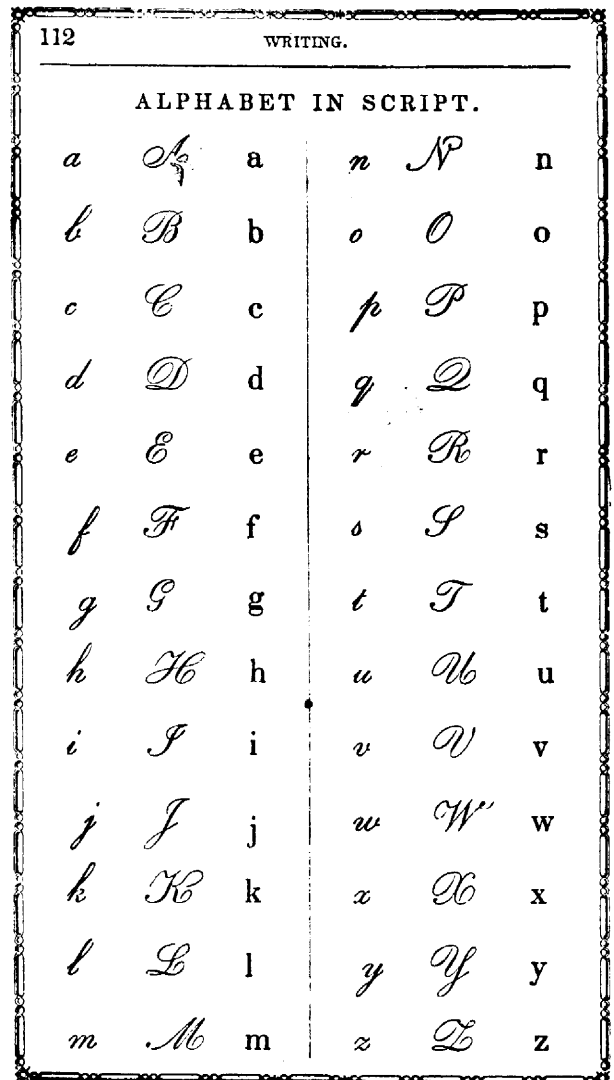


Handwriting in the Civil War

Handwriting

The predominant handwriting style seen in the mid-nineteenth century is known today as Spencerian Handwriting, named after the originator of this style, Platt Rogers Spencer. This particular style replaced the style that dated back to the 18th century which we now call Copperplate style. Spencerian style is characterized by sweeping and ornate upper case letters, with lower case letters that look strikingly similar to the modern style. The so-called “Long S” the lower case “s” character that resembled an “f”, is gone with the rise of Spencerian style. This style of handwriting will dominate American correspondence until the advent of the Palmer method of handwriting in the 1920s.

This is not to say that everyone wrote with a particularly elegant hand. Quite the opposite. Existing samples such as letters and military forms show us that, just like today, there is quite a variety of handwriting within the basic Spencerian style. For those that wish to learn to write in a 19th century Spencerian style, we offer a facsimile page from a child’s school book of 1853, printed in Michigan. This schoolbook would have been in use by young men who, 8 years later, would be involved in the Civil War.



Directions for Using a Steel Nib Pen

To write with this reproduction pen requires much less pressure than we are used to applying when we write today. The easiest way to perfect your 19th century penmanship is to think of this pen as a paintbrush, and apply the same pressure as you would if you were painting the letters on the page.