

Hi

I'd appreciate any thoughts on the earliest influence of the flexible steel pen on Spencerian letterforms. I am not speaking about the general population's handwriting, but rather on the folks who wrote the copybooks, i.e. Spencer's kiddies.

Nick D. has a Spencerian salesman's sampler that states the Spencerian No. 1 was available in the early 1850's. Nash's book, 'American penmanship, 1800-1850; a history of writing and a bibliography of copybooks from Jenkins to Spencer' refers to comments from the 1840's by Oliver B. Goldsmith. The comments refer to the growing influence of steel pens:

“Of late years the steel pens have pretty nearly driven our old friends, the goose quills, from the field. The former possess the great requisite of uniformity. No man can make two quill pens exactly alike, and if one is a little harder or softer than the other, a difference in the Handwriting is perceptible. On the contrary, steel pens of the same make are usually all alike, and change as often as you may, the appearance of your manuscript when finished, will be uniform. For this reason, and because no time is consumed in mending them, I prefer the productions of the cutler to that of the goose-though toward the latter I entertain the most profound reverence for the service she has rendered to the cause of Literature-services of far more importance than that which gained her almost divine honors in ancient Rome. But now the Metallic Pen is in the ascendant, and the glory of goosedom has departed forever.”*

Taken together with recent information on oblique penholder patents from Fife, Spencer, etc. make me wonder how early the instructional text exemplar forms were influenced by the flexible steel pen with out without the oblique penholder.

*Text obtained from Nash's book but was originally from *Goldsmith's Gems of Penmanship, 1846. 'Lecture on "The Pen"'