



Historic School  
Penmanship Lesson

*Good, better, best.  
Never let it rest,  
until your better is your best.*

# Historic School Penmanship Lesson

Lesson Time: 20 minutes while other groups are reading.

Objectives: The students will practice cursive writing. (Harrisburg students will do their penmanship in the original sod building) Penmanship class will be conducted by the regular classroom teacher.

## Background Information:

It was one of the duties of the teacher to fill ink wells about 1/4 full so bottles would less likely be spilled. Quills were checked as to sharpness. Quill pens, made by the teacher or older students, were common for writing. Lead pencils were a luxury. Many were borrowed by settlers who kept it carefully wrapped in paper. Ink was variously manufactured from pokeweed berries steeped in water, from stove soot mixed with oil, oil by itself, or from commercial powder to which water was added. The ingenious teacher kept ink from freezing by burying it in the ashes from the stove or in sand.

About 56 A.D. the quills of geese and crows were found to be more useful than the camel's hair brushes and reeds previously used for writing and drawing. For centuries the quill remained a favorite instrument until the steep pen finally replaced it. In the 1885 alone, Great Britain imported 26.5 million goose and swan quills.

The quill pen produces beautiful writing. It was only the demand for something more durable that led to experiment with horn, tortoise shell, glass, steel, silver, and gold.

The quills used at historic School are not fancy, but explicit directions for making fine quill pens are available at SOAR. In the days when penmanship was considered an art form, the complaint of having wretched pens, ink or paper as an excuse for careless or unintelligible writing was not accepted.

For chalk the teacher improvised with soft, white rocks, such as soapstone. Some slate pencils were available. Many families brought small slates and pencils with them from the East, and they were also sold in the early stores and mail-order catalogues.



*Haste makes waste.*

This lesson will be conducted by the regular classroom teacher who will emphasize that penmanship is the art of writing neatly and correctly. Precision is preferred over speed.

1. Teacher demonstrates how to hold the pen, open the ink, and place the copy book correctly. The ink is permanent, and will stain clothing, so special care must be taken. Make sure the lid is tightly fastened on jar. Tip bottle slightly to fill the ink well on side of jar. Unscrew the lid with great care. Hold quill very gently with the angled opening on top. Gently dip into the ink. A tine tap on the jar helps prevent splotches.
2. Teacher conducts the penmanship lesson, using the copy book which students have prepared previously and brought with them to Historic School.

### Directions for Presenting the Lesson



Begin at the bottom of the line, push to the top, pull to the bottom of the line keeping strokes close together, make about eight and end at the top of the line.



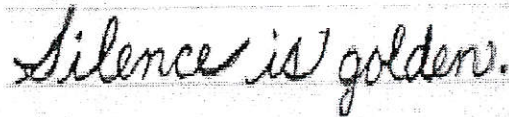
This is not a circle, but an oval. It begins at the top of the line and ends at the top. Make about five strokes.



The small setter "s" is made in a series of three. It goes to the middle of the line and looks like three ships sailing.



The capital "S" has the first stroke slant to the right, goes to the top of the line, small loop is behind the first stroke, come down making the big loop and bring the last stroke through the first stroke.



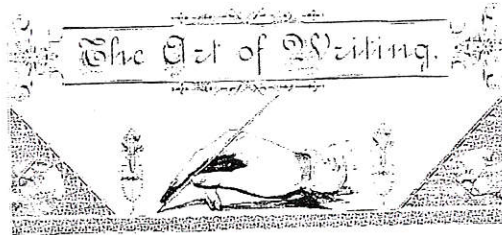
Write this sentence one time only, in your very best cursive writing. Check your sentence carefully making sure it starts with a capital letter and the words are spelled correctly. Make sure the I's are dotted and you have ended your sentence with a period.

Finally, write your name on the outside of the booklet. Take care of your supplies, cap the ink and put away quill pen in container provided.

## PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES FOR PENMANSHIP

1. Prepare a copy book for each student in the class. Three master pages for reproduction are included in this guide. Cut apart on dotted line to make the nine pages. Children can make brown paper covers and tie with twine. Newsprint is inappropriate for pages, because the ink will soak through. Each page is approximately 3 ½ by 8 ½ inches, requiring covers to be approximately 4 inches by 9 inches. Pages might be numbered and put in the following sequence:
  - Page 1—push/pulls
  - Page 2—practice (blank)
  - Page 3—ovals
  - Page 4—practice (blank)
  - Page 5—small “s”
  - Page 6—practice (blank)
  - Page 7—large “S”
  - Page 8—practice (blank)
  - Page 9—sentence “Silence is Golden.”
2. Review the cursive strokes used in the push/pulls, ovals and the letter S.

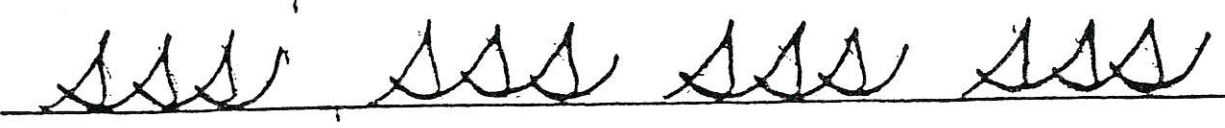
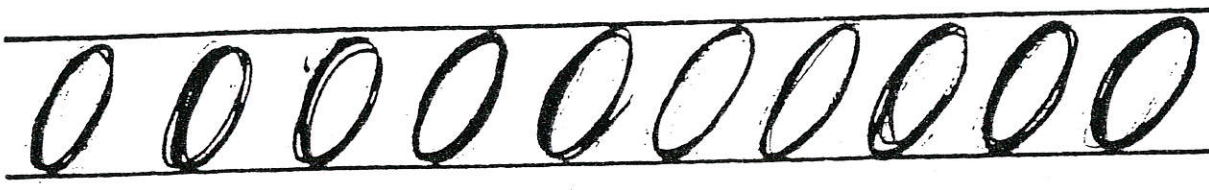
*The parent's life is the child's copybook.*



*Youth and White Paper take any impression.*

## FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES FOR PENMANSHIP

1. Write a thank you letter to Banner/Sioux County Historical Society, SOAR/ESU #13, or a classroom visitor.
2. Have a calligraphist visit school and demonstrate her art.
3. Have a handwriting expert (graphoanalyst) visit class and tell students about penmanship as it pictures the individual.
4. Students could make quills using turkey, goose, or chicken feathers. When they have mastered the quill, they can write maxims or create holiday cards.



S S S S S S S S

Silence is golden.

