Type:	Article in Journal
Author:	Meier, Paul
	Zabell, Sandy
Title:	Benjamin Peirce and the Howland Will
Year:	1980
Journal:	Journal of the American Statistical Association
Volume:	75
Issue:	371
Pages:	497-506
Keywords:	Statistics, Probability
Abstract:	The Howland will case is possibly the earliest instance in American law of the use of probabilistic and statistical evidence. Identifying 30 downstrokes in the signature of Sylvia Ann Howland, Benjamin Peirce attempted to show that a contested signature on a will had been traced from another and genuine signature. He argued that their agreement in all 30 downstrokes was improbable in the extreme under a binomial model. Peirce supported his model by providing a graphical test of goodness of fit. We give a critique of Peirce's model and discuss the use and abuse of the "product rule" for multiplying probabilities of independent events.
ISSN:	01621459
DOI:	10.1080/01621459.1980.10477501
Language:	English