



# - The Titan of Typewriters - the Antikey Chop

by Laurencia Ciprus / photos by A. Vincent Scarano



Poet-for-hire GennaRose Nethercott dashed off a few stanzas about a fella and me. She busks for work on Brattleboro's Main Street...a red lipstick smile and a 1952 Hermes Rocket typewriter. With a few details and a ten-dollar bill she click-clack pounded out pretty words on the little manual. We wait 15 minutes for the goods - dancing on the sidewalk to Pink Floyd streaming from a curbed car radio. GennaRose presents the poem on soft ragged-edged paper in a cellophane sleeve. Each feathered letter pushed into the page forms imperfect inky words you can close your eyes and run your fingers over. A laptop can't touch this level of romance...only a typewriter.

GennaRose isn't the only scribe typing out award-winning work. Dozens of authors, poets and screenwriters agree. Actor, writer, and collector Tom Hanks, and screenwriter Quentin Tarantino; Danielle Steele's 100 novels created on a 1946 machine plus brilliant work from late Gonzo journalist Hunter Thompson; play-



wright Sam Shepard and songwriter John Mayer - all fiercely loyal to the typewriter. Poet Laureate Maya Angelou's electric Adler lives in the American Writer's Museum in Chicago. Richard Poul - the editor of online ETCetera, the magazine for the Early Typewriter Collectors' Association - talks about the trend in his book *The Typewriter Revolution: A Typist's Companion for the*

*21st Century*. Poul is also known for *The Typewriter Manifesto* - a wry and satirical ode to the tactile and anti-tech.

Inside this tightly knit world of typewriter culture, there are originals like Connecticut's Greg Fudacz.

Infectiously passionate, the keyboard crusader, collector and brilliant historian has dedicated the past fifteen years preserving the romance and magic of this



icon of American industry. From his first humble tag sale find - a Royal portable bargained down from \$10 to \$5 - Fudacz evolved from a hobbyist into a respected professional and authority. Just back from Dublin, Ireland he is over-the-moon having secured a gorgeous and highly sought-after Waverly typewriter to add to his private collection of about 75 rare machines. Advertised as "An English made typewriter for Englishmen," the circa 1889 Waverly with high sweeping curves and an ingenious chrome paper roll - an innovation, that makes words visible on the face of the page - is a bril-



**Facing Page:** The Gorham Corona, ca.1931. Promotional typewriter with a Gorham Sterling Silver housing. **Top right:** Hammond No.1, ca.1884. Made in New York City. **Above:** Collector Greg Fudacz in his studio demonstrating his Chicago No.3.



Above left top shelf, left to right: Crown Index Typewriter, ca.1888. Made in New York City. Burns Typewriter, ca.1890. Made in Buffalo, NY. Top left, bottom shelf: Keystone Nos.1 & 2, ca.1898. Made in Harrisburg, PA. Above right: The Noiseless Standard No.1, ca.1909. Made in Middletown, CT

liant example of the Art Nouveau period in industrial design.

At the turn of the 20th Century, Hartford was both the Insurance Capital and the epicenter of typewriter manufacturing – employing a huge industrial workforce at both the Royal and Underwood factories. Initially, the key players Royal and Remington were the contenders and Underwood strictly a ribbon supplier. Remington began to make their own ribbons; pulling the lucrative contract from Underwood and the tables turned. Buying the Remington patents, Underwood started to make their own typewriters and the

company – along with Royal, became the Fords of the robust typewriter industry. The New England riverfront city was a manufacturing hub, with a wealth of talent and expertise and pros turning out industrial, munitions and military products. Companies such as Colt Firearms and Pope Manufacturing of Columbia Bicycles. Demand was high, and typewriters became mass-marketed to feed this new technology – mainly to corporate consumers and only the wealthiest of private citizens.

Hartford icon Samuel Clemens – aka Mark Twain – was the most prominent author of his time to try out this new equipment. He

had a love-hate relationship with his 1874 Sholes and Glidden Type-Writer – acknowledged as the first official widely manufactured machine. Twain's typewriter was the equivalent of \$2,500 in 2019 numbers – a huge status symbol for a private citizen. (Old postcards from the era show people crowding around the typewriter in their parlors the way a state-of-the-art home theatre would claim bragging rights today.) Money be damned – Twain wasn't happy wrestling this new beast cramping his literary style. In Twainian style, he reportedly dashed off a letter to Remington stating that "he was abandoning the machine" and "it made him want to swear."



Above left: Diskret Cipher Machine/Typewriter, ca.1898. Made in Berlin, Germany. Above right: Pocket Index Typewriter, ca.1887. Made in Bradford, England.



Fudacz loves the history of the choice and rare pieces in his ogle-worthy collection. Twenty-one of his prized machines were chosen for their own exhibition at the New Britain Museum of American

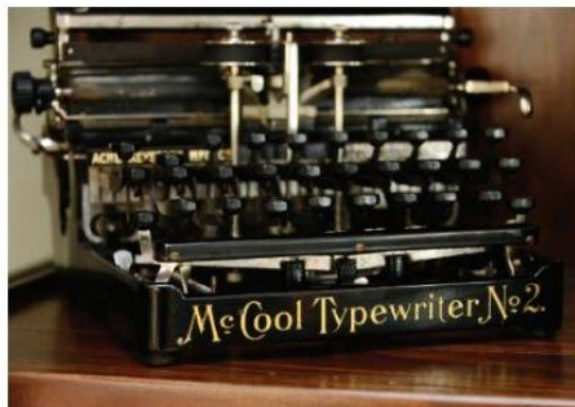
at a time. Small typing machines which were able to create encrypted messages during World War 1 cycled through the roster. The Lambert is one of Fudacz's favorites, a 101-piece compact machine in a domed wooden case. It holds the surprise of a full keyboard and featured the RCA Spokesdog Nipper in early advertising. This Steampunk stunner Franklin is elegant with an open half arc keyboard and tall enameled shield. It's an early design by innovator and inventor Wellington Parker Kidder whose advanced technology later brought the Noiseless Typewriter to market.

glammed-up version of this well-known and humble machine. It was a presentation piece by the Edsel Division of the Ford Motor Company; honoring San Francisco Chronicle Journalist Leon J. Pinkston at the National Press Meeting. Edsel's specifications were precise: each metal component of the typewriter was to be gold plated - screws, levers, and every surface. It was tricky business down to the millimeter, for the machine was required to function correctly. It did, and the gilded machine is a stunner. No detail was missed - from Pinkston's



Art. The exhibit elevated them beyond function and focused on their beauty and design. Many of these gorgeous one-of-a-kind contraptions were simply prototypes and never made it past go commercially. There are early indexing machines that slowly punch out words from a turning disk one tantalizing letter

The collection also boasts some improbably extravagant stunners that are sure attention grabbers. The gold plated - yup - 1957 Remington Quiet-Riter is the





Sholes & Glidden, ca. 1873. Made in Ilion, NY. First commercially successful typewriter.



Chicago No.3, ca. 1903. Made in Chicago, IL.



Gold Plated Remington Quiet-Riter, ca. 1937. Made in Ilion, NY.



Minerva Braille Teaching Typewriter, ca. 1928, Made in Leipzig, Germany.



Merritt Index Typewriter, ca. 1889. Made in Springfield, MA.



The Waverley Typewriter, ca. 1889. Made in London, England.

nameplate on the front and the Edsel brand mark emblazoned on the paper table; even the hinges and hardware on the case. Two others of these golden goose machines are in circulation, presented to two other writers at the time. There is one more which steals the limelight and belonged to James Bond Writer, Sir Ian Lancaster Fleming. This machine fetched \$48,000 due to its provenance.

The antipole of this machine is a pure sterling silver flat-topped Smith Corona popular during the Great Depression. Gorham Silver was commissioned by Smith Corona to create 184 of these luxe typewriters and promotional pieces. They were all to bear the Gorham hallmarks of a rampart, an anchor, and an Old English "G." Despite the dark times, the luxury market survived, and over 1,000 of the machines sold at \$125 each, along with a "Sea Robin" grained leather case. (This trans-

lates into \$1,800 in 2019 dollars; amazing to grasp considering the times.) Many of these machines disappeared from circulation - likely for scrap during WW II. Author and journalist Gwen Barstow



received lots of press after a 1935 photo of her writing at her own Gorham Corona circulated, a costly and romantic gift presented to her by her writer husband, Bruce Manning.

Greg Fudacz continues to collect, with a

warehouse of models patiently waiting refurbishing and ultimate re-entry into grateful hands of faithful keyboarders. There's also a passel of young converts - like GennaRose - buying into the romantic non-technology. A subculture has emerged. Austin based Typewriter Rodeo wrangles a team of national popup writers-on-demand and broadcasts the work over the airwaves. Typewriters are everywhere: at flea markets, and swap meets; college campuses and indie bookstores. (Even Urban Outfitters was selling vintage Olivetti portables for a stretch!) Fifteen years ago, when Greg Fudacz bonded with that little tag sale portable, he already knew a retro revolution was brewing and makes it an adventure! In uncertain times often, the certainty of the past can make the future brighter.

To start your own collection, contact Greg Fudacz at [Antique.Chop@gmail.com](mailto:Antique.Chop@gmail.com) or, 860.729.2252



Center: The writer with the collector's wife in the background, Linda Mare, operating an Urban Spirograph, the first movie player. Made in New York City, ca.1921 Bottom: Keystone Nos.1 & 2, ca.1898. Made in Harrisburg, PA.