

POUCH CLIPS IV

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Despite discovering a new category, pouch clips and rule clips remain rare and mostly American.

Another update - why?

Pouch clips have become my “15 minutes of fame¹”. In my last update I foolishly tongue-in-cheek suggested that I might end up doing a Sylvester Stallone and be tempted into a “Pouch Clips IV” Rocky film-like sequel.



Fellow authors be warned, such frivolous statements can come back to haunt you! My original article on pouch clips was published in 2006 and had collectors rechecking their collections and swaps for a possible overlooked rarity. The first update came in 2007, followed by another three years later. This time, alongside a couple of new sightings, I can at least recount the history of a little-known but stylish American manufacturer and refreshingly introduce a new category: **the Rule Clip!**

Previously unseen Faber-Castell clip

So far several examples from the German maker Faber-Castell (F-C) have featured in two of my earlier pouch clip accounts. So it was surprising to hear about an F-C rule on eBay® with a pouch clip I did not recognise. Was it home-made or perhaps the pouch did not belong to the rule? Fortunately bidding interest was low. So I could satisfy my curiosity and win the item for a modest investment.

When the pocket Elektro 67/98 from December 1951 (blind date-stamped “51” and “12” on the back) arrived it turned out as much of a surprise as the pouch clip. First versions of the 67/98 are rare as they were only made for a short 3-year period. From 1952 F-C started marketing a version 2 of the rule and later added a suffix to the model number making it the 67/98b. The later version and the suffixed model both have a wider body. With the extra space the “W” and “V” scales in the well of the rule in the original layout were moved onto the lower front face of the stock of the later versions.

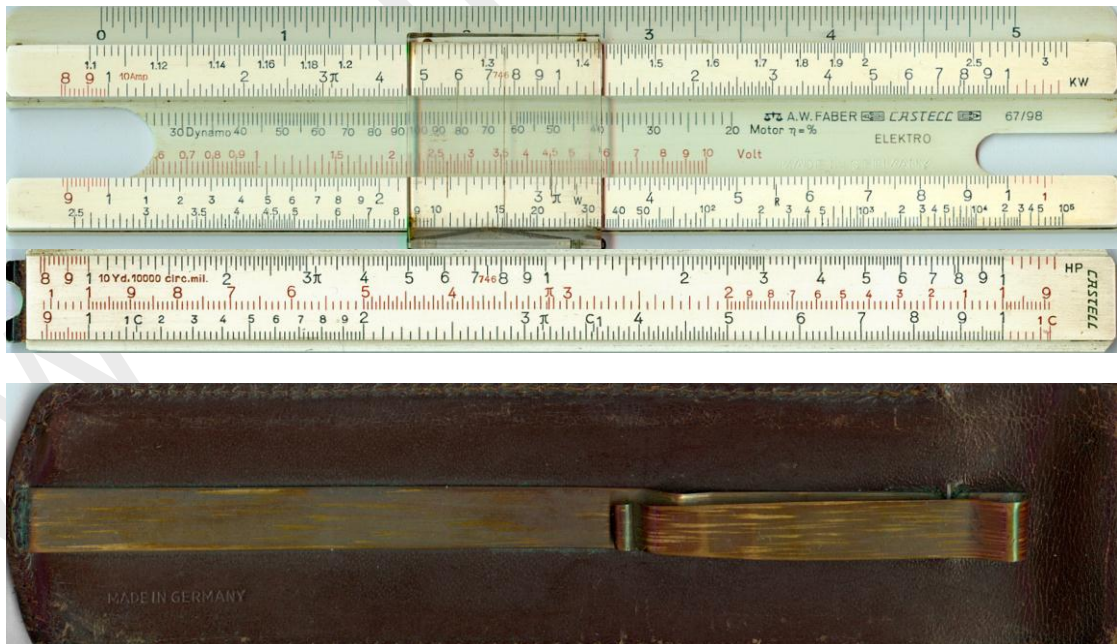



Fig. 1: Simplex Faber-Castell 12½cm plastic pocket Elektro 67/98 (version 1) and pouch

¹ Andy Warhol (1928-1987) once famously said: “... everyone will be famous for 15 minutes.”

It is not shown but the front of the pouch is embossed with “A.W. Faber *Castell*” and typical for its year of production, the Libra  set of scales is depicted above the company name. The dark-brown leather pouch is clearly an F-C original and belongs to the rule. The brown-coloured metal clip is almost as long as the pouch. Hidden under the folded over part of the clip, it is stapled to the pouch. At the bottom, the pouch stitching remarkably goes through the leather and the metal clip – which must have dulled the needle of the sewing machine! One-third along the clip from the top, the folded double metal is bowed to create a simple but effective sprung clip. Like the few years this version of the rule was in production, this pouch clip was probably a short-lived unsuccessful try out of a new clip design.

American fondness for clips

A recent gift of a late (the “type 6” logo confirming it is post 1966) American Pickett & Eckel N600-ES² rule came with an interesting accompanying reddish-brown leather pouch and clip.

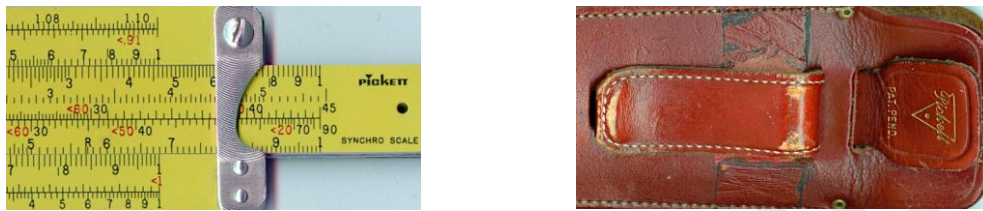


Fig. 2: Duplex Pickett & Eckel 6-inch aluminium pocket N600-ES and pouch

Intriguingly the company logo on the “pull-out” tab of the pouch is a “type 3” from an earlier 1952-1959 production period than the rule it came with. This style of pouch clip and the “pull-out” tab were featured in my original 2006 article but what is new is the “PAT. PEND.” emblazoned on the tab. What this example shows is that Pickett & Eckel clearly thought that their innovative “pull-out” pouch tab was worth patenting. But like many other slide rule manufacturers this was probably just a ploy by Pickett & Eckel to get some initial protection for their idea with a provisional patent application. Later, as was often the case, the company simply allowed the patent application to elapse. Just three fully paid up patents were ever registered to Pickett & Eckel and none of them are for a “pull-out” pouch tab.

New category: the Rule Clip

Of all the cheap advertising plastic “give-aways” the “Concrete Calculator” slide rule is possibly one of the most common. I suspect an example can be found in many collections.

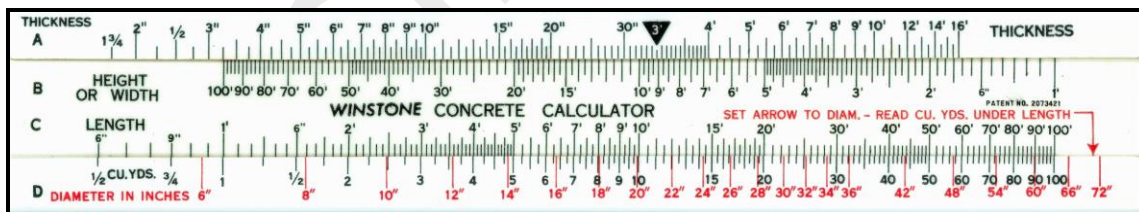
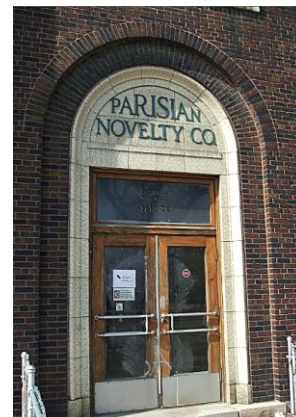


Fig. 3a: Simplex 8 x 1½ inch ultra-thin plastic Concrete Calculator slide rule for Winstone Ltd.

The maker of this slide rule and many similar advertising “give-aways” was the *Parisian Novelty Company* of Chicago, U.S.A. The company has a colourful and stylish history. It was established in 1898 by Louis L. Joseph Sr., a German immigrant and entrepreneur of his day. The company name may have come about because most of the early production equipment was imported from Europe. But much more likely it took its name from the *Beaux-Arts* movement. With its roots in Paris, this was a style in art and architecture popular in the US from 1880 to 1920 and featured strongly in the *Chicago World Fair* of 1893. As can be seen from the stylish façade to their plant opened in 1928, the company truly embraced its Parisian name and its *Beaux-Arts* heritage.



² ES: Eye-Saving yellow coloured model



From a modest start selling advertising paraphernalia, over the next 110 years many Joseph family members filled a myriad of positions in the company and helped run a highly successful business. The company had two main divisions: (i) for metal celluloid or plastic-faced buttons and (ii) for plastic printing and fabrication. Company success came largely from thin gauge plastics and a line of printed plastic advertising speciality products for businesses, schools and clubs. In the 1950s an offshoot company, *Joseph Manufacturing*, developed and made pressure-sensitive labels for the automotive battery industry.

In their heyday Parisian made everything from plastic hotel-style doorknob hangers to baggage labels and novelty buttons. The more high-value items were mainly the custom designed slide charts and calculators. But such items needed to be accurate. So the artwork was enlarged to accommodate any variance in printing and the shrinkage involved in the lamination. Then, before any production run, samples and mock-ups were prepared for testing and calibration.



Unusually for a slide rule, all the scales of the “*Concrete Calculator*” are in imperial units. It can also boast that its design was innovative enough to be granted a patent – often, as in Fig. 3a, proudly printed on the slide of the calculator. However, the patent was not for the unusual scale layout. US patent **2073421** was granted to Joseph Komorous on March 9th 1937. Joseph was one of the first Parisian employees. He, and later his son, was the engineer and designer of many of their products. The idea Joseph cleverly came up with was to emboss (raise) the centre “well section” of the slide. This unique feature kept the ultra-thin slide rigid and limited the amount of play when used in conjunction with the simply made stock – an oblong strip of thin plastic simply folded over along the top and the bottom. This patented innovation ensured the calculator was accurate when used but at the same time, easy and very cheap to make. Interestingly Parisian never licensed use of this patented idea to any other manufacturers.

However, what makes this *Concrete Calculator* truly exceptional is the shiny ECOBRA-like metal clip attached through the back and well of the stock – the slide masking its presence from the front.



Fig. 3b: *Concrete Calculator*'s built-in metal “rule clip” (enlarged) fixed onto the back

The clip was a machine-made optional extra. This was possible because such calculators were always advertising specialities and Parisian never sold to the retail market. So they were only made to order. When Parisian received an order for a calculator with a clip, the clips would be made to their specifications by a 3rd party and then mounted onto the back of the rule by Parisian. This was an astute market response, especially for the home market where such clips were popular, as “give away” slide rules only ever came in a paper sleeve-style pouch – anything else would have been cost prohibitive. As it was, such calculators were never a major source of revenue for the company.

Sadly the company no longer exists. In August 2008 Robert Joseph, a third-generation Joseph descended from the founder, sold the button division to *The Matchless Group* - another Chicago based company with an even longer history. The new owner decided to retain the Parisian Novelty name – renaming the new company: *Matchless Parisian Novelty, Incorporated*. No buyer could be found for the other division. So the printing equipment and any remaining antique *Beaux-Arts* office furniture was sold off piecemeal and the company sadly wound up.

Pouch or Rule Clips – that’s it now?

Despite these latest finds and the newly introduced category of the slide rule clip, clips of any shape or size remain rare and are worth looking out for.

So will this be my last update - **YMTTICNPC**³?

Acknowledgement and References

This latest update was possible because fellow collectors and friends, **Peter Hopp**, **Dr Klaus Kühn** and **Dieter von Jezierski** remembered my unusual and quirky interest in pouch clips and pointed out some new examples.

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³ **YMTTICNPC**: the abbreviation for “*You Might Think That, I Could Not Possibly Comment*” - first coined by the character Francis Urquhart in the 1990 hit BBC political TV series “House of Cards”.