Its graceful letterforms made it visually appealing, while its shortened descenders allowed printers to squeeze more type on a page.

In the early years of his career, Goudy designed mostly display faces for advertising. As he progressed as a designer, however, his interests moved more toward the perfecting of the traditional roman typeface. He drew his letters by hand, and objected to the mechanical way that companies such as Monotype produced matrices for his typefaces. In 1924, he set up a foundry in his home in Marlborough, New York. Here Frederic's family, including his son, Frederic T. Goudy, worked in the manner of the artisan families of the sixteenth century. By 1927, he was engraving the matrices himself.

Fire again destroyed all of his equipment and about 75 of his designs in 1939. Instead of rebuilding, Goudy decided to concentrate on designing type, writing, and lecturing. In 1940 Goudy was appointed a type design lecturer at Syracuse University's School of Journalism.

Goudy won a number of honors for his fine books, including the gold medal of the American Institute of Graphic Arts, the Friedsam gold medal of the Architectural League of New York, and the medal of honor of the Ulster-Irish Society of New York. Goudy went on to live to the age of 82, passing away in 1947. With 124 type designs to his credit, he is one of the most creative typographer giants in American History. ■