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**The History of Cursive Handwriting in the**  
**United States of America**

Bachelor's Diploma Thesis

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*I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently,  
using only the sources listed in the bibliography.*

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*Lucie Kottavá*

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# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1 The Description of Cursive Handwriting .....</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1 Copperplate.....	10
1.2 Spencerian Cursive Writing System.....	12
1.3 Palmer Method.....	15
1.4 D'Nealian .....	17
<b>2 The History of American Handwriting.....</b>	<b>19</b>
2.1 The First Period of American Handwriting (1600–1800) .....	20
2.2 The Second Period of American Handwriting (1800–1850).....	23
2.3 The Third Period of American Handwriting (1850–1900).....	27
2.4 The Fourth Period of American Handwriting (1900–1922).....	30
2.5 The Fifth Period of American Handwriting (1922–2010).....	32
<b>3 The Importance of Cursive Handwriting in Present Day .....</b>	<b>35</b>
3.1 Common Core State Standards Initiative.....	36
3.2 Keeping Cursive Handwriting Alive .....	38
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Works Cited.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Resumé.....</b>	<b>47</b>

## **Introduction**

The knowledge of reading and writing has been a sign of modern society for centuries. Writing has always been a part of the school curriculum. Until several years ago cursive handwriting was taught everywhere, while manuscript handwriting stayed voluntary. This trend of teaching cursive in schools has stopped not that long ago compared to how long the cursive writing has been around. Even though most of the schools have completely abandoned the teaching of the cursive handwriting, some school still teach cursive briefly after the children embrace writing in print. However, changing one's handwriting or learning new script is a complicated task, because different hand movements have already been a well-established.

The aim of this thesis is to increase the knowledge of cursive handwriting because, in this modern era of computers, cursive writing is not considered to be an essential knowledge and children are not able to read or write cursive. This will be achieved by describing the development of handwriting in the United States of America while focusing mainly on cursive and also by describing different scripts which have dominated America since the seventeenth century. This thesis also states both advantages and disadvantages of cursive writing and the problems with cursive handwriting in the United States of America at the present time.

The first chapter describes four different cursive scripts which were the most popular in the United States of America between the eighteenth and the twenty-first century – Copperplate, Spencerian Script, Palmer Method, and D'Nealian. At first, a visual approach is taken with every script, which is then followed by a description of a methodology and finally the description is completed with a comparison to other scripts.

This chapter is mainly focused on the visual examination, while the second chapter is more focused on the practicality of each script in its era.

Although the focus of this thesis is the history of handwriting in the United States of America, a general history of writing is also briefly stated. The second chapter of this theses then describes the cultural history of handwriting in the United States, while mainly focusing on how the society, revolutions, and past events shaped handwriting and the reasons for changes in handwriting. The history of handwriting in the United States can be divided into five periods. However, there is an ongoing trend of simplifying the cursive handwriting. This trend continues throughout the centuries. Every following script eventually became easier to learn.

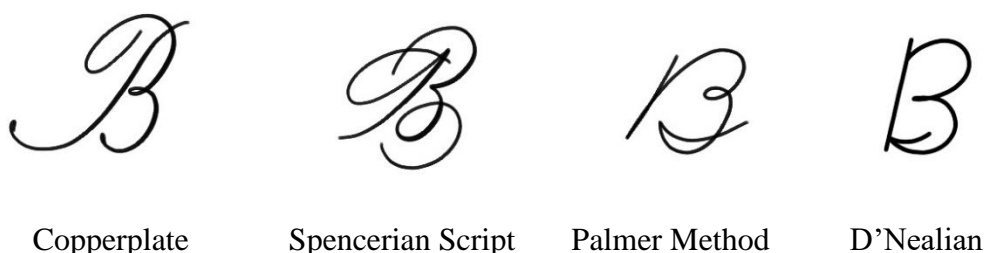
This trend of simplifying the handwriting is seen even in the present, which is mentioned in the third chapter. Cursive writing is currently not required to be learned and forty-one states have already adopted the Common Core State Standards Initiative, which have replaced the English and Language Arts Standards. If the Common Core State Standards Initiative passes in all fifty states, the cursive handwriting will eventually vanish. However, some states which adopted the Common Core, still managed to teach cursive writing in schools.

Furthermore, this thesis mentions the benefits of keeping learning cursive, such as the capability of reading old documents and increase of fine motor skills. There are also many organizations whose goal is to broaden the knowledge of cursive handwriting. However, there are also many reasons why cursive is considered to be old-fashioned. People also need more simple and quicker script than cursive in this fast age of computers, which the manuscript handwriting is.

This theses, however, only analyses the template of the scripts — the books which were used to teach penmen. It does not analyze the handwriting of different people. The analysis of handwriting – graphology – is much more complicated than the analysis of the templates. Graphology is the analysis of the distinction between one’s handwriting and the template. The main focus of this thesis is on the methodology and the characteristics of different templates and how the American history reflects in them.

# 1 The Description of Cursive Handwriting

This chapter focuses in detail on the four most important cursive scripts which were extensively used in the United States of America from the eighteenth century up to the present. The first cursive script, which is described, is Copperplate, which originated in England, but it was used in the United States of America up until the nineteenth century. The second script, which is characterized is the Spencerian Cursive Writing System, which was used for more than a century and was a great foundation for modern cursive scripts. However, after a century of using this system, the Spencerian Script became too difficult and the handwriting was revolutionized with the Palmer Method. The Palmer Method was simpler a faster than the Spencerian Script. But even the Palmer Method eventually became too slow and it was replaced by D'Nealian script. The cursive scripts are described while paying attention to their appearance, letter-formation, and methodology.



*Fig. 1*

Handwriting is determined by a set of rules, which need to adhere in order to create letters. Penmen hold the knowledge of these rules and apply them to achieve legible writing. Penmen should not only be able to use the set of rules to write letters, but they also should understand these rules theoretically. Because penmen are often also teachers and they have always passed down the knowledge of handwriting to other young learners.



In order to analyze the templates of different scripts, basic terminology must be established. Simple strokes are not only excellent for analysis, but also for learning various scripts. When learning penmanship, children usually first learn lines, then curves, and then ovals, and then how to shape them into the basic principles of writing. Only after all of these are mastered, the child is combining them into letters, words and sentences.

In order to talk about the position of letters, several other lines must be established. A baseline is a level line, which can be either real or imaginary, which most of the letters rest on. A midpoint, also often called x-height, is an imaginary line parallel to the baseline. The distance between the baseline and midpoint is the height of the lowercase letter x. When children start learning how to write, the midpoint is usually quite distinct, but it is erased later. When speaking about cursive writing, another two lines, which are parallel with the baseline, are important – an ascender line and a descender line. An ascender is a letter, which is not capital letter nor a short letter. Ascenders are letters b, d, f, h, k, l, and t. Therefore, an ascender line is a line parallel to the baseline, which ascenders go up to. Similarly, a descender is a letter, which is not a capital letter nor a short letter. Descenders are letters g, j, p, q, y, and in some scripts the letter z. A descender line is a line parallel to the baseline, which descenders go down to. The distance between the baseline, the midpoint, the ascender line, and the descender line varies in different cursive scripts.

Most of the old scripts not only contain lowercase and capital letters but also flourishes, which are ornamental strokes used with the intention to decorate the letters. The ability to add flourishes to letters is usually mastered after many years of learning how to write. Normally, all the capital letters are flourished. Although, the penman can add flourishes to ascenders, descenders, and even to short letters, which are at the end of words or sentences. However, lowercase letters are not generally flourished. The penman must master both the formation and placement of flourishes to achieve great legibility.

Another important feature of a script is its weight and its gradient. The weight of a script is the thickness of the lines. The thickness usually varies based on the strokes. In many old scripts downstrokes are often thicker than the upstrokes. However, in modern running hands, the thickness is constant in both downstrokes and upstrokes. Based on the weight, two lines can be distinguished — fine line and shaded line. A fine line is a line which is created when no pressure is applied to the pen. A shaded line is written when the penman adds pressure to the pen while writing.

## **1.1 Copperplate**

Copperplate, as a style of writing, was established in England in the middle of the seventeenth century. Until then, most of Europe used Italic script, which was very artistic and therefore, very slow. There was not a need for a simpler or faster script. Italic script was popular, useful, and fairly readable. It was morality, that played a big part in creating Copperplate. Italic script was used in most of Europe in the Renaissance period. Reformers in England and America, such as Puritans, were not pleased with Italic script, because it was too pretty. Italics is very detailed, decorated, and embellished. It simply very well reflected the Baroque period. Therefore, the Copperplate was established as a result of a reformation in the seventeenth century. Copperplate was also used by almost all Founding Fathers. The Declaration of Independence is, beside of the gothic title, written in Copperplate. And other founding documents of the United States of America are mainly written in Copperplate.



*Fig. 2*

Copperplate is often referred to as English Roundhand or Round Hand because it was based on the round shape of a circle or an ellipse. Roundhand is very plain and simple in comparison to Italics. However, it is still very difficult and complex when it is compared to the Spencerian Script or The Palmer Method. Because almost all letters in English Roundhand have two or more possible forms. The capital letters are flourished up to a point that they are very difficult to read – for example, the capital letter Q is very similar to the number 2.

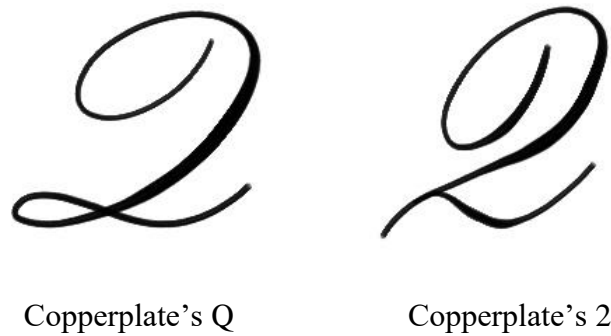


Fig. 3

Copperplate letters are formed by separate distinctive strokes, which mainly use finger movement and not forearm or whole-arm movements and they are quite close together, therefore, the process of writing is quite slow, cautious, and planned.

Copperplate writing is described in detail in George Bickham's *The Universal Penman*, which is mostly written with Copperplate. Bickham states in the introduction of his book that the penman should be careful with over flourishing his letters and that flourishes were designed to fill up empty spots. (Bickham 8-9) Bickham's *The Universal Penman* also describes different variations of the English Roundhand - for women, men and for master penmen. Bickham also shows other alphabets, which was not very common. He described the Roman, Italic, and Gothic alphabets and even more. However, this book contains only the model of these scripts. Only professional penmen were able to achieve such beautiful lettering.

Copperplate was eventually replaced by many different scripts, because it was too difficult to form. Copperplate is a very narrow script. The letters are not well spaced, their

weight is too big, and the slant is also too big. It is difficult to write shaded letters even with modern pens while in a hurry. Copperplate was also seen as too English. After the establishment of the United States of America, an American script was used.

## 1.2 Spencerian Cursive Writing System

Spencerian Script was introduced by Platt Rogers Spencer in his book *Spencerian Key to Practical Penmanship*. Spencerian Script is considered to be the first truly American writing system. It was used for over hundred years and it became the standard for writing. Spencerian Script accentuates the beauty of handwriting and it is one of the most beautiful scripts to have ever been taught. Furthermore, the Spencerian Script is recognized even in the twenty-first century, because it is used in logos of worldwide companies such as Coca-Cola, Ford, and Budweiser.

Platt R. Spencer took inspiration from various English scripts including the Copperplate script and created his own, which is even more based on ellipse and curve than the Copperplate is. Most importantly, Spencerian Script, unlike of Copperplate, not only uses finger movements, but also forearm and whole-arm movements. He developed a new writing system and he spent his whole life teaching writing. P. R. Spencer also helped to revolutionize writing in the United States of America.

Because many scripts later derived from the Spencerian Script, Platt R. Spencer gained the title of “the father of American writing”. (Florey 64) *The Spencerian Key to Practical Penmanship* was written by Platt R. Spencer, but it was never published by him. After his death, his children spent their life following their father’s footsteps and promoted his script, taught writing and published many books about it. One of these books was *The Spencerian Key to Practical Penmanship*. However, this book did not contain enough practice and later the children of Platt R. Spencer published *The Theory of*

*Spencerian Penmanship for Schools and Private Learners*. This new edition of Spencerian Penmanship was published in five volumes to suit the need of a different level of the penman's ability. His children became known as Spencerian Authors and helped to popularize Spencerian Script even more. Lynman P. Spencer, who was probably the finest penman of his age, even expanded the Spencerian Script and contributed to it with another publication – *New Spencerian Compendium of Penmanship*.



Fig. 4

Spencerian Penmanship is very elliptical, very wide, and very loose. It also has almost no weight, and the penman is able to add his own style to this script because the script is spontaneous in its flourishes. The Spencerian System supports a free hand and arm motion, which leads to writing with ease while conserving legibility and speed. Also the slant of the script helps both legibility and speed. Spencerian script adheres to the fifty-two-degree slant, because, it is the best ratio between the best legibility and the fastest writing. Although Spencerian Script does have shaded lines, their shading is not extensive. All shaded lines are still fairly thin compared to the Copperplate.

Spencerian writing system was first designed for business schools and for professional penmen. Therefore, students are first taught the correct posture, the right pen-holding, and the basic movements on several exercises. Both finger and forearm movement are used extensively, however, whole-arm movement is used only with flourishes. Spencerian script also emphasizes that a few basic strokes should be learned first and after all of these are mastered then the penman further studies the composition

of letters and their connections. Spencerian alphabet is based on seven basic principles of writing. These seven basic strokes form most of the letters in the script.

As to the size, Spencerian Script is considered to be a running hand, because the height of the short letters, such as the lowercase letter u, is the same as the distance between the parallel lines of the letter u. The size of all letters is described in detail in the *Theory of Spencerian Penmanship for schools*. The script uses two ascender lines - the first ascender line is for the stem letters d, and t, and the second ascender line is for the letters f, h, k, and l. The spaces between the and midpoint is the same as the space between the midpoint and the first ascender line and between the two ascender lines. Even though, Spencerian Script itself is very well thought through, thanks the different sizes, its very difficult to execute.

Spencerian handwriting also allows more variations than Copperplate does. Apart of the general hand, which was generally used in schools, there is also a running hand, which allows fast writing and the capital letters are not as flourished as they are in the general hand. *New Spencerian Compendium* also includes Back Hand script, whose letters slopes to the left instead of the right. They are described as “very legible, but not so well suited to easy, rapid, execution as those sloping to the right” (Spencer 44) Another variation of the Spencerian Script is its Italian hand which is over flourished and was used mainly by professional penmen.

Even though the Spencerian Script is beautiful, it was simply not quick enough to keep up with the industry. It was designed for penmen and not for the broad public and therefore, when one tries to write quickly while using Spencerian script, one’s handwriting becomes very illegible. And because of hand and arm movements in Spencerian handwriting, after a long period of writing, the hand and arm begin to ache.

Spencerian writing is also very detailed and flourished and when the school system changed it became too difficult to read effortlessly.

### **1.3 Palmer Method**

Although Austin Norman Palmer studied and mastered the Spencerian script, the demand for a simple and quick hand influenced him so greatly that he decided to create a new script, which became known as the Palmer Method. However, Palmer did not dislike the Spencerian script, even in the introduction of his book *The Palmer's Guide to Business Writing*, he explained that the Palmer Method “has not been written to exploit anyone's skill as a pen artist” (Palmer 2). The Palmer Method was not created to replace the Spencerian script, but to give people more options. Palmer was mainly interested in a script, which would be easy to form, legible, and quick.

*Palmer's Guide to Business Writing* contains very strict instructions on posture, pen-holding, and even the pen itself. “Under no circumstances attempt to execute business writing with an oblique holder. The oblique holder is all right in its place, and its place is in executing ornamental writing.” (Palmer 7) Palmer Method is learned while using 'Crown' penholder, which is more similar to a present-day fountain pen. Thanks to the use of everyday pen, the Palmer Method was brought to the public.

The structure of *Palmer's Guide to Business Writing* is very similar to *The Spencerian Key to Practical Penmanship*. Both methods start with an introduction, which explains the benefits of using this script. Then for a long period of time, the young learners focus on pen-holding, posture, and materials. Both books contain excessive amount of practice. However, the theory and practice of arm and hand movements and basic strokes in the Palmer Method is much longer and much more detailed than in the Spencerian penmanship. Palmer's practice of basic movement and strokes is supposed to ensure, that

every penman will have the exact same letters and therefore, the Palmer Method will remain legible among many writers. However, this extensive and almost endless writing of lines, curves, and circles is the main reason, why the Palmer Method is not popular now.

The image shows the title 'The Palmer Method' written in a cursive, handwritten style. The letters are fluid and connected, with a consistent slant and a uniform height for the lowercase letters. The overall appearance is elegant and professional.

*Fig. 5*

Palmer's script is simple and plain. The script is not as round as the Spencerian script is, but the Palmer Method uses short and wide letters. Because of A. N. Palmer's inspiration was mainly in the Spencerian penmanship, there are some similarities between the Palmer Method and the Spencerian Script. The similarities are, however, only with lowercase letters, out of which almost all look the same. Although A. N. Palmer did change the formation of several letters to achieve simplicity. The biggest and most important change with lowercase letters is that Palmer's all lowercase letters reach the same height. Spencerian lowercase letters vary in height. Most of Spencer's lowercase letters are between the baseline and the midpoint, however, the lowercase letters p, r, and s are extended few millimeters over the midpoint. Then there are the stem letters - d and t, which are extended even more than p, r, and s. And to make it even more complicated, the ascenders - letters b, f, h, k, and l are extended even more than the stem letters. And of course, capital letters reach even further. Therefore, all letters in the Spencerian Script reach up to five different heights. Because Palmer wanted to simplify the Spencerian Script, the height of the letters was completely changed. Lowercase letters are of two different heights - midpoint and the ascender line. And to achieve even more simple script the capital letters and the ascenders are of the same height.



Palmer's capital letters are also simpler than Spencer's. Even though the capital letters have some flourishes, they are not as extensive as with the Spencerian Script and lowercase letter are never flourished. Some flourishes remained because they distinguish the cursive script from a print script. The small abolishment of flourishes leads to good legibility, fast writing, and easy learning, which was the goal of A. N. Palmer. Also, the slant is of sixty degrees, which helps the legibility even more. The Palmer Method is also faster because it does not have any weight. All strokes are of the same thickness, which helps with the speed of the writing because the penman does not have to contemplate of his hand movements as much.

#### **1.4 D'Nealian**

Even though the Palmer Method was quite revolutionary, it still needed to change, when manuscript writing became more popular. A completely new style of writing and teaching writing derived out of the Palmer Method – D'Nealian. D'Nealian style of writing and teaching was created by Donald N. Thurber, who was a primary school teacher. The name of this method comes from its author and it is a combination of his first name and his middle name – Donald Neal. The D'Nealian method was created with the intention to help children learn both cursive and manuscript handwriting because the D'Nealian method has two different forms – print and cursive.

Donald N. Thurber created the two scripts to be similar and most importantly, not to be difficult to incorporate both in one's handwriting. Both D'Nealian cursive and print handwriting have the same slant, which helps when children need to learn both. Most letters in D'Nealian are either the same or very similar and have the same size. Even though Donald N. Thurber got his inspiration from the Palmer Method, his main

inspiration was not in the letters themselves, but in the creation of simple and easy to learn script.

*D'Nealian cursive*  
*D'Nealian print*

*Fig. 6*

The cursive script is similar to the Palmer Method, but the lowercase letters are even more round because it is easier to shape them for children. The D'Nealian cursive also has a simpler form of the letters than the Palmer Method, because Donald N. Thurber wanted to achieve a cursive script, which would be as similar to a manuscript as possible. The D'Nealian cursive only reaches up to two different heights. All capital letters and all ascenders are of the same height. And then the rest of the lowercase letters has the same height. Therefore, D'Nealian cursive, as well as D'Nealian manuscript, uses, apart of the baseline, only three assistant lines – midpoint, descender line, and ascender line. The capital letters in D'Nealian cursive are very simple. Some letters even look exactly the same, which also helps children when learning cursive after mastering the print. The biggest difference between the Palmer Method and D'Nealian cursive is with the capital letters, which are never flourished and that helps to achieve simplicity even more. The letters also have bigger slant than they do in the Palmer Method, which helps with legibility.

## 2 The History of American Handwriting

Writing is a tool, which helps to preserve the history of humankind. Thanks to handwriting, people maintain language and cultural heritage of most nations, even those which no longer exist. The nations which had never developed their handwriting often changed their language, which then either developed into several dialects or they adopted the language of a nearby nation, which already had well-developed handwriting. The evolution of handwriting is closely connected to the tools, which were used to write with. The tools usually depended on location, natural resources, and human inventiveness.

Handwriting has been evolving for over 5000 years. Cave paintings are the oldest predecessors to present day writing. However, cave paintings could serve the purpose of an art piece and not bear a piece of information as pictograms do. Therefore, cave paintings cannot be described as writing. The most famous cave paintings were found in South Europe in caves Altamira, Pasiefa, and Lascaux. The oldest writing actually similar to scripts is Hieroglyphs and wedge-shaped scripts. “The Sumerians were drawing pictures on wet clay of the objects that made up their world—a tree, say, or a house.” (Florey 37) Their writing tool was very similar to a pencil. The Ancient Egyptians and Sumerians created their writing to record a religious text for other generations. This script was built using symbols which represented objects. Every symbol represented one word.

Later the handwriting evolved and the signs became more conceptual. They symbolized phonetic sounds. Phoenicians created a new script which consisted of twenty-two symbols. The writing was revolutionized into simple symbols instead of pictograms. The Phoenician script is very revolutionary because most of the present-day alphabets evolved from this script. Greeks modified the Phoenician script around 700 BC. The two most important Greek alphabets then derived from this modification – west, and east. The

present-day Greek alphabet was established from the east modification. And the Latin alphabet, which most nations use now, was established from the west modification. All American handwriting is just a modification of the Latin Alphabet.

## **2.1 The First Period of American Handwriting (1600–1800)**

The history of American handwriting can be divided into five periods based on the techniques which were used, the form of the scripts, and the influence. In the first period of American writing, which was from 1600 to 1800, the ability to write was considered to be a high skill. Prior to the nineteenth century, cursive writing was a privilege, which was only mastered by a percentage of people mainly from an upper social class with a status.

Unlike writing, reading was a necessity mastered by many. However, there were definitely differences in reading among time, location, social status, sex, and religion. The ability to read was significantly more common in the eighteenth century than in the seventeenth century. Almost everybody was able to read in New England, but in the southern colonies, reading was not common (Thornton 4). Also reading literacy was higher in cities than in the countryside. Men had generally higher literacy than women. Reading was taught to children at the age of five or six to achieve Bible literacy (Thornton 4). In most cases reading was taught by female members of society – usually a mother or another relative, or later by a female teacher at school. But only men were able to teach writing and not women.

Writing and reading were not taught at the same school. Schools with the sole purpose of teaching writing were very common. Many desired writers also attended private evening courses which were offered by master penmen. The writing was a skill made for men, there were not many penwomen. However, women did know how to write, but there were not many and their penmanship was different. No particular script

dominates the American handwriting in the seventeenth century, because members of different parts of society used different scripts. Usually, businessmen and vendors attended the evening schools and their handwriting was very loopy and strong. Women's handwriting was very sophisticated and their letters were usually shaded. Upper-Class members, who were generally very wealthy, had the most interesting handwriting. They did not adhere to any rules and their handwriting was very illegible. If a letter from this period is considered, a social class of the author can be estimated solely based on the handwriting and not the information in it.

However, later in the eighteenth century, Copperplate became quite common among the upper class. Copperplate is considered to be very functional. It was obviously used for handwriting, but it was also used for printing, which helped with the general knowledge of this script. Even though Copperplate was originally designed for business, its form allows for both simpler and more complex styles. The style of Copperplate which was usually used by ladies was simpler and more elegant than its general form. Ladies were not considered to be good penmen and they only used handwriting for personal intentions, therefore their hand need not to be very complex. All letters in this style had the same weight to achieve even more simplicity. And women were also considered to be more elegant than men and that is very well reflected in their handwriting. The Roundhand which was used by professional penmen was more complex and more flourished than its general form. Because the craft was the main interest of these penmen, they mastered the ability to change or alternate the script to make it either simpler or more complex than the general form was. Penmen were able to add many flourishes to their letters. Professional penmen also generally added more complex shading to this script.

Master penmen were considered to be very well educated, had a high social status, and had enough wealth. Penmen, who mastered cursive writing, and who had well-formed

letters, were valued by society. The writing was also very sought. These penmen were in demand to write many documents, such as certificates, legal documents, and books. They were often hired by companies or businesses. Penmen usually “established a shop as other craftsmen did, under a sign - the hand and pen - which symbolized their expertise.” (Thornton 12) Penmen were also often doing the work of bookkeepers, notaries public, or legal scribes.

The writing skill was usually handed down from penman to penman, because of a lack of educational books and courses. The lack of study materials resulted in the almost exclusive use of books from the United Kingdom. “Even when manuals on the subject began to be published in the Colonies in the middle of the eighteenth century, they were either a reprint of English publications or largely dependent on English models.” (Yeandle 294). The most popular was George Bickham’s *The Universal Penman* or Benjamin Franklin’s *The American Instructor*. However, some penmen published their own books and created their own practice sheets, which were later used for teaching in their evening classes.

Teaching handwriting was very demanding. Not only there was a lack of books, but also the preparation for writing was very time-consuming. First, the penmen were taught how to cut a nib from various available feathers. If the quill was badly made, it did not hold the ink well, it dried up quickly, or it carried the ink unevenly, which destroyed the whole work. In this period, penmen mostly used the quill pen, which required plenty of time, care, and money to shape, prepare, and keep in a functional state. Apart from learning letter, the master penmen also explained how to use the quill to get the best ink-flow and to get thin upward strokes and thick downward strokes. Quills were available for purchase in stores, however, not everybody had the means to purchase quills. Quills were also not very durable and had to be constantly sharpened or exchanged. Therefore,

only the members of the upper class of society had the means to actually buy quills. Most people and mostly professional penmen made them from feathers.

Instead of teaching students for several hours a day, the teacher had to spend his time making copies for them. The cost of paper was very high and therefore instead of paper, birch bark was often used for copybooks. (Ward 64) The lead pencil was not very common in this period. Children used a lead plummet, which was a block of lead shaped like pencil, to rule their own paper for writing. The ink was made by braising nut-galls in water with rusty nails. (Wickersham 192) The penmen also had to learn how to mix their own inks, because it was not available in stores.

Master penmen usually manage to become proficient in more than one script. Apart of general round hand, they also mastered italics and Italian hand. They usually also learnt print writing, which was very common among all the social classes, and most importantly, it was used for learning reading. Even though master penmen were able to learn many different scripts, some writers only managed to master one.

## **2.2 The Second Period of American Handwriting (1800–1850)**

After the American Revolution, the entire government was restructured and with the new government came hatred towards everything English related. This hatred against Great Britain made an impact on education. Suddenly, the English textbooks were not sufficient and Americans started to produce their own books. The hatred towards England greatly influenced this transition period. However, it was not only influenced by the hatred towards England, but also by the friendly relationship between the United States of America and France. Thanks to this friendship Pestalozzi's educational theories were embraced to teach handwriting.

There are many reasons why Copperplate writing became outdated and inconvenient to use, but two reasons are distinct – patriotism and simplicity. Copperplate was established in England by English authors, taught with English books and the newly established United States of America did not have a great relationship with the United Kingdom. After the American War of Independence, the Americans did not want English handwriting. Americans were in a need of their own American Script.

In this period, textbooks used either four or five guidelines for letters to help learners practice. These lines were inspired by the lines – also called staff – which are used in musical notations. Thanks to the use of these lines, penmen were able to exactly measure the height of the letters. These guidelines were horizontal, however, textbooks and practice sheets also had vertical lines, which regulated the width of the letters, the spacing between them and their slant. The usage of goose quill and lead plummet started to fade away. Penmen used steel pens instead of quills and the lead plummet was replaced by lead pencils.

Even though Copperplate was still used at the beginning of this period, it was only popular among the people that were able to write. Education was of course only available for Caucasians. Only businessmen and members of the wealthy society were taught how to write and how to read handwriting. Beautiful and legible handwriting was a sign of an aristocracy. An average American of the eighteenth century did not know how to write or how to read handwriting. The handwriting was completely unnecessary for them. And “slaves were discouraged from learning to write, lest they communicate escape plans to each other or try to contact the outside world.” (Florey 85) Handwriting became more popular, when public schools became more common and when handwriting became a part of the curriculum, which was in the late eighteenth century.



However, cursive handwriting became available for women in this period. Women of the upper class became more independent and beautiful and legible script became a necessity for them. Books for women and men were almost the same. Women's script was still different from man. Handwriting became more popular among women. Books in this period generally described three different types of scripts. There was a business script offered for man of the upper class, business men, and merchants. Then there was an oversized script, which was more round and easier to learn than the business hand and was used by beginners. Payson describes the style of women's handwriting to be "of smaller size, so as to render them more suitable for ladies" (112). Women used Ladies Hand, which was not only reduced in size but also more elegant.

Legible and beautiful penmanship was in this period a sign of a great character. "Businessmen did indeed regard good handwriting as a necessary qualification for office work." (Thornton 43) It was a sign of a good breeding, discipline, and individuality. The penmanship was considered to be a great representation of its author. The handwriting was more legible, more beautiful, and more elegant the higher the social status was.

The involvement of shaded letters in this period was supported by the creation of the flexible pointed pen. Prior to the nineteenth century, the quill was mostly used for writing. When the flexible pointed pen was invented, it was not used in Europe, because it was not suited for writing the Italics script, but it was mainly used with Copperplate in England and later it was popularized in the United States. However, the flexible pointed pen was still expensive, and only a few penmen were able to afford it. When this pen became more common in all social classes, cursive handwriting became even more popular, because it was easier to shape the letters with the flexible pointed pen than it was with the quill.

The difference between the first and the second period is not only in the textbooks, materials, and teaching, but there is also a difference in the method of writing. This period was influential because of muscular-movement writing. In muscular-movement writing, the manner of writing is more important than the form. This method was developed by Joseph Carstairs. He published a system of exercises, which were supposed to be used when teaching young penmen. This system only trained the movement of the hand, the posture, and muscle work, and it did not teach any scripts. The principle of muscular-movement writing is that flowing, and legible script is only possible, only the motion of the hand of the penman is effortless, and painless. This easy motion is achieved by combining the movement of joints of the fingers, the wrist, the elbow, and most muscles in hand and forearm.

Before learning how to write letters, the penmen first had to learn, how to form basic shapes and strokes. These basic strokes included curves, loops, and turns. Instead of teaching letters as a whole, they were divided into parts - key elements. And letters and words were formed by joining these elements. When writing a text, the master penmen would dictate numbers, which corresponded to the elements. This method of teaching writing is very characteristic of this period.

The Carstairs family was England based, which was a trouble for the newly founded United States. Carstairs' method was, therefore, popularized by B. D. Foster in his book *Practical Penmanship, a Development of the Carstairian System*, who said that the method "is based on the unerring laws of nature as developed in the anatomy of the arms, hands, and fingers." (Foster xvii). Muscular-movement writing is important for young learners because while learning shapes, fingers are taped in a harness to keep them from moving. Therefore, the shapes are created by the movement of the wrist and elbow and not by the movement of fingers. This method was used mainly in small classes of

maximum twenty students and the knowledge can be taught in twenty lessons with six to 12 hours of practice per twenty days. (Foster, 17) And after all the fundamental strokes are learned, fingers are freed from the harness and details are created by the movement of fingers.

The Carstairian method of muscular-movement writing is crucial to American handwriting because it – at least in some way – influenced every method of teaching handwriting, which was created after the 1850s. Some methods only took inspiration from the small use of finger movement from Joseph Carstairs' method. Some methods were even more extreme and did not allow finger movement at all. And some methods got their inspiration from Joseph Carstairs by learning hand movements first and later learning shapes, letters, and connectors.

### **2.3 The Third Period of American Handwriting (1850–1900)**

All methods of teaching handwriting were questioned in the late 1800s. All the books which were published between 1850 and 1900 tried to change the methods that were established fifty years prior. The third period of handwriting brought new styles of handwriting, new scripts, and new methods. The books did not only describe scripts and methods, but also reformed the position of the hand, the arm, and the body. Not only were the scripts and methods revolutionized, but also the desks and the position were also reformed.

Most of the methods published in this period derive from Joseph Carstairs. First, elementary shapes and strokes were established and practiced for a long period. Later, they were combined into more complex shapes, then into letters, and then finally into words. The letters were created by complex movements which were the combination of

hand, forearm, and arm movement. However, unlike muscular-movement writing, the new method used extreme arm movements and almost no finger movements.

The most important book, and also method, in this period, was published by Platt Rogers Spencer. Spencerian Method is mostly used because of its “use of the whole arm from the shoulder, the elbow being raised slightly from the desk, and the hand sliding on the nails of the third and fourth fingers” (Spencer 7) This style was at first taught in business schools, where it was usually explained and practiced for up to twelve hours a day. But soon after that, it became the base of handwriting in “most public and private schools across America” (Florey 72). Spencerian Script was spread to all social classes.

Cursive handwriting became more common when the public schools did. The children in public schools were of various diversity. Every school used to have Protestants, but now it was common for African Americans, and for poor children to attend schools. And all children, no matter the social class, were writing in the same script. In the previous two periods, different social classes had different scripts, but that changed. However, the differences between social classes were still seen in the penmanship. “Handwriting functioned as a form of self-presentation” (Thornton 52). Men with the beautiful and legible hand were usually part of high social class and were offered better jobs than men who had sloppy handwriting.

Even though everybody was taught the same script, there were some variations. Women’s script was much more complex. The ladies hand was flourished, completed with ornaments, and included shaded letters. Women mainly used handwriting in private correspondence, which took time and therefore, they were not in need of fast handwriting. Men, on the other hand, were writing fairly quickly and legibly at the same time. Their script did not have many flourishes and was generally easy to execute because they used their penmanship at work.

In both the first and the second period, the handwriting was mostly used by businessmen and their script was strong and difficult. However, in this period that was changed and “Business Writing served the need for a quickly written, legible form of writing that could be used in all commercial endeavors. It shows little variation in stress, or weight with no flourishes of any kind” (Sull 21). The handwriting of businessmen became easy to shape because merchants needed to quickly write down their notes.

An ellipse was a considered to be a base for most scripts in this period, including the Spencerian Script, which was developed from an elliptical curve, which is the most natural to write for a hand. Penmanship and especially the Spencerian Script was designed to be used by all social classes. Therefore, the script needed to be easy to form. Writing elliptical letters is natural to the hand and from this period onwards all cursive scripts derived from this knowledge.

This period was revolutionary in many ways - the letters had more round shapes, penmen used whole arms, and a new style of books appeared. Beginning in this period, instead of sole books and practice sheet, a series of books were published. The United States of America adopted a graded system in public schools, and children, which were taught handwriting in public schools, needed one book for each grade. It was also the Spencerian script, which was mostly used in public schools. The graded system had a large impact on the books. Because of the grading system, the series was divided into several books based on the improvement in the writing of the penmen or based on the children’s grade at school.

All of these crucial changes lead to more efficient writing which was very demanded in this period. And this demand for more efficient writing influenced the establishment of writing classes in commercial schools. Public schools then took inspiration in several of courses which were taught in commercial schools and a new type

of courses was then established in public schools. However, these public school courses were criticized, because the authors created these courses for commercial schools and therefore they were not optimized for problems with children and their special needs. These courses were a complete failure in elementary schools.

## **2.4 The Fourth Period of American Handwriting (1900–1922)**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, American education was extremely changed. The ongoing demand for a fast and easy form of writing influenced more changes in scripts and methods. Thanks to the Education Act of 1870, a network of elementary schools was established. And most importantly, a connection between teaching reading and teaching writing was built and “any child who attended primary school could not only decipher a text but also hold a pen and write at least few words” (Clayton 240). Thanks to the combination of learning how to read – visually learning symbols and sounds, with the creation of shapes, children would learn how to both read and write more quickly. Because the learning of reading is similar to learning of writing, these two should be taught together and should complement each other. When the technique, how reading and writing were taught, was finally changed, students were able to learn more effectively.

Because of the Second Industrial Revolution, people were in need of a quick script, which had easy to form letters. But also, women were able to work more and they were usually personal assistants and the main part of their job was to type and take note and they needed good penmanship. Women eventually became interested in the business world and enrolled in business schools. Up to this period, there was a set style of handwriting - the business hand, which was exclusively designed for men. However, the business world lost its gender imbalance. And therefore there was not a need for a script

for men only. Women wrote with the same hand as men did. In this period all different variation of the scripts started to fade.

Although the Spencerian Script was revolutionary, it had its flaws. The biggest flaw was that penmen simply could not write quickly enough. This was changed by A. N. Palmer – the inventor of the Palmer Method, which managed to combine legible, consistent and fast script. Similarly to Spencerian Script, the Palmer Method was developed for business schools and later was adapted to public schools. Almost 75 % of all elementary schools in the United States of America adopted the Palmer's Method to their system. “More than 25 million people had been Palmerized” (Florey 80). A. N. Palmer’s method also managed to shorten the practice time to thirty minutes per day and to simplify Spencerian Script, which was full of curls and flourishes. Palmer method became popular because of its clean, simple, and easy to read letters. Most people favored this script because its simplicity increased the speed of writing and effortlessness of reading.

Between the 1900 and 1922 the teaching of handwriting was influenced by the large amount of paper used. Because students spent plenty of time on drills, large amount of paper was needed. Apart of books and copy-books, students were supplied with practice pads or sheets of paper. Sometimes, when there was a lack of these, students used old-style books, but wrote new scripts in the lines.

The biggest impact that the fourth period had on handwriting was the elimination of different writing styles. Both women and men were taught the same script. The books were also for both upper and lower social classes. There were undoubtedly differences in penmanship as a result of different personalities, but the template was the same for men and women.

The increase in speed is an ongoing trend when it comes to handwriting. Speed became necessary during the Industrial Revolution when a need for a quick hand was crucial for keeping up with production in industrial companies. Because of the need for speed, the script became more simple in its form, and all unnecessary strokes such as flourishes or difficult connectors were removed. However, this trend of simplifying the script was excessive and almost unreasonable, because some scripts lost their beauty.

## **2.5 The Fifth Period of American Handwriting (1922–2010)**

The only handwriting style taught in school used to be cursive writing. This was changed when Marjorie Wise, who was England based educator, taught manuscript writing at Columbia University Teachers College in 1922. “Within a year, twenty-seven schools had adopted manuscript writing into their penmanship curriculum (...) levelling off toward the end of the 1920s at 152 schools” (Thornton 171) The curriculum was changed, because of the belief that the whole-arm movement was not developed enough in elementary school pupils and therefore it should not be taught. The combinations of moving their arm, hand, and fingers, while thinking about the letter and watching the script was too difficult for small children, and therefore the beautiful cursive script could not be achieved. On the other hand, the manuscript writing “consists of simple and discrete letterforms (...) could be mastered by any child without such intensive practise” (Hawkins and Razali 308) In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the manuscript writing was a temporary solution “one to be discarded once students were physiologically ready to learn ‘real’ writing” (Thornton 174). This system, which first taught the manuscript writing in order to achieve fast writing and later taught the time-consuming cursive writing, still valued the beautiful cursive scripts and the work of master penmen.



Cursive became unimportant after the educational movement in the 1980s and children have been mainly writing in manuscript since then. However, cursive writing was still taught at schools, after the manuscript had been fully mastered. However, the transition from manuscript to cursive is difficult. Both children, as well as parents, did not understand the need of two different handwriting systems. D'Nealian helps children to learn both cursive and manuscript and to combine these two scripts together.

The D'Nealian system first appeared in 1978 as a way to ease the problem with the difficult transition from manuscript to cursive writing. Because D'Nealian cursive writing and manuscript are very similar, then it should theoretically be effortless to learn cursive handwriting while using D'Nealian than while writing with a traditional cursive method. However, D'Nealian is criticized in various ways. Steve Graham, who is Professor in the Division of Leadership and Innovation in Teachers College, stated in 1993 that there is no credible evidence which confirms that D'Nealian does make a difference in handwriting (Sheehan and Graham 92). The biggest issue with D'Nealian is that the children are taught to write D'Nealian cursive in the first or second grade, which is too early, because manuscript writing is still not mastered. Children should learn print handwriting first and after years of practice they should learn cursive.

Cursive writing generally demands many hours of practice. Penmen usually spend plenty of time on basic shapes and strokes, then on letters, and then finally on connectors. These time-consuming practices were the waste of children's creativity, self-expression, and imagination. Manuscript writing became a part of public education because it was fast and easy to learn for all children regardless of their learning disabilities such as the disorder of written expression or reading disorder.

The manuscript handwriting made writing much faster than it used to be. Instead of spending many hours on drawing ovals and curves, children spent only a few hours on

drills and then quickly move to easy letters. Children also were not demanded to write with pen and ink, but they wrote either with a pencil or they used a chalk and a board.

With all changes in the script, the education also had to change. Teachers were trained in writing the new scripts and as well as educating the new scripts to others. Universities and colleges established courses which lead to certificates and diplomas and teachers were required to graduate these courses. The teaching of manuscript writing started because of its educational approach. However, this than in the 1980s evolved into an educational movement. With this movement writing changed from the process of writing, learning certain scripts, and artistry, into only the documentation of ideas, expression of thoughts, and sentence and paragraph structure. Cursive writing is not an expertise that needs to be mastered to be a part of a higher social class.

The biggest difference between the present education system and the past educational systems is the amount of time it spends on instructions, which is only up to an hour per week, while it used to be many hours even per day (Vi Supon 3). Instead of spending many hours on cursive writing, children are briefly explained the instructions of manuscript writing and schools can spend more time on different subjects.

### **3 The Importance of Cursive Handwriting in Present Day**

In the age of fast advancing technologies, computers, and smart phones, which is the twenty-first century, the technologies force us to abandon putting a pen to paper as much as we did a hundred years ago. However, the access to a computer is not always present, therefore teaching handwriting is still relevant. Writing on the keyboard and writing with a pen need to coexist. Therefore, schools should be able to teach their students to master both of these skills. When it comes to handwriting, cursive has been taught and used for centuries. Few years ago, the cursive writing started to vanish from the schools completely being replaced by print writing. Cursive writing is an important skill and it needs to be maintained in the school curriculum.

The ability to type quickly on a keyboard while not making many typos is an important and very sought skill even by young children. Children, who have barely mastered handwriting, are learning to use a keyboard even in kindergarten (Layton). However, handwriting is still a skill which every child should be required to achieve. Handwriting and especially cursive handwriting has more benefits than just to have a way of note-taking when a computer is broken or its battery is flat.

Being able to write and read in cursive connects people to their past. All of the founding documents were written in cursive. Until the invention of the typewriter, many scientific, historical and other significant documents were written in cursive. Even the printing machines used script, which is very similar to cursive. “Cursive allows you to read handwritten notes from older people or those from other countries who will often write in cursive. In addition, it allows you to access historical materials” (Darling). If the

teaching of the cursive writing will be terminated everywhere in the world, future generations will not be able to read any of these documents.

Cursive handwriting also helps our nervous system. “Scientists are discovering that learning cursive is an important tool for cognitive development, particularly in training the brain to learn functional specialization—that is, the capacity for optimal efficiency. In the case of learning cursive writing, the brain develops a functional specialization that integrates both sensation, movement control, and thinking” (Klemm). The cursive writing is a very important skill from a cognitive standpoint because it provides hand-eye coordination, sensory-motor coordination and makes us use our thinking memory. But most importantly, cursive writing engages both hemispheres of the brain at the same time.

### **3.1 Common Core State Standards Initiative**

The government of the United States of America approved a new style of education in 2010, which marked cursive writing as unnecessary skill. This new style of education is called Common Core State Standards and they have been adopted in forty-one states, four territories, and the District of Colombia. The Common Core State Standards Initiative is, according to their website, “a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy” (About the Standards), which help children to acquire a very important skill for their future life – the use of digital tools. The Common Core State Standards encourage children to extensively use computers from a very young age.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative does not demand children to have the ability to write in cursive. The Common Core State Standard for writing specifies that children should by the end of fourth grade “demonstrate sufficient command of

keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting” (“English Language Arts Standards”). These writing standards are categorized into four broad areas: text types and purposes, production and distribution of writing, research to build and present knowledge, and range of writing. However, penmanship is not mentioned anywhere in the Common Core State Standards.

Even though the Common Core State Standard Initiative is generally bad for cursive handwriting, this initiative has some benefits for American Education. The biggest benefit of the Common Core State Standards is that students are better prepared for college and work and are able to think more critically. Students are not only required to come up with the right answer but also to explain the answer. Furthermore, the students are able to understand what knowledge they should acquire. Thanks to this initiative, different states are able to accurately compare scores and not only in the United States of America, but also internationally.

Not only that the Common Core State Standards do not include cursive handwriting, the transition in the states, that adopted them, was very difficult, because both teachers and students had to change the way they were used to work. This led to many teachers quitting their jobs. The transition to the Common Core State Standards was also very difficult because it cost plenty of money. The schools had to update their technology to fit the Standards. Many textbooks became outdated therefore the schools had to buy new ones. The biggest criticism of the Common Core State Standards is with young children. Young children are obliged to learn more quickly than they were before this initiative.

The benefits of cursive handwriting affected some teachers up to a point, that they decided to include cursive in their lesson plans. Some states even extended the Common

Core State Standards by adding cursive. “Several states have tried to resurrect cursive. California, Georgia, and Massachusetts all have laws mandating cursive instruction” (Shapiro). The state of Louisiana is a great example in saving cursive, because the state added instructions for cursive handwriting in every grade from the third all through the twelfth. (Loewus) When the schools have the option to terminate cursive completely, thanks to the Common Core, Louisiana managed to show that cursive is still relevant.

### **3.2 Keeping Cursive Handwriting Alive**

Beautiful and legible cursive handwriting has always been a symbol of high education, upper social class, and great manner. Even in the twenty-first century a handwritten note, letter, or invitation has a bigger impact on one’s good mood than a text message or an e-mail. A beautifully written application or an elegant signature can persuade a future employer to accept the applicants with the well-structured handwriting, because it speaks about their great personality.

Even though, in the last years there have been many the attempts to keep cursive alive, most of them are weak and cursive handwriting is still slowly dying. However, a majority of people across the United States of America believes that cursive should still be learnt and practiced. USA Gold Pencils conducted a survey in 2013, where 89 percent of adults and 89 percent of children believe that it is “necessary to practice reading and writing in cursive” (Urist). The majority of Americans believe that cursive writing is important.

Many organizations were established for the sole purpose of broadening the knowledge of cursive handwriting. IAMPETH – The International Association of Master Penmen, Engrosses, and Teachers of Handwriting – is an organization, which promotes penmanship and helps with the development of everything handwriting related. The

ambition of this organization is to preserve penmanship. They host conferences and cursive writing classes regularly and they offer certificates of great penmanship. And IAMPETH is not the only organization which helps to popularize cursive handwriting. There are also Teachers of Handwriting, Engrossers 16, and the International Association of Master Penmen. Even though some of these organizations are old, they are not outdated, and they are still very active. They have hundreds of members, newsletters, and active websites.

Even though the majority of Americans believes in the importance of cursive handwriting, the cursive is still questioned by many. “Some script skeptics question the advantage of cursive writing over printing and wonder whether teaching it takes away from other valuable instruction.” (Matthews) The arguments for using cursive handwriting are simply not strong enough. There are two main arguments for keeping cursive alive. The first argument is that cursive is very traditional therefore it is needed in the present day to read old documents, letters from grandparents, and the constitution. However, old documents have been modernized and they can be read on computers. The second argument is that cursive helps with the nervous system and coordination, which could probably be achieved differently.

Cursive handwriting is dying and there is nothing to do about it. Even though there is this fairly new trend to popularize cursive. Handwriting have always been evolving and as it can be seen in the past, each script eventually became outdated, too difficult, and not quick enough. And this is exactly what is going on with cursive now. Cursive is simply too difficult and too slow in this fast age. Although, cursive handwriting is beautiful, it will eventually disappear.

## Conclusion

Cursive handwriting has always been a big part of American Society. Beautiful and legible penmanship is a sign of intelligence, craftsmanship and high social class. Cursive writing was taught in many schools all over the world. But the modern age of computers, smartphones, and the internet, putting pen to paper and writing a beautiful and loopy script is seen as pointless.

When cursive handwriting first appeared in northern America, the most popular script was Copperplate, which was created in England and later spread to the colonies. In eighteenth-century America, not many people were able to write in cursive. Penmanship was solely for the members of the upper class and businessmen. Often only men were able to master Copperplate writing. Even though Copperplate was the script mainly used among these people. It was not as widespread as the Spencerian Script.

After the American Revolution and the establishment of the United States of America, Copperplate became unpopular fairly quickly mainly because it was seen as too English. The Spencerian Writing System replaced Copperplate and became the foundation for many cursive scripts to come. Thanks to the P. R. Spencer's method cursive became more popular than Copperplate and because it included some variations of the script, it was not used only by businessmen, but other people and women became very fond of Spencerian Script.

However, thanks to the Industrial Revolution, everything became much faster and Americans were in a need of the simple and therefore faster script. Spencerian penmanship became outdated and the United States started to use the Palmer Method. Because the Palmer Method is much simpler than the Spencerian Script, it allows much faster writing and is much easier to use. Therefore, cursive became even more popular



and even more people were able to study cursive writing. The Palmer Method then became irrelevant when manuscript writing was introduced as a new and easier way to write.

With the adoption of manuscript writing which became popular in the 1920s, the United States searched for a way to combine manuscript writing and cursive writing. Donald N. Thurber created D'Nealian – a method of writing which included manuscript writing as well as cursive writing. D'Nealian cursive is very similar to D'Nealian manuscript and therefore children are not having trouble while learning both scripts. And the transition between manuscript and cursive became much easier with D'Nealian.

In 2010 the government of the United States of America issued a new standard for schools. The Common Core State Standard marks cursive writing as an unimportant skill and instead of practicing handwriting children practice keyboard typing, which is in this modern era of computers essential. Americans still consider cursive as significant and many organizations were created to popularize cursive writing. Even though many states have already accepted Common Core State Standards, some of the states expended them by adding cursive into the curriculum. Therefore, setting a new precedent for other states.

The history of cursive handwriting very well reflects the history of the United States of America. When cursive writing evolved it was as a consequence of a historical event. Cursive handwriting started as an unpopular, with only a fraction of population being able to master it. Then it eventually evolved into a well-known skill, where almost all Americans knew how to write in cursive. Nowadays the cursive is slowly disappearing from the schools and public. In the history of cursive writing there is an ongoing trend of simplifying the script and therefore making it faster and easier to learn. The current system of writing has to change to better suit this fast age, which the twenty-first century is.

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# Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to increase the knowledge of cursive handwriting. This thesis describes the history and evolution of cursive handwriting in the United States of America. Cursive handwriting is not a necessity in this modern age full of technologies. Nowadays children are not taught how to read cursive or how to write using cursive.

Four cursive scripts are described in the first part of this thesis. These scripts dominated in schools in the United States in the last four centuries. Each script is characterized while paying attention to its form and methodology. The scripts are compared to each other. Furthermore, their history and cultural aspect is mentioned.

The second part of this thesis mentions the history of penmanship in the United States of America. First, the history of writing is briefly stated. Then, the main focus is with the history of the handwriting in the United States, which is divided into five periods according to their main influence.

The last part of this thesis is focused on the present problems with cursive handwriting in the United States of America. It further mentions the advantages and disadvantages of using cursive. When the cursive started to disappear from schools, the government of the United States came with an initiative called Common Core State Standards, which removed the obligation of teaching cursive writing in public schools. The thesis deals with this initiative and its impact on American Education.

# Resumé

Cílem této bakalářské práce je zvýšit povědomí o historii a vývoji psacího písma ve Spojených Státech Amerických. V této moderní době plné technologií se nepovažuje psaní psacím písmem za nezbytnou znalost. Děti ve Spojených státech amerických se dnes neučí psát psacím písmem a ani ho číst.

V první části práce jsou popsány čtyři psací písma, které dominovaly ve školách ve Spojených státech v posledních čtyřech stoletích. U každého písma je popsán jeho vzhled a metodologie. Písma jsou následně porovnána mezi sebou a u každého typu psacího písma je brán zřetel na jeho historii a kulturní přínos.

Druhá část práce popisuje historii rukopisu ve Spojených státech amerických. V této části je nejdříve stručně popsána historie písma a poté se zaměřuje na historii pouze ve Spojených státech s důrazem na vývoj psacího písma. Historie písma je rozdělena do pěti období podle toho, co ovlivňovalo vývoj psaní nejvíce. Je zde zmíněno, čím bylo písmo ovlivňováno a jak tento vývoj ovlivnil historický vývoj Spojených států. Kapitola také stručně popisuje školství.

Poslední část této bakalářské práce je zaměřena na současné problémy spojené s psacím písmem ve Spojených státech. Dále zmiňuje výhody a nevýhody zachování psacího písma. V rámci ústupu psacího písma byla americkou vládou schválena iniciativa Common Core State Standards (CCSS), která zrušila povinnost učení psacího písma ve školách. Práce se zabývá touto iniciativou, dopadem zrušení této dovednosti na americké školství a skupinami lidí, kteří nesdílí názor s CCSS a snaží se naopak psací písmo zachránit a udržet v osnovách škol.