



# The Origin of Stencil Duplicating

*W.B. Proudfoot*

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"THE ORIGIN OF STENCIL DUPLICATING is the only documented and authoritative history devoted to this subject. Briefly mentioning the first uses of copying devices in the Babylonian era, Mr. Proudfoot traces a truly fascinating story up to and including the revolutionary years of 1875 to 1905. During the early part of this period stencils were considered in various forms but only emerged as a practical process in 1881. This process was perfected in 1888, subsequently extended to a stencil for use on the typewriter and thus revolutionized long-established office procedures. The copying methods in use in the eighteenth-century and Victorian office prior to that brief but active period of innovation are described and discussed in the first part of this book. The story of the growth of stencil duplicating and the struggles of its pioneers are told in three subsequent parts: Handwriting Stencils, Typewriting Stencils, and Rotary Duplicators in which the technical evolution of the process and its practice is traced. In crediting the inventors and assessing the commercial progress of stencil duplicating it is inevitable that the rise of the House of Gestetner and its founder David Gestetner should emerge as a central part of the story. ABOUT THE AUTHOR: W.B. Proudfoot was born and educated in Dundee. After extensive studies in pharmacy and chemistry he became a lecturer at Dundee Technical College, but moved to London in 1944 to join a research team doing war work on reclaiming rubber at Gestetner Limited, Tottenham. After the war he remained with the firm and was subsequently involved in Gestetner's industrial research and development on stencil duplicating and related products. He was later appointed Head of Research, an appointment he retained up to his retirement in 1970.

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