

# Waterman

Classic and modern vintage fountain pens.  
Period 1953 – 1996

Waterman fountain pens:

C/F, Goutte, Concorde, Cotele, Master, Laureat, Maestro.

**The Waterman** name is one of the more recognizable names in fine luxury pens. The famous "Waterman of Paris" pens in their distinctive blue clamshell boxes can be found in high end retailers around the world. Waterman's claims to fame are many, including the invention of the modern fountain pen and the invention of the modern cartridge pen.

What fewer people know is that Waterman was effectively two different companies: the old L. E. Waterman Pen Company of New York, and the current Waterman S.A. of Paris.

Waterman originally started as an American company, which eventually spun off a French subsidiary. When the American company collapsed, the French subsidiary took over the name. Collectors will notice a very sharp difference between vintage and modern Watermans, as the modern pens come from a rather different design lineage.

The modern Waterman company traces its origins to the French subsidiary. In 1914, Jules Fagard becomes the Waterman Company's French agent. Fagard's branch evolved into a semi-autonomous subsidiary under the JiF-Waterman name in 1926, producing American-designed pens as well as local designs.

In 1954, with the closure of Waterman's US manufacturing facilities, JiF-Waterman becomes, in effect, Waterman.

Over time, JiF-Waterman continues to grow, and by 1971 it had acquired the remaining pieces and registered all the appropriate trademarks of the old Waterman company. JiF renamed itself to Waterman S.A. and has carried on the Waterman name ever since.

JiF-Waterman began experimenting with cartridge pens as far back as the twenties, and enjoyed limited success in Europe.

The CF was introduced in 1953/1954 and was the first commercially successful mass market cartridge fountain pen. Plastics solved many of the sealing shortcomings of earlier glass cartridges, and the concept of a cartridge-filling fountain pen took off. Although current Waterman cartridges are incompatible with the original CF, almost every major pen manufacturer has adopted cartridges partially or exclusively for their fountain pens.

Waterman continues to survive today as perhaps the largest French penmakers (and certainly one of the major European penmakers), making it the longest running brand name in fountain pens. Waterman is currently owned by Sanford, the same owners of Parker.

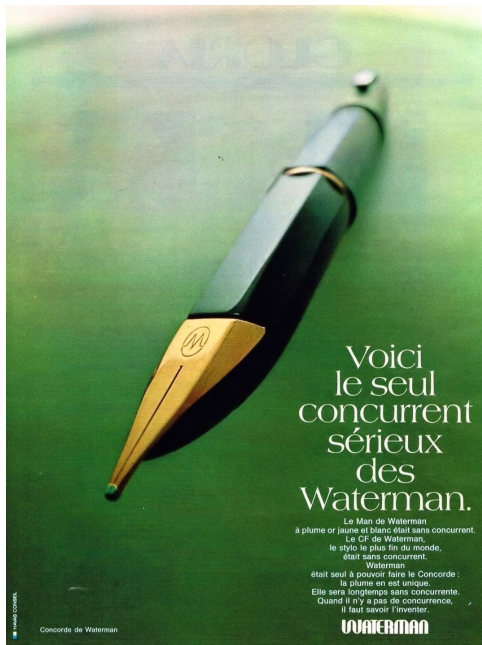


## Waterman Concorde

Cool vintage pen that actually kinda looks like the plane. Angular shapes and an inlaid nib make it look like the 1970s version of the Carene.

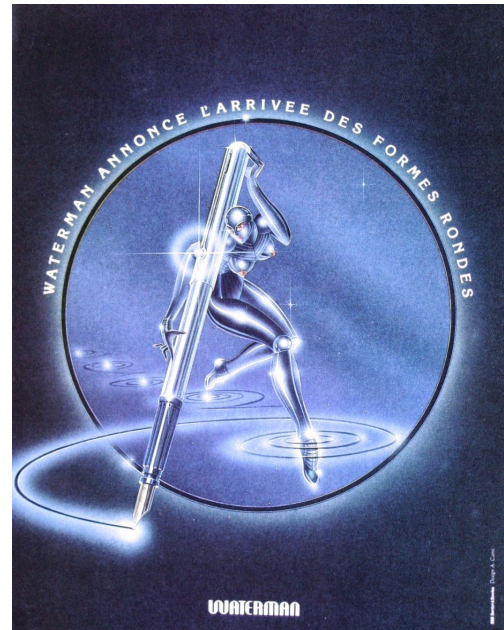
These might go back as far as 1965; certainly by 1971 they were generally available.

The matte plastic ones generally had matching sections, while the metal ones used black sections. Nibs are 18k gold, matching the trim.



## **Waterman Goutte**

Introduced in 1978 and designed by Alain Carre (a moderately famous designer back in that time). The pen has a rather distinctive look. It is long and tubular with rounded ends. The clip is a straight clip (not the usual Waterman split clip) and has a large ball at the end. The nib is 18k gold. But this pen doesn't turn up very often here.



## Waterman CF 1953 - *First cartridge system world wide available*



*This December 18, 1954, advertisement from The Saturday Evening Post proclaims, "What a wonderful way to fill a fountain pen!"*

# Waterman's C/F

Cartridge-filling fountain pens had been pioneered as early as the 1890s, and in the 1930s Jif-Waterman of France marketed a line of glass-cartridge pens built by Waterman in the U.S.A. World War II put a severe crimp in the further development of cartridge pens, but Jif-Waterman did revive the line after the war, and some of them were quite stylish. Shown here is a fully streamlined glass-cartridge pen from that period.



In 1953, however, L. E. Waterman eclipsed these pens entirely when it introduced the first widely successful modern cartridge-filling fountain pen, **Waterman's C/F** (U.S. Patents Nos [2,802,448](#) and [2,987,044](#)).

With its drop-in loading and disposable cartridges, the C/F changed forever the way the world uses fountain pens; but as revolutionary and successful as it was, the C/F was not first to the market. That honor goes to the LUS Atomica, a remarkably cheap but also remarkably well designed and reliable Italian pen, which beat the C/F by about a year.



The Atomica was an excellent pen, and many thousands were sold of the original version and its improved successors. But LUS was a regional company and could not compete with Waterman's global clout; and as the market shook out, it was the C/F that came out on top.

## Studio 29 Pen box

[www.studio29penbox.nl](http://www.studio29penbox.nl)

The design of the C/F was thoroughly modern: sleek and slender in profile, dramatically sculptured in black plastic set with shiny metal (U.S. Patent No [D178,033](#)). In retrospect, the pen's advanced styling (by famed automotive designer Harley J. Earl) seems to have been about half a decade ahead of its time. (Compare the [Parker 61](#), which appeared about three years later, and the appearance in 1957 of similar styling on U.S. automobiles as exemplified by the '57 DeSoto below.) An unfortunate consequence of all that brightwork was a tendency for the section's gold- or rhodium-plated brass "apron" to corrode at the tips, where it is adjacent to the nib. Corrosion of this type, which has in some cases eaten away large areas of the metal, diminishes the value of a C/F significantly.



Internally, the C/F was more robustly engineered than many modern cartridge/converter pens. The sophisticated feed was fabricated of hard rubber and featured a hard rubber center feed. The cartridge piercing tube is metal, not plastic, and the section assembly is well sealed by a rubber gasket to prevent extraneous seepage. This beefier and more reliable design was costly, and as time went by Waterman made changes to reduce the cost; later C/Fs have molded plastic feeds with plastic center feeds. The cartridge piercing tube, however, remained metal through the C/F's product lifetime. The small C/F nib is novel; it fits smoothly into the pen from the front, and when it is pivoted upward into its final position it keys itself in place against molded ledges inside the shell. The feed, inserted from the back, locks the nib so that it cannot pivot downward and fall out.

**Studio 29 Pen box**  
[www.studio29penbox.nl](http://www.studio29penbox.nl)

The C/F cartridge itself seems to have been modeled on the design of the cartridge for the LUS Atomica; but it was not as thoroughly engineered. Both have a metal reinforcing cap at the back and a narrowed “nozzle” that connects to the pen’s piercing tube.

The Atomica’s cartridge nozzle was sealed by a metal ball bearing; when a new cartridge was installed, the piercing tube forced the ball bearing into the cartridge, where its movement served to improve flow by breaking surface tension. The C/F cartridge lacks this advanced feature.

After the U.S. Waterman operation closed down in 1957, Jif-Waterman in France continued to produce different C/F versions to attract new buyers. Among these was a selection of pens with lacquered bodies like this tortoise-shell brown one.



**Catering to the Crowd**

The high-style C/Fs shown above were near the top of the model range, and there was a significant portion of the population who preferred less fancy writing instruments — primarily because they cost less. The C/F 875 shown here, as its model number suggests, was priced at \$8.75, and that price bought a 14K nib — even a flexible one if the purchaser desired. The pen here does have that elusive flex nib, as shown by the chalk mark still present on the underside of its barrel.



At the bottom of the “standard” C/F line, the construction of the cap shows a distinct move to economy, with a visible rivet (bearing a stamped imprint of Waterman’s Ideal globe) to secure the clip instead of the hidden attachment used on most of the more expensive models. Pens at this level have steel nibs:



Waterman isn’t known for school pens the way Sheaffer is, but the least expensive C/F pens would have been ideal for school students; they are rugged, fitted with economical steel nibs, and definitely a step up in style from the almost ubiquitous Sheaffer school pens of the day.

These pens, although they lacked the trendy automotive styling of their more costly siblings, would have been an ideal fit for the budget of a price-conscious student. They had bullet-shaped caps and barrel ends, without the bright barrel tassie that marked pens even as inexpensive as the green-and-white one shown above, and they also lacked the usual C/F nib. These basic pens were fitted with a relatively ordinary nib that wraps around the feed to leave only a narrow gap, or slot, at the bottom:



### **And for Those in the Chips...**

Since the days of gold and silver overlays on hard rubber pens, metal pens have been symbols of prosperity. In those early years, Waterman made some very beautiful pens, and the company's tradition of creating elegant metal designs continued unbroken, long after overlays had faded into obscurity, to the C/F. There were sterling silver C/Fs, solid gold C/Fs, and — for the slightly less well heeled — several attractive gold-plated models. Shown here are two French-made pens, one gold filled in the Barleycorn (*Grain d'Orge*) pattern and one in sexy silver *moiré*:



### **Afterword**

The C/F remained in production for about 30 years, and its styling legacy lives on in the smoothly curving bifurcated clips of several more recent Waterman models; but all good things must end sometime, and Waterman no longer makes even the unique cartridges that the C/F requires. All is not lost, however; at this 2012 writing, the U.S. Waterman service center in Janesville, Wisconsin, still has small supplies of the very solid squeeze-type converter that was designed for the diminutive Waterman Lady but also fits the C/F.

**Waterman C/F**



As a celebration of its 70th birthday, in 1954 Waterman introduced the Waterman C/F, the first large-production cartridge filled pen. Such an innovative pen needed an exceptional designer: **Harley Earl**

Responsible for General Motors styling section between 1927 and 1959, he was the inventor of jets and space crafts motifs in car design, tailfins, two-tone colour, abundance of chrome. Cadillac Eldorado, Chevrolet Bel Air, Buick Skylark, Corvette. Symbols of wealth and trust in the future.

Waterman CF was first produced in U.S.A. and then, after problems of American factory, in Canada, UK and France. The production goes from 1954 to the first years of 80's. We easily find the idiom of Earl design in the CF, especially in the first models, made in U.S.A.: the clip, the metal inlays in the section, the two-tone colour. Among all models, the pens made in France in the factory of Nantes, in the late production in the '70s and '80s, are the most gorgeous; in those years Waterman competed with Parker and most of the patterns of Parker 75 and CF were the same size .



## New era, new series 70s, 80s, 90s

Waterman Goutte (1978), Directeur General (1976), Watermina (1974), Laureat (1981), Cotele, Master (1981), Executive (1980), Exclusive (Late 1980s), Gentleman (1982), Le Man 100 (1985) & 200



### Goutte 1978

Introduced in 1978 and designed by Alain Carre (a moderately famous designer back in that time). The pen has a rather distinctive look. It is long and tubular with rounded ends. The clip is a straight clip (not the usual Waterman split clip) and has a large ball at the end. The nib is 18k gold.

Known colors:

- Silver Fougere ST
- Silver Plate Milleraires (fine vertical lines) ST
- Sterling Silver ST (with blue gem in clip ball)
- Gold Plate GT
- Brushed Stainless GT
- Fluted Gold Plate GT (with green gem in clip ball and gold section)
- Matte Black GT

Doubtless there are more colors, but this pen doesn't turn up very often here.



### Executive 1980s

Waterman Executive 1980s, 18k gold nib, lacquer over brass, cartridge/converter. The Executive is another one of the thin 1980s style pens, often confused for the similar Exclusive. The section features longitudinal ribbed lines.



### Exclusive Late 1980s

Waterman Exclusive circa late 1980s-early 1990s, 18k gold nib, lacquer over brass, cartridge/converter

A long slender tubular pen typical of 1980s Waterman, and therefore easily confused with the similar Executive and Gentleman. The section has a deeply imprinted waffle (or hand grenade like) pattern and there are a bunch of rings at the cap tassie and lip.



### **Gentleman 1982**

Waterman Gentleman circa 1980, 18k gold nib, lacquer over brass, cartridge/converter  
The Waterman Gentleman was the top of the regular line from 1976 through the introduction of the Le Man in 1983 and is the classic tubular lacquer Waterman. Unlike most modern Watermans, the Gentleman's section matches the barrel and is also constructed of heavy brass. This is a heavy and luxurious pen.



### **Le Man 200 Rhapsody 1983 - 1990s**

Waterman Le Man Rhapsody 18k gold nib, resin over brass, cartridge/converter  
The Rhapsody line consists of Le Man 200s in shimmering flake and swirled marble finishes.