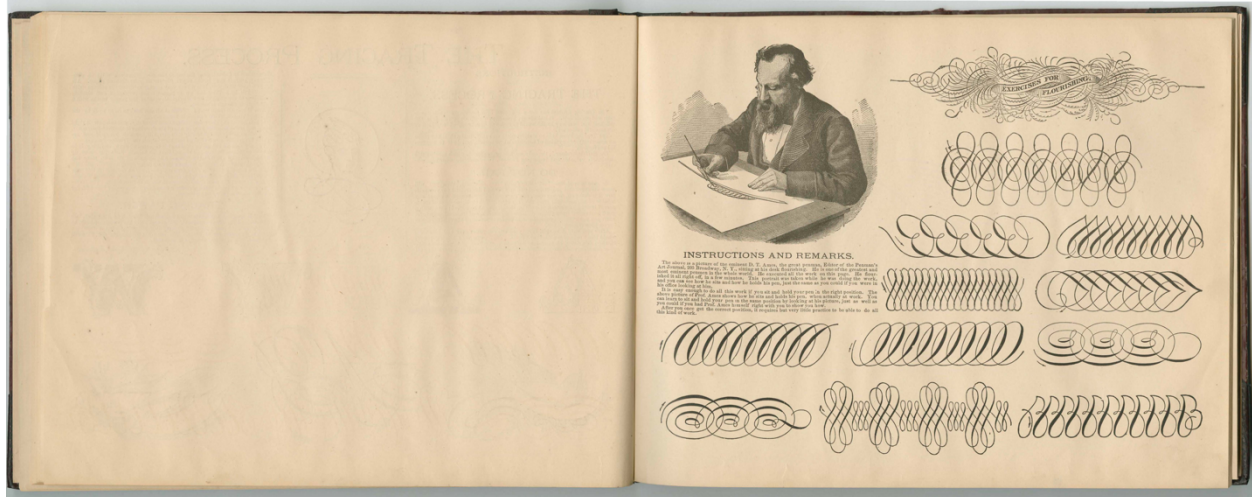


Knowles & Maxim Publishers, [Real Pen Work, Self-Instructor in Penmanship](#) (St. Catharines, 1881)

Researched by Madison Vandermeer



This book for penmanship, part of Brock's Archives & Special Collections (10th Floor Stacks; Z 43 R43 188) was published in St. Catharines in 1881. The illustrated instructional book features comprehensive directions and examples on learning and mastering beautiful pen-work covering everything from how to sit and hold a pen, movements in writing, ornamental pen-work, directions on tracing and transferring, and many lovely illustrations featuring flourishing methods taught within the book. Knowles and Maxim Publishers claim the book to be the “greatest means ever known for learning to write an elegant hand” promising readers an easy to understand, simple way of learning that anyone can master.

On this page we see many examples of exercises for flourishing, which can be used in ornamental designs and handwriting, they are also used throughout the illustrations within the book. The flourishing as well as many of the illustrations are the work of Daniel T. Ames who is featured in the top left corner of the page, in the text he is regarded as “one of the greatest and most eminent penmen in the whole world.” He lived from 1835 – 1909 and specialized in decorative penwork and illustration.¹ His book, *Ames' Compendium of Practical and Ornamental Penmanship*, published in 1883 features very similar exercises and more extensive examples of ornate lettering.

Real Pen Work, Self-Instructor in Penmanship teaches the Spencerian method of handwriting which was popular from the mid 19th century up until the early 20th century.² Platt Rogers

Spencer, “father of American handwriting,”³ developed the unique style to be quick to write and easy to read due to its freedom of movement in the arm and hand.⁴ The Spencerian method was widely integrated into the school system until it was replaced by the simpler Palmer method.⁵ To learn more about the Spencerian method, I would advise you to investigate his book, “*Spencerian Key to practical penmanship*,” published in 1866. As well as chapter 2 of Kitty Florey’s “*Script and Scribble*” for information on the life and legacy of P.R. Spencer.

NOTES

¹ L.E Stacy, *The Blue Book Containing Photographs and Sketches of a Few Commercial Teachers* (Meadville, PA, 1907), 76. [Accessed through Hathi Trust](#).

² Donald M. Anderson, “Spencerian Penmanship.” Encyclopædia Britannica, January 22, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Spencerian-penmanship>

³ Kitty Burns Florey, “The Golden Age of Penmanship” in *Script and Scribble: The Rise and Fall of Handwriting* (Melville House, 2013), 63.

⁴ Platt R. Spencer, *Spencerian Key to practical penmanship*. New York: Ivison, Phinney, Blakeman & Co., 1866. <https://archive.org/details/cu31924029485467/page/n9/mode/2up>

⁵ Anderson.

FURTHER READING

Ames, Daniel T. *Ames’ compendium of practical and ornamental penmanship*. New York: Lithographics, 1883.

Florey, Kitty Burns. *Script and Scribble: The Rise and Fall of Handwriting*. Melville House, 2013.

Spencer, Platt R. *Spencerian Key to practical penmanship*. New York: Ivison, Phinney, Blakeman & Co., 1866.