

From the Collection

The 1874 Sholes and Glidden Typewriter

Reading about early typewriter manufacturers can seem a little like trying to trace the various combinations in a complicated square or line dance; bowing and changing partners is almost too frequent. Sholes, Glidden, Scule, Densmore, Yost, Rose, Wyckoff, and Smith; these were some of the names associated with what were called, at least sometimes, Remington typewriters.

This very expensive and decorative item probably dates from about 1874 and is like the one purchased by Mark Twain, the first author to appreciate its usefulness. It sold for \$125. Read more here.

Remington was making it at their Ilion, NY, factory. Sholes' and Glidden's names were on it, and by then, the company was owned by Densmore and Yost. Confused yet? It gets more tangled. Christopher Latham Sholes is responsible for the "qwerty" keyboard arrangement. Sholes and Glidden patented a primitive typewriter in 1868. They created some 30 improved models within four years. Remington Arms Company manufactured from their designs starting in 1870.

William Ozman Wyckoff of Ithaca was born in Lansing, a Civil War veteran and self-educated lawyer employed as stenographer of the 6th District Court. He recognized the possibilities of typewriters and began promoting their use. He started, with the able assistance of Mary Adsitt, a school for stenographers, The Wyckoff Phonographic Institute, which was later merged into Ithaca College.

In 1882 Wyckoff, Seamans, and Benedict formed a company that was the marketing arm of Union Typewriter Company which was owned by Densmore, Yost, Remington, and Smith. By 1888 Wyckoff and partners would own the Remington Standard Typewriter Company, with son Edward G. Wyckoff as General Manager of plants in Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo.

Sources; the Phonographic World, V.!! no. 8, April 1892, The Smith-Corona Story 1960; Wyckoff file at the History Center.



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