THE HISTORY OF GREGG SHORTHAND

by

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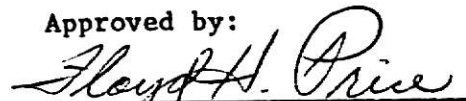
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On May 28, 1888, there appeared on the market in Liverpool,
England, a modest little four-by-six paper-covered booklet entitled
"Light-Line Phonography."

In the Preface of "Light-Line Phonography" as Gregg Shorthand
was then called, the author outlined the features of his system, which
included such revolutionary departures from the systems of his day as
the absence of shading or thickening; the basing of shorthand characters
on ordinary longhand writing; the insertion of vowels in their natural
order; the absence of position writing; the predominance of curves; and
the introduction of consonantal blends. In the last paragraph of the
Preface Gregg stated:

> In conclusion, the endeavor of the author has been
> to compile a system so simple as to be readily acquired by
> the humblest capacity and those possessed of little leisure,
> and yet rapid enough to reproduce verbatim the fastest ora-
> tory. In presenting his work to the public, he asks for
> nothing beyond an impartial investigation, and with perfect
> confidence awaits the result.[1]

These were very brave words indeed when we consider the author,
John Robert Gregg, was only a boy in his teens. The passing of time
proved that Gregg had every reason to await the result with "perfect

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[1] Charles E. Zoubek, "System Changes in Gregg Shorthand—Diamond
Jubilee Series," The Business Teacher, (January-February 1963), p.7.

confidence." He lived to see the day when millions of people used his system for secretarial work, for reporting, and for personal use. He lived to see the day when more than twenty thousand schools taught his system not only in English but in many foreign languages as well. He lived to see the day when most people think of the term "shorthand" as synonymous with Gregg.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The writer attempted an in-depth study of the evolution of shorthand writing, and in particular, traced the history and development of the Gregg Shorthand system.

Importance of the study. Shorthand has become a vital part of American business. The writer of this paper felt that while many teachers and students were masters of the theory behind the shorthand system invented by John Robert Gregg and recognized its importance in the business world, the great majority of them had no idea of the colorful history behind this great invention.

As an instructor of shorthand for two years, the writer often encountered questions from students in regard to the history behind Gregg Shorthand. The writer felt a historical study would not only add interest to the subject matter being taught but could also be presented in such a way as to motivate students, especially in the early weeks of learning the subject.

In this study an attempt was made to research the background of the Gregg Shorthand system. It is the hope of the writer that this study will be a source of interesting material for shorthand teachers.

<u>Objectives</u>. The purpose of this study was (1) to trace the development of shorthand writing systems through history, and (2) to study the development of the shorthand system devised by John Robert Gregg.

<u>Limitations</u> <u>and</u> <u>Delimitations</u>. Of all the shorthand systems in existence, this study was limited to the historical facts surrounding the shorthand system invented by John Robert Gregg. Mention made to other systems was provided to help the reader realize that shorthand writing did not begin with the system initiated by Gregg. The writer's sources of information included a review of magazine articles and brochures, and books. Another source of information was early shorthand textbooks published by Gregg.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

<u>Light-Line</u> <u>Phonography</u>. The first name given to the shorthand system devised by John Robert Gregg in 1888.

<u>Shorthand</u>. A rapid method of writing by substituting characters or symbols for letters or words.

<u>Transcription</u>. An arrangement of a composition for some other instrument than that for which it was written.

<u>Original</u> <u>1888</u> <u>Alphabet</u>. The ten strokes devised by Gregg upon which his entire shorthand system was based.

<u>Longhand</u>. The ordinary mode of writing by the use of script letters.

<u>Phonography</u>. A mode of writing, whether long or short, in which

each speech-sound of the voice is represented by a letter or sign of its own. It is also known by the name of phonetic writing.

Stenography. Signifies exactly the same meaning as the word "shorthand."

Ellipse. A plane curve, the path of a point, the sum of whose distances from two fixed points is constant; a conic section, the closed intersection of a plane with a right circular cone.

Pairing of Consonants. The arrangement of consonantal characters in pairs according to their phonetic relationship.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Shorthand is an important part of our education enterprise in America. Shorthand has been taught in schools in this country since the middle of the 19th century. Today it is offered to some 800,000 to 1,000,000 students annually in over 20,000 schools and colleges in our country.[2] Shorthand is more than strokes and signs and symbols. It is more than a recording medium. Shorthand is an institution; and institution that is closely associated with knowledge, discoveries, research, literature, diplomacy, government, business, industry, and the professions.

I. LITERATURE ON THE HISTORY OF SHORTHAND SYSTEMS

Ever since recorded history began, men have tried to improve upon the current means of recording speech. Through the ages, hundreds or perhaps even thousands, of shorthand systems have been invented. Tironian shorthand (invented at the time of Caeser) survived for over one thousand years--a longer period than any modern system has lasted.[3]

Tiro was a remarkably intelligent Roman slave who earned his freedom by inventing a shorthand system in the last century preceding the Christian era. He was born in the ancient city of Arpinium, south

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[2] R. E. Slaughter, "Shorthand and Society," Business Education World, XLIII (January 1963), p. 11.

[3] Arnold Condon, "Shorthand in the Sixties," Business Education Forum, XVI (October 1961), p. 9.

of Rome, in the year 103 B.C.[4] Tiro's mother was owned by a nobleman called Marcus Tullius Cicero, father of the celebrated Roman orator of the same name. In 96 B.C., this young slave was sent to Rome to study with his master's two sons, Marcus and Quintus, who were about his same age.[5] As the boys advanced in their studies, their friendship grew and when the old master died, Marcus Cicero became Tiro's legal owner and the slave became his master's secretary.

Exactly when and where Tiro invented the famous "notes" that won him the title of the "Father of Shorthand" is not clear. Some researchers even question the authenticity of his invention, claiming that Tiro merely stole a stenographic system already in use in ancient Greece or Egypt. Other researchers state that Tiro may have been inspired by a rudimentary abbreviating device of the Greeks or Egyptians, perfecting it and adapting it to the Latin language. Most historians do consider the "Tironian notes" to be the first efficiently organized system of shorthand that enabled a writer to take down spoken words as fast as they were being said.

Tiro seemed to have followed his master into exile to Thessalia, where the orator remained for one year. Back in Rome in 57 B.C., the two men resumed work together. It was at this time that the "notes" made their first appearance.[6]

According to some sources, Cicero himself picked up a shorthand system during one of his trips to Greece and taught it to Tiro, who adapted

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[4] F. Pasqualini, "Shorthand in Ancient Rome," Business Education World, XXXVIII, (April 1958), p. 26.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

it to Latin. Whether this was true or not has never been established, but it was Tiro who wrote the shorthand treatise that was soon distributed throughout the Roman Empire under the name of the Tironian Notes.

This system was taught to children of all social classes. The Romans, who conducted their business by word of mouth at the forum, were quick to realize the usefulness of a shorthand system of reporting this oral communication.

Thus, a new profession was born. Shorthand reporters of that epoch were significantly called sursores, which meant "runners." Court reporters were known as notarii (singular: notarius) because they wrote down the proceedings in "notae."[7] This title came down to us through the French notaire as "notary," although the stenographic part of the notary's role disappeared a long time ago.

Tiro's greatest contribution to the advancement of Western civilization lay in the widespread use made of the Tironian Notes. Not only was this system taught in Roman schools, but with the advent of Christianity—shortly after Tiro's death in 4 B.C., it was adopted by the early Christian churchmen as a practical means of spreading the new religious doctrine and recording the deeds of the saints and martyrs.[8]

The first evidence of the revival of shorthand was in the Renaissance. The sermons of the "new prophet," Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) were reported in some form of abbreviated writing by Lorenzo di

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[7] Ibid., p. 36,

[8] Ibid,

Jacopo Violi.[9] There are many omissions or incomplete sentences in these reports and it seemed that Violi was showing his inability to keep pace with the great orator. Savonarola, however, acknowledged that he had been reported with accuracy.

In 1588, as Queen Elizabeth was directing the preparations against the menace of the Spanish, it was recorded that she took time to grant a patent to a subject for a shorthand system. The young subject was Timothe Bright who was credited for inventing "Characterie--An arte of shorte, swifte, and secrete writing by character."[10]

John Robert Gregg, in conversation, once called attention to the strange fact that shorthand systems seem to come in fifty-year cycles. Almost without exception every shorthand system that attained widespread use was published very close to a fiftieth anniversary of the first modern shorthand system. The reader should note how close these systems come to the 88's and 38's:[11]

Bright	1588	Mavor	1789
Shelton	1641	Gabelsberger	1834
Mason	1682	Pitman	1837
Weston	1727	Gregg	1888
Taylor	1786		

Shelton's system was not only used widely in its day but it was also sure of a permanent place in history because it was the system used by Samuel Pepys in keeping his famous diary.

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[9] Ibid., p. 36.

[10] Louis A. Leslie, The Story of Gregg Shorthand (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 2.

[11] Ibid., p. 5.

Perhaps the one outstanding exception was the system of Byrom (1767), but that system was not taught widely and was not published during the author's lifetime. It was the system used by John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, and his brother, Charles Wesley.[12]

Mason's shorthand system (1682) is the oldest system still used. That system is still used in reporting British Parliament debates. There are also some shorthand reporters in America who still employ this method.

In this brief summary an attempt has been made to show the reader that Gregg Shorthand was far from being the first shorthand system to come into existence. Gregg's predecessors laid the groundwork for his important creation. Gregg drew much from their work but added the ingredient of simplicity and formulated his own system. What is remarkable to the Gregg method is that it replaced all the others and is practically the only system used at the present time. The writer will endeavor to trace the development of the Gregg shorthand system by now viewing the man and his work.

II. LITERATURE ON THE LIFE AND WORK OF JOHN ROBERT GREGG

John Robert Gregg was born June 17, 1867, in the little Irish village of Rockcorry, County Monaghan, and was the youngest of the five children of George and Margaret (Courtney Johnston) Gregg. Of these five, his brother George and his sister Fanny were brilliant scholars, both taking first school prizes every year. John was considered a dunce and his school master treated him as such. The effect of this was to convince young Gregg that he was a hopeless case, an impression his

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[12]Ibid., p. 6.

family endorsed also. Gregg was treated with pity by almost everyone. Early in his childhood, Gregg suffered punishment from his schoolmaster which was to plague his physical condition the rest of his life. Gregg told it this way in The Story of Gregg Shorthand:

> I should explain at this point that the reason why I was so stupid in school was that in the first class, the teacher having been called out of the room, we boys got talking, as boys will. The teacher, coming back and finding me talking to another boy, caught our heads and banged them together, and in doing that, he broke the drum of my ear, so that I suffered all through my school days from that, and I have suffered from that more or less all my life. I didn't tell them at home about it, because they had a great deal of the old Scotch covenanter theory of life. The injunction to spare the rod is to spoil the child was a religious injunction with them. I knew from past experience that if I were punished at school (that being the evidence of wrong-doing on my part) it was supplemented at home even more vigorously than was the case at school. So I didn't tell them. But I suffered with this, and couldn't hear, and consequently didn't make much progress at school. [13]

But there was one who did not share the view that John was a dunce. An old friend of the family, who was also the most respected man in Rockcorry, watched and studied John and summed him up in a manner entirely contrary to that of the members of his family. Again, Gregg summed up the situation very well:

> Now, that was the impression under which I grew up, that I was a hopeless dunce; and that was the impression which all of my family had about me. When I was referred to, it was always as "poor John"; whenever I said anything that sounded ordinarily intelligent, it was a subject of comment in the family circle. I grew up with the firm conviction that my life was bound to be a hopeless failure, and I say in all seriousness that it is a tragedy for a boy to grow up with that impression firmly fixed upon his mind.
>
> Old Sandy Gilmour always had a kind word for me, and I hung around when he visited us. One evening he spoke to me; but as I did not hear him, my brother Jared said,

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[13]Louis A. Leslie, The Story of Gregg Shorthand (New York: The McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 31.

"Mr. Gilmour, John is dull of hearing." The old man turned
around in his chair and put his hand on my shoulder and
said: "Dull o'hearing, laddie, but no dull o' brain."
The effect of that remark on me was extraordinary. Up to
that time, no one had ever indicated that I had any gray
matter whatever--quite the reverse. To have this man with
his reputation for profound wisdom say that I had anything
in my brain simply electrified me.[14]

An old friend of John's father, Annesley, came to the village

where the Gregg family lived and accompanied the family to church one

Sunday. In so small a place, a stranger was always an object of curiosity;

and when he began taking notes of the sermon, the congregation became

alive with interest. The young parson was so visibly taken aback that

he almost broke down, rushing from the church after the service and beg-

ging Mr. Annesley not to publish the sermon, as it had been "borrowed"

from the works of a great preacher.[15]

This incident made a great impression on John's father, who

decided that all his children should immediately begin learning shorthand.

Arrangements were made, and a repition of the children's previous bril-

liant accomplishments was awaited with confidence--with, of course, the

usual reservation about John.

John's three brothers and his sister applied themselves to the

study of the art, but made little or no progress and soon abandoned the

study. But John was somehow inspired to succeed in learning the shorthand

system. "I suddenly was determined to stick to shorthand even if it

killed me," he confessed afterwards.[16]

Gregg made this decision when he was not more than ten years old.

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[14]Ibid., p. 31.

[15]F. A. Symonds, "The Saga of Gregg Shorthand, 1. The Early Years
in Great Britain," Business Education World, (January 1961), p. 7.

[16]Ibid.

Yet even at that early age, bitter experience guided him in his choice of the system he decided to master. His brothers and sisters had failed using the Pitman method, so he decided on the Odell version of a system by Samuel Taylor, published in 1786--"because I saw that it was contained in a very small pamphlet."[17]

From the outset, the system strongly appealed to Gregg. He had found something he could really do. What added to his delight was the discovery that somehow he was also able to take up again many of the subjects he had once failed at in school and make progress in them.

With great speed, Gregg mastered the Taylor system. Then he began to tackle Pitman, the system he was afraid to try in the beginning. Gregg developed a fascination for shorthand and began to investigate many of the other systems. "Shorthand had me in its grip," he admitted.[18] In Gregg had been sown the seed of an insatiable enthusiasm that was, years later, to be transmitted through his own shorthand system to people throughout the world.

Meanwhile, Gregg and his parents left Ireland and settled in Glasgow, Scotland. Here he was attracted to a number of systems, notably the Sloan adaptation of the method invented by the Abbe Duploye of France. He mastered this system and entered a speed examination and won the gold medal.

Gregg obtained employment as a clerk with a Glasgow lawyer. His employer was overfond of the bottle, and Gregg was frequently left

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[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., p. 8.

with free time on his hands. He turned to other shorthand systems, among
them the Pernin adaptation of the Sloan-Duployan and a version of the
original Duploye shorthand invented by Jean Martin, of Lyons, France.
Then Gregg explored the systems from other foreign countries, among them
those of Gabelsberger and Stolze in Germany. He found a new enthusiasm
in the discovery of the cursive, as opposed to the geometric basis of
shorthand writing and this was the beginning of an idea that was eventually
to become Gregg's own system of shorthand.

Gregg came into contact with others in Glasgow who were interested
in the study of shorthand. Among them was a man named Malone, who was the
local agent for Sloan-Duployan shorthand. This man already had his own
school of shorthand and was established as an expert in the art.

The two men became very friendly and Malone gave Gregg a job
teaching shorthand in his night classes. Gregg confided in Malone that
he had been working on a system of shorthand all his own and he showed
him some of his rough drafts. Malone offered to collaborate with Gregg
and publish it. Malone pointed out to Gregg that since he was established
in the world of shorthand study and had financial backing that they should
publish the system together. The result was the publication, in 1885, of
a method called Script Phonography, based on the slope of longhand, with
connected vowels on the Duployan plan, though with shading and position
writing; but Malone was listed as the sole author.[19]

Gregg did not share in the rewards of the publication and was
eventually cheated out of his rights. This incident embittered him, but

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[19]Ibid., p. 9.

later in life he recalled that it was a blessing in disguise because it impelled him to go on with the completion of his goal.

Gregg began working day and night on his alphabet. In the midst of his labors came the news that his brother George, was dying of tuberculosis. His sister, Fanny, had also developed the same disease. The shock was too much for him and he put his notes away. He gave up his job and tried to forget his dreams. He packed his belongings and went to Liverpool.

Gregg joined his brother, Samuel, in Liverpool. Finally, after nearly a year, Gregg resumed his work on the notes he had written in Glasgow. He found that his dream system was nearly complete. Testing it by copying out some speeches and newspaper articles, he realized that, even in that crude form and without using any abbreviations, it was "wonderfully easy to write and beautiful to look at."[20]

In Liverpool, Gregg started his first shorthand school. He described it this way:

> . . . so I went to Liverpool, where my oldest brother, Samuel, lived. I started a shorthand school in a little room on the top floor of a building in that city. There was no elevator in the building, and there were ten flights of stairs up to that room; but when an inquirer finally got up there, he was willing to sit down and let me talk to him. I found that to be a great advantage, because I was a very nervous and diffident youngster. [21]

Soon Gregg tried to persuade his brother, Samuel, to help finance the publishing of the notes he had been testing. Samuel listened to all John had to say but his attitude was critical. He felt John was obsessed

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[20]Ibid., p. 11.

[21]Leslie, op. cit., p. 42.

with his idea of a shorthand system and felt the only way to rid him of the obsession was to let it run its natural course. He lent John ten pounds, just enough to pay for the bare printing. Samuel thought he would not see his money again.

John found a comparatively cheap printer and contrived to get just 500 copies of his textbook printed. In form it was a mere pamphlet, 6 x 4 inches in size and consisting of just 28 pages. It made its appearance on May 28, 1888, under the title of "Light-Line Phonography" and the price was one shilling.[22]

Gregg had to struggle for bare existence, but he kept his faith in his invention. "I always maintained its speed possibilities," he said when addressing the Silver Jubilee Convention of the Gregg Shorthand Association in Chicago in 1913, "and I predicted then the results that you have seen accomplished."[23]

Gregg's first student was a man named Fred H. Spragg who became a brilliant writer of the system. Another student was a Mr. Jakeman, who acted as an assistant to Gregg in teaching Script. But at the end of a month disaster was staring Gregg in the face. His resources were exhausted. At that time, a weekly paper known as Tit Bits ran an article about a writer of Pitman shorthand who had sustained dictation at the rate of 220 words a minute for forty minutes. Gregg called attention to this article to a good friend of his, Mr. J. Carlisle McCleery, who was an official at the Customs Department and had been a good student of Gregg's. John Gregg convinced McCleery to write a rebuttal to the periodical stating

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[22]Symonds, op. cit., p. 12.

[23]Ibid.

the claim about Pitman shorthand was impossible. McCleery wrote under the pseudonym of "Whyte Tight." The letter is remarkable for its bluntness and humor. After stating that he had checked on the account of the feat using Pitman shorthand, McCleery continued:

> I have no wish whatsoever to cast the shadow of a shade of suspicion on the accuracy of Mr. Watt's timekeeping. His feat stands unsurpassed in the chronicles of shorthand. I cannot, however, repress a gurgle of admiration for the lung and tongue power of the Scotch Counsel which enabled the said Counsel to give utterance to 220 words per minute for forty minutes. My mother-in-law in her most excited moments couldn't have come within miles of it.
>
> As an illustration of the Counsel's speed, I may state that Messrs. Pitman's letter to Tit Bits consisted of 237 words. I read it aloud as quickly as I could and the reading occupied exactly seventy-two seconds, or at the rate of 197 words per minute. I could not possibly have continued at that same rate for a quarter hour. A counsel who could collect his thoughts and speak at the rate of 220 words per minute for forty minutes when I could only read at the rate of 197, must indeed be an oratorical express.[24]

McCleery then detailed some of his own experiences in studying and practicing the Pitman method and stated that after six months of studying Pitman he reached only the speed of 60 words a minute. His letter concluded:

> Now, in my green old age, I have actually started to study Light-Line Phonography--a system invented by John Robert Gregg, of Liverpool. After a month's study of "Light-Line" I was able to write 100 words a minute. Who knows but that some day or other I may even be able to report to Scotch Counsel.[25]

This letter started Gregg's system on its way. A day or two after its appearance Gregg received hundreds of letters. Soon letters were

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[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid.

coming from all over the world. Gregg's system could not have survived had there not been the inquiries that enabled him to keep it going during the trying summer when it was first published.

The correspondence about shorthand continued in Tit Bits during that summer. As it went on, public interest in Gregg's system grew, and the roll of students at the little top-floor school increased. Money began to trickle in and Gregg carefully managed it until he had enough to start a publicity campaign.

The highlight of this publicity campaign was an elaborate pamphlet that was an example of modern advertising at a time when the art of publicity was in its infancy. Other auxiliaries in the campaign during that period between the years of 1888 and 1892 included the appearance of two monthly periodicals devoted exclusively to the system.

The first of these was the "Light-Line Magazine," which was published and edited by an Exeter enthusiast by the name of G. Ridsdale Blake. The most intriguing feature of the magazine was its recognition of the growing importance of women as shorthand-typists. In those days it was a rare thing for a member of the fair sex to be employed in an office. But Gregg had the prophetic insight to realize the time was rapidly approaching when young girls would enter actively into commercial life.

The "Light-Line Magazine" had a brief career lasting only one year. Gregg soon launched a new monthly that he called the "Light-Liner." It was a larger production than "The Light-Line Magazine" had been, and there was more of a professional journalistic touch to it.

The magazines were part of a campaign to launch Gregg's system. Many people became attracted to the study of shorthand. During this time

there were many successes, but all in all they represented little more than a good start.

Disaster overtook Gregg again. In the early months of 1893, a gray ghost from the past reared its ugly head. All his life, Gregg had suffered from the punishment his school master had inflicted upon him when he was young. At this particular time, Gregg suddenly and completely lost his hearing.

For six months Gregg could hardly hear a sound and his teaching business almost vanished. About the end of that time, he received a letter from Mr. Frank Rutherford, who had learned Gregg's system in England, stating that he intended to teach the system in Boston, where he was located, and urging Gregg to come to America and copyright the system.

Gregg had always intended to go to America. He had subscribed to many American newspapers and had become well acquainted with American ways. In Gregg's personal account of the story of his life in The Story of Gregg Shorthand, he stated:

> It appalled me to think that I was in danger of losing
> my copyrights in America, which I had always looked forward
> to as offering the greatest opportunities for the recognition
> of the system. I immediately prepared a revision of the entire
> system, sold my school in Liverpool for forty pounds--about two
> hundred dollars--and started for Boston.[26]

Gregg landed in Boston full of hope. He had come to protect his copyrights and to tell America about his system. At that time he had precisely $130 between himself and destitution.[27]

Business was virtually at a standstill in Boston. Gregg had

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[26]Leslie, op. cit., p. 50.

[27]Symonds, op. cit., p. 12.

arrived at a time when typists and stenographers were out of employment. It was not a good year to start a new venture, especially in Boston.

Gregg got in touch with Mr. Rutherford. Rutherford boasted to him that he already was head of a commercial school and he took Gregg along to see it. Rutherford's "school" was a desk in a room in the Equitable Building which he rented for $12 a month. Rutherford offered Gregg a partnership in his school. Gregg and Rutherford started their shorthand campaign and were able to carry on this school for the next two years and even to produce the first American edition of the textbook in paper covers.

Their students were a mixture of both sexes and various ages. Among the first to be enrolled was a mysterious lady who came on Saturday afternoons from some distance. She was secretive about herself and seemed to regard Gregg's system with a suspicious eye. After she had had about 12 lessons she confessed that she was already a shorthand teacher, employed at the Salem Commercial School, and had been sent by the school master to look into the new method offered by Gregg. The end result of this was the first school adoption of Gregg Shorthand in America.[28]

In December of 1895 Gregg went to Chicago. He found an office at 94 Washington Street for $15 a month. He bought the furniture he would need, put a small advertisement in one of the newspapers, and opened his new school.

Two years later, in 1898, Gregg was able to publish the system in book form for the first time, and the system began to move forward

[28]F. A. Symonds, "The Saga of Gregg Shorthand, 2. Triumph in America,"Business Education World, (February 1961), p. 19.

more and more rapidly. In 1900 it began to sweep all over the United

States. Gregg stated in the Story of Gregg Shorthand:

> Up to that time I was simply an enthusiast and didn't
> have much knowledge of business. When I got into the atmosphere
> of Chicago, I realized that it was only through a knowledge
> of business methods that I could accomplish the object I had
> in view. I learned business methods by hard study and then
> proceeded to build up the business organization which has done
> so much to spread the system.[29]

The ultimate secret of Gregg's success can be summed up in one word--

demonstration.[30] The public--represented by teachers of other systems--

wanted proof of his claims and challenged him to test his system at high

speeds. Gregg accepted this challenge and won.

It began, when in 1910, Fred H. Gurtler, a young Gregg writer,

entered the final contest for the famous Miner Medal under the auspices

of the Eastern Commercial Teachers' Association, and won the medal. Gurtler's

net speed was 173 words per minute. Two other Gregg writers, both only

17 years old, also placed in the contest with speeds of 163 and 139.4

words a minute respectively.[31]

In the following year, at the shorthand speed contest held by

The National Shorthand Reporters' Association at Buffalo, an 18-year

old Gregg writer, Charles Lee Swem, established the highest world's

record for accuracy of transcript on solid, difficult matter by writing

170 words a minute for five minutes.[32]

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[29]Leslie, op. cit., p. 57.

[30]Symonds, op. cit., p. 19.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid.

A year later, Swem crowned this achievement at the New York speed contests of the National Shorthand Reporters' Association, by setting a new record of 268 words a minute for five minutes on testimony, defeating three former champions.[33] He followed this up in 1923 by establishing a world's record of three takes at 200, 240, and 280 words a minute, with an average accuracy of more than 99 per cent; and he repeated it in the 1924 World's Championship.[34] Gregg Shorthand had by this time won six world's championships, establishing the world's highest speed records.

Foreign-language adaptations of the system--in Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, Italian, and Esperanto--were also beginning to appear. A whole series of magazines, headed by the Gregg Writer and the American Shorthand Teacher in the United States, and the Gregg Shorthand Magazine in England, added their lively testimony to the mounting success of the system.[35]

In time, anniversaries of the publication of Gregg Shorthand were celebrated. In 1913, Silver Jubilee Conferences were held simultaneously in Chicago and London and a special Anniversary edition of the Gregg Shorthand Manual was published. In 1938, the Golden Jubilee of what was now justly described as "the most widely used shorthand in the world" was celebrated in America and Great Britain, when the press of the world acclaimed the author and many congratulatory messages were received including one from King George IV and Queen Elizabeth.[36]

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[33]Ibid., p. 20.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid., p. 21

In 1929, Gregg was given the honorary degree of Master of Commercial Science by Bryant-Stratton College. In the following year, Boston University conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Commercial Science. He was appointed delegate of the United States Government to the International Congress for Commercial Education, which met at Amsterdam, and was elected chairman of the delegation and vice-president of the Congress. The degree of Doctor of Letters was conferred on him by Rider College, Trenton, New Jersey.

In 1931, the Eastern Commercial Teachers' Association presented Dr. Gregg with its first gold medal "for distinguished services to Business Education," and he was also elected to honorary life membership of the National Commercial Teachers Federation.[37] Mention must also be made of the gold medal "for Notable Services to the Nation" awarded to him in 1936 by the Ulster-Irish Society of New York, and the life membership of the New York State Reporters' Association in the following year.[38]

Throughout this long period of mounting success, Dr. Gregg continued to be as active and enthusiastic as always. Gregg continued to work at his accustomed high pressure all through the Second World War. Then in the latter part of 1947 he was taken ill and rushed to the hospital for an operation. He appeared to make a good recovery, but one week after he had returned home from the hospital, he suddenly collapsed and died. Gregg passed away on February 23, 1948, at the age of eighty-one.

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[37] Ibid., p. 22.

[38] Ibid.

At Dr. Gregg's death, his shorthand had become nearly universal in use, and statistics proved that it had already been taught to 18 million people throughout the world, either in English or through its many adaptations to foreign languages.[39]

In the time that has since lapsed, Gregg Shorthand has continued to grow in popularity; and its present promoters, the McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., have done much to insure this as well as keep the memory of John Robert Gregg alive. Among the firm's many activities has been the founding of the John Robert Gregg Award in Business Education which is presented annually.

III. LITERATURE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GREGG SHORTHAND SYSTEM

The sheer simplicity of the Gregg Shorthand system, both to the student and to the expert, may give the impression that it was simple to invent. Nothing could be further from the truth. John Robert Gregg's aim was simplicity and because of this aim he was faced with many difficulties.

Through the centuries, shorthand had been evolving. It started with the crude and clumsy efforts of the earliest experimenters to the more refined systems of Gregg's day. Gregg still felt something was lacking. Gregg collected all the material he could find on existing shorthand systems. His own idea began to take shape--the idea of inventing a system that would follow the natural lines of longhand writing. Gregg

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[39]Ibid.

came across a book, The History of Shorthand, by Thomas Anderson, in

which the author wrote: "I am persuaded that the true progress of short-

hand--the real solution to the difficulties surrounding it--is to be found

in an attentive study of our ordinary longhand writing."[40] Gregg took

from Anderson's idea and developed for his own guidance what he called

the Seven Basic Principles inherent in a good shorthand system. These

were:[41]

1. The system should be based on the ellipse, or oval--i.e.
   on the slope of the longhand.
2. The system should have curvilinear motion.
3. Obtuse angles should be eliminated.
4. Vowels should be joined to consonants.
5. Shading should be eliminated.
6. There should be only one writing position--along the line.
7. The system should be lineal--that is, the writing should
   run in an easy, continuous flow along the line.

Gregg was determined to build a system on the active maneuvering

of a few selected signs. His raw material was restricted to the segments

of the ellipse, plus a dot--a total of only ten signs.[42]

With nothing but these ten signs, Gregg fashioned his entire

system. He had to provide characters not only for the 21 consonants and

5 vowels of the English language, but for all the 40-odd shades of

sound expressed in speaking the language.[43]

Gregg's initial efforts were fired by a desire to emulate a man

[40]F. A. Symonds, "The Saga of Gregg Shorthand, 3. The Infinite
Capacity; The Quest for the Ideal," Business Education World, (April
1961), p. 26.

[41]Ibid., p. 27.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid.

by the name of Dr. Thierry-Mieg, who had devoted his whole life to an attempt to construct what he called, "the rational shorthand of the future,"[44] based exclusively on ordinary longhand writing and who had failed tragically. Gregg sympathized with Dr. Thierry-Mieg's long struggle to invent something new in shorthand, because he was attempting to do the same thing.

As already stated in this paper, young Gregg confided in his Glasgow friend, Malone, who as a result published a system known as Script Phonography. This system incorporated some of Gregg's ideas, but was far from achieving his real goal. Malone had insisted on collaborating with Gregg to include some of the shaded characters found in the Sloan-Duployan method of shorthand, against which Gregg had protested vigorously but in vain. Malone was much older and had the money and influence that Gregg lacked. This was a false start for Gregg and a cause for great disappointment to him, but it spurred him on to return to his own ideals and studies, and to produce a system that fulfilled those ideals.

Gregg took specimens of prose and analyzed them scientifically, counting up the frequency not only of common words but of syllables and sounds, and he made tables of these frequencies for study and comparison. He divided and subdivided the alphabet into groups of letters according to the kinds of sounds (labials, coalescents, diphthongs, aspirates, etc.) and worked out a set of averages, comparing this with the results achieved by various inventors and searching for inherent weaknesses.[45]

Gregg studied painstakingly the number of times that any given

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[44]Ibid., p. 31.

[45]Ibid.

letters of the alphabet were combined within a specified piece of writing and worked out their frequencies. "I worked day and night, devising and testing alphabets," he said, adding with ironic modesty, "It was a fascinating pursuit."[46]

Gregg began constructing his alphabet by following the lines of his predecessors by first trying to ascertain the value of each shorthand character. He assigned a certain value to each of the strokes, according to his estimate of their facility of execution. Then, through studying other authors and by personal investigation and testing, he tried to discover the most frequent letters and sounds of the language. Gregg found that after he had assigned certain values to each letter, it was a simple matter to assign the most common letter to the character to which he had given the highest value.

Gregg found that certain of his shorthand characters, when joined together, formed an obtuse angle, which had been the bugbear of all the systems and one of the greatest impediments to speed.[47] Gregg's system was based on ordinary longhand writing and there were no obtuse angles in longhand. Obtuse angles had to be eliminated and Gregg was limited to only ten signs.

The answer soon came upon him. In shorthand, those lines that join with an obtuse angle take on the appearance of large curves when written speedily. In other words, the angle is lost or obscured. This phenomenon had always been a nightmare to shorthand inventors. Gregg had the idea of making this obscure angle an integral part of his system.

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[46]Ibid., p. 32.

[47]Ibid.

He decided to adopt the curves made by fast writing as signs in themselves.

From this idea came the discovery of an entirely new principle in shorthand--the idea of Blended Consonants. Never before in the history of shorthand had the natural blending of characters been accomplished.

The first assignment was the downward horizontal curve to "r" and "l" and the curve that preceded it to "p" and "b", thus providing for the representation of the combinations "pr", "pl", "br", "bl", in their natural order by one impulse of the pen.[48]

Gregg gradually built up the entire alphabet basing his selection of the consonantal signs on two factors: curvilinear motion and lineality.[49] The first of these two factors was completely new in shorthand theory.

Gregg also discovered, as others had before him, that great saving could be effected by the pairing of related consonants: "p", "b"; "t", "d"; "k" and "g"; for example.[50] It enabled him to express two letters by one stroke--the short stroke representing the short sound and the long stroke for the long sound. This distinction by length (instead of shading as in other systems) enabled him to form pairs for the upward characters and to use both the horizontal straight lines and horizontal curves for frequently recurring pairs of letters.

Gregg had two main concerns in his shorthand system. He wanted to build a sound and logical shorthand system, but he also wanted one

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[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Ibid.

that would respond to the greatest demands in speed-writing. His constant

aim was to avoid wasted movements of the pen. He wanted to make sure

that all characters and joinings could be written with a pen that literally

skimmed over the paper, thus justifying the title by which his shorthand

was first known--Light-Line Phonography.[51]

In later years Gregg described, stage by stage, and in fascinating

detail, how this work was accomplished. It is worthwhile to quote here

a part of that description:

> It seems to me that the best way to begin an exposition
> of the construction of the alphabet is to go back to the founda-
> tion. . .
>
> The system is based, primarily, on the elements of long-
> hand writing; and the basis of longhand writing is the oval or
> ellipse. The first thing to do, then, is to analyze the ellipse.
>
> It is very easy to ascertain the elements of the ellipse.
> If you write the ordinary longhand letter "o", and dissect it,
> you will see that it is composed of five elements--the down-
> ward curve, the turn at the bottom, the upward curve, the small
> circle or oval, and the connecting stroke.
>
> Now write the entire alphabet in the small letters of
> longhand, and count the letters in which that lower turn (which
> expresses "r" in our system) is to be found. You will find
> that the lower turn occurs in no less than nineteen of the
> twenty-six letters of the alphabet. The exceptions are "h",
> "j", "m", "n", "p", "s", and "z"; and you will notice that the
> connecting stroke after four of these letters is made with
> the lower turn. It is important to note that every vowel-
> sign in longhand contains that lower turn; and in two of them
> ("a" and "u") it occurs twice. Furthermore, the connecting
> stroke after every vowel contains it.
>
> Carry the inquiry a little further, and you will notice
> that the first two elements of the oval or ellipse occur in
> combinations in nearly every letter of the alphabet and in
> all vowels.
>
> I do not think I need to point out the importance of the

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[51]_Ibid._, p. 33.

facts disclosed by this analysis. In themselves they furnish an acid test that may be applied to any system founded on the longhand-movement basis. It is well, however, to keep in mind two points: the importance of the combination, and the importance of the phonetic pairs of letters.52

The previous description does not show the enthusiasm and feverish excitement in which young Gregg worked at developing his system. Gregg went on to allocate the other characters, each being chosen only after the most painstaking tests and computations: the upward turn in the longhand signs for "m", "n", "p", "h", "z", "k", and "g", because these letters are much less frequent than "r" or "l"; the right curve of the longhand "v" and "z" for "f" and "v", thus providing for one of the most graceful combinations ("fr", "fl", "vr", "vl") in the system; the straight downward line for "sh", "ch", and "j", the trick for "sh" being a mere drop of the pen, such as is used in the first part of the bookkeeper's check mark; the upward straight stroke that connects the letters of a longhand word for "t" and "d", and the little upward curve for "th"; the expression of "n" by a short horizontal stroke and "m" by a long horizontal stroke; corresponding to the difference in their size in longhand and to the length of the sounds of these characters.53

One of the most difficult characters for Gregg to construct a sign for was the letter "s". From a close study of his frequency tables, Gregg found that "s" was not only very common, but it was also constantly appearing in conjunction with every other letter. It had to be a sign that would combine brevity with flexibility.

Eventually, Gregg selected the two downward halves of a tiny

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53 Ibid.

ellipse. He had now taken care of all the consonants. There remained only the vowels and "w", "y", and "h". Gregg decided to give "w" consonantal value, but felt for shorthand purposes the letter "w" belonged to the vowel family, as did the "y".

The letter "h" was a real problem to Gregg. Left over from his raw material, Gregg still had the small dot, which he finally assigned to the letter "h".

Gregg was now ready to tackle the vowels. In using his raw material (small circles and hooks) he introduced a radical change from the methods of previous inventors, by assigning the characters in accordance with the frequency-values of the sounds and the facility-values of the material.[54] Gregg expressed twelve sounds by only four signs. The relatively few number of shorthand signs meant, for the student, less mental and physical effort in learning them; they could be memorized more easily and written with greater speed because recall would be largely automatic.[55] Another advantage to the simplicity of Gregg's system was the ease with which it could be adapted to foreign languages.

If a shorthand system is based on the omission of vowels and writing the words as consonantal skeletons it is very difficult. The secret of the ease in the Gregg system is the development of the abbreviating principle--the grouping of joined vowels. This makes abbreviation natural. When vowels are included in the fundamental shorthand outline, the question of the abbreviation is reduced to simplicity because the inclusion of the vowel makes it easy to read the word from the outline.

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[54]Ibid.

[55]Ibid.

IV. LITERATURE ON SYSTEM CHANGES IN GREGG SHORTHAND

Since its publication in 1888, Gregg Shorthand has undergone only seven system revisions—in 1893, 1898, 1902, 1916, 1929, 1949, and the present Diamond Jubilee Series in 1963.[56] In none of these revisions has there been a change in the Original 1888 Alphabet. All the system changes made in these seven revisions have been concerned only with the addition or elimination of abbreviating devices.[57]

Today, any writer of Gregg Shorthand, regardless of the edition he learned, can read material written with the Diamond Jubilee outlines. He will find the same alphabetic strokes that appeared in the edition he learned in the Diamond Jubilee Series. The only difference he will find is that some words and phrases for which abbreviating devices were provided are now written in full.

One of the events marking the seventy-fifth birthday of the publication of Gregg Shorthand was the issuance in January, 1963, of Gregg Shorthand Diamond Jubilee Series, which contained many features designed to make the training of stenographers and secretaries even more pleasant and effective.

The changes made for the Diamond Jubilee Series are not nearly as sweeping as those that were made in 1949 with Gregg Shorthand Simplified. The changes represent more of a refinement of Simplified rather than a major revision of the system.

According to verified figures supplied by the Gregg Publishing

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[56]Leslie, op. cit., p. 19.

[57]Ibid.

Division of McGraw-Hill Book Company, Gregg Shorthand is taught in 99.9 percent of the towns and cities in the United States where high schools teach shorthand.[58] According to the U. S. Census Bureau, in 1960 there were approximately two million people--more than 95 percent of them women--employed in occupations requiring shorthand and typewriting skills.[59]

Nellie Ellison Dry in an article she wrote for The Journal of Business Education stated:

> The spoken word is the signal to which the student must respond by writing the shorthand outline. The learning of the correct responses to the signals is facilitated by a reduction in the number of exceptions to established patterns for writing shorthand. When the learner hears words that are constructed as exceptions from established patterns, his response becomes hesitant. The degree of hesitation depends upon the learner's ability and knowledge of the shorthand system. Thus, if the learner does hesitate to execute the outline, he loses his recording speed. Therefore, it is important and essential that there be an elimination of exceptions to established patterns and that there be an elimination of a large number of words to be memorized since they do not enable the student to learn Gregg Shorthand more quickly and easily.[60]

The main reason for the reduction in the memory load of Diamond Jubilee Shorthand is to enable more students to be able to learn shorthand than ever before. A student should be able to develop vocational competence in less time than that required when using the Simplified edition. Memorized forms--brief forms, brief form derivatives, abbreviated forms, abbreviated form derivatives, prefixes, suffixes,--as well as rules and exceptions are held to a minimum in Diamond Jubilee

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[58]Ruth H. Gaffga, "On the Job Shorthand vs. Shorthand Learned in School," Business Education World, (November, 1967), p. 19.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Nellie Ellison Dry, "Memory Load of Simplified and Diamond Jubilee Compared," The Journal of Business Education, (April 1968), p. 281.

Shorthand. More words in Diamond Jubilee are written by simpler, fuller, and more exact shorthand forms than in Simplified Gregg Shorthand. These outlines should aid him to transcribe more accurately.

The changes in Diamond Jubilee Gregg Shorthand should expedite the acquisition of speed in writing shorthand from dictation and allow more time for each student to attain greater speed and accuracy in transcription in less time than was previously required.

It is usually suggested that the shift from edition of Gregg Shorthand to another edition has had no significant impact on the top speed that can be acquired or on the speed with which such speed can be acquired. No valid research is available on the subject. Many competent users of different versions of Gregg Shorthand do, however, believe the top level of speed has been lowered. The writer of this paper offers the opinion that the system changes from Gregg Simplified to Gregg Diamond Jubilee have affected top speed levels attainable. It stands to reason that elongating a system will slow the writer down. But it is also the opinion of the author of this paper, having learned both Simplified and Diamond Jubilee shorthand and having taught Diamond Jubilee to high school students, that more students are able to learn shorthand by the Diamond Jubilee method. The memory load required is less for this edition and because many words that were formerly abbreviated are written in full has helped many of those students who find it hard to memorize to learn a shorthand system.

There is little doubt that the further simplification to the level of the shorthand alphabet with possibly a dozen, or at the most two dozen phrases will lower the top level of speed. But this simplification will

not lower speed to less than 90 or 100 words a minute and this speed is
probably more than sufficient for the average stenographer on the job.
Such simplification should help significantly in reducing the time required
for learning the basic skill (theory) and thus allow much more time for
dictation practice and achievement of transcription skill.

A Gregg Notehand for personal use only has been available since
the autumn of 1960. The basic reason for the advent of this system was
concern about the academic student. The idea behind Notehand was to sup-
ply academic students (college-bound) with something that is useful to
them in business education. Gregg Notehand is based on the regular
shorthand alphabet designed by John Robert Gregg. It is not an abbreviated
system of longhand. The authors of Notehand insist it must be used for
personal note-taking. Many teachers question this because they cannot
understand why if people learn shorthand they cannot use it for either
personal or vocational reasons. Many teachers and researchers feel that
the next revision of vocational shorthand will be as close to Notehand as
possible. Herbert A. Tonne in an article in The Journal of Business Educa-
tion seems to favor this revision because he feels it is important to save
the utmost time in teaching the subject matter. He says:

> If we don't do the job in minimum time we will not get
> the students we need and want. They will take more academic
> subjects instead. We need as much time as possible for the
> adaptation of shorthand skill to job use.[61]

The authors of the personal note-taking system of shorthand did not
design it with the idea in mind that there would now be two systems competing

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[61]Herbert A. Tonne, "The Impact of Notehand," The Journal of Business
Education, (November 1961), p. 56.

with each other--Notehand and vocational shorthand. They designed Note-
hand for the personal use of the college bound-student. Whether the next
revision of shorthand will combine many of the principles of Notehand is
not yet known. If the authors feel that combining the principles of Note-
hand with those of vocational shorthand will make it possible to decrease
the time needed in learning the basic skill and thus provide more time
for mastery of transcription competency then the tendency will be to re-
vise the system to be as close to Notehand as possible.

Various systems of abbreviated longhand alphabetic systems for
taking dictation and combinations of such systems with shorthand adapta-
tions have been advocated for many years. In recent years they have
gained a foothold in the private and even in the public schools. There
are many cases of successful users of abbreviated shorthand on the job.
The proportion of such cases to the total number of stenographers is
minute. In many cases, these systems are advocated for personal use only.
Where they are used vocationally they seem to have their greatest success
in giving workers skilled in other occupational work a chance to get a
toe-hold in business and thus be able to demonstrate their major skill.[62]
There is little research on the use of abbreviated longhand for use in
office dictation and none of it is even definitely suggestive of the pos-
sibilities for real time saving and maximum top speed.

The fact that most students in high school now have only one year
of shorthand should have a significant influence on shorthand theory.

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[62]Herbert A. Tonne, "The Present and Future of Shorthand," Business
Education Forum, (October 1960), p. 12.

Most shorthand teachers question whether one year in shorthand is enough time for adequate mastery of the subject. This brief period for learning gives little time for attaining skill in transcription which teachers recognize as vitally necessary to job preparation.

The shorthand vocabulary is bound to change. Just a few years ago we did not have the space age vocabulary, automated jargon, or medical transplant terminology. The time may come when shorthand outlines may be modified to include a combination of alpha-numeric symbols appropriate for computer programming input.[63]

Perhaps the secretary and boss may not even see each other personally in the future. Teleterminals and computer screens enable the boss to dictate directly from a distance--perhaps even outer space. The secretary may be even recording or transcribing some dictation from machine-originated sources.[64]

The form of dictation in the future may vary from the conventional letter to suitable styles of input for the automated machines now being planned. Shorthand teachers must be aware of the changes that are planned. Shorthand teachers must be aware of the changes that are certain to come about in business and technology, since these changes will be reflected in the employment opportunities awaiting their students. With this awareness, teachers will be more likely to provide a lively, up-to-date instructional program in the shorthand classroom.

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[63]Mary Witherow, "Shorthand--Now and in the Future," Business Education Forum, (November 1969), p. 22.

[64]Ibid.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report was to trace the development of shorthand writing systems through history and specifically to study the development of the shorthand system designed by John Robert Gregg.

The writer felt this study was important because it was her experience to find, while both learning and teaching Gregg Shorthand, that knowledge on the history of the man and the development of the system was not easily accessible. The accumulation of such data would aid in both instruction and motivation in the shorthand classroom.

The nature of the research was historical and the review of the literature was divided into four main categories. The first division dealt with the early history of shorthand writing systems. The art began with the Tironian method of shorthand and real interest in the subject did not arise until the Renaissance. Many systems evolved after this time culminating with Gregg's publication of his method in 1888.

An attempt was made to search for facts about the life of the author. This data gave the reader a unique appreciation of Gregg's invention because the material accumulated disclosed the man's personal fight for his ideal. It was found that Gregg's perseverence and optimism coupled with minimum successes, kept him enthusiastic and patient until his system received the notoriety that was its due.

The writer found that Gregg drew much from his predecessors. To

this he added his own special ingredient, called "simplicity," and de-
signed a shorthand system that is now virtually the only method being
taught. It was concluded that Gregg's system involved true genius because
his shorthand system had been adopted in so many foreign countries. The
writer established the fact that Gregg accomplished his foremost ideal
which was basing his system on ordinary longhand writing and making it
the speediest system in existence.

The final section of literature was an attempt by the writer to
show the true value of Gregg's contribution. This was proved by the fact
that in all the seven editions of Gregg Shorthand, not one symbol of his
Original 1888 Alphabet was changed. The writer found a marked trend
toward elongation of the Gregg system. This showed that emphasis on
speed had subsided somewhat in the last ten years because of the advent
of machine shorthand. The publishers of Gregg Shorthand decided the em-
phasis on memory load necessary for earlier editions of Gregg Shorthand
would be decreased with the Diamond Jubilee edition in order to accomplish
their goal of enabling more students the chance to acquire shorthand skill.
The trend now was found to be more emphasis devoted to acquisition of
transcription skill instead of the former goal of constant drill on speed-
building. Gregg's system of shorthand was found to be taught in over
ninety percent of schools offering a shorthand course.

Gregg Notehand may have a tremendous effect on future editions of
Gregg Shorthand. At present it is designed for personal-use only, but
there is speculation that many Notehand principles will be present in any
new edition of vocational shorthand. Various systems of abbreviated long-
hand were studied but there seem to be very few cases where actual
stenographers use this skill.

Much current interest was focused on the future form of dictation a secretary will receive. Current articles on shorthand discussed the need for shorthand teachers to be ready for changes in editions, vocabulary, and instructional methods.

It was hoped that the research accumulated and discussed in this paper showed a true picture of the history behind John Robert Gregg and his shorthand system. The writer hoped to give the reader an appreciation of the great debt owed to Gregg by all those who today and in the future enjoy the fruits of his genius.

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THE HISTORY OF GREGG SHORTHAND

by

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B. S., Marymount College, 1968

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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requirements for the degree

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The purpose of this report was to trace the historical development of shorthand writing systems and specifically to study the development of the system devised by John Robert Gregg.

Many teachers and students have mastered the theory behind the shorthand system invented by Gregg, but the great majority of them had no idea of the colorful history. Such knowledge would not only add interest to the subject matter taught in the shorthand classroom, but could also be presented in such a way as to motivate new students as they embark on their study of Gregg Shorthand.

The review of historical literature was divided into four main categories. First, the early history of shorthand writing systems was explored. A system invented by a Roman slave seemed to be the only method that existed until the Renaissance. Interest in the art was then revived with many new systems making their appearance, culminating with Gregg's system which was published in 1888.

The events of Gregg's life are found in the second division of the review of literature. This material added a unique appreciation to Gregg's invention because much data was accumulated that disclosed his personal fight for his ideal.

Gregg drew much from his predecessors, added his special ingredient called simplicity, and designed a shorthand system that is now virtually the only method being taught. The third section of the literature review was devoted to the development of the shorthand system itself. Gregg's system was based on ordinary longhand writing and his raw material consisted of only ten symbols. The literature showed the efforts and ideas used by Gregg in formulating Gregg Shorthand.

The final section of the review of literature traced the system changes made in Gregg Shorthand to the present day.

From the study the following conclusions were drawn: (1) the pure genius of the Gregg system has been proved by the fact that in none of the revisions had the Original 1888 Alphabet been changed in any way, (2) the trend toward elongation of the system proved that emphasis on speed has subsided somewhat in the last ten years because of the advent of machine shorthand, (3) publishers of the system now feel that the memory load necessary for earlier editions of Gregg Shorthand has been decreased with the Diamond Jubilee edition thus accomplishing their goal of enabling more students the chance to acquire shorthand skill.