SOFTWARE & TECH

American Cursive Handwriting Michael Sull Odawa

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Reviving the Lost Art: American Cursive Handwriting and the Legacy of Michael Sull

In a world increasingly dominated by keyboards, touchscreens, and digital communication, the gentle scratch of a fountain pen on paper feels almost revolutionary. For decades, the art of handwriting, specifically American Cursive Handwriting, was a cornerstone of education and personal expression. Today, a dedicated community of practitioners, historians, and educators is working tirelessly to preserve this elegant skill. At the forefront of this revival stands Michael Sull, a master penman whose life's work has been to document, teach, and breathe new life into the flowing lines of American cursive. His influence reaches far and wide, even finding resonance in communities deeply rooted in tradition, such as the Odawa people, who understand the profound power of preserving cultural practices for future generations.

This article explores the rich history of American Cursive Handwriting, the profound contributions of Michael Sull, and the unexpected yet meaningful connections between this beautiful craft and the enduring spirit of cultural preservation embodied by the Odawa nation. Whether you are a seasoned calligrapher, a teacher looking to bring penmanship back into the classroom, or someone simply nostalgic for the feel of a handwritten note, join us on a journey into the world of ink, loops, and legacies.

The Essence of American Cursive Handwriting

American Cursive Handwriting is more than just a method of writing quickly; it is a distinct style that evolved from European copperplate scripts and business hands. Unlike the ornate Spencerian script that preceded it, which was popular in the 19th century for its delicate, shaded strokes, American Cursive streamlined these forms for speed and practicality. This evolution was driven by the needs of a growing nation—businessmen, clerks, and everyday citizens required a script that was both legible and efficient.

Key Characteristics of the Script

What sets American Cursive apart? It is characterized by:

- Slanted, Connected Letters: Each letter flows seamlessly into the next, creating a continuous, rhythmic line.
- Simplified Strokes: Compared to Spencerian, the loops are less exaggerated, and the capitals are less ornamental, favoring function over flourish.
- Consistent Slant: A uniform forward slant, typically between 52 and 55 degrees, gives the writing a cohesive and professional appearance.
- Oval Shapes: The fundamental building blocks are based on oval shapes, which are easier to execute rhythmically than perfect circles.
- Arm Movement: True American Cursive is written using the larger muscles of the forearm and shoulder, not just the fingers. This reduces fatigue and allows for greater speed and flow.

This style was the standard in American classrooms for much of the 20th century. Generations learned their "ABCs" with the Palmer Method, a direct forerunner of modern American Cursive. However, with the advent of the typewriter and later the personal computer, the emphasis on penmanship rapidly declined. For many, cursive became a fading memory, a skill held by grandparents but no longer taught to children.

Michael Sull: The Penman Who Refused to Let the Ink Dry

If American Cursive Handwriting has a modern champion, it is Michael Sull. A master penman, author, and educator, Sull dedicated his life to the art and science of handwriting at a time when most had declared it obsolete. His journey is a testament to the power of passion and the importance of preserving craft.

From Student to Master

Michael Sull's path to becoming a master penman was one of rigorous self-discipline and mentorship. He studied under the legendary Paul Standard, a renowned calligrapher who himself was a bridge to the golden age of penmanship. Sull immersed himself in historical manuals, practicing for countless hours to perfect the arm movement and the delicate pressure required for shading. His dedication paid off. He became not only a virtuoso of the pen but also a meticulous historian of its techniques.

The American Cursive Handwriting Curriculum

Perhaps Sull's most enduring contribution is his comprehensive curriculum for American Cursive Handwriting. He authored several books and instructional texts, most notably **"American Cursive Handwriting"** and **"The Art of Cursive Penmanship."** These works are not mere instruction manuals; they are

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