



Heartland Science

Ohio's Legacy of Discovery & Innovation



Communications

From Greenbacks to Lexis-Nexis

Spencerian System of Penmanship

Platt R. Spencer developed the Spencerian system of penmanship. It explained how all the letters can be made gracefully and rapidly using various combinations of a few basic pen strokes. The Spencerian method was a phase of paleography or the study of language recording. Teachers in almost all American schools adopted the system in the late 19th century. He also developed a way of recording scientific observations that used by scientists everywhere for 70 years.



Spencer was born in 1800 in East Fishkill, NY as one of twelve children. It is said that Spencer learned to write on leather used by a nearby tannery, using dyes as ink. After his father's death, the family relocated to Ashtabula, Ohio, where as a child, Spencer was known to write with a stick in the white sand for hours.

In the 1800's, elegant handwriting was a much sought-after skill. Spencer's penmanship goal was to develop a system that would be comfortable to execute. He strove for natural writing positions, so that a person could write for hours without cramps or strains. He experimented with different methods of holding a pen, positions for the arm and fingers. Ultimately he found a system that was comfortable and produced lovely handwriting. He published his technique -- the Spencerian System of Penmanship -- in several books, many of which are still available for sale today. The Spencerian System took hold and was considered the most beautiful method to emulate.



Spencer served as an administrator of Bryant, Lusk and Stratton Business College in Cleveland. He also taught penmanship in Jefferson, Ohio and lectured on penmanship techniques at the Hiram Institute. Spencer was also known for his active interest in human rights and his anti-slavery efforts. He died in Geneva, Ohio in 1864.

Find out more...

- [Spencer Biography and Photo](http://www.zanerian.com/PRS.html)
(www.zanerian.com/PRS.html)
- [Spencer Biography at Myers University, Cleveland, OH](http://www.dnmyers.edu/myersHistory/chap3.htm)
(www.dnmyers.edu/myersHistory/chap3.htm)