

## In this issue

Editor's Notes .....	2
Halda 4.....	3
Writing Ball meeting .....	6
Show & Tell: Typit.....	7
Watch the QWERTY .....	8
Portables: Royal Scrittore....	12
Postcards in Paris .....	14
Around the World .....	15
Letters.....	16



# ETCetera

Journal of the  
Early Typewriter  
Collectors' Association

No. 99 -- September 2012



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## On Our Cover

*McCool #1821, Maddie Allen collection  
(story in our next issue)*



## Editor's Notes

of the typosphere in person. In case that term isn't familiar to you, the typosphere is the subset of the blogosphere that consists of typecasters and other typewriter-loving bloggers. Michael Yulo and Ton Sison, both originally from the Philippines, are infectiously enthusiastic about their machines. Ton's favorite make is Olivetti, and I think Michael's new favorite may be the gold-trimmed Olympia SM3 that we found at a vintage store in Claremont, California.

I was delighted to pick up a Sholes Visible on eBay recently for a three-figure price. It's in poor condition, but basically functional. And I have to say there's something better about a fixer-upper than a perfect machine. The spotless one sits beautifully on the shelf; the rough one gets taken apart and explored, so you get to know it much better and gain a great sense of satisfaction in the end. Would you agree?

Did you know that some typewriters have two different printing points where typeheads can strike? I'm not talking about something exotic like the Duplex (ETCetera no. 74), but a '70s Olympia Traveller that I recently got, made in Yugoslavia. Why does it have two different printing points? In order to handle the unusual requirements of its alphabet: Thai.

Have you heard of the Typewriter Insurgency yet? "We strike a blow for self-reliance, privacy, and coherence against dependency, surveillance, and disintegration. We affirm the written word and written thought against multimedia, multitasking, and the meme. The Revolution Will Be Typewritten." Read the whole Manifesto at typewriterinsurgency.webstarts.com.

Our December issue will be ETCetera's one hundredth! It's going to be a big one, with stories about fascinating typewriters and—I hope—lots of content from you. Please imagine what you'd like to share with fellow enthusiasts and with future generations who will read this issue. It might be a list of your recent acquisitions for "New on the Shelf"; a photo of one of your favorite machines; a story about how you found one, or the one that got away; reflections on typewriters, typing, or the collecting hobby; reactions to the magazine and suggestions for it; questions for other readers or for me; in short, anything to do with the world of typewriter collecting.

I hope to receive something from everyone. My contact information is in the box on this page. Let's make the hundredth issue the best yet.

The rest of this column will offer a few examples of the sort of thing you might want to share with other readers. — At left are two glimpses of a May meeting at Peter Weil's house. At top, Herman Price and Maddie Allen check out her new McCool, which she promises to tell us all about in December. Below, Bob Aubert and Marty Rice inspect the Cahill before its trip to its new home in Austria. I couldn't make it, but was able to peek in via Skype.

Skype is fine, but flesh and metal are still better. I recently had the pleasure of meeting two members



# The Little-Known Halda 4 from Sweden

## From Pocketwatch to Typewriter

by Uwe Bethmann

Hardly anything has been published before now on the early Halda typewriters. Ernst Martin writes that several hundred model 4 machines were produced starting in 1902, but he does not include a picture of the machine.

Wilfred A. Beeching is more concrete: he pictures the five experimental models. According to Beeching, about 100 examples of the model 4—the last of the experimental models and the one that will be described in this article—were produced from 1905 to 1914. The experimental models were first produced starting in 1890; their basic designs correspond to the Bar-Lock or the Maskeyne until the model 4, which is strongly reminiscent of the Densmore in its appearance. Examples of all five models exist in the Karlshamn Museum in Sweden.

### *How it all began*



The Halda no. 4 typewriter is marked “Halda Fickurfabrik.” As you can see in this ca. 1890 ad, *Fickur* means pocketwatch.<sup>1</sup>



How did the second Swedish typewriter (after the Sampo) come to be built? Everything circles around the gifted inventor Henning Hammarlund. Born on December 30, 1857, in Varaslöv, Hammarlund was interested in machin-

1. *Fik(Ø)a* (Norwegian): to move swiftly (Duden etymological dictionary). The word surely refers to the sound of the quickly ticking action inside the watch case.

ery early on; when he was still a child, he made several clocks out of wood. Hammarlund got his first positions at the age of sixteen at the Helsingborgs Mekaniska Verkstad and then as a watchmaker apprenticed to Per Jönsson Holm in Ängelholm. Starting in February 1879, Hammarlund studied in Stockholm and then traveled around America and all of Europe. He also studied in Geneva, the capital of watchmaking at the time.

In Svängsta, Hammarlund found an appropriate site for his company, where he manufactured fine pocketwatches starting in 1887. The founding of the Halda company marked the beginning of watch production in northern Europe.



*Halda watch factory, 1887*

The company received plenty of orders, but profits remained low. So Hammarlund decided to produce more products, such as bicycles, taximeters, and—starting in 1890—typewriters. However, his first success with typewriters came only with the model 8 of 1914.

### *A late blind writer*

The model 4 was Hammarlund's first typewriter design to be produced in a small series. There are varying claims about the year in which this machine appeared. Probably the model 4 was constructed around 1900 and first marketed in 1902. At the time, visible typewriters were already established. The Halda 4 was one of the last understrikes to ap-

pear on the market, against the technological trend. In addition to the model 4 designation, the machine was also offered until 1914 as the Halda 4 Commercial, Halda 5 Commercial A, and Halda 6 Automatic.



*Restored no. 4 #286. The similarity to the Densmore is particularly clear from the side.*

The machine I bought in 2008 thanks to the generous assistance of Martin Reese, with serial number 286, was in poor cosmetic and mechanical condition. I disassembled the machine almost completely and discovered some interesting peculiarities.

### *Some technical details*

The Halda no. 4 is technically immature, and some details are poorly carried out. This may be the reason why the machine described here gives the impression of having hardly been used. The paint and keyboard show only slight signs of use.

Particularly striking are the impre-

cisely guided key levers, only 1.2 mm wide. The typebars, with their inserted typeslugs, are mounted much like those on the Smith Premier understrokes. The typebars lie behind each other diagonally; they are hung very weakly and soldered only to a small depth. It is hardly imaginable that this design could stand up to extended use as an office typewriter. One of the soldered connections had already broken on the machine described here.



*Typebars and escapement before restoration*

The carriage, as in the Densmore, is simply hooked on to the machine, but the carriage guide here is inexact. The carriage runs on ball bearings along two rods in which grooves are cut to hold the bearings. In front, the carriage is guided along a rail by two grooved wheels. The margin stops are mounted on the front rack of the carriage.



The escapement uses a toothed rack with fixed and loose dogs. The main-spring housing, with a 33 mm diameter, is unusually small.

The frame of the body of the machine consists of four pieces that are



screwed together and were painted after assembly. Under the thickly applied paint, the slots in the screws that hold the frame together can just be seen.

Two peculiarities make it clear at just how immature a stage the machines were manufactured.

The key levers, as usual, are brought back to their starting position by a tension spring at the end of each lever. Obviously, not enough room was provided for the springs for all 42 key levers, so the spring for the twelfth lever, for the letter L, hangs on an extra, added hook on the crossbar behind the other springs.

Evidently there is yet another error here in the assembly of the machines. A hole, in this one key lever only, is provided for hanging the spring in the construction of this machine, in front of the row of springs; but the hole (between the red lines in this photo) was not used in



assembly, and instead the spring was extended and hung in the rear hole. This is the case in both of the machines known to me.

Also unusual is an extra slot in the front key lever guide comb. Since the slot is in the fifth position from the right, it cannot be meant for keyboards with more than 42 keys.



But there are also some details of the model 4 that give evidence of being well made. For instance, the margin stops are mechanically elaborate; they each con-

sist of 12 pieces, including six screws. The key lever lock is also constructed in a very elaborate way.



The steel plaque under the lever lock is engraved "HALDA TYPEWRITER No. 4 MADE BY Patent HALDA MANUF. Ltd. HALDA SWEDEN."

The technical inadequacies of the model 4, illustrated here with some examples, and the competition from other typewriters on the market that were already more modern in their conception were surely the reasons why the Halda blind writer had no success.

### *The end*

In 1914, the First World War began (in which Sweden remained neutral). But Hammarlund decided to expand his typewriter production anyway. With the model 8, the first Halda frontstroke appeared.

By 1916, Halda was employing 300 workers. But during the war, the prices for raw materials were very high and delivery times were long. Despite these difficulties, Hammarlund was resolved to expand the factory. The new three-story factory building was erected in 1917. The economic condition of the enterprise became more dire. Hammarlund could not gather the necessary capital and had to sell the factory. The new owners were Svenska Emissionsaktiebolaget and Centralgruppens Emissionsaktiebolaget.

On December 30, 1917, on his sixtieth



birthday, Hammarlund had to give up the ownership of his factory; from then on, he was just the director. The company was then renamed AB Halda Fabriks. The new owners wanted to restructure the company but had no success; liquidation followed on March 14, 1918. On November 8, 1918, Hammarlund left Halda. The Schwedische Handelsbank audited the company and decided to let it produce again at a minimal level. The workforce was cut in half, and in 1920 the second half also had to be dismissed. Only four workers were left. For a while, only returned typewriters, models 8-10, were being refurbished.

By May 1923, nearly all the typewriters had been sold. The commercial banks issued an order for the manufacture of 1500 new machines, with the condition that as many parts as possible of the model 10 should be incorporated in them. In total, 1575 examples of the machine marketed as the Halda 12 were produced by 1926.

Halda existed as an independent company until 1929. After difficulties during the worldwide economic crisis, it collaborated with the Danish company Norden. From that point on, the typewriters bore the name Halda-Norden. In 1938, the company was taken over by Facit A.B. The typewriters were still sold under the name Halda until 1957. The factory founded by Hammarlund in Svengsta was closed in 1992.

Henning Hammarlund met the same fate as many inventors of his time. He was unable despite many efforts and brave decisions to lead his life work, the Halda factory, to great success. Amidst his attempts to bring various products other than watches to market, the typewriters were certainly an important pillar, but too many years were spent in experimenting. Halda had its first success with typewriters only with the introduction of the model 8 in 1914. At this point in time, Halda had economic problems again. The difficulties then due to the

war could not be overcome without foreign capital. After leaving Halda, Hammarlund lived a withdrawn life; he grew ill, lost all self-awareness, and died on April 25, 1922. ■

*I thank the staff of the Karlshamn Museum for information on Halda and the photos they provided. Thanks go to Wolfgang Zacharias for his translation from the Swedish and for traveling to the Karlshamn Museum, and to Frau Lindfors for her translation from the Swedish.*

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*All photos by U. Bethmann except 2, 3, and 4 from Wikipedia. The photos below were kindly provided by the Karlshamn Museum.*

## The Halda Experimental Models

*First row: 1890-1900 model 1 based on the Maskelyne; model 2  
 Second row: two model 3 variants (1900-1905); model 4 #284*



# GATHERED AROUND THE WRITING BALL

BY JAVIER ROMANO

Being able to behold an original Malling-Hansen typewriter is not an everyday occurrence. How about when you can admire ten of them a few inches from your nose, and even touch them? That was the number of units gathered by members of The International Rasmus Malling-Hansen Society for the display that took place at the Auction Team Breker headquarters in Cologne (Germany) on May 27th. This is where the Society's fourth assembly took place, and where former President Christian Barnholdt resigned his post. Jorgen Malling Christensen was elected as the new President. Throughout the day, experts and researchers gave interesting lectures about the life and scientific work of Rasmus Malling-Hansen and about his most famous invention, the Writing Ball. But the highlight of the meeting was the exhibition of those ten wonders. Only 45 Writing Balls are known to exist in the world today, according to the records of the Malling-Hansen Society. The Museu de la Tècnica de l'Empordà contributed two pieces, and two more were provided by Hans Barbian; one in each pair had a keyboard for the visually impaired (Moon alphabet). The Writing Ball manufactured in 1:2 scale and owned by Lars Mathiesen is a small marvel. On an antique bureau, which almost served as a sanctuary, Uwe Breker displayed two prototypes and a classic model in its case, in addition to a few original documents and several of the inventor's personal belongings. In short, it was an extraordinary opportunity to enjoy and learn more about one of the milestones in the history of the typewriter. 🎯



*The audience at one of the lectures*



*Two unusual models of different size*



*Museu de la Tècnica de l'Empordà's Writing Ball with keyboard for the visually impaired*



*Two small specimens and a classic Writing Ball in its case*



*Christian Barnholdt (left) displays a small Writing Ball*



*Several Malling-Hansen typewriters on display*



# Show & Tell ..... Typit

I learned the profession of office machine mechanic in Hamburg from 1950 to 1954, and experienced the postwar revival of the German typewriter industry firsthand. So I ask myself why this sensational American invention, by NASA engineer Robert Twyford, gets so little attention. From around 1960 to 1980 you could use Typit to type up to 1500 characters, using either a type-bar or a single-element machine. I myself sold this system to my customers and installed it.

—Klaus Brandt, Norderstedt, Germany



Inventor Robert Twyford



The system required a special type guide to be installed on the machine.



The Typit unit slips over the prongs on the special type guide, and then you can hit any key to type the character. Time supposedly required: 4 seconds.



Left: a Typit kit with 45 units. Below: a smaller case with 6 units.

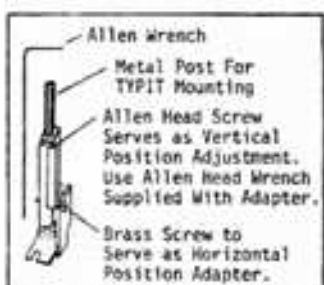


Figure 3

From the installation instructions for the Typit II system, for use with Selectrics and similar typewriters.



Typit was distributed in Germany by Dreusicke.



"Typit writes with every typewriter"

# Ephemera by Peter Weil . . . . . Watch the QWERTY!



One day in the middle of the final decade of the 19th century, J.W.H. Shipler, a photographer in Clyde, New York, a village on the Erie Canal west of Syracuse, focused his camera on two well-dressed women. Possibly sisters, they looked each other in the eyes, and the one on the right sat in front of a late-version Munson #1 typewriter, her hands placed on the ends of the carriage. The other woman held a pen looming over a large record book.<sup>1</sup> As 21st-century observers interested in typewriters and their place in industrial culture, what can we most effectively learn from such studio portraits? This double portrait is relatively unusual in that it provides the name of the photographer and the location of the studio, whereas in many other cases no such written information is available. At this point in my research on these studio photographs that include typewriters, much of what I suggest inevitably is speculative. Nonetheless, whether there is firm data or simply informed speculation, these rare early typewriter photographs have an affecting presence that we can all enjoy.<sup>2</sup>

1. This and the other photographs here are from the author's collection.

2. I want to thank the following for their several suggestions about the photographs included here that they have sent me over the years I collected the images: Martin Howard, Jos Legrand, Ed Neuert, Herman Price, Paul Robert, and Alan Seaver. I also very much appreciate Bert Kerschbaumer's searches for more historical data on the making of studio images of freelance typists. And I want to express my deep appreciation to Cornelia Weil for her many editorial suggestions.

The Munson image is part of a larger category of ephemera most often labeled "occupational" or "occupational photographs." While not all such photographs were taken in studios, both in studios and in more natural settings the images share the presence of one or more objects (such as an anvil in images of blacksmiths) or job-related clothing (as in photos of men wearing fireman's togs), or both. Ephemera dealers and collectors today use these objects as symbols to label the photographs "occupational." The label is a problematic one, however, because the presence of such objects may not be an accurate indication that the subjects are members of the occupational group associated with the objects. This is most often the case for images made in photographic studios, locations often stocked with objects to be used as props, points of interest to add character to the subject and the portrait as a whole. Thus, while studio portraits that include typewriters fall into a subcategory of ephemera called "occupational," without other evidence within the image or written on them, they may not be that at all.

For example, in the case of the picture at right, we find another example that shares an extremely similar composition to that of the Munson photograph: two elaborately-dressed women facing each other from opposite sides of a table, with the one on the right using a typewriter (in this case, a Williams #4), and the woman on the left holding a pen (in this case actually writing with it on a stenographer's pad).<sup>3</sup> The similarity of the composi-

3. She also has with her a "potbelly" nickel-plated phone from the American Electric Co., a firm in

tion of the two photographs is at least suggestive that such a way of posing with typewriters and pens as props was likely part of a pattern in the subculture of portrait studio photographers, and not a good indication of the occupational statuses of the subjects. This suggestion is further supported by the high quality of the clothing worn by the subjects in these portraits. In the 1890-1910 period, the abundance of textiles in clothing was a primary social indicator of the wealth status of both women and men in the U.S. and other industrial societies. One of the central characteristics of women who were actually typists and stenographers at this time was their pay level, which was dramatically below that of men in offices holding the same jobs or managerial positions above those indicated.<sup>4</sup> The women usually came from farming or urban working-class families that could not afford such clothes, and the salary for the jobs usually



the midwest of the U.S., introduced in the 1890s. The telephones were primarily used in that area and it is likely that this is a good indication of the location of the studio. This is an early real photographic postcard with a split back, which approximately dates it between 1907 and 1910.

4. There are several sources that examine issues of women's entrance into the industrial business office as clerks, stenographers, and typists. Among these are Donald Hoke's 1979 book *Ingenious Yankees* (Columbia University Press), Margery W. Davies' 1982 book *Woman's Place is at the Typewriter* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press), F. A. Kittler's 1999 *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford Univ. Press), and D. Wershler-Henry's 2007 *The Iron Whim* (Cornell University Press).



could not pay for such clothes either. The four women in these two images were unlikely to have been typists and stenographers. Yet, why would they accept the use of typewriters and other office equipment as props for their portraits? One key answer is the theme of “progress” in the cultures of industrial countries, most specifically represented by typewriters and other new technologies of the industrial age that were seen as improvements over the manual labor with tools that preceded their introduction. To include a typewriter or telephone in your portrait could be viewed as a way to identify with a desirable “future.”



In contrast to such often-ambiguous images that were probably made for distribution to family and friends or for employment, there are studio portraits more clearly made for business purposes. These portraits were intended primarily to promote sales of typewriters. The first example was shot in Cincinnati, Ohio, at the studio of Randolph “Ralph” P. Bellsmith<sup>5</sup> as a commission for the American Writing Machine Co. (Hartford, CT). The subject is a “Miss R.L. Parker” with her Caligraph #3 Special. As the back of the cabinet card tells us, Miss Parker participated in a speed contest or demonstration in October, 1892, in Kansas City (MO or KS) at which she typed 183 words per minute of a familiar sentence and 111 words per minute from unfamiliar dictation. The card was handed out to potential customers as an indication of the alleged superiority of the Caligraph’s speed based on its design that included its “full,” non-stand-

5. Bellsmith was a well-known Ohio photographer who won a blue ribbon in 1894 at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago and who later became the president of The Photographer’s Association of Ohio. See [http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ohnhs2/Bellsmith\\_RP.html](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ohnhs2/Bellsmith_RP.html)



dard QWERTY keyboard. Such sales-related images also were made to promote local sales. A probable example of this is a ca. 1888 small carte de visite cabinet-card portrait of a man with his Caligraph #2 and its unusually expensive case sitting in a contrived woodsy studio scene reading a letter headed with the American Writing Machine logo.<sup>6</sup> In a similar vein, this studio portrait of a Densmore salesman with his model #1c machine, with a piece of paper asking “CAN I SELL YOU ONE?” in the platen and accompanied by a



6. Made in the Findlay, Ohio, studio of A.B. Crozier. Crozier left the town in 1895, and the specific typewriter case in the photograph was introduced in 1888, according to a Caligraph trade catalog. This creates a dating window of 1888-1895. The typewriter is almost surely a #2, which favors the earlier date if that was the company’s main product being promoted by a salesman.

young woman, was intended to be handed out to potential prospects.<sup>7</sup> Another example of a portrait intended for advertising is this one of a little girl taken about 1897 in Lebanon, PA, by a photographer named Roshen. The typewriter is a Smith Premier #2, a model heavily promoted by the Smith Premier Co. through studio photographs of little girls, primarily in the U.S. and Europe but also in other areas of the world, posed in front of or otherwise looking at the typewriter. The theme was justified in ads by the company as emphasizing the ease of use of their products, and the proliferation



of the images in magazine ads and in the form of a 35-page booklet entitled *Our Juvenile Class* (ca. 1898) implies that they were found by the public to be acceptable as subjects.<sup>8</sup> In this case, as in most such images used by the company, there is an advertising message in the platen. The one here states “My papa uses the Smith in his college.”<sup>9</sup> It is the best.”

Beyond commercial sales of typewriters, studio portraits were made for other types of promotional reasons. One example is this photograph of a Numipu<sup>10</sup> Native American

7. No data are available on the name and location of the photographer or the names of the subjects.

8. However, just as Lewis Carroll’s interest in little girls is today regarded as somewhat prurient, the theme used by Smith Premier might be regarded by many today similarly as part of a larger Victorian set of values that literally and figuratively diminished women.

9. At the time the image was made, many schools teaching typing and selling typewriters were called “colleges,” and it is likely that this small cabinet card was made to support sales for such an institution.

10. The population uses the name “Numipu” for themselves instead of “Nez Perce,” which usually is regarded by them as a pejorative one. I studied



woman typing on a Remington #10. The print here was made from the author's glass negative, which was made about 1912 in Pendleton, OR, near the Umatilla Reservation, and was used two years later to produce postcards sold to local non-Indian people and tourists in eastern Oregon, Washington, and western Idaho.<sup>11</sup> When it was made, the northern Methodist Church was designated as administrator of the Umatilla Reservation by the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the U.S. War Department. Through this arrangement, the national government funded education on the reservation, and the church was under pressure to demonstrate that its educational activities were effective, in that they resulted in "Indians" gaining skills that would result in employment in the non-Indian society as part of the elimination of the Indian culture still so disdained by most in American society. Notwithstanding that bias, the beaded clothing likely was included in the image by the church to clearly identify the subject as a Native American to the viewer of the image. Thus the photograph was most probably commissioned by the church and originally sent to the War Department as justification for the church's budget, and soon after used for the promotion of the alleged success of the civilizing force of the reservation and of tourism.

Studio portraits including typewriters may also have been commissioned by their subjects

to use, in part, to seek clients. Typists and stenographers wanted pictures of themselves and their equipment to leave, along with a separate calling card, with prospective employers. While such images were undoubtedly also given to relatives and friends, the primary motivation for making them would have been to seek employment as freelancers or "temps." None of the photographs to be discussed in this section have any writing

on them that indicates this purpose. However, the substantial amount of equipment included in the images is indicative that the typewriters and accessories presented were not props owned by the studios. Instead they would have belonged to the subjects, who were, by implication, equipped and ready for at least temporary employment. A photograph interpreted here as strong evidence for this type of image is this ca. 1900 portrait of a young woman in front of a Smith Premier #2 or early #4 on its baseboard on top of a por-



table folding Smith-Premier table and with a copyholder that hides the keyboard from the user.<sup>12</sup> This copyholder itself was an indication of the high level of the typist's skill. All this equipment, taken together, was just the type of equipment that a skilled itinerant freelancing typist would use, and not the kind likely to be kept in a photographic studio as props. Similarly, the subject of this ca. 1900 studio image in Albion, NE, with a Smith Premier

12. No data are available on photographer, the subject, or the location of either.



#2 on its baseboard and equipped with her stenographic pen and notebook, also probably had the photograph made to seek employment. Tables like this one, a form of what had long been termed a "secretary," often show up in studio images, and it is likely a prop, but the remainder of the equipment looks more complete and thus more personal. A close parallel to this photo is this ca. 1890 portrait of "Ivan," with his Remington #2, shot in C.T.



Chenoweth's Elk City, KS studio.

Similar is this ca. mid-1890s example of two women with a Remington #6 shot at the studio of a "Patterson" in Carrollton, KY. While the photo of Ivan does not include the machine's baseboard and the second one does, both images include the tops of the cases. Ivan and the anonymous subjects of the second image (who are likely sisters) are probably looking for jobs, Ivan alone and the probable sisters together (perhaps one as a typist and

the politics and history of the Numipu in Lapwai and Spalding, Idaho, in the field in the summer of 1963 and through literature review for the next two years. The suggestions made about the reason for the making of the portrait are based in part on that research and the specific long-term research by Theodore Stern of the culture history of the Numipu people living on the reservation based at Umatilla, Oregon. Research in the archives of the Bureau of Indian Affairs is necessary to fully support this explanation.

11. At the bottom of the picture on the front of the 1914 postcard is printed "Nez Perce Girl Typing."





the other as a clerk). The symbolic value of the typewriters is not enhanced by the metal tops, and thus these are not likely to be props. Instead, the tops probably were parts of typewriters belonging to the subjects who used the machines in their work.

Other images seem to have been primarily commissioned to give to relatives, friends, or both. They might include some evidence of this purpose written on them. For example, in November, 1891, this portrait was given to a child of the subject and signed on the back "Momma." The typewriter is a Caligraph #2



with ringed keys and a frame that indicate that the machine dates from around 1885. That the typewriter is on its baseboard and appears to be in real use probably indicates that the machine may be the subject's own. The image was made at the studio of the Dwight Art Co. in Dwight, IL, a small town southwest of Chicago.



In contrast, the subject of another image, one that includes a Sun #2, wrote an acquaintance on the back of the un-postmarked rppc (real photographic post card) on which it is printed that the subject "Was in Grand Rapids [MI] yesterday, went up against a picture machine and this is the result." In this case, the picture was given to a friend, and the typewriter was almost surely a prop. Similarly, the subject of this ca. 1910 un-postmarked rppc



never mentioned the New Yost or Yost #4 at his elbow in his portrait when he wrote to his friend, saying "Harry, Am so cold I can't write." The un-noted Yost in combination with the subject's lack of involvement with it and expensive clothes probably mean that the machine also was a prop.<sup>13</sup>

13. The location and the photographer are unknown. Note that this image includes a telegraph key and what is probably a repeater to the left of the typewriter. These also are probably props, and their inclusion may have been for the purpose of identifying the male subject with a male "progressive" activity, that of a telegrapher with his "mill." Virtually all in that occupation were at this time men.

Lastly, a dapper Francisco "Rubio" Mendoza was remembered in the writing of a relative or friend across the back of this unmailed studio image rppc of himself in January, 1934. The Corona Special portable typewriter in its deluxe brown leather covered case may have been his own. Such a device would fit well with his fine clothes and the income and travel implied by the fancy portable that may have been part of his world at the height of the Depression.<sup>14</sup>



Studio portraits that include typewriters beguile us with the charm of both the subjects and the machines with them. The images are a form of text that we are challenged to read, however imperfectly and speculatively, to learn the culture history of the typewriter world they encode and to enjoy them even more. The next time you are hunting, take some time to go through that box of photographs of unknown children, aunts, fathers, and uncles—and Watch the Qwerty! ■

14. Rppc's became far more common as a way to print studio portrait photographs that include typewriters or other objects beginning in 1907 in the United States (1904 in Europe), when the use of messages on the back was allowed. Rppc's had always been made with thicker photographic paper that eliminated the need for the "card" backing of cabinet cards. Thus the price of prints for the subjects must have been much lower. Ironically, many of them were not mailed as postcards. Instead, they were often transferred to their recipients directly or as enclosures in envelopes. It is possible that many of the subjects were not ready to send messages that postmen and other members of the public could read.

# Portables, ETCetera by Robert Messenger

Effective with this issue, the column titled “Portables, ETCetera” makes its return to the pages of this magazine. I originally wrote this column, which appeared regularly in *ETCetera* from March, 2002 until March, 2009. When I first started, the editors at that time (Rich Cincotta and Chuck Dilts) had the grand foresight to understand that portable typewriters, and probably eventually most 20th century standards, would have some interest in the collecting field—and had faith in me to launch such a venture in this magazine. The column transitioned over to Richard Polt’s takeover of the magazine, but ended when I decided it was time to direct my energy in other new ways. The re-launch of “Portables, ETCetera” this time finds the entirely able Robert Messenger at the helm. Robert, whom I got to know fairly well via e-mails about as soon as he burst upon the world’s typewriter collecting scene, is one of today’s most well known typewriter collectors and authors. His book on portable typewriters, *The Magnificent 5, and 250 Other Great Things About Portable Typewriters*, definitely set a new direction in the field of collecting and researching portables (as well as typewriter collector print media) with its modernistic layout and photography, coupled of course with first rate research material, background and writing skills. I am happy to have heard that Richard Polt and Robert Messenger are re-launching this column; they have my blessing and my encouragement. I look forward to many new and exciting things in terms of both content and style from Mr. Messenger in this new endeavor—there is no more fitting, capable or qualified author on the subject.

*Will Davis, July 30, 2012*



This typewriter collector was startled in late April last year to be awoken at 6:30 am and asked by a radio station to comment on a story which, to use the modern parlance, had “gone feral” on the Internet: that the world’s last manual typewriter had been made.

It turned out the Godrej and Boyce factory in Mumbai, India, had actually stopped making typewriters in 2009, two years previously, and had leftover stock of about 500 typewriters, most with Arabic keyboards, which it needed to shift. Hence what we in Australia call a “furphy” about these being the “world’s last typewriters.” The ruse worked, certainly in terms of the international interest it generated.

For typewriter lovers, the most fascinating aspect of all this unfounded fuss was the sudden worldwide attention to typewriters. Obsolete technology was “hot news” — if false news.

So widespread was the “last typewriter” rumor, it would have been difficult for anyone with even a tenuous connection to typewriters to have missed it. Among those who did take note, apparently, were the people at Royal Consumer Information Productions in Somerset, New Jersey.

In January this year, Royal put a

“new” manual portable on the market, the Scrittore (it’s Italian for writer). I place the word “new” in inverted commas because the Scrittore is, in design, merely a slightly upgraded modification of Chinese-made typewriters with which we have long been familiar: these include the Rover family (the Scrittore is almost identical to the Rover 5000), the Generation, Olympias (including the Traveller C) and, perhaps most notably, the Scrittore’s immediate predecessor, the Olivetti MS Premier 25 Plus. The mechanics, and in some cases the ABS housing as well, are based on designs which originated with the Japanese company Brother.

The packaging and manual which come with the Scrittore, and the companies which market it (I got mine from Amazon) give next to no clues as to its country of manufacture. Requests to the distributors for more information

are met with the equivalent of shrugged shoulders. “No idea,” one replied. I assume that at least one potential buyer’s query would have been answered: “When this says manual, it doesn’t have to be plugged in, right?”

What I can confirm is that these typewriters are made by the peculiarly-spelled Shanghai Weilv Mechanism Company (established 2004) in the Luxiang Industrial Zone, southwest of Shanghai City.



*The factory*



If Royal was indeed motivated to “cash in” on the renewed interest in typewriters sparked by the Godrej and Boyce saga, it was a smart move. Some of the promotion for the Scrittore states that it “replaces the Royal ME25, RoyType MS25 and the Olivetti MS25.” And the Scrittore is definitely an improvement on these, with a few seemingly insignificant design changes making for, overall, a better operating machine. I not only tested it myself, but got several other people to try it out as well, and all of us found it a most satisfactory typer.

The Scrittore effectively uses a small metal strip to rebound the typebars from the ribbon vibrator, where previous versions of this model had a wire or plastic bar.



*The old way*



*The new way*

As well, a notorious problem with the ribbon vibrator itself seems to have been overcome by encasing the mechanism under the right ribbon spool in a solid metal hood, strengthening it and adding to its reliability. It's reassuring to think the manufacturers recognized faults, took in feedback, and made adjustments to the design.



I was alerted to the existence of the Scrittore by a letter on the back page of the last issue of *ETCetera* (No. 98, June

2012), from Joshua Hirsch, of Newton Highlands, Massachusetts. Despite my grave misgivings about spending \$A109.95 to get just another MS25 in a black mask (not to mention the cost of shipping), the moment I read Joshua's letter, I couldn't resist going straight online and ordering a Scrittore myself. Unlike Joshua, in the past 47 years I have often had “the experience of buying a new typewriter.” This was the fourth new Chinese-made typewriter I had bought in the past five years, the others being the MS25, an Olympia Traveller C, and a Rover. Yet, like Joshua, I still do “like that ‘new typewriter smell.’” And I also take delight in being able to show at presentations “a typewriter made this year.” Joshua made the point that, for the benefit of future collectors, he had taken care to keep the manual, box and invoice.

I can't, however, claim to have been won over to the Scrittore by the advertising lines: “[It] offers essential functions that are easy for even the most grizzled sportswriter to operate.” (I may be a sportswriter, but hardly grizzled.) “Not a reconditioned model, it is one of the few manuals still being manufactured today, with a compact profile reminiscent of Olivetti's iconic Lettera 22 typewriter that was favoured by journalists and students in the 1950s.” “This is the classic manual typewriter reminiscent of those used by Ernest Hemingway, Tennessee Williams and Jack Kerouac to create their classic literary works ... it recalls the thoughtful, well-written correspondence of yesteryear. Devoid of technological crutches such as spell-check and deletion, each of its 44 keys requires a firm, purposeful stroke for a steady click-clacking cadence that encourages the patient, considered sentiment of a wordsmith who thinks before writing. Using a 10-characters-per-inch Pica 87 font, it faithfully reproduces the

eclectic printed impressions of its forebears — variable kerning, subtly ghosted letters and nuanced baseline shifts — imparting unique, personal character to every letter, piece of prose, or verse of poetry.”



The Scrittore's distributor, through Elite in Hong Kong, is a division of New Jersey-headquartered Acedepot called Pop Pop. This company, which handles a range of manual portable typewriters, intriguingly shares the same Charlotte, North Carolina, address as Nakajima-North American Distribution (both are part of the Carolina Wholesale Group, Arlington Industries). Nakajima, which maintains links with China, claims that for more than “35 years [it] has been the ‘behind the scenes’ designer and manufacturer of many of the industry's best known typewriter brands throughout the world.” So while the mechanics of the Scrittore may come from Brother, it would seem the hand of Nakajima is also involved. But to what extent, I cannot say. ■

*Coming in our 100th issue: the tale of the Century!*



# From Our Members



*Elisa, shown here with her Everest 90, is one of the world's youngest typewriter collectors at eight years old. Photo by Silvano Donadoni.*



*What is the keyboard arrangement on Jett Morton's new Smith Premier? Check your answer in "New on the Shelf."*



*An Olivetti Lexikon 80 with practice keyboard, photographed by Silvano Donadoni.*



Almost any time is great to be in Paris, but a late April/early May vacation was particularly rewarding this year. In addition to visiting with friends, my wife and I made three trips to an old friend: the Antiquités Brocante Bastille (the Bastille Antiques and Secondhand Goods show). These two unused postcards were among the things we brought back.

The Smith Premier postcard would have been given out by the thousands at the Paris International Exposition of 1900. The Smith Premier No. 4, still clinging to the past as a double keyboard understrike "blind writer," nonetheless took home a gold medal. In addition to showing a typewriter I now own, I am very taken by the overall design of the card, the color, and quality printing.

The same show yielded two postcards showing typing or stenography schools. The one shown here was photographed at the Institution Millet-Ducloux, at Nevers in the Burgundy region. It appears to have been a fairly large girls' school. In addition to showing equipment, including a Yost Model 10 with double keyboard and a stenographic machine with continuous paper roll, the fashions are noteworthy, including elaborate hairdos, smocks, and the dress on the wasp-waisted teacher.

The same trip also coincided with the Paris International Antiquarian Book Fair, one of the finest in the world. However, space is limited here. To find out what else I found, as well as the relationship between Remington typewriters, the composer Offenbach, and a former mayor of sixteenth-century London, visit the Parisian Fields blog at <http://parisianfields.wordpress.com/2012/06/24/finding-typewriter-history-in-paris/>

—Norman R. Ball

*A historian of technology, Norman Ball is currently collaborating with Martin Howard on a book about nineteenth-century typewriters.*





Herman Price's new "bullseye" Sholes & Glidden. Lovely!

## Red Hot Writers



Colorful Everests and an Olivetti from Silvano Donadoni's collection, plus a Hispano-Olivetti from Richard Polt's collection. (Confession: the psychedelic Everest is my Photoshop creation. —RP)



## HISTORISCHE Bürowelt

No. 88, July 2012

- *Olympia Simplex A vs. Olympia Simplex B*, by Jörg Thien: the earlier and later versions differ in their decals, their ribbon mechanism, the material of the keys, and more.

*Also in this issue:*

- *44 Years as an Office Mechanic in the Hamburg Area*, by Franz Schneider
- *The Adrema Addressing Machine*, by Martin Reese
- *Rema Calculators*, by Jasmin Ramm-Ernst and Martin Reese
- *A Flaw in the 1929 Mauser Calculator*, by Peter Haertel
- *The Rena Addressing Machine*, by Klaus Brandt

More information at [ifhb.de](http://ifhb.de)

## HBw-Aktuell

May-June 2012

- Collectors' mtg. at Mitterhofer Museum, Partschins
- IFHB general assembly & new board of directors (including our translator, Norbert Schwarz!)

July 2012

- May 26 Breker auction
- Meeting in Essen
- Kay Kostka's typewriter exhibit in Meyenburg



Vol. 24 no. 3, August 2012

- Mark Twain's typewriters, by Jack Knarr
- Royal FP color ads
- John Lewis' museum in Albuquerque
- Platen recovering in the old days
- Me and my Blickensderfer 3, a poem by Jett Morton

# Letters

I'm very much enjoying the latest issue of *ETCetera*. As always Peter Weil's "ephemera" column is as entertaining as it is encyclopedic. It continues to be my favorite ongoing feature.

Also particularly noteworthy was Flavio Mantelli's treatment of miniature type-bar machines. I'm constantly amazed at how, in the pages of *ETCetera*, I find articles on - and photographs of - machines I never knew existed. Those of us who collect more modern machines, and especially portables, and who use them regularly, are acutely aware of the trade-off between size and 'touch'. I can't help wondering what type of Herculean effort would have been required to use one of those lilliputian machines!

Finally, I'm looking forward with great anticipation to Martin Rice's response to Mantelli's assertion that the Baby is "...the only known portable typewriter with U-shaped typebars." This, especially after Mr. Rice's Oliver flag-waving and horn-tooting in the "Letters" section of the same issue!

Thank you for your outstanding work in *ETCetera*. I continue to look forward to each issue.

Sincerely,



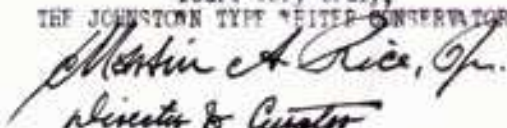
Devin S. Thompson  
Milford Center, OH

It is, of course, with pleasure that we receive the latest *ETCetera* and note again the references to the Oliver Type Writer, proving once again that the Oliver is **NOT STANDARD VISIBLY WRITING**.

We would also like to take this opportunity to note Flavio Mantelli's deft correction of his comment to the effect that, " (Fontana Baby) ... is the only known portable typewriter with U-shaped typebars" by mentioning that it is the only non-Oliver with such. We would also add that the Oliver is likewise a portable with such type bars (although we admit the Oliver is slightly more unwieldy than the Fontana).

We also note the informative article by Peter Weil indicating that in the area of blotter paper ephemera the Oliver was not to be outdone by its competition and was clearly up-to-date in all advertising techniques.

Finally, we also thank you for printing our correspondence in full graphic detail, indicating clearly the typographical excellence of correspondence produced with an Oliver.

Yours very truly,  
THE JOHNSTON TYPE WRITER CONSERVATORY  
  
Director & Curator

*The editor takes this opportunity to remind the possibly baffled reader that Olivers have a handle on each side.*

## New on the Shelf

Maddie Allen: McCool #1821, Commercial Visible 6 #23198, Noiseless Portable #6116, Sun 2 #22726, Wagner Underwood 4 #18366-4 (saved from key-choppers!), Remington Jr. (1914 luggage) #JA60853, Juwel portable #W102619

Richard Amery: Alpina

Lars Borrmann: Postal 3

Don Feldman: Junior (Bennett type), Pittsburg 10, Williams 6

Nick Fisher: Baby Rem, Blick Featherweight, British Empire #F9161, Carmen, Rem-Blick, U.S. Mirsa Ideal

Thomas Fürtig: Masspro 1 #1009 (lowest known), North's, Rem-Sho 5 copper

Adam Golder: black Bennett, Oliver 3

Juan Ramón Gracia: Bartholomew stenograph, Polygraphe (straight Polygraph, French kbd.), Triumph Visible

Flavio Mantelli: Cantelo, Gerda, Morris, Phönix, Thürey with case

Robert Messenger: Adler 32, Adler Tippa Pilot, Astoria, Atlas, Bijou (Palestinian banking), Hermes Baby (black, 1940), Olivetti Praxis 48, Olympia 4 (green), Royal Scrittore, Smith-Corona Poweriter, Torpedo 30, 1951 Torpedo

Jett Morton: Olivers 4, 10, 11 (17.25" carr.), 12, 16; Rem. port. 1; Smith Premier 10 with Caligraph keyboard (photo p. 14)

Frank Notten: Klein-Adler, Kanzler 1b #2514

Stellios Peios: Columbia index 2, red Junior (Spain)

Ettore Poccetti: Crandall New Model #4777

Richard Polt: Chicago #73715, Diamant 28, Eichner (Torpedo 18 w/ dec. tab), Groma Combina, yellow Hispano-Olivetti Studio 46, Belgian Olivetti MP1, Thai Olympia Traveller, Sholes Visible #4004, Tachotype stenotype, Triumph Norm 6

Herman Price: British Oliver 16 #R1001, Moya 1, Sun 3 #1181, Postal #1330, Remington 2 #5464, Remington Electric, Hammond Electric, Oliver 12, "Bullseye" Sholes and Glidden #3637, Portia (Sabb), Hammond stand

Alan Seaver: Dutch Yost 4

Steve Stephens: Blick 7, Fox 4, Underwood 3, Remington 2, Royal 5 & 10 & KHM, Rem-Blick, Yost 10

Claudia Tan: gold Royal Quiet De Luxe, Remington Bantam, red Royal portable with Vogue typeface

Cor van Asch: Bing 1

Reinmar Wochinz: Bing 2, Crandall Visible 4, Diamant, Ludolf, Omega, round Polygraph

## Marketplace

**For sale:** Malling-Hansen Writing Ball #137, complete in case. Juan Ramón Gracia, graciajuanramon@yahoo.es.

**For sale:** 1926 Russian Rem. Portable. Alex Kochergin, Santa Rosa, CA, dedapaki@aol.com.

**For sale:** '20s Underwood 4-bank portable with brown woodgrain finish. Phil Ferrell, ferrell.phil@comcast.net.

**Wanted:** information and parts for Robotyper model IER19517E (right), incl. 2-3 plastic holders with membranes. Bernd Moss, Mühlenstr. 23, 59425 Unna, Germany, phone +49 2303 45692.





This back issue of

# ETCetera

is brought to you by  
The Early Typewriter Collectors' Association



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.

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