The Art of the Letter  
Workshop

For those in the Gilded Era, letter writing occurred everyday and it was important. They took pride in their penmanship. Children learned by practicing repeatedly by writing out sentences on slate. There were no computers, and the typewriter (although invented in 1872) certainly was not mainstream yet. There was no automatic font, so each word was written carefully out. There was no spell check and there was no "delete" button. You had to get it right the first time.

Children would practice their handwriting by using copy books that were printed by copperplates. In fact, the term "copperplate" refers to neat and tidy handwriting script from the 19th century.

Activity

Part 1

Using pens with a metal nib at the end and ink, students will use templates of the alphabet and try to recreate the 3 popular types of copperplate script from the 19th century: French, Palace, and Edwardian. Students will write their name on a calling card using one of these scripts.

Part 2

Students will be given a blank postcard. Each will write a letter describing their day. Each student then will chose a place that they will "mail" their letter to. Using postage figures from 1870 students will calculate how much money it would take to mail their letter. Students will discover how long it would take for their letter to arrive.

Grade 4 Common Core Learning Standards
Reading Standards for Informational Text and Writing Standards, Grade 4 4.1, 4.6 Social Studies 4.MD.2, 4.OA.2, 4.OA.3 Mathematics