



2025

**SURVEYORS'**  
*Conference*

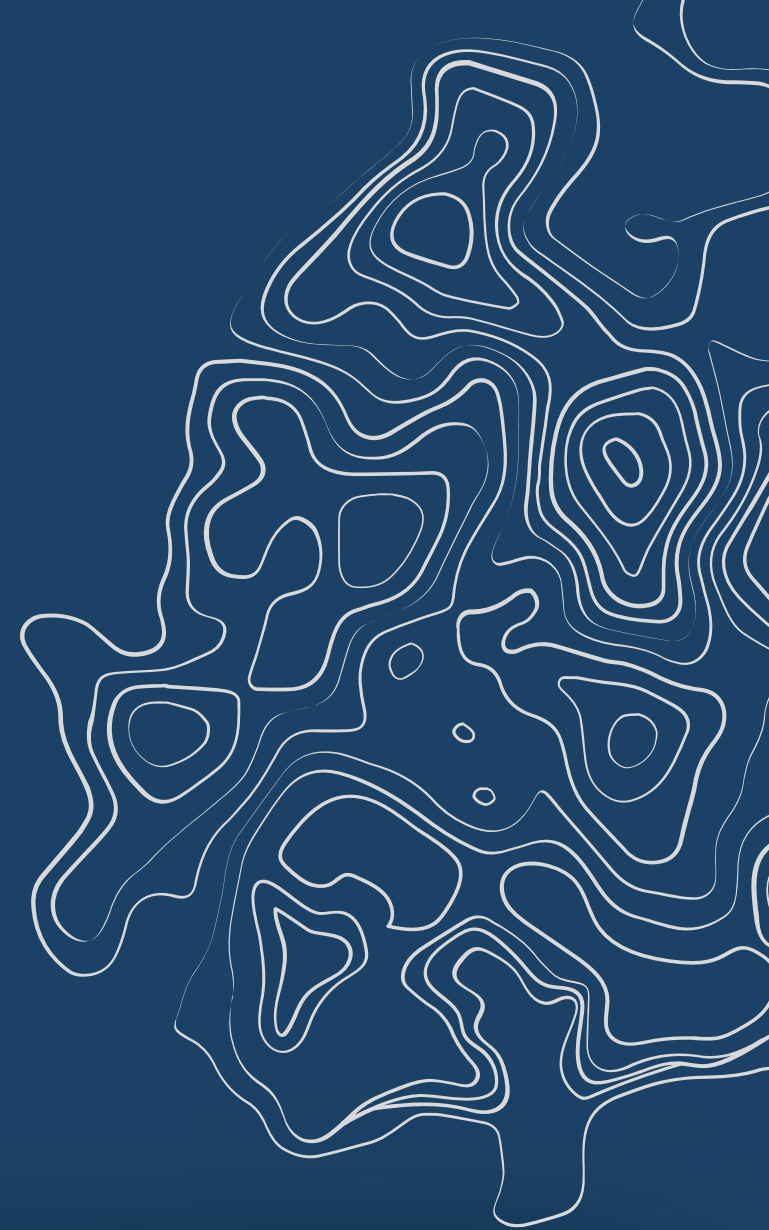
***CURSES?! #%&;***

***No. Cursive.***

**Donald Teter, PS**

**Assistant Professor of Surveying**

**Fairmont State University**



**JANUARY 12-15, 2025 | HERSHEY, PA**

Surveyors often need to interpret old handwritten documents.

We are increasingly unfamiliar with the cursive writing style in general, and also face issues with unfamiliar abbreviations and unusual letter shapes.

Rods to a Red ash tree marked then North & be East  
forty Six Rods to a White pine tree marked then west & be  
North Eight Score Rods to a White Oak Tree marked  
then Straight forty six Rods to the first Bounds men-  
tioned also including & taking in all the Nor west  
Meadows so called that is Adjoyning to the aforesaid  
Land on the Northern Side as said meadows Lots are laid out and Bound-  
as by the records of said Kingstown the same may  
more fully appear With all the Buildings fences & saw  
mill that is on & about the same TO HAVE  
& TO HOLD the said granted & bargained Pre-  
mises

# *Palaeography*

is the study of old handwriting.

Tempting to declare it totally illegible;

but just appears that way

to modern readers.

# *Common Features of Cursive Styles*

There are some common features within the variety of cursive styles.

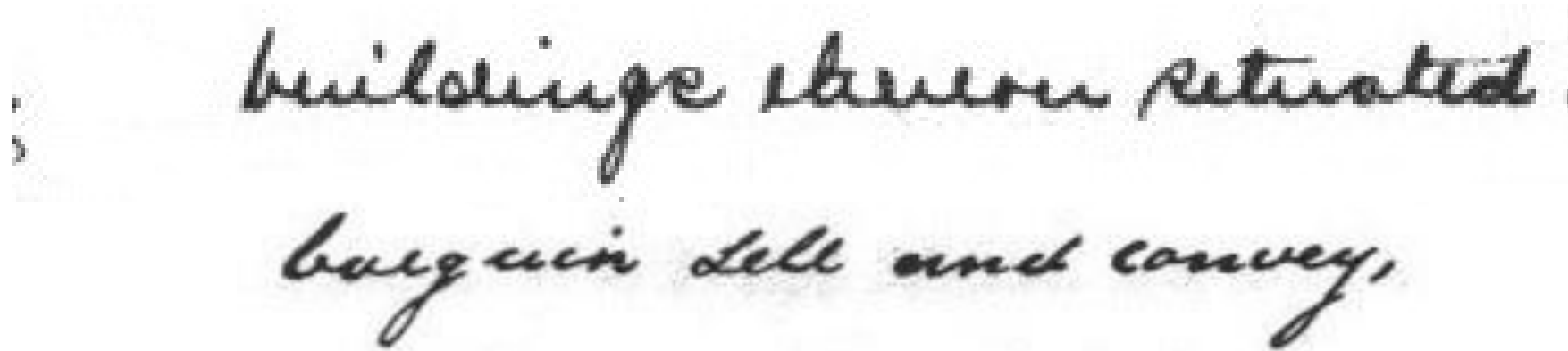
## *Continuity of pen strokes*

Quill pens or ink pens with steel nibs.

held a limited amount of ink,

when raised it could drip and make puddles or smudges.

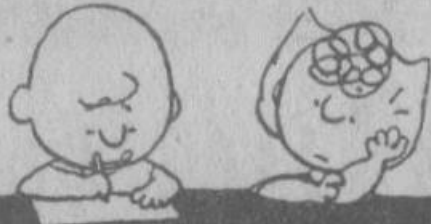
Letters within words made with as few strokes as necessary.



Not forming each letter individually is quicker than printing

# PEANUTS

Dear Pen Pal,  
Today I am going  
to try to write you  
a neat letter.



© 1976 Peanuts Worldwide LLC, Dist. by Andrews McMeel

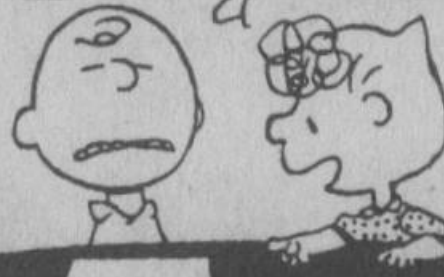
No smudges  
and no smears

8/24



www.snoopy.com

LOOK AT THAT!  
YOU SMEARED "SMUDGE,"  
AND YOU SMUDGED  
"SMEAR"! THAT'S VERY  
FUNNY! DON'T YOU  
THINK THAT'S FUNNY?



I THOUGHT IT  
WAS VERY FUNNY!



SCHULZ

## Abbreviations

With pen strokes at a premium, and paper scarce and expensive, abbreviations were often used. There are some standards, but often an abbreviation is simply indicated by squiggles or dashes above or between letters.

Alex.<sup>n</sup> J<sup>o</sup><sub>n</sub> Jim<sup>n</sup>

Jack<sup>a</sup> Nicol<sup>l</sup> Matth<sup>u</sup>

thirty shill<sup>t</sup> money

" Do



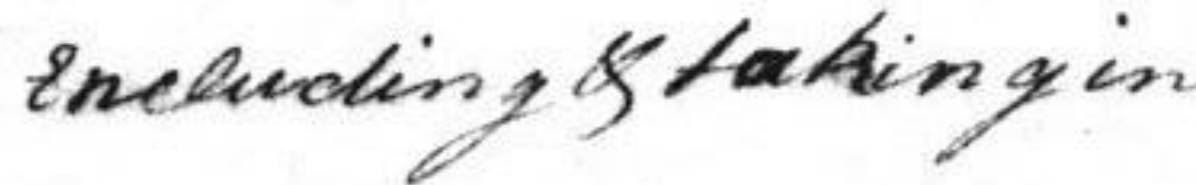
# *Abbreviations*

The **Ampersand** may take several forms:



*Staunton & Parkersburg*

Staunton **and** Parkersburg



*Including & taking in*

Including **and** taking in

*An ampersand that ain't*

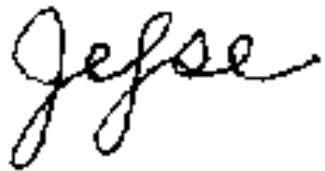
℘ = - pro; with

℘vide being provide;

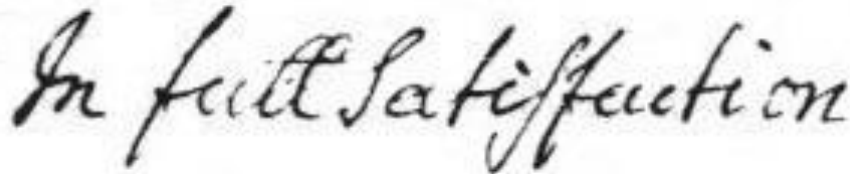
℘ being per

## *The Long S*

A lower case "s" was often written like an "f" especially where there was a "double s." The unusual s is placed first and called the "leading s," then the regular s is added. It may also appear other places in words, with the rules apparently being somewhat flexible.



The image shows the word "Jesse" written in a cursive script. The first 's' is a long s, which is taller than the second 's' and has a distinct crossbar, resembling a lowercase 'f'.



The image shows the phrase "In full Satisfaction" written in a cursive script. The 's' in "Satisfaction" is a long s, which is taller than the other 's' in the word and has a distinct crossbar, resembling a lowercase 'f'.

In typeset styles, the long s would not normally include the cross bar found on an f: **ſ**

# THE F-HOLE



# The f-hole used to be a C-hole or S-hole

The openings on both sides of the body of the violin that are shaped like a lowercase "f" are appropriately called f-holes, and these serve to transmit to the outside air the vibrations within the body caused by the body's resonance, ringing out with a rich tone. The Viola da Gamba, which is older than the violin, has primarily C-shaped holes, and even after the violin appeared in the sixteenth century, half-moon, flame, S-shapes and other designs were also prevalent.

Standardizing on the current f-shape started about the beginning of the eighteenth century when the development of the violin was mostly complete. The f-hole is said to have been created when violin makers carved a section out of the middle of the S-hole to indicate the position of the bridge on the body.

(Source: Takatomo Kurosawa, *World Instrument Dictionary*, published by Yozankaku)

## *Cross-bars on (or off) t*

Might stretch to cover more than one t

*thirteen rods & twenty one links*

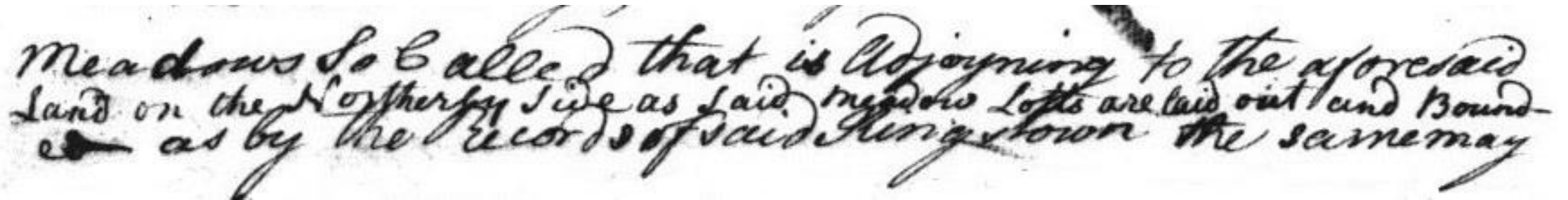
And might miss the t entirely

*Some last and  
thence with 2 lines*

*last*

## *Unusual Letter Shapes*

Many letters might have extra long tails or flourishes



Meadows so called that is adjoining to the aforesaid  
land on the North side as said meadows Lots are laid out and Bound  
as by the records of said Kingstown the same may

# *Unusual Letter Shapes*





*Unusual Letter Shapes*

  
DONALD R. MOORE

## *Unusual Letter Shapes*

Something that looks like a t might be  
a capital A scrunched together.

*A A t t*

*Mrs. Alahzah Standle*

Mrs. Alahzah Standle

## *Abbreviations*

With pen strokes at a premium, and paper scarce and expensive, abbreviations were often used. There are some standards, but often an abbreviation is simply indicated by squiggles, dots or dashes above or between letters, indicating that letters have been left out.

Alex.<sup>n</sup> Jim Jim  
Jack<sup>a</sup> Nicol<sup>s</sup> Matth<sup>w</sup>  
thirty shillings money

## *Abbreviations*

ℓ

Abbreviation for “es”, “is”, “s”, to denote a plural;

oatℓ = oats

## *Old Style Abbreviations - Proper Names*

*Ab<sup>m</sup>*

*Abra.*

**Abraham**

*Asa<sup>m</sup>*

*Asa*

**Asa**

*Alex.<sup>r</sup>*

**Alexander**

*And<sup>w</sup> And.*

**Andrew**

*Benj<sup>m</sup>*

*Benja*

**Benjamin**

*Ch<sup>d</sup>*

**Charles**

*Chris<sup>m</sup>*

**Christian**

*Ch<sup>r</sup>pher*

*Christ*

*Ch<sup>r</sup>topher*

**Christopher**

*Corn*

**Cornelius**

*Dan*

**Daniel**

*Edw. Ed.*

**Edward**

*Eph. Ept.*

**Ephraim**

*Ez.*

**Ezekial**

*Frā. Fran.*

**Francis**

*Gabl. Gab.*

**Gabriel**

*Geo. Geo.*

**George**

*Hen. Hen.*

**Henry**

*Ja: Jas*

**James**

*Jerch*

**Jeremiah**

*Jer jr<sup>o</sup>*

**Jerome**

*Jn<sup>o</sup>*

**John**

*Jn<sup>o</sup>*

**Johnathan**

*Jos Jos:*

**Joseph**

*Matth<sup>us</sup>*

**Matthew**

*Matth<sup>us</sup>*

**Matthias**

*Michl*

**Michael**

*Nath<sup>n</sup>*

**Nathaniel**

*Nicks Nich<sup>o</sup> Nicol<sup>!</sup>*

**Nicholas**

*Rich<sup>o</sup> Rich<sup>i</sup>*

**Richard**

*Rob<sup>t</sup>*

**Robert**

*Samel<sup>!</sup>*

**Samuel**

*Simn Sim<sup>n</sup>*

**Simon**

*Step<sup>n</sup>*

**Stephen**

*Sol<sup>o</sup> lo*

**Solomon**



*Tho Tho: Tho*

**Thomas**

*Tim*

**Timothy**

*Wm Wm Will: Will:*

**William**

*Zach:*


**Zachariah**

*Sen*  
**Senior**

*Old Style Abbreviations - States*



**Arkansas**



**Indiana**



**Illinois**



**Kentucky**



**Massachusetts**




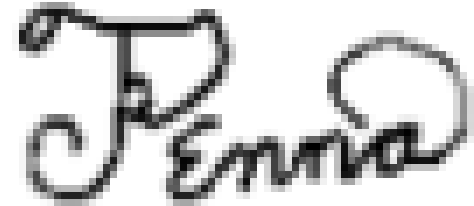
**Missouri**



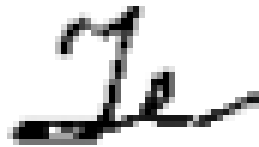
*Old Style Abbreviations - States*

A cursive abbreviation for New York, consisting of a large 'N' and a 'Y' joined together.

**New York**

A cursive abbreviation for Pennsylvania, consisting of 'P.' and 'a' joined together.A cursive abbreviation for Pennsylvania, consisting of the word 'Pennia' written in a flowing script.

**Pennsylvania**

A cursive abbreviation for Tennessee, consisting of the word 'Tenn' written in a flowing script.A cursive abbreviation for Tennessee, consisting of the letters 'Te' written in a flowing script.

**Tennessee**

**Virginia**

Three cursive abbreviations for Virginia: 'Va', 'ring', and 'viria'.

## *Suspension*

A letter or letters, often followed by a full stop, represents a word.

**.M.** for majesty

**Lo.** for Lord

## *Omitting m or n*


The omitted letter may be represented by a dash or wavy line, as in *demād* for demand.


## *Omitting i*

May be represented by a dash or wavy line over the following o, as in *commissōn* for commission. Sometimes the dash would be over the end of the word on the final n.

## *Unusual Use of Capitals in sentences or words*

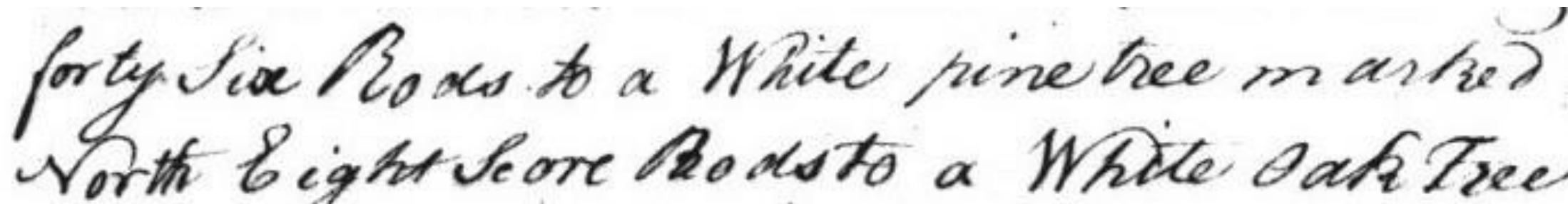
We are used to seeing capital letters only used at the beginning of a sentence. Old cursive often has capital letters appearing in the middle of words:

 (Unknown, abbreviated)

 **Wagon Maker**

## *Unusual Use of Capitals in sentences or words*

Or almost anywhere in a sentence, perhaps for emphasis.



forty Six Rods to a White pine tree marked  
North Eight Score Rods to a White Oak Tree

And lower case letters may look like capitals, e.g. “k” in marked.

## Hyphens are not always obvious

tioned also including & taking in first Boundsmen

Ats Viz

of 10.000 Acus - and is bounded as follows

*Numbers may be odd*

1705

1785

17∞5

1785



# Strategies

## *Practice and Perseverance*

Don't give up. Was it easy to learn how to run the instrument? To do a traverse closure? To analyze a complex boundary issue?

# Strategies

## *Build an Alphabet*

Often same clerk, etc. for many years.

Some common styles

*Suetterlin script, aka Gothic script, aka  
High German script*

u	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m
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
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
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
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

Leslie

ü = w  
ü = w  
(ue)

Lmlin

(L) (B)

~~Lmlin~~  
Lmlin

L (B)

L

~~Palaeography~~  
paleography

AN  
+ e

~~AN~~

Nich

Spencerian script  
ford + coca cola  
logo

Nich

"w"

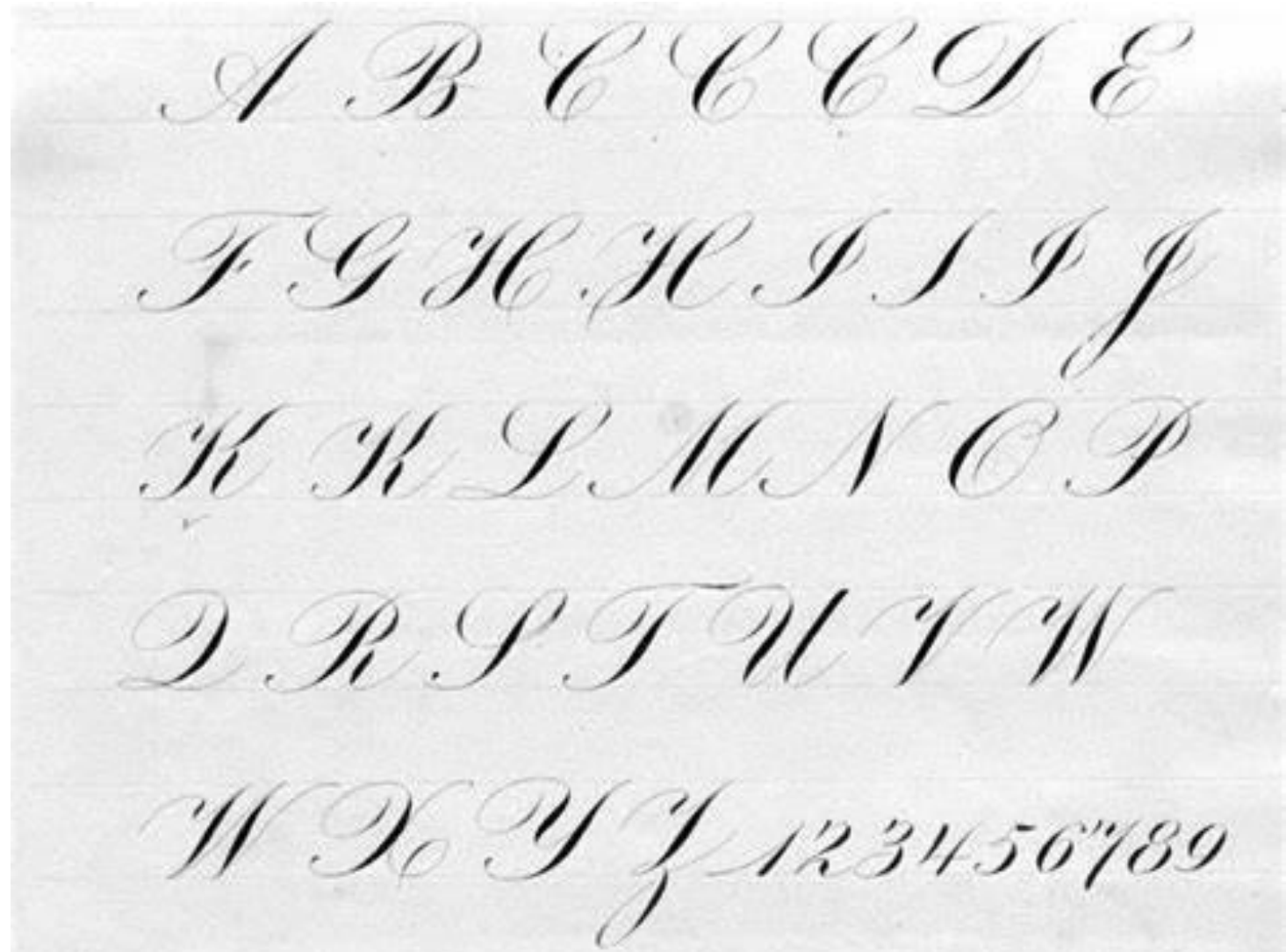
f  
"s"

B = double  
"s"

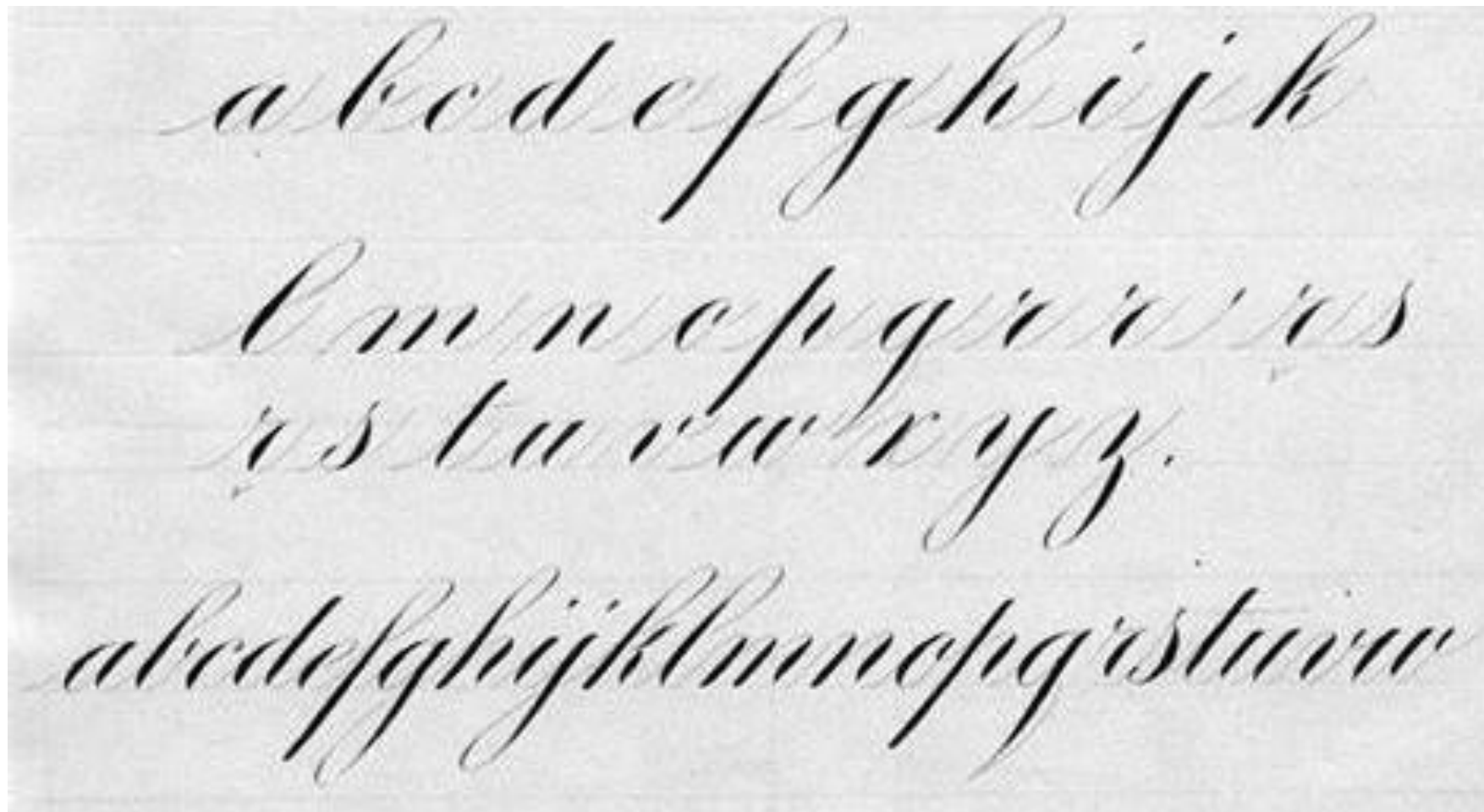
# Spencerian Alpha, Upper case

Developed by Platt Rogers Spenser in 1840, he established a school to teach it. Standard business script in the U.S. from about 1850 through about 1925.

Typewriters began its demise.



# Spenserian Alpha, Lower case



Spencerian Ladies Hand

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

# Spenserian Script

*Coca-Cola*

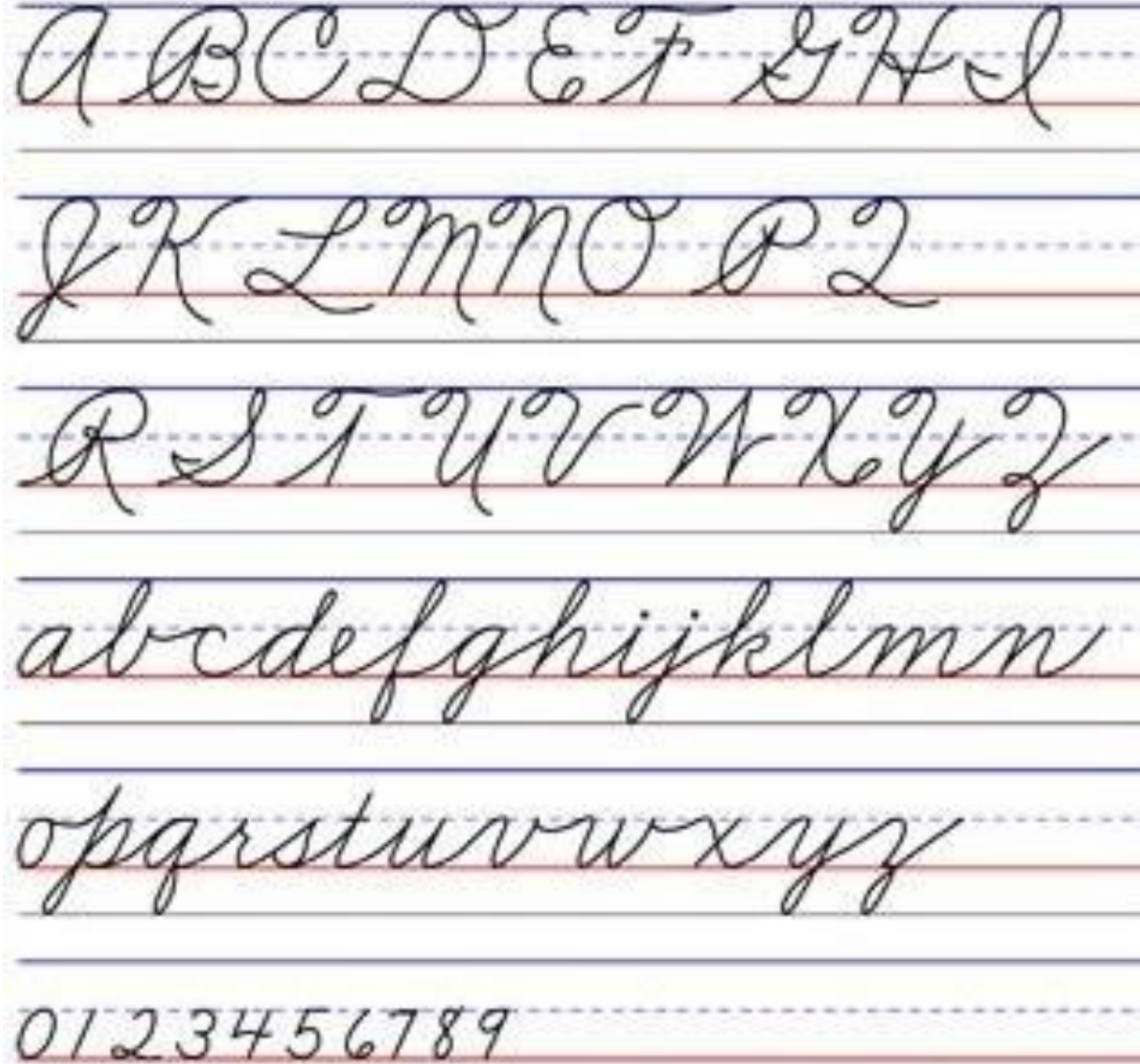




### *Palmer Script*

Simplified from Spenserian, rhythmic looping circular motions, less ornate, better speed. Developed c. 1888, by Austin Palmer. Method involved "muscle motion", the more proximal (closer to the center of the body) muscles of the shoulder or arm used for movement, rather than allowing the fingers to move.

Gradually superseded Spenserian, use began to wane in the 1950's. Like Spenserian, its overall decline was hastened by the typewriter.



# Strategies

## *Blow it Up*

Expand uniformly, or stretch in either direction

# *Blow it Up!*

Westerly by said wall eight rods & thirteen links to the West cart<sup>way</sup>, from thence running Northerly by said cart rut & by lance of said Samuel twenty five rods fourteen links and an half to a stake and stones by said cart rut, thence Northerly by said Samuel's land fourteen rods one and a half link to a stake and stones by said highway, thence Westerly by the highway thirteen rods & twenty one links to the first mentioned bounds. Also a privilege to pass & repass in the cart path from the barn to the South field, reserving to myself a privilege to pass & repass in the cart path up and down the hill in the South field, and to pass from the top of the hill Easterly into said Samuel's field. —

Westerly by said wall eight rods & thirteen links to the West cart; from thence running  
Northerly by said cart rut & by land of said Samuel twenty five rods fourteen links  
and an half to a stake and stones by said cart rut, thence Northerly by said Samuel's  
land fourteen rods one and a half link to a stake and stones by said highway, thence  
Westerly by the highway thirteen rods & twenty one links to the first mentioned bounds. Also privilege to pass & repass in the  
cart path from the barn to the South field, reserving to myself a privilege to pass & repass in the cart path up and  
down the hill in the South field, and to pass from the top of the hill Easterly into said Samuel's field. —

thirteen links to the West cart,  
ence of said Samuel twenty fo  
by said cart rut, thence North  
link to a stake and stones by a  
only one link to the first mentioned bound  
reserving to myself a privilege to pass  
to pass from the top of the hill East

# Strategies

## *Use Context*

Familiar words and phrases in deeds

Recognize them, use as keys

*To have and hold;*

*bargained and sold;*

*heirs and assigns;*

*in consideration of;*

*To all to whom these presents may come, Know Ye;*

*in the year of our Lord*

# Strategies

*Don't struggle to make it what it isn't*

*witch hazel*

**NOT**

*with hixel*

# Strategies

## *Find a Rosetta Stone*

Find another document in different handwriting

With the same description, etc.,

So you have two examples of each word,

And use it to decipher.



# Strategies

## *Fill in the Blanks*

Transcribe what you recognize,  
Leave blanks for what you can't read,  
Use context or letter forms to fill in blanks

Said Wood had S 88 E 240 ps to a white oak S 75 E  
200 ps to a white oak then with another line of  
N 80 E 80 ps to a white oak & maple on said line  
then leaving said line & running S 34 1/2 E 58 ps along the  
Pike & a run to a small locust on the West Side of said  
Pike then S 35 W 312 ps passing through one corner of the  
Phillips improved mount & crossing Flat back to a  
small white oak with pointers on the West bank

\_\_\_\_\_ Wood \_\_\_\_\_ S 88 E 240 ps (poles) to a white oak S 75 E  
200 ps to a white oak \_\_\_\_\_ another line \_\_\_\_\_  
N 80 E 80 ps to a white oak and maple on said line  
then leaving said line and running S 34 1/2 E 58 poles \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ to a small locust on the West Side of said  
Pike then S 35 W 312 ps \_\_\_\_\_ through one corner of the  
Phillips \_\_\_\_\_ and crossing Flat \_\_\_\_\_ to a  
Small white oak with pointers on the West bank

Hannah Bee & others  
P 3 Seed  
Almira Bee & others

This deed made this 24<sup>th</sup> day of February 1865 between Hannah Bee  
Lemuel Davis and Rhoda Davis his wife Zebulon Bee and Elizabeth  
Bee his wife Daniel May and Abigail A May his wife Asa Bee  
and Catharine Bee his wife and Loamie Bee party of the first

part Almira Bee Priscilla Bee and Eugene J Bee party of the second  
part all of the County of Ricketts O state of West Virginia Whereas the party  
of the first part for and in the consideration of the sum of one dollar in  
hand paid the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged doth grant unto  
the party of the second part a certain tract or parcel of land by in the  
County of Ricketts on the state part of others side and bounded as follows to wit  
beginning at David F Randolphs corner in Negleick H. Ettons line thence with  
the same to Asa Bees line thence with his line to John Foxes corner thence with  
his line to the corner of Asa Bees land right of Henry J. Jamis thence with the same  
to David F Randolphs land thence with the same to the beginning containing thirty five  
Acres Very much or less the said parties of the first part covenants with said parties  
of the second part that they will warrant generally the property hereby conveyed  
Witness the following signature and seal

Hannah Bee  
Lemuel Davis  
Rhoda Davis  
Zebulon Bee  
Elizabeth Bee  
Daniel May  
Abigail A. Bee May  
Asa Bee  
Catharine Bee  
Loamie Bee



**Know all Men by these Presents,**

**That** We, Daniel Pinkham & Joseph C. Plummer both of Epping  
in the County of Rockingham & State of New Hampshire, and Sarah  
Ann Pinkham & Sally Plummer wives of the said Pinkham  
and Plumer.

For and in consideration of the sum of Two Hundred Dollars  
to me in hand, before the delivery hereof, well and truly paid by

Henry S. Leach of the aforesaid Epping.

the receipt whereof we do hereby acknowledge, have given, granted, bargained and  
sold, and by these presents do give, grant, bargain, sell, alien, enfeoff, convey and confirm unto the said  
Henry S. Leach his heirs and assigns forever,

A certain tract or parcel of land with the building thereon containing three acres be the same more or less, situate in said Epping on the road leading from said Plumers dwellinghouse to Nottingham, bounded Easterly by said road, Southerly by the road leading from said Plumers to David Bartletts, & Westerly by the road leading from said Bartletts to Nottingham, meaning to convey all the land that is where I the said Pinkham now live, also all the manure that is on said premises.

Ames  
Smith

For and in consideration of the sum of One dollar and other valuable consideration  
to me. In hand before the delivery hereof, well and truly paid by

John H. Smith of Atkinson in the County  
of Rockingham and State of New Hampshire

Delivered to  
J. Greenough  
mail

the receipt whereof I do hereby acknowledge, have given, granted, bargained and sold, and by these  
presents do give, grant, bargain, sell, alien, enfeof, convey and confirm unto the said

John H. Smith and his heirs and assigns forever,

A certain parcel of land situated in said At-  
kinson and bounded as follows namely: Beginning at the  
Northerly corner thereof at the corner of a wall by land now  
of the Goodhue heirs formerly of Jonathan Taylor and by  
land formerly of Joseph Coffin and thence running South 8°  
West by the land last mentioned on a high ledge nineteen (19)  
rods to land of the grantee formerly of Wheeler thence Westery

by the land last mentioned thirty nine (39) rods and seven (7) links to land of Daniel Merrill formerly of Leonard Merrill; thence North  $8^{\circ}$  East by the land last mentioned about thirty eight and one half ( $38\frac{1}{2}$ ) rods to said Goodhue land; and thence South  $66^{\circ}$  East by said Goodhue lands forty (40) rods more or less to the point begun at.

Said parcel of land contains about six (6) acres and one hundred and fifty two (152) rods but the accuracy of the courses and distances are not warranted. The land is also conveyed subject to and with any existing rights of way but the existence of rights of way is not warranted or admitted. Said premises were conveyed to John J. Marsh & late of said Baverhill deceased by a deed recorded with Northampton Records Lib. 353 - Vol. 186 and devised to Mary J. Ames & late of said Baverhill and I make this conveyance by virtue of the power given to me by her will and every other power me hereto enabling.

Know all Men by these presents, that we George J. Brown and David Brown of Newburgh in the County of Penobscot and State of Maine have in consideration of Eight dollars to us in hand paid by Joseph Graves of Brentwood in the County of Rockingham and State of New Hampshire Esquire the receipt whereof we do hereby acknowledge, do hereby remise, release, bargain sell and convey, and forever quit claim unto the said Joseph Graves his heirs and assigns <sup>forever,</sup> all the right, title and interest in and to our Shares which may happen to us out of the estate of our uncle Jeremiah Brown (he being in parts unknown) out of the share which was set off to him out of the estate of his Hon. Father Jeremiah Brown late of Brentwood aforesaid dec'd all our Share of Real and personal estate said real estate is situated in said Brentwood see committas reposit which is filed in the Probate office in the County of Rockingham who part of the several Shares in the estate of the said Jeremiah Brown dec'd.



State of New Hampshire. Carrol ps Given  
March tenth New Style A.D. 1-8-77.  
To me well known in person and name,  
David C. Rogers personally came,

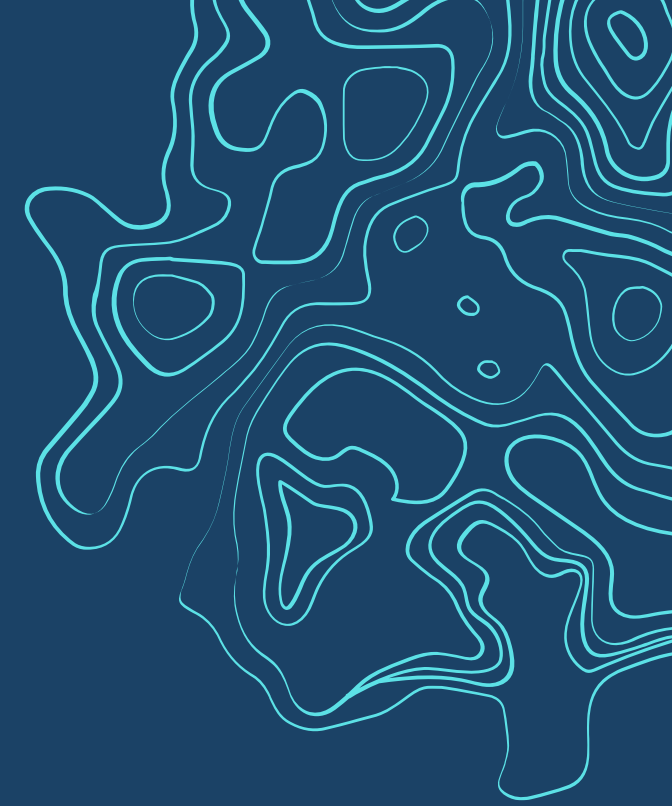
And th<sup>t</sup> above instrument declared to be  
His voluntary act and deed, <sup>^</sup>Fore me:  
William C. Fox, Esquire, now as of late,  
Justice of the Peace and Quorum, for the State.

Received March 12. 1877  
Examined By Saubens B. Carter Recorder

We y<sup>e</sup> subscribers being Chosen a Com<sup>te</sup> by y<sup>e</sup> Com<sup>on</sup>ers of  
Hampton to sell several peices of land for to help defray y<sup>e</sup> charge  
they have been att: & In a Especial manner A peice at Giles Swamp  
Accordingly we have sold part of s<sup>d</sup> peice to Calab Tole & now we  
have sold y<sup>e</sup> other part of s<sup>d</sup> peice of Swamp to Phillip Tole begin-  
ing by y<sup>e</sup> Country Road at his fathers Bound & so to run by y<sup>e</sup>  
Side of y<sup>e</sup> Swamp until it comes to Joshua Lanes Bound & so by  
Lanes land to y<sup>e</sup> fence of y<sup>e</sup> field & by y<sup>e</sup> fence until it comes to  
his fathers land again & we sold to him: only s<sup>d</sup> Phillip Tole is to  
leave out y<sup>e</sup> pond of water for Creturs to drink att: & for y<sup>e</sup> s<sup>d</sup> Swamp  
we have receiv<sup>d</sup> thirty Shill<sup>ts</sup> money In full Satisfaction this  
Sixth day of february 1722/3 \*

Francis Page }  
Jabez Dow } Com<sup>rs</sup>

# SESSION EVALUATION



2025

**SURVEYORS'**  
*Conference*

[HTTPS://WWW.SURVEYMONKEY.COM/R/2025PSLSEVAL](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2025PSLSEVAL)