The big star of the November 24 Breker auction was the Blick Electric, which went to a German museum for €55,000. At the other extreme was a set of nine parts machines that sold for €5. As for the other typewriters pictured in our last issue: Sholes & Glidden, €18,000; Oliver 1, €14,000 (to the Heinz Nixdorf Museum); Shimer 2, €14,000; Defiance, €6,000; mystery frontstroke, €5,400; Travis, €3,800; Ideal prototype, €3,600. To get a concept of the dollar amount of these machines, remember that the euro sales amount must be increased by 22.97% to cover commission and taxes, and then multiplied by 1.48 (the dollar value of the euro on Nov. 24). Shipping was extra too, of course.

Over on eBay, this ultra-rare and ultra-eccentric Thürey recently sold for €15,250. Also notable: an Oliver 1 missing one of its nameplates, for $18,000. Special typewriters are still out there—and so are prosperous collectors!

Paging through some 1992-93 issues of Paul Lippman’s magazine The Type Writer, I bumped into a little information about the Defiance. It was originally called the Knickerbocker, and was to be manufactured in Niantic, Connecticut; the company was incorporated in 1908. In 1912 it was sold and renamed Defiance Typewriter Company. Obviously production never passed the prototype stage.

I’d like to recommend a newly reprint ed book: Don Hoke’s Ingenious Yankees. An extensive chapter here provides great insight into the factory systems used to build typewriters in the 19th century. The cost is $30 + shipping ($4 US, $14.75 abroad). US buyers send a check to Donald R. Hoke, Ph.D., 4431 Allencrest Lane, Dallas, TX 75244-7506, (972) 661-9672. Foreign buyers may use PayPal and send their payment to donhoke­tx.rr.com.

This issue is a first for ETCetera: 16 big pages. We simply had to go to this length to print the excellent research by Jos Legrand and Ed Neuert! I encourage those who can provide insight into any other former Onondaga typewriters to tell us about them, as Jos has done so well with the Ideal prototype.
Benjamin Livermore is one of the most forgotten pioneer inventors in American typewriter literature, starting with the famous “Record of Typewriters” in the Phonographic World of 1891-1892. It was the even more famous “50th Anniversary Historical Number” of Type writer Topics that in 1923 brought Livermore into the light with two meager lines about his invention: “Also in 1863, Benjamin Livermore, of Hartford, Vermont, contributed a machine to the list of typewriter inventions. Its novelty was character signs, used singly or in combinations to form letters.” An illustration accompanied the text. And so he was on the scene, but except for Dupont/Sénéchal, Martin and Adler, no authors found him interesting enough to list him in the American pre-production inventors’ guild.

But, in contradiction to the Topics text, Benjamin Livermore came from Hartland, not Hartford. A slight difference, although not for the people in Windsor County, Vermont. Hartland is at a nine mile stone’s throw from Hartford. Originally it was called Hertford. In 1782 it was renamed Hartland to avoid a confusion with Hartford. It was difficult for strangers to distinguish which of said towns might be meant ... and many other inconveniences do attend the having two towns so near of one name in the state.”

In fact he came from Foundryville, a part of the town where a foundry was located.

The Livermores came to Hartland in 1797, Joseph Livermore and his father. In 1818 Benjamin, son of Joseph, was born. Nine brothers and sisters he had, himself being the third child. Hartland was a village in those days, as it is today with its 3223 inhabitants now. It is situated on the New Hampshire side of Vermont, not more than two miles from the Connecticut River.

Emily was Benjamin’s third sister. She married a certain Nathan Frederick English, who lived in Hartland after an expedition in the shoe machinery business in Milford, Massachusetts which he undertook together with Benjamin Livermore, his brother-in-law. Livermore married Almira, Frederick’s eldest sister. The two men went to Milford in 1847 or ’48, and set up a system in which teams of men were hired, who were working at home, stitching, pegging, sewing or lasting. There was a lot of resistance to English’s system. Fred English got malaria there, returned to his home state, and stayed ill for two or three years. Back in Hartland, English specialized in making machinery and was interested in making daguerreotypes. “They all lived very close to each other and in some cases shared inventions” (the Hartland News, citing the Woodstock Standard in 1905).

Nine patents by Fred English and/or Benjamin Livermore are listed in the Vermont Historical Records Survey. One of Fred’s ten children was Analdo, who invented machinery too, but also designed the Simplex typewriter. It is not difficult to guess where he got his inspiration.

According to Howland Atwood, Analdo English and his brother Ernest Benjamin told him that Livermore once lived on the Max Crosby place just before entering Hartland Four Corners Village. The house was the former Judge Elihu Luce House at Byron Ruggles Place between Foundryville and Four Corners Village.

Maybe it was there that he invented his typewriter. He called it a Mechanical Typographer. The machine was patented as a “device for hand-printing.” The patent was filed on July 21st, 1863. A hand-printing machine it is. It is the first portable typewriter ever, although the patent text speaks of a “new and Improved Hand-Printing Device.” “The object of this invention is to obtain a portable device which may be held in the hand.” There are surviving photographs of Benjamin Livermore holding his machine in his hand. Mrs. A. A. Sturtevant recollected: “it was so small that he worked it with the fingers of the hand with which he held it.” A pamphlet from those days speaks of a “Pocket Writing Machine.” And indeed, he could put his machine into his pocket. He could even write with the machine then, and the word “pocket typewriter” should therefore be taken literally: “He usually carried it in his pocket and could print it there, placing his hand in such a position that his fingers rested on the keys. After taking down the conversation of those he met, he placed it under his pillow at night to catch any stray thoughts, as he termed it,” Eunice Cobley Lyman, Livermore’s great-grandniece, wrote according to the Woodstock Standard.

The machine is four inches long, two and one-fourth inches broad and one inch deep, according to Livermore in a brochure, and as recollected by the Hartland News in 1905. The Boston Daily Traveller gives this description: “five inches long, two and a half inches broad, and one and a half inches thick.” Other measures are also known, such as $4\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2} \times 1$, mentioned by Eunice Lyman. Its mechanism is situated in a case made of metal—“polished steel,” said the Traveller—bent at the end. In it there are two rollers on which the paper is wound.
longitudinally. "A strip of paper twenty feet long may be put in and printed over without further attention," according to the Woodstock Standard (freely adapted from the Boston Journal). Twenty feet, about 6 meters! Livermore doesn’t contradict it, but Carol Morey recalled in her notes from January 1939: "He used tissue paper in it in 20’ sheets about 2 1/8’ wide. It was rolled up on wires and made a roll about as big as a lead pencil."

The paper runs across an inkpad on one side, with the printing point opposite it (placed on the upper part of the machine). The letters are formed by a “combination-type,” as Livermore called it. Six keylevers control six parts of the combination-type. "By means of these six parts the alphabet is formed," says the patent. The form of the letters is derived from capitals or small letters, depending upon their readability. The alphabet shown is a bit idealized, because the numerals were also thought of. In fact there are sixty-three possibilities. Eunice Lyman, quoted in the Woodstock article, remembered that "The machine was worked by six keys placed at one end of the box and pressed down after the manner of piano keys. He would print with it in the dark. He usually carried it in his pocket and could print it there, placing his hand in such a position that his fingers rested on the keys." However, the keys only work when they are pressed forward, or "inwards" as the patent says.

A pamphlet from 1857 with the announcement for an "Interesting and Instructive Exhibition" by Livermore himself has an illustration that gives an idea of how to work with the Permutation Typograph. The same picture appears in a circular distributed earlier that year and printed at the Vermont Chronicle office.

The keys could be operated by the middle three fingers, according to the three positions of the keys. But there were several other versions. A description from oral history from the 1930s gives this account: "Three sets of 3 or 9 keys are combined to make different elements." But at least we can be sure of a daguerreotype on which Benjamin Livermore can be seen along with his sister Emily and four of her daughters together with a machine with four positions; two rows with two keys and two keys apart are shown.

That picture probably dates from summer 1853. And so it takes a middle position in the development of the prototypes of Livermore’s Permutation Typograph, as the 1857 pamphlet informs us: the invention is the result of seven years’ study. His great-grandniece stated: "Benjamin Livermore while studying shorthand invented typewriters, 1850 and soon after commenced work on them. The first ones resembled the typewriters of the present day, but not being satisfied, he kept making improvements until at last built what he named ‘Permutation Typewriter’ or a pocket writing machine." So the whole process of invention lasted about thirteen years, closing with two patents. In the same year as the US patent was granted, Livermore also filed a patent in England. According to Rootsweb.com there was a machine in the Patent Office: "one is in a case not far from the door in the Main Hall of the Patent Office in Washington DC." That site mentions an earlier invention of a typewriter before the Permutation Typograph also, but no information could be found at the moment. It cannot be ruled out that the text comes from the same source, Mrs. Lyman.

In the fall of 1857, shortly before Livermore announced that he would give "a representation of the machine," he edited a brochure. He was looking for investors. The press was already informed in the first half of 1857, and not only the Vermont Christian Messenger, but the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin and others also published about it, such as the Phrenological Journal from New York. The brochure gives an interesting insight into Livermore’s mode of thinking. The machine is invented for "various classes of persons" and for "the circumstances where pen or pencil cannot be used," as one of the testimonials declared. We have to think of travelers or tourists taking notes while riding in a car or carriage; "the physician can note his cases," Livermore stated, "while on his way from one patient to another. The public lecturer can note any important thoughts as they occur to his mind, at any time or place, and preserve them for future use. The student can write his themes while on his rambles, or in unoccupied moments, without being confined to his study; and take notes in the lecture or recitation room. The reporter can take his notes in a crowded audience, where he cannot secure conveniences to write with pen or pencil; in the street, in the dark, among the jostling crowd."

Benjamin Livermore saw his invention not so much as a mechanized writing process but as a “new mode of writing.” Nor was it thought of as a means for the blind to communicate, as was the basis for some other early typewriter inventions. It was a Professor Jackman from Norwich University who called Livermore’s attention to this in a letter: “You have surely presented a method by which thoughts may be recorded when travelling and in the dark. In his bed, at dead of night, a man may record his waking thoughts. But you have conferred the greatest blessing on the blind.” Morey’s notes from 1939 also made such a remark: “It was a machine that the blind could write with.” Jackman’s letter has been entered into the long, impressive list of testimonials. Livermore knew how to win people’s hearts. A lot of professors, reverends and postmen pass by when reading the list. Even a commissioner of patents belongs to it.

The Permutation Typograph is not a stenographic machine. The alphabet used is meant as an alphabet, and printing is always one character at a time. And although one character is composed of several elements, the machine is a typewriter in the literal sense of the word. Read the Letters Patent No.39,296: "The invention also consists in the employment or use of finger pieces or keys, arranged in a novel way with levers, for the purpose of operating the several parts of the type, and also in a certain means employed for causing the type to transverse or move so that proper spaces may be allowed between the impressions, and the type allowed to adjust itself properly at the termination of each line for the printing of a succeeding one." It is the combination of elements that must be printed in one movement: “The keys or finger-pieces L may be readily operated, either singly or two or more at the time, so as to form the several letters”; after that, the
spacing follows. It is the description of the essentials of a typewriter. “To form any single letter requires but one movement of the hand, and this movement also secures the other required movements of the paper and type, so as to form regular lines, with equal distances from each other,” the Vermont Chronicle reported on Aug. 13th, 1857.

Livermore’s machine has survived. The one pictured here is preserved in the collection of the Vermont Historical Society. Two others have been saved and are in the collection of the Franklin Museum of Nature and the Human Spirit in Windsor. Several experimental models have survived too. The Vermont machine is the final state of the Typograph. It resembles the machine that is pictured on the pamphlet and the circular from 1857. But it doesn’t function anymore (the combination type is dismantled and it seems that parts are missing). The Vermont Permutation Typograph is made of brass and steel and measures 4.25” x 2.44” x 1” (10.8 x 6.2 x 2.5 cm). It weighs 7.2 oz (ca. 204 g). The six keylevers are connected with hook-shaped levers, as can be seen above. These levers activate the distinct parts of the combination type. The whole printing mechanism runs along a curved rack, and so the printed lines are curved too. Twenty letters could be written on a line, the New England Farmer informed us in the brochure, with sixty lines upon one foot. After a line was ended, there was an automatic return to the starting position simply by gravity. There is one condition: “when the device is in use, [it] being held in an inclined position in the hand of the operator.” Spacing was just before printing, but the patent does not give information about how empty spacing was arranged. There is an automatic paper feeding after the termination of each line. Because the type puts the paper against the inkpad, special paper has to be used: “A piece of paper having a mixture of coloring matter and grease rubbed over it,” the patent says.

No production was made in spite of all the plans. The Boston Daily Traveller prophesied an extensive application on a larger scale, but apparently Livermore got too few orders or none at all. He wanted, if possible, cash in advance. “I employ no agents, all remittances should be sent directly to me,” he wrote. According to Livermore a plain machine should have cost 10 dollars, but up to 100 dollars would be no problem “according to outward style and finish.” But it could be made larger or smaller, as might be desired.” The instrument may be still more reduced in size, if the ladies should want a small and elegant one as travelling companion,” the Boston Journal thought.

Two pictures of Benjamin Livermore are known to me, and on both of them the typewriter can be seen. We owe these to his brother-in-law Fred English, who experimented with daguerreotypes, and even invented a portable ambrotype himself, which is a kindred photographic process. On the two pictures we see a sturdy man with bristly hair and an open face. The youngsters on the crowded picture are the children of his sister, who is also in the picture. On the other photo Livermore examines his typewriter.

Benjamin Livermore was born August 6th, 1818 and died April 4th, 1871 at the age of 52 years. Almira English, his wife, born as Almira Elizabeth Hodgeman, passed away much earlier, on August 22nd, 1846 at the age of 24, a year after they were married. Twenty years later he remarried with Julia Goodhue Winship. Livermore’s gravestone still exists. No children came, but in a future article I will show that Livermore’s inheritance is still alive and kicking.

Thanks to Mrs. Mary Rogstad of the Vermont Historical Society and Mr. Jay Boeri, chairman of the Franklin Museum of Nature and the Human Spirit in Windsor. Special thanks to Mrs. Beverly Lasure, Vice President of the Hartland Historical Society.

Literature

Please Read and Circulate! Livermore’s Permutation Typograph, or Pocket Printing Machine, Windsor 1857
USP 39296 (21/7/1863)
Hartland News, Vermont Journal, Windsor, June 3, 1905
The 50th Anniversary Historical Number, Typewriter Topics, LV, 2, 10/1923, pp. 13,18
Vermont Historical Society Library / VHS Home Page / Manuscripts at the VHS / English-Livermore / Papers, 1796-1907 / MSA 190-191
B. Lasure/J. Legrand, private correspondence, 2007/2008
J. Boeri/J. Legrand, private correspondence, 2007
Though machines built along its general design were manufactured for many years and sold throughout the world, the Noiseless Typewriter of Middletown, Connecticut has rarely received a detailed look at its genesis and early development. It’s about time the quiet was broken in this regard, for it is a classic story of inventive pluck and commercial luck (both the good and bad kind) at the turn of the last century and the early decades of the 1900s.

It’s also about time that some of the unsung players in the drama that brought forth a substan- 
tially quieter writing machine get their time on the stage. The dominant figure in the story of the Noiseless’ invention is, of course, Wellington Parker Kidder, the Maine native who is credited with developing the Franklin and Wellington typewriters, the latter of which, like Bernard Granville’s Rapid, used thrust-action and a fan-shaped assemblage of typebars.

In either 1891 or 1892 Kidder was fortunate to make the acquaintance of the Canadian 
businessman and politician Charles Carrol Colby, of Stanstead, Quebec. The Dartmouth- 
educated Colby had an up-and-down record in business ventures, and in the early 1890s had seen his nearly quarter-century career as a member of the Canadian Parliament come to an end. C.C. Colby’s son, Charles W. Colby, left a personal memoir on life at the Stanstead Historical Society (now located in the Colby family’s stately stone mansion) that details the Kidder-Colby relationship. C.W. Colby describes the good feeling between his father and Kidder that persisted till the elder Colby’s death in January 1907, during which “they were in constant contact, becoming not only business associates but close friends.”

C.W. Colby also came to know Kidder well, and on the whole thought highly of him, but left behind a frank appraisal of the man: “In the field of invention I should call him an inspired amateur... He abounded with original ideas, a good many of which through lack of technical skill he was unable to work out... Although the noiseless typewriter could never have been made a commercial success without the aid of other engineers, Kidder brought [it] into being.” Calling Kidder an amateur of any kind seems to be going a bit too far, in addition to his typewriter inventing. Kidder’s improvements in printing presses and numbering machines were quite real, and impacted the printing trades for many years. I imagine that C.W. Colby’s impressions of Kidder were colored at least in part by his own nature: C.W. was a disciplined, organized scholar with a Harvard Ph.D. in history, and he quite likely found it hard to fathom a rapid-fire mind like Kidder’s, which could quickly move from inventing steam engines, to presses, to typewriters, to something as utilitarian as a bark-scraping machine.

C.C. Colby had taken on the international 
marketing and licensing of the Wellington typewriter in the early Nineties, through the 
formation of the Imperial Typewriter Company (which distributed the Wellington design under the Empire brand) and the licensing of patents to the German concern that marketed the Adler brand. Both efforts brought in consider- 
able profit to the pair. As C.W. Colby recalls, “Father one day... asked Kidder what further steps could be taken to improve the typewriter. Now that visibility had been achieved, Kidder’s answer was that steps should be taken to not only reduce noise but to eliminate it. He...had given the matter considerable thought...What he had in mind to produce was a writing machine which would print by pressure instead of by hammering. His earlier experiences in building large printing presses gave him this idea. The objective was not to muffle noise that had been created by hammering but to make something that would be organically noiseless.”

Kidder patented his early ideas on pressure printing in 1896. But his inventive mind could not 
remain focused, and his friend and supporter C.C. Colby, in today’s terms, “enabled” him in this regard. “As fast as father began to have cash returns, through Empire dividends and Adler royalties, he spent a considerable fraction in financing Kidder’s inventiveness at large,” writes C.W. Colby. Leaving typewriter inventing, Kidder went off, with C.C.’s backing, to design pneumatic saws and bark scrapers (potentially lucrative machines in the vast timberlands nearby in Maine and Quebec) and then to that new wonder of wonders, the automobile (Kidder and Colby even share inventor’s credit on at least one Canadian automobile patent). The Kidder Motor Vehicle Company built steam-powered autos for several years in its New Haven, Conn., factory before failing in 1903.

This automobile company failure seems to have brought Kidder back to focus on typewrit- ers. He put in some effort revising the Franklin model with Walter Barron, and then returned to the quest for a silent writing machine. But his lifetime business partner realized that the time had come for a change. By the begin- ning of 1905, C.W. Colby writes, C.C. Colby "found he had gone as far as he could financially in helping this man of original genius reduce his ideas to commercial form. Also his health was failing. So in all kindness he told Kidder that another business advisor and financial sup- porter must be found." That new supporter was the Buffalo,N.Y., businessman George Mat- thews, owner of the Buffalo Express, which was printed on Kidder presses. Matthews funded the creation of the Parker Machine Company (using Kidder’s middle name to preserve some measure of secrecy for the effort) to support a revived research effort into producing a noiseless typewriter. Matthews’ chief business ally in the enterprise was W.C. Ely, one of the most prominent businessmen/politicians of the day in New York State. C.C. Colby and Kidder received shares in Parker Machine for the patents transferred into the enterprise, and at least once before his death the ailing Colby visited Buffalo to review the progress being made on the design.

With fresh infusions of cash from Matthews and his partners, a design team was recruited and went to work. From a review of the patent record, it is fair to assume that Connecticut native Charles W. Sponsel was among the first. He shares a crucial 1908 patent with Kidder. Sponsel seems to have had no prior typewriter engineering record, but he did hold a patent on a piece of rope-laying equipment and, since C.C. Colby’s other successful business venture was the Dominion Wire Rope Co., it is pos-
sible that Sponsel was brought into the effort through this connection. William A. Lorenz of Hartford was another early recruit. Lorenz was a prolific inventor, with experience in printing and typesetting equipment that surely interested Kidder, and he had a particular strength in designing devices for the forming and precise handling of paper. Other engineers soon working under the Parker Machine aegis were Joseph A. Ronchetti, of Woonsocket, R.I. (who had recently invented a mechanism for running-demonstration typewriters in Underwood show-windows), Edward L.C. Clark, Ernest B. Bishop, Otto Hultgren, and one figure who would prove his worth several years later, Nils H. Anderson.

Kidder, always a pressman at heart, realized that the most important aspect of noiseless typewriting, as with printing, would be rigid control of all the elements that brought type, ink, and paper together. After all the problems of sound dampening in the key action and escapement and carriage control had been addressed, the team would have to achieve a very taut ribbon movement, and a method of maintaining precise handling of the paper being typed on. As the months, and then years ticked by, money was spent, patents were filed, models were built, but the project seemed stalled in the research and development phase.

Then, in January 1907, C.W. Colby died in a Montreal hospital. C.W. Colby, then a professor of history at McGill University, was named executor of his father's estate. While attempting to structure the estate to provide for his mother's future needs, C.W. realized that a large part of his father's investments lay dormant in the financial landscape, banks were closing, and fortunes were disappearing overnight. One of these fortunes was that of George Matthews. Matthews appealed to C.W. Colby for help raising funds to keep Parker Machine going. "The ensuing suggestion," recalled Colby, "was that Billy Kidder (Wellington P.'s son) should come to Montreal with the latest model of the Noiseless and demonstrate it to possible investors." Billy had a reputation as the ablest operator of what was still a temperamental mechanism. Colby put together just such a demonstration and, when Billy Kidder returned to Buffalo, he "took along with him subscriptions for Parker Machine Co. stock which immediately furnished it with $50,000 cash." Colby soon helped Matthews sell off some of the cash-strapped publisher's additional shares in Parker, and by 1908 he was drawn in as the key director of the concern.

There were originally to be three noiseless typewriter manufacturing companies formed— one in the U.S., and others in Great Britain and Germany, much along the lines of the successful Wellington-Empire-Adler pattern. The Silent Writing Machine Company was organized to have a majority interest in each company. Shares of Silent Writing Machine were sold to raise at least $750,000 of operating capital. In Middletown, Conn., the Eisenhut Horseless Vehicle Co., makers of the unsuccessful Compound brand auto, had recently declared bankruptcy and closed, leaving their large factory building standing empty. Silent Writing struck a deal to acquire the factory just as 1908 came to a close, and soon there was established the Noiseless Typerwriter Company of Connecticut, the first of the three planned manufacturing concerns.

The year 1909 seems to have been spent refining the design of the typewriter and designing and building the specialized tooling needed to produce the machine, all under the supervision of Edward Clark, the Harvard trained engineer who'd come from Remington's Ilion, N.Y. engineering department. This Noiseless "Model 1" machine is very seldom seen today, and it defies some of the standard descriptions of the brand. Most collectors today, when they think of the Noiseless, immediately think of a machine with a cylindrical metal platen as its defining feature. But for the first seven years of its existence the Noiseless had a completely different platen design. Up until the introduction of the Model 4 in 1917, Noiseless machines employed as their platen a flat metal bar about 8 millimeters high, which ran across the width of the carriage. The back surface of this platen bar was ground with a curve, and behind it, fitting into that curve, was a large, soft, natural rubber roller that looks to the casual observer like a regular cylindrical rubber platen. In fact, it is a part of the mechanism whose function is to keep the paper moving over the platen bar as tightly and as flat as possible, which enables the type to precisely "kiss" the open-faced sandwich of ribbon and paper with maximum pressure and minimum sound. Because the Noiseless models with this construction (the Model 1 "cam-action" and the Model 3) have a flat platen, they also have flat-faced type, the first office-model typewriters so equipped since the 1880s.

Inside the Model 1’s typebar assembly is a system of cams and toggles attached to the ends of the bars. Depressing a key on the machine runs the toggle down the cam, which drives the typebar forward. These early machines require a subtle change in the operator's fingering. They rely less on developing momentum in their typebars, so the operator’s finger must continue pressing all the way down. The Noiseless Model 1 is very quiet, and also quite different in feel from a standard typewriter. Ultimately this difference led to the commercial failure of the design. In December of 1910, articles about the Noiseless appeared in both Scientific American and Cassier’s Engineering Monthly. The simultaneous appearance of these pieces smacks of a company-produced publicity campaign, and it is quite likely that this first “public appearance” of the Noiseless, along with information contained in financial documents in the Stanstead files, signal that full-scale manufacturing of the Model 1 only began in 1910.

But even before 1911 dawned it was clear that things were not going well. Typists just did not enjoy the feel of the cam-action keyboard. Production was halted, and the Model 1 was withdrawn. Today less than a dozen specimens are known. They can be most readily recognized by the nickel-plated rim on the top cover at the head of the typebar assembly, where a triangular printing-point indicator appears on later models. They also generally carry patent dates on the back of their frame that end with April 7, 1908, and have an incorrect patent date listed (Feb 1, 1908, which should be Feb. 11). The familiar decal of a silent-but-powerful tiger leaping over the typewriter and the words “The Typewriter Plus” first appeared on the top cover of these models, and the decal would thereafter always portray a Model 1 machine. Model 1’s have solid disc-shaped ribbon covers, and a 28-key three-bank keyboard with Cap and Fig shift keys only on the left; backspace and margin release keys appear on the right, and there is no tab key. The Model 1 sports a high paper table, with the word "Noiseless" decalled upon it, and a scaled shaft that looks like...
a paper bail on which ride two elaborate paper fingers. On the left side of the carriage is a distinctive short-handled return lever. This and all other office models of the Noiseless have a small crank-shaped stencil switch on the right side of the machine. A nickel-plated semi-circular pressure indicator on the front of the Model 1 allows an operator to adjust the distance between the platen bar and the type. This feature is the most visible component of the “center-tie,” the rigid connection running down the center axis of the Noiseless that connects the type action, ribbon movement, and paper handling functions.

American collector Dennis Clark owns what is probably the oldest Noiseless cam-action machine; it has its own distinctive blue-and yellow pinstriping and is the only one known so far to actually carry factory decals designating its model number (it also has its own distinctive patent date listing on its back which correctly lists the Feb. 11, 1908 patent). Clark’s machine carries the serial number 6-10, and is possibly part of the first dozen machines bearing a “6-” prefix which may have been produced as part of the careful batch-testing done as the machine was readied for market. What may have been the oldest machine from regular production – serial number 27 – was entrusted to the Onondaga Historical Society; it was destroyed several years ago in a flood. Several other OHA Noiseless machines with early serial numbers now being readied for auction in Germany were not available for inspection for this article, but they are unlikely to date earlier than the Clark machine. Precisely how many Model 1s were manufactured is still not known, but it is unlikely to be more than two to three thousand. It’s worth noting that Beeching’s book lists the “Cam-Action” and “Model 1” as two separate machines; they were, in fact, one and the same model.

The cam-action fiasco led to the disappearance of the Silent Writing Machine Co., and the reorganization of the Noiseless Typewriter Company in late 1913 (the New York Times ran a short news article in October 1913 which noted the Noiseless Company’s financial distress). Kiddier and the company parted ways. What a company history itself called “the second Noiseless Typewriter Company” was formed from the reorganization, with redesign engineering by Nils Anderson and William Lorenz, and newly-recruited engineers George Going and James Ruffin, who together had invented a flatbed typewriter of their own in partnership a few years previously. (Ruffin also patented the ribbon shield frame of the Hammond Multiplex).

Edward Clark left the company, and Ruffin was installed as the manager of the manufacturing works. Middletown banker Joseph Merriam became the new president of the company, but C.W. Colby remained the power behind the throne and in short order took over formally as president.

The philosophical momentum for the reconstitution of the company was provided, appropriately enough, by mechanical momentum itself. On Valentine’s Day 1913 Nils Anderson was sitting in a hotel lobby when an idea suddenly crossed his mind. In a flash of inspiration, he envisioned a small toggled weight added to the end of the typebar which would provide momentum to impel the type the last few millimeters needed to make a clear impression. The operator’s fingers would not have to complete the job, and the Noiseless, though now slightly noisier, would have a more conventional feel. (Some accounts place Anderson’s epiphany in 1912, but a Remington Noiseless company history from the early 1930s clearly places it in 1913, and is supported by patent chronology.)

After reorganization was completed in December 1913, the Middletown factory slowly returned to life, as increasingly larger batches of the first momentum-accumulator machines were assembled and tested during 1914. One of these machines found its way into my hands, and it is one of only two Noiseless machines known to have been produced in a color other than black (Dennis Clark owns the other, a red woodgrained Model 4 or 5 machine). Mine is a rich brown, with the usual gold decaling and striping. It carries the serial number 4/5/18, which I believe is simply 4,518 in slightly different form. The back of its frame, like others from this transitional time, carries the same patent-date decals that were used on the Model 1, but with an additional decal overlay in slightly different tone in which the “Feb 1, 1908” date is corrected to Feb. 11, and a new Dec. 26, 1911 date is added. The ribbon covers were at this point changed to the familiar cutout design, and the pressure indicator was changed to be a sort of upside-down tombstone shape, which hung over and partly obscured the main front brand decal. The machine also carries a high paper table with a Noiseless decal. The platen bar is there, as well as a platen roller in light-colored natural rubber (these very soft rubber platen rollers are almost always found today in cracked or bubbled condition). The elaborate, scaled paper finger connector was removed, and a conventional-looking carriage return lever replaced the stubby version of the Model 1. The machine now has 28 keys, with Cap and Fig shift on the left, Cap shift only on the right, and back space, margin release, and tab keys on the right.

All the technical changes introduced in this transitional time found their way into the Model 3. Though one is tempted to designate machines of this era as “Model 2” I have found no evidence that the company itself ever specified one particular configuration from this period as the “Model 2.” The company’s own history, printed in its house organ in the ’20s and substantially reprinted in the famed Typewriter Topics compendium of 1923, speaks of this time in which small quantities of machines were built and tested. Other company literature and contemporary trade listings indicate that there was no actual “Model 2” Noiseless.

By the end of 1915, the design was set and the new Model 3 machine was offered at a price of $135. As usual, there was no actual model number stated on the machine – it was simply known as “The Noiseless.” These platen-bar machines carry the two-column listing of patent dates on their backs.

The Model 3 was made until October 1917, when the Model 4 superseded it. The Model 4 had 28 keys, and a right-hand figure shift added; it also featured the introduction of the famous metal platen roll. The carriage was redesigned, the paper table disappeared, and a new high paper rest was added. At some point late in their run, the design of the momentum weight was changed from a spherical to roughly triangular shape. On the back of the Model 4, in place of patent dates, was a jaunty script-styled decal that says “The Noiseless.”

Design improvements were always a consideration for the company. In my research in the Colby archive, I found a touching note handwritten in 1917 to C.W. Colby by Holland Duell, the company’s patent lawyer, as Duell prepared to set sail from New York with his Army regiment to fight in the trenches of France. “I hope you will have as much progress as possible made on the single-shift Underwood keyboard machine, because I am convinced that the certain and continued success of the Noiseless depends on it,” Duell wrote. He returned after the Armistice, by the way – a decorated war hero who
Model 1 “Cam-Action”
This introductory model of 1910 shows the flat-platen and soft rubber platen roller configuration, elaborate paper fingers and scaled connector construction (seen directly over the platen roller) and a short left-side lever. Nickel-plated rim near head of typebars. High paper table, nickel trimmed, with decal. Paddle-shaped margin stops. 28-key keyboard with Cap and Fig and lock keys only on the left, backspace and margin keys on right. No tab key. Nickeled semicircular pressure indicator above main decal. Solid ribbon covers. Inside is a fan-shaped arrangement of typebars propelled by a cam-and-toggle arrangement (inset). On the back, patent dates, including an incorrect 1908 one, ending in April 1908. (Pictured is the author’s machine, serial number 1103.)

Model 3
Same platen-bar configuration as Model 1. Simple paper finger with no connector. New longer return lever on left. Triangular print-point indicator. High decaled paper table without nickel trim. Semicircular topped margin stops. 28-key keyboard with Cap and Fig and lock keys on left, backspace and margin keys on right. Tombstone shaped pressure indicator partly obscures main decal. Cut-out ribbon covers. Inside, spherical momentum-accumulator weights. On the back, patent dates with Feb. 11, 1908 correction and last date of Dec. 26, 1911. Look for variations in components and construction on early machines. (Pictured is the author’s machine, serial number 4/5/18.)

Model 4
Metal platen roll. 28-key keyboard with Cap and Fig and lock keys on left, backspace, tab, Cap, Fig, and margin release keys on right. Low paper table and high nickeled paper rest. Triangular weights on later machines. On most machines, a back decal that says “The Noiseless” in script. (Pictured is Wim Van Rompuy’s machine, serial number 13415.)

Model 5
Metal platen roll. 30-key keyboard with Cap and Fig and lock keys on left, backspace, tab, Cap, Fig, and margin release keys on right. Ribbon color-shift switch on right front of machine, with “upper” and “lower” markings decaled. Ribbon cups have cut-out segments. Front “Noiseless” decal is smaller. Top cover piece made of lighter-weight stamped steel, with hole in front center that fits post at top of pressure indicator. Tiger decal usually missing. For about a year after the merger with Remington this model was decaled on the front as the “Remington Noiseless 5.” (Pictured is the author’s machine, serial number 75034.)

There is no completely reliable serial number list for the Noiseless, especially in its early years. Existing Model 1s tend to be under SN2,000. Model 3s up to roughly the 13,000s. Model 4s to the 60,000s. Model 5 high 60,000s and above. All of these are very rough estimates, and odd numeral/dash/dash combinations muddy the waters even further.

—Ed Neuert
The Onondaga Split-Up:  

Barney's Model  

by Jos Legrand

The first thing that struck me with the announcement of the big split-up was the apparent great easiness with which the transaction seemed to have been achieved. The discomposure that such a unique collection was to be dissolved had made way for dispassionateness by now. You could ask yourself where the machines would be better off. The Onondaga Historical Society did not accept its responsibility for conserving them; a lot of machines are in bad shape (although at least they were not subjected to the opposite danger—a bad restoration). The argumentation of the Society that in all those years about ten or twelve people visited the collection doesn’t discharge them from their liability.

To the auction! The machine that struck my attention was announced as "208: Experimental Model 'Ideal' By Barney (?), with original museum tag. Doesn't work." The typewriter was illustrated in the catalogue, together with a Model Shop label that reminded me of tagged carcasses in a butcher shop. I recognized it immediately. Years ago for one of my projects I was researching the German Ideal typewriter (pronounced I-de-ál), built in Dresden by Seidel & Naumann. Barney was supposedly its inventor. I had scrutinized the various patents from beginning to end, and now unexpectedly the model announced itself to me. It had slept for over a hundred years. And, finally, I could research the machine in person.

The question mark behind Barney’s name can be disposed of. The machine definitely is Barney’s model, which is the subject of the US patent number 594978. The patent is granted to "Edwin Earl Barney ... assignor of one-half to Frank J. Tanner." Both were from Groton, N.Y. Barney knew how to make a typewriter. He worked for the Crandall Typewriter Company in Groton, and then for the Daugherty Co., which had placed the production of their machine into the Crandall works. Edwin Barney was the supervisor of that project. It is not surprising that his invention was a sort of front-strike machine, as was the Daugherty. And therefore it is not strange that we see the characteristic big mainspring barrel in the middle of the Daugherty appearing in Barney’s model again. Originally it was a feature in the National upstrike machine, produced one year earlier. There the barrel is directly engaged to the carriage feed rack without using a cord to pull the carriage. On the Daugherty such a cord is wound up around the barrel. Barney used the same principle. But where in the Daugherty the escapement dog gears directly into the carriage feed rack on the upper side of the carriage, as in the National, Barney used a tension-rack in the middle of his machine (photoshopped pink, and 75 in the patent drawing) ruled by a gear. His machine deviates from the Daugherty especially in the transmission from key to type. An intermediate lever is used where the Daugherty employed a direct connection between type and key.

Barney’s machine is a real model, or prototype if you like. Everything is there, it could work. It is a model in the sense that its finish doesn’t matter. Functions had to be demonstrated. For instance, the keys are not equal: some are angular, some big and round. Four typelevers, the shift key, and one other key are missing or were not provided for. Keylevers are of 1 mm-thick sheet metal. Their pivot fasten-
Other modifications, apart from its more flamboyant form or the fact that the frame of the Ideal is more than one inch wider, concern (among other things) the roller underneath the carriage, the position of the rail belonging to that roller, the spacebar, the line space mechanism, the universal bars and the shift lock. These modifications can be found back in a later patent, USP 896680, that Barney filed June 1900, but that patent was not granted until 1908. There you can see the early Ideal in full glory.

It must be a coincidence, but Barney filed the first application for his machine just one day before another patent was granted. On January 12th, 1897, William Farnum of Arlington, Vermont, got his patent for a type-writing machine, which he had filed four years earlier, in August 1893. In fact, he applied for two patents and divided his idea into different claims, but its main principle stood firm: a typewriter with obliquely positioned typebars. A “scape-wheel,” as he called the barrel, was placed in the middle of the rear, directly engaged with the carriage rack. So if in his patent Barney speaks of his machine as particularly belonging “to that class in which the writing is visible, the printing being done upon the front upper quarter of the cylindrical impression-platen,” he may (or should) have meant Farnum’s device. Or did he have the Horton in mind as an example, an actually fabricated machine? Anyway, Barney filed the application for his patent on January 11, 1897 and the patent was granted on December 7th of that year.

Visibility is the keyword, “work in sight”—and there were only a few frontstroke visible machines of the “class” he describes produced in those years. Prouty maybe, the Horton fourteen years earlier, and yes, the Daugherty. And although the Underwood was not produced before 1896, Wagner’s patent dates from 1893. Barney must have known about it, especially because he already worked in the typewriter business by then.

Another characteristic, the hand crank to pull the carriage to the right, had a predecessor too. From 1890 dates a similar device, invented by Walter Reason from Caro, Michigan. A crank in front of the machine rules a rocking lever on the back in a way that “the carriage may be withdrawn to any desired point.” If the carriage was withdrawn towards the initial position, a feed-lever was activated and the platen moved one line. The invention was applicable to a Remington, but the Caligraph could be equipped with it also.

Barney wanted to sell his idea and make money, but how he came into contact with Bruno Naumann from Dresden in Germany is not known. Naumann was interested in typewriters. He owned a Remington as early as 1880, and in 1896 he bought a Williams. “With his peculiar daring, Bruno Naumann accepted an offer from Edwin E. Barney and Frank J. Tanner in Groton (America) in the autumn of 1897,” Weisser wrote in 1929. One day after Barney got his patent granted in 1897, his machine had been patented in Germany, although in reduced form: Umstellvorrichtung zum Drucken der Doppeltypen für Typenhebelbrechmaschinen, that is, only the shifting device. That same day Seidel & Naumann, manufacturer of sewing machines and bicycles in Dresden, patented the rest of Barney’s original US patent: the eye-catching hand-crank and the line spacing device. New drawings were used, so Seidel & Naumann were actively involved with the machine since August 1897.

In that same year Seidel & Naumann started to make construction drawings already, but the contract of sale was not concluded until October 24th, 1899. Barney was engaged to work in the factory as a superintendent for about two years. He worked together with two supervisors, Rahms and Brand, but what strange teamwork! According to Martin, Paul Vollrath, a technical designer, sighed: “Then came the problem that it was not permitted to disassemble the only model! Today one would find such a suffocating impertinence simply absurd, but at that time it was his way or the highway, and the appointed task had to be solved. All our petitions to the constructing engineer that he was aggravating the new work irresponsibly by his refusal to reproduce the parts from the originals did not have any effect at all. It just was not allowed to disassemble the machine, so that’s that!” They worked on the new machine for one year, making the various parts from drawings and sketches based on the model and without specialized tools. In the meantime, Barney changed his machine. Especially its escapement device was altered, and later on came the characteristic universal bar mechanism.

Barney’s model is a key machine in the literal sense of the word. Two worlds circled around the machine. The role of Barney cannot be underestimated. I think that now, with the big sale of the last great company collections from the United States in Europe in my mind, Barney could be seen in a similar dramatic light. In his days, around the turn of the century, there was no typewriter production in Europe worth mentioning. Frister & Rossmann had been producing their machine based on the Caligraph 3 since 1892. Shortly afterwards, Adler developed its machine from the Wellington-Empire principle [see p. 6]. In April 1898, in an ad, the Jewett-Duplex typewriters were seen as deutsches Fabrikat (German make), just because they were assembled in Germany. Three months later the following was written about that machine: “as a national make, it could enter into competition successfully with foreign products.” The author of the article, probably Burghagen, proceeds in the same way: “Surely it is to be welcomed with satisfaction, if we don’t have to fear the competition with America anymore. Therefore we wish the modern concern good progress, and hope that it succeeds to help the German business reach the same appreciation as the American enjoys.”

It was policy for American companies to sell the rights for their next-to-latest model to Europe, such as the Lambert 2 or, as in the abovementioned case, the Jewett 3. But with the coming of Barney and his model to Dresden, for the first time an American invention was taken directly into European production. Its success certainly contributed to the enormous proportions that the German typewriter
industry assumed after 1900. This industry was based on the highly modern Underwood innovation, whereas the Union Typewriter Company still defended the blessing of its upstrike machine divisions. And so Continental, Regina, Stoewer, Mercedes and Torpedo could compete with them successfully. It led unavoidably to mutual vexation. The Germans got excited over the huge, prohibitive customs of 45% for their machines in the United States. The Americans complained about the favoritism shown to the German machines by German authorities. A spokesman for Wyckoff, Seamans & Benedict stated in the New-Yorker Handels-Zeitung: “Germany is the only country that has brought its own typewriters on the market for some years, which models, however, are by no means original but rather follow American ideas entirely, imitate their fundamental principles, and are based on costly know-how developed in this country. The natural consequence of such home-made supply is that, for patriotic and political reasons, the German product is preferred in their own market above the expensive American machine.” And although the German state was only founded in the same year that Densmore produced the first 25 Sholes & Gliddens in 1871, the German atmosphere after 1900 was indeed patriotic, which is a euphemism to say that hard and dirty words were not eschewed. But within Germany there were competitors too. In the German magazines from the beginnings of the twentieth century a lot of polemics can be found. Kuhn: “It is correct, Herr Beyerlen, that I take the Adler machine to be one of the best machines that are being made anywhere in the world at all. To my conviction is added the circumstance that the machine is fabricated in Germany itself, so that the buyers of the Adler machine do not send their money abroad—especially not to a country that, like America, by means of its downright repellent, anticultural customs policy, full of unsurpassable hatred for Germany, makes a fool of itself to the core before the eyes of the whole civilized world.”

By the early beginnings of the century, Barney’s machine was no longer seen as an American invention. Seidel & Naumann, manufacturers of the Ideal, thought of their machine as a German machine from the start, even before it was introduced on the market. From that moment on, the Atlantic competition had begun. If only Barney had known.

After his years in Dresden, Barney went back to the States. In three extra patents, he had patented the improvements that finally shaped the Ideal. Apparently he went to Grotto, where he met Frank Tannen again. With Tannen as assignor, he patented a frontstrike mechanism. In 1904 he worked for the Monarch Company and worked on their frontstrike machine. According to Ernst Martin (who provided us with Barney’s presumed image below) he stayed there until 1909; thereafter he supposedly worked for Smith Premier. Since 1912 he served the Remington concern, although it was all part of the Union Typewriter Company. Altogether, he patented 82 typewriter inventions. He had taken his model with him. That is the reason that we find his invention back in the model shop of the Remington Company—and therefore we should not be surprised to find the Ideal prototype in the former Onondaga collection.

The Noiseless (continued from p. 8) continued a distinguished patent law career. The four-bank keyboard had not in fact been perfected by the time he returned, nor would it be seen for many years to come. At last, as the Twenties began, the company appeared to have found its way and built a nationwide and international sales force. To communicate with that growing force, Colby and his advertising manager in 1921 began publishing a high-quality house organ, charmingly entitled Whispers from the Noiseless Type-writer Company. This was not your average company newsletter. It included, in addition to the usual sales stories, an essay in each issue by a celebrated writer of the day on the subject of noise. The contributors included Colby’s fellow Canadian, the humorist Stephen Leacock, the columnist Franklin P. Adams (“FPA”), and the young Dorothy Parker. At the same time, the company engaged N. W. Ayer, the early powerhouse ad agency, to design an advertising campaign that drew national acclaim for its use of eye-catching cartoon illustrations and spare, humorous headlines and copy. One public relations coup for Noiseless occurred when their quiet machines were the only typewriters allowed on the platform press areas of both the 1920 Democratic and Republican conventions.

Much more lay ahead for the Noiseless in the Twenties. George Goring, who would have the longest tenure at the company of all its engineers, devised the momentum-weight Noiseless Portable introduced in late 1921 (see ET-Cetera #71 for a story on Going). There would be a Model 5, introduced in 1923, which had 30 keys and an added ribbon-color-change shifter on the right-front of the machine’s body. A few months after this introduction, in January 1924, the company merged with Remington to form the Remington-Noiseless company. C.W. Colby would serve for many years as the board chairman of Remington-Noiseless and Remington Rand, its successor. The Model 5 was produced with a new Remington decal for a year or so until the introduction of the four-bank Remington Noiseless 6, produced at the Middletown plant, on March 16, 1925.

Wellington Kidder, enmeshed in the unsuccessful startup of the Rochester portable, lived long enough to see the Remington-Noiseless merger announced; he died in New York City in October 1924, probably while on a business trip seeking capital to fund his next great invention.


The Noiseless continued a distinguished patent law career. The four-bank keyboard had not in fact been perfected by the time he returned, nor would it be seen for many years to come.

At last, as the Twenties began, the company appeared to have found its way and built a nationwide and international sales force. To communicate with that growing force, Colby and his advertising manager in 1921 began publishing a high-quality house organ, charmingly entitled Whispers from the Noiseless Type-writer Company. This was not your average company newsletter. It included, in addition to the usual sales stories, an essay in each issue by a celebrated writer of the day on the subject of noise. The contributors included Colby’s fellow Canadian, the humorist Stephen Leacock, the columnist Franklin P. Adams (“FPA”), and the young Dorothy Parker. At the same time, the company engaged N. W. Ayer, the early powerhouse ad agency, to design an advertising campaign that drew national acclaim for its use of eye-catching cartoon illustrations and spare, humorous headlines and copy. One public relations coup for Noiseless occurred when their quiet machines were the only typewriters allowed on the platform press areas of both the 1920 Democratic and Republican conventions.

Much more lay ahead for the Noiseless in the Twenties. George Goring, who would have the longest tenure at the company of all its engineers, devised the momentum-weight Noiseless Portable introduced in late 1921 (see ET-Cetera #71 for a story on Going). There would be a Model 5, introduced in 1923, which had 30 keys and an added ribbon-color-change shifter on the right-front of the machine’s body. A few months after this introduction, in January 1924, the company merged with Remington to form the Remington-Noiseless company. C.W. Colby would serve for many years as the board chairman of Remington-Noiseless and Remington Rand, its successor. The Model 5 was produced with a new Remington decal for a year or so until the introduction of the four-bank Remington Noiseless 6, produced at the Middletown plant, on March 16, 1925.

Wellington Kidder, enmeshed in the unsuccessful startup of the Rochester portable, lived long enough to see the Remington-Noiseless merger announced; he died in New York City in October 1924, probably while on a business trip seeking capital to fund his next great invention.

Enthusiasm for the use of portable typewriters by authors young and old continues to grow, and with it grows the desire for information about what makes the best machine to purchase. In many cases those persons who inquire on the subject also wish to know what the best machine of the small, flat class of typewriter is, especially after having procured one or more examples in this field only to find the performance disappointing. Many of these newly-crowned collectors cannot understand why, from a design standpoint, the small machines should be so bad as compared with the larger machines; the reasons for this are numerous, but simple.

A great many machines of the small, flat class contain keyboard and key lever designs which mount all of the key levers on a single dowel. While this certainly saved on manufacturing complexity and reduced vertical height, it had an unfortunate consequence: the upper rows of keys, when fully depressed, not only move at an arc uncomfortable and unnatural for the typist but also frequently drop well below the next lower row. This makes the machine difficult for those with larger fingers. A further detriment of this design is that the key levers are all mounted at, and thus hinged at, the same line in space but naturally must protrude forward at different final heights and must have different lengths, resulting in a different key tension for each row. Many complaints about such machines, such as mis-strikes and skipping, are a result of this style of key lever design; while it is possible to alter one's technique to overcome these circumstances, it is awkward to change back and forth between a more conventional, larger machine and one of these.

Further along the previous subject is the matter of key motion. Those used to typing on larger, standard machines or even some portables will quickly note that such small, flat typewriters have keys which move in a sharply curving manner, and which thus do not feel the same as those of other machines. The arc of upper keys, as hinted at previously, is smaller than that of lower keys. This difference in key top travel is most important for those who practice touch typewriting and who do not look at the keyboard, although all will notice the difference if able to experience it.

A different concern is weight, which of course must be minimized for carrying comfort. However, the important job of a typewriter is not to be handy, but to be fully and completely up to the task of writing cleanly and accurately at a comfortable speed. Those machines which are light are apt to move around when placed on random surfaces such as might be encountered when one travels to write, either during the typing or more certainly on the return of the carriage. One can carry some sort of non-slip accessory pad, but this of course partly negates the convenience simply bestowed by light weight and small envelope.

If one continues along these lines, it becomes rather obvious that in general the smallest, flattest machines are actually less desirable for actual work. As I have written before (ETCetera #61 & 62), the Rooy Portable is at once a rather supreme engineering achievement overall, and certainly the furthest extrapolation of the concept that a portable typewriter should be not only small and light but convenient; the Rooy Portable is also a rather awful machine for actual work. The achievement in design did not translate well to use, being so narrowly focused as it was on the original conception and not on user friendliness.

The number of surviving machines tells us that a great many of the flat class of portable typewriter were made and sold, but perhaps there is one important point: these machines are far more often discovered inoperable today than their larger brethren. Indeed, many of the larger class of machine were priced just above the small machines, so that the customer may well have been drawn initially by the low price of the flat machine only to find the slightly larger, slightly more expensive machine so much more worth an expenditure that the choice was clear-cut. (We call this the bait-and-switch today, but it is by no means new.) Some advertising also seems to indicate that the small machines were priced with a premium included for the extreme portability and specialty.

In the final analysis, an author wishing to purchase a typewriter that is light and easy to move around is akin to a traveling salesman who wishes to purchase a stylish roadster. The important point is the work, not the "getting there," and both may soon be displeased when the bigger picture is in view.
this issue I return to the New Model Crandall Typewriter as the focal point for discovering typewriter history through ephemera. Pictured is the second known photograph showing the machine in use, during a period when the technology was at its peak. In the first such image found (ETCetera #74), the Crandall was in a home office, an unexpected location given the price of the device and its advertised uses. In this new discovery, the Crandall is in use in a more prosaic business setting, most likely a general store and post office in Wyoming County, New York. The date is probably January 1891. The primary subject is Franc Brown, the user of the Crandall.

The typewriter is a New Model Crandall. The old photo is not very sharp because of low depth of field caused by the low sensitivity of the film and the slow, often optically poor lenses used at the time. These problems are compounded by the bright sunlight from the window and the same sunshine and/or flash powder lighting from the left. The typewriter is attached to its baseboard and placed on a shelf supported by metal brackets at a level that even in the late 19th century would have been regarded as quite high for typing. Notwithstanding the blurring and play of light within the parts of the machine, the Crandall appears to be typical of its model, including its twenty-eight black celluloid or composition keys.

Wyoming County is in upstate New York just to the east of Erie County and Buffalo at the eastern edge of Lake Erie. Wyoming was a county of small towns and hamlets, such as Attica, Castile, Java, Sheldon, and Warsaw, any of which might have been the location of the store. The photograph was purchased by the seller from another dealer, who had bought it earlier from the estate of the Pratt family located in Wyoming County.

The calendar is blurred and shows no clear year, but it does show the month of January with the 31st day appearing on Saturday. This would include 1891, 1903, and 1914, the largest range of reasonable options for the use of a Crandall for business purposes. The last date is improbable because of the clothing. Of the other two, the most likely one is 1891. The absence of a telephone or any wiring and electric lighting is also consistent with early images made in small towns before the beginning of the 20th century. The sole light source other than natural lighting is a kerosene or whale oil chandelier in the upper center of the picture.

Power transmission lines from the hydroelectric system at nearby Niagara Falls were not available as a source of electricity until late 1896. Thus, while it is possible that the general store had electricity available to it in 1903 and simply did not purchase the service, or that the image does not show the wires that might have been present in the other room, January 1891 is the most likely date of the photograph.

The primary subject is Franc Belden (Baldwin?) Brown, who is seated before the Crandall. There is a handwritten caption that I read as, "Franc Belden Brown in office. Mr. B. with apron on." I first assumed that "Franc" was a man's name and that the person referred to was sitting in the chair to the left of Mr. B. (Brown), the man standing to the right of Franc. However, in my unfruitful attempt to find the Browns (father and son? brothers?) in the 1890 census for upstate New York, I did discover that all but one person with the given name "Franc" were females, not males. Franc Brown is the only person in the image that is addressing the camera and paying specific attention to it. She is well outfitted in a period dress that contains voluminous amounts of cloth. The amount of textiles used in a woman's dress at the end of the 19th century was a primary indicator of her relative wealth and social status. While she might have been a lower level employee of the small firm pictured here, it is far more likely that she is part of a family running the business and "Mr. B." is her husband. Furthermore, her position as spouse is supported by the inclusion of what is surely a maiden name, not a middle name, in the caption with "Franc." Her type of dress and the fact that she is using a very expensive device lead me to conclude that she and her husband own the store and are rising entrepreneurs (who can also obtain cloth at wholesale prices). The seated man with his great muttonchops must, unfortunately, remain unknown to us.

The building is probably a general store. Such small firms were common throughout rural New York and New England until at least the end of World War I. The layout is fairly typical, with the office records stored in the back shelves and the post office pigeonholes behind the counter. The entrance would have been to the left. What appears to be a sales counter is to the left and in front of this postal area. Packaging apparently took place in the office area using the wrapping paper seen on a roll in the back of the image.

I now would like to know much more about Franc Brown and Mr. B. and the role of the New Model in their lives and their business. Why did they buy a beautiful Crandall, the dream of so many of us collectors a century and more later? Was it the hypertensive experience that several users documented—"the source of more swear words by typists than any other typewriter" (Lippman 1994, pp. 58-59)? I'll let you know if I discover more.

Thanks to Dennis Clark, Ed Neuert, Richard Poli, Herman Price, Paul Robert, and Don Sutherland.
Naeseth Collection to be Sold

Rodger L. Naeseth of Hampton, Virginia, will auction his lifetime collection of typewriters on April 6th. Mr. Naeseth, who is a member of the Space and Technology Hall of Fame for his pioneering work with para-wings and hang gliders, has been a collector since the early 1950s and has amassed over 100 machines. He has always admired the mechanical ingenuity of the many different solutions to the problems of getting your message down on a piece of paper with something more complicated than a ballpoint pen.

As the owner, he is sorry to see the collection go, as he loved the fun of collecting each machine, but space is limited in the retirement home. The highlight of the collection is a New Model Crandall, with other names including Bar-Lock, Bing, Blick, Hammond, Noiseless, Odell, Rex, Varityper, and World. There are several toy typewriters and colorful portables. Collector books and periodicals, manuals, and parts are also included in the sale. The auction will be conducted by the Phoebus Auction Gallery of Hampton, Virginia, beginning at 10 AM EST, April 6th, 2008. The complete catalogue is available on their website at www.phoebusauction.com. The auction will be available for real time bidding on ebayliveauctions.com and through liveauctioneers.com. Questions may be addressed to Bill Welch, bill@phoebusauction.com, 757-722-9210.

What will Mr. Naeseth be collecting next? “At 88 years old, time might be short, but I have a start on a collection of miniature steam engines.”

Marketplace

For sale: Hermes 3000 original green case (no typewriter) with brushes, eraser shields, polishing cloth, eraser, most with Hermes logo. $12 + shipping. Frank Lindauer, cad49@bellsouth.net, 770-934-4294.

Book Review

The Typewriter Sketchbook

by Paul Robert

with Flavio Mantelli, Richard Milton, and Peter Weil

The Virtual Typewriter Museum, 2007, $52.11

Purchase online at lulu.com/content/1370470

Those of us who subscribed to The Virtual Typewriter Journal were amazed by each new number, which brought fresh discoveries of unheard-of machines and fascinating pictures. The VTJ had the highest proportion of surprises per issue of any collectors’ publication I’ve ever seen. Its only limitation was the low resolution of its digital images.

The journal is no longer being published, but its best articles have been revised and collected in this volume, beautifully laid out, illustrated with high-resolution photos, and supplemented with new stories and pictures. The major eye-catchers here are one-of-a-kind creatures such as the Visible Index (not to be confused with the Index Visible), the Durand (belonging to “the undefined group of ‘silly machines’”), the Cantelo (below), and a nameless little machine with a gnome logo that uses a unique method of typing. You’ll also see super-rare variants of already super-rare machines, such as a prototype Crary, an aluminum Blick 4, and a front-strike Jackson. From the former Onondaga collection we see a Perfect (which seems to be a name variant of the Alexander), an unusual Emerson labeled “Secretary of New York,” and a small Sholes & Glidden-like machine. Other typewriters discussed include the Odell, Hogar, Sun index, Pettypet, and Globe.

In addition, the volume includes in-depth looks at the lives and creations of renowned inventors James B. Hammond, Frank Lambert, Hidalgo Moya, and Robert Ingersoll. Peter and Corny Weil have contributed photos and other ephemera from their collection, which ETCetera readers already know to be wonderful.

This is a perfect book to keep by your bedside table and browse in pleasant fascination. Its only drawback is the price, which may seem a bit high. This is the cost of producing a high-quality, full-color, print-on-demand volume. But for the price of a Royal or Remington, you’ll get to see unique typewriters that will haunt your dreams—and the cost per page is less than that of ETCetera. It’s actually a good deal, and you might drop a hint to a significant other that The Typewriter Sketchbook would make a perfect gift for the typewriter collector in his or her life.

—Richard Polt
Letters

I discussed the Remington “spikes” [ETCetera #79 & #80] with an old typewriter mechanic. He’s of the opinion that this must be a device for writing on file cards. Some are punched. They are normally stiff, and to manage to bring them to the right line and to avoid slippage, these spikes could be helpful. The pharmacy symbols support this; pharmacies often use file cards.

Norbert Schwarz
Schnaittach, Germany

Just got your latest edition and wanted to commend you on the terrific job that you continue to do. The colors and paper are great, and always some fun reading/learning to do.

Mike Brown
Philadelphia

When it is a month to receive the ETCetera, I always tell the doorman to pay attention for it and to tell me right away when it comes. He always says: Señor, un poco de paciencia (“A little patience, sir”).

Stellios Peios
Madrid

I continue to clean up and try to sell rather common, but functional typewriters in my booth at the antiques mall. Occasionally these machines sell, ranging from a glass-sided Royal to, most recently, a wide-carriage Olympia portable (heavy, heavy!). A lady purchased it as a Christmas gift for her daughter soon to enter college. Are you surprised? And her daughter asked for it! I give that girl much credit for wanting you surprised? And her daughter asked for it! I give that girl much credit for wanting to get used to that heavy touch, and having to slam the carriage back at the end of a line, much less changing the ribbon.

Frank Lindauer
Tucker, Ga.

New on the Shelf

Items in red are former OHA typewriters.

Lars Borrman: Blick 5 #2465, alum.
Dactyle featherweight, round Rofa
Tony Casillo: Shimer 2
Miguel Castro: Blick 8 alum., Edland,
Ingersoll #23, Rofa 1, Ludolf index
Jim Dax: Blick 5 #3581, Porto-Rite,
Remington 5 portable, Hammond 2
remod. #1433
Tilman Elster: 2 British Empires,
Remington 9A Arabic
Jörg Fehrensen: American, Portex 5,
#17075, Erika folding 2
Heidi Frei: bright blue Bambino,
Defiance, Hartford 2
Thomas Fürtig: Adler 17, Albus #109,
Columbia (downstroke with shift),
Dayton, Erika 4 Arabic, red Eureka
toy, Fox 2, Invicta 5, Kanzler-Rapid,
Lilliput 1, green Meteor 1, nickel
National 10 portable, blue Orga
Privat 5, Pagina 3 (Meteos), Regent
2 (Minerva), Remington 2 modified
into a frontstroke, Williams 3
Jim Gehring: Odell 1B
Flavio Mantelli: New Sholes prototype
Richard Polt: American Deluxe
(Optima Elite), Gourland #1533,
Peerless #4034, Swissa Junior
Herman Price: Allen #27, Caligraph
1 #1096, Fox 2, Monofox, Oliver 2
nickel, Remington 4 #299,
Remington Standard 9 w/ stand,
Remington Telegrapher, Standard
Folding black #582, Sun wide carr.,
Venus
Paul Robert: American index 1,
Caligraph 1, Munson 1, Standard
Folding #15, early World 1
Wim Van Rompy: Corona tripod,
Merritt, Picht, Standard Folding with
all-symbol keyboard
Richard Rye: Janalif (made in Kazan,
USSR, 1920s; Polish keyboard)
Norbert Schwarz: Emerson 3
Sirvent bros.: Densmore 2, Fox
Sterling, Mercedes 2, Munson 1,
curved Polygraph, Portex 5, Reivo
(nickel Oliver 3), Russian Underwood
5, Williams 1 straight
Don Sutherland: wide-carriage
Hammond Multiplex, green folding
Multiplex, Coxhead Writing
Machine, Remington Noiseless 5
Mark Taff: Smith Premier table
Peter Weil: Blick 5 #4904, Emerson 3
#3645
Jay Williams: Elliott stencil cutter
Reinman Wochinz: Travis, Moya 2

Around the World

Historische Bürowelt
No. 77, December 2007
• Electronic blueprint markers
• Shift systems
• Smith Premier 2 w/ Linotype kbd.
• Rise and fall of the Merz (Part 1)

HBw-Aktuell
November 2007
• Photos: completely nicked Duplex
(Kortsch collection), Enigma A,
Titania 3, Hebrew Kappel
• IFHB meeting March 28-30, 2008 in
Ludwigsburg
December 2007/January 2008
• Auction & meeting reports
• Photos: white Adler, Norica
• HBw-Aktuell now available as PDF

contact
No. 29, December 2007
• Maurice Giraud obituary
• Vouvray meeting
• Exhibits by ANCMCEA members

L’ufficio d’epoca
No. 41, January-April 2008
• The story of the Sholes & Glidden
• Index, issues 1-40
• Color brochure for Olivetti exhibit

New book: Giuseppe Silmo,
M.P.S.: Macchine per scrivere
Memoirs of an Olivetti man
The mission of the Early Typewriter Collectors’ Association is to support communication and interaction within the community of typewriter lovers and collectors, and to encourage its growth. Our magazine, *ETCetera*, serves that mission by gathering and sharing knowledge about typewriter history with the community and beyond.

Learn more at

[etconline.org](http://etconline.org)