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## A Survey of Handwriting Styles by Geographic Location

The duties of a document examiner are primarily those of determining whether a writing is or is not authentic. Occasionally the document examiner is asked questions that require a certain amount of crystal-ball gazing to answer. One such question is the determination of the geographic origins of a writer by his handwriting style.

The American people are a nomadic population. A child may attend two, three, or more elementary schools in his or her learning years. The wars in which the United States have been involved in the past 40 years have necessarily caused people to move, and "service brats" may be subject to a number of handwriting systems. The interrelated school systems, through faster and better communications, tend to broaden the extent handwriting systems are taught in schools that are many miles apart. Some schools teach their own handwriting styles, which may be a combination of two or more popular handwriting systems. Finally, in this era of extensive individualization, the students themselves alter the handwriting styles they were taught to the extent that they sometimes cannot be recognized.

An attempt was made to survey at least two schools in each of the 50 states in the United States to determine handwriting systems being taught. Three survey letters were mailed to some of the larger states such as Texas and California. The schools receiving the survey letters were picked indiscriminately, except that they were picked from opposite ends of the respective state. In all, 154 letters were mailed to individual schools. The schools were requested to inform us of the system of handwriting taught in kindergarten through the second grade. Of the 154 letters mailed, 58 were returned, representing 39 states. Schools in the following states responded to the survey (an asterisk indicates that two or more letters were received from that state):

Alabama	Maine	Oklahoma
Arkansas*	Maryland*	Oregon
California	Minnesota	Pennsylvania*
Colorado	Missouri*	Rhode Island
Connecticut*	Montana	South Carolina
Delaware*	Nebraska*	South Dakota*
Florida*	Nevada*	Tennessee
Hawaii*	New Hampshire	Texas*
Idaho	New Mexico	Utah
Illinois	New York	Virginia*
Indiana	North Carolina	Washington*
Iowa*	North Dakota	West Virginia*
Kentucky	Ohio*	Wisconsin

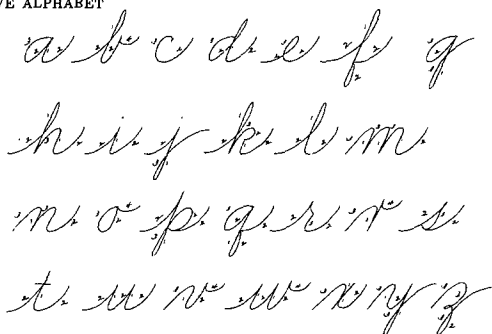
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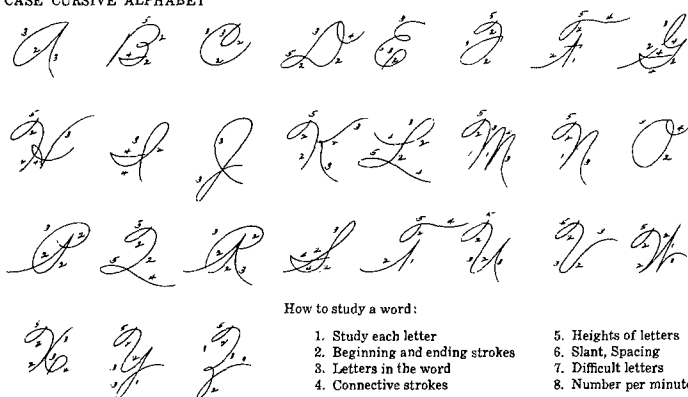
The 39 states from which responses were received represent 78% of the 50 states. The 58 responses received represent 37% of those schools to which the survey was mailed.

A breakdown of the systems taught by the responding schools shows that 13 schools teach the Palmer method of handwriting (Fig. 1); 27 schools, the Zaner-Blosser method

LOWER CASE CURSIVE ALPHABET



UPPER CASE CURSIVE ALPHABET



How to study a word:

- |                                 |                       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Study each letter            | 5. Heights of letters |
| 2. Beginning and ending strokes | 6. Slant, Spacing     |
| 3. Letters in the word          | 7. Difficult letters  |
| 4. Connective strokes           | 8. Number per minute  |

FIG. 1—The Palmer handwriting method.

(Fig. 2); 3 schools, the Peterson Directed method (Fig. 3); 2 schools, the Noble and Noble method (Fig. 4); 2 schools, the McGraw-Hill method (Fig. 5); 1 school, the Steck-Vaughn method (Fig. 6); 1 school, the Spirit Masters method (Fig. 7); 1 school, the Bobbs-Merrill method (Fig. 8); 1 school, the Haan-Wiersen method; 1 school, the Scott-Foresman method (Fig. 9); 1 school, the D'Nealian method (Fig. 10); 1 school, the Jenn Company system; and 2 schools, an educational self-development program (Fig. 11). Two schools responded but failed to indicate the handwriting system they teach. Table 1 lists the various systems and their publishers.

The percentages of the systems taught in the responding schools are as follows: Zaner-Blosser, 47%; Palmer, 21%; Peterson Directed, 5%; and miscellaneous other systems, 23%.

When the 13 different handwriting systems are placed in their respective positions on a map of the contiguous 48 states (Fig. 12), the widespread pattern of handwriting systems taught can easily be seen. For example, the Palmer method is taught in Washington, Idaho, Nevada, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Alabama, and Florida.

The map also indicates that some states teach more than one style of handwriting. For example, Washington teaches both the Zaner-Blosser and Palmer methods. Nebraska,

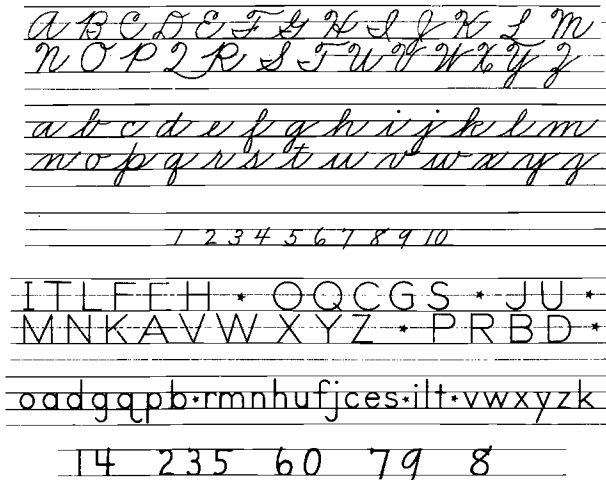


FIG. 2—The Zaner-Blosser handwriting method.

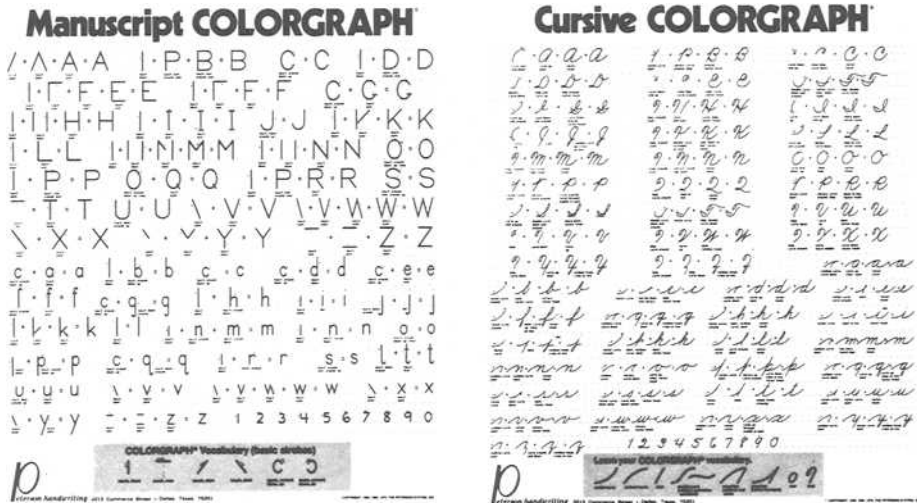


FIG. 3—The Peterson Directed handwriting method.

as well as South Dakota, Florida, and others, teaches Zaner-Blosser, Palmer, and self-development handwriting systems.

The only schools that teach an individualized system of handwriting are in Hawaii. In the Hawaii District, whose elementary school population represents about one tenth of the total Hawaii State Department of Education, 88% of the students are taught the writing style of The Hawaii English Program (Fig. 13). Those schools in Hawaii that do not teach the Hawaii English Program use programs that the teachers favor: Zaner-Blosser, Palmer, or Spelling book writing programs such as that from SRA, Silver-Burdett, Lyons and Carnahan, and others.

When the responding schools in the survey are considered as an example, the inter-mixed styles of handwriting taught in the United States become obvious. While it is true

A B C D E F G H I	a b c d e f g h i
A B C D E F G H I	a b c d e f g h i
J K L M N O P Q R	j k l m n o p q r
J K L M N O P Q R	j k l m n o p q r
S T U V W X Y Z	s t u v w x y z
S T U V W X Y Z	s t u v w x y z

FIG. 4—The Noble and Noble handwriting method.

The McGraw-Hill handwriting method practice sheet consists of 14 rows of handwriting on a four-line grid. The first three rows show lowercase letters a through z, with the first row (a-h) and second row (j-r) having arrows and numbers indicating stroke direction and order. The next three rows show uppercase letters A through Z, with the first row (A-I) and second row (J-R) having arrows and numbers. The final two rows show cursive lowercase letters a through z, with the first row (a-h) and second row (j-r) having arrows and numbers.

FIG. 5—The McGraw-Hill handwriting method.

A B C D E F G H I  
 J K L M N O P Q R  
 S T U V W X Y Z  
 a b c d e f g h i j k l m  
 n o p q r s t u v w x y z  
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

Aa Bb Dd Ee Gg Ii Ll  
 Mm Nn Oo Ss Tt Yy Zz  
 ee ff pp rr ss vv ww zz

FIG. 6—The Steck-Vaughn handwriting method.

all need help from someone.  
 r parents and teachers help us.

FIG. 7—The Spirit Masters handwriting method.

u i n f A C O

Work these steps on paper before you write them in your book.

Step 1 Step 2 Step 3 Step 4  
 fun fun fun fun

flag flag flag flag

did good top hill

FIG. 8—The Bobbs-Merrill handwriting method.

A B C D E F G H I  
 J K L M N O P Q R  
 S T U V W X Y Z  
 a b c d e f g h i  
 j k l m n o p q r  
 s t u v w x y z  
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 , ? ! ' " "

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee  
 Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk  
 Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp  
 Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv  
 Ww Xx Yy Zz

FIG. 9—The Scott-Foresman handwriting method.

Up-Hill Stroke			Over-the-hill Stroke		
D'Nealian Manuscript	+ Added Stroke	= Cursive	D'Nealian Manuscript	+ Added Stroke	= Cursive
a	↗	a	n	↘	n
b	↘	b	o	↗	o
c	↗	c	p	↘	p
d	↗	d	q	↗	q
e	↘	e	r	↘	r
f	—	—	s	—	—
g	↗	g	t	↘	t
h	↘	h	u	↘	u
i	↘	i	v	↗	v
j	↘	j	w	↘	w
k	↘	k	x	↗	x
l	↘	l	y	↗	y
m	↗	m	z	↗	z

FIG. 10—The D'Nealian handwriting method.

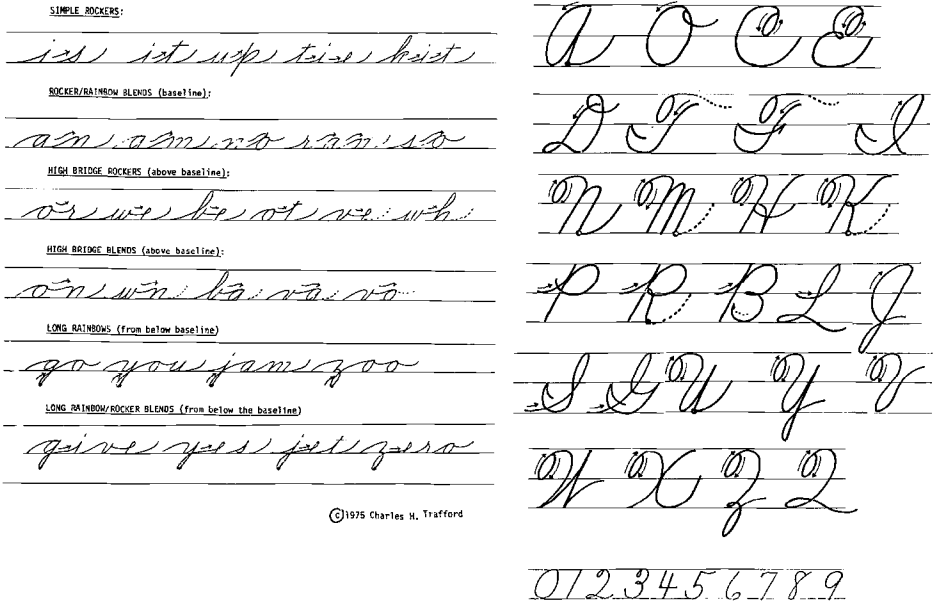


FIG. 11—A self-development handwriting method.

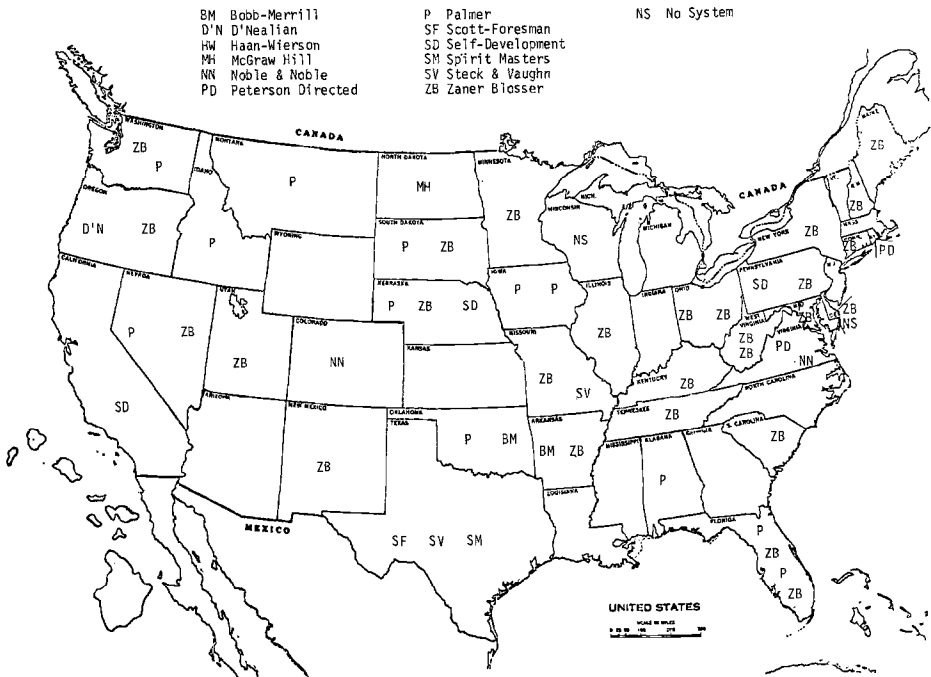


FIG. 12—Map of contiguous 48 states marked with the handwriting system taught in the responding schools.

that certain systems may predominate in certain areas, no one system of handwriting is unique to any one particular region. The many handwriting systems taught in schools throughout the United States, the ease of transportation, military service-connected

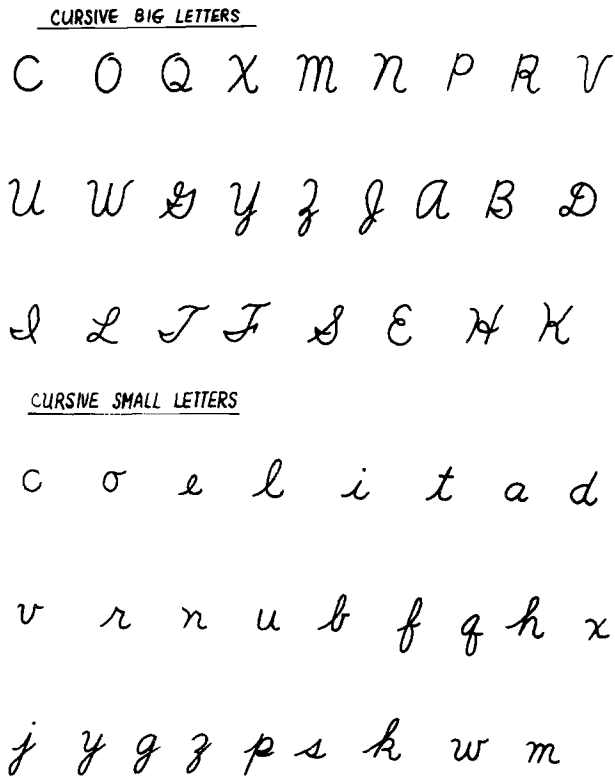
FIG. 13—*The Hawaii English Program self-development handwriting system.*

TABLE 1--Handwriting systems taught in the responding schools.

System	Publisher
Self Development	Educational Self Development Inc., Greensburg, Pa.
Zaner-Blosser	Zaner-Blosser Inc., 612 North Park St., Columbus, Ohio
Noble and Noble	Noble and Noble Publishers Inc., 750 Third Ave., New York, N.Y.
Peterson System	The Peterson System Inc., 2215 Commerce St., Dallas, Tex.
Haan-Wierson	Allan & Bacon Publishing Co., Boston, Mass.
McGraw-Hill	Webster McGraw-Hill Book Co., Manchester Road, Manchester, Mo.
Steck-Vaughn	Steck-Vaughn Co., 807 Brazos, Austin, Tex.
D'Nealian	Gibraltar Schools (Donald Thurber), Rockwood, Mo.
Bobbs-Merrill	Bobbs Merrill Co., Inc., Indianapolis, Ind.
Jenn	Jenn Publishing Co., 815-825 East Market Street, Louisville, Ky.
Hawaii English Program	Hawaii Department of Education, State of Hawaii
SRA	Science Research Associates, Inc., 259 East Erie St., Chicago, Ill.
Silver Burdett	Silver Burdett Co., 250 James St., Morristown, N.J.
Lyons and Carnahan	Lyons and Carnahan, Meredith Corp., Chicago, Ill.
Palmer	A.N. Palmer Co., New York, N.Y.

migrations, and personal individualism preclude any attempt to determine the geographic origin of a person by handwriting style.