

July 2024



Time Travellers Club

Dear Club Members,

It's 150 years since the type writer went on sale. Sholes and Glidden typewriter (also known as the Remington No. 1) went on the market on July 1st 1874. Principally designed by the American inventor Christopher Latham Sholes, it was developed with the assistance of fellow printer Samuel W. Soule and amateur mechanic Carlos S. Glidden.

It had many of the features we'd still associate with a "modern" typewriter, some of which have since transferred on to computers, such as a QWERTY keyboard. However it was limited, in that it could only write in upper case, and the typist had to type blind, the mechanics of keys hitting the paper were hidden inside the mechanism, meaning mistakes were only posted once a considerable amount had been typed further. However the new businesses of the late 19th century created a need for speedy legible correspondence, and so the Sholes and Glidden and its contemporaries soon became common office fixtures. The typewriter is credited with assisting the entrance of women into the clerical workplace, as many were hired to operate the new devices. Prior to this the progression of Clerk was almost exclusively male.

Remington, primarily an arms manufacturer, who were diversifying after the civil war in to producing sewing machines, had seen the potential for the new machine, and purchased the rights to manufacture 1000 of them. They turned the machine in to something more similar to their sewing machines, including a japanned case with floral ornamentation, and a stand with a treadle to operate the carriage return. By December only 400 typewriters had been sold, businesses were slow to adopt the new technology, and the \$125 price was equivalent to the average annual salary. Mark Twain however did purchase one, describing it as a "curiosity breeding joker". It's display at the Centennial Exhibition in 1876 was overshadowed by Alexander Graham Bell's telephone.

A new model was introduced in 1878, adding the ability to type in lower case, and replacing the treadle with a lever. By 1884 more companies were making their own versions, and the typewriter spread far and wide in offices, businesses and also in to homes.

The early machine was strongly linked to women due to Sholes practise of getting his daughter to demonstrate the machine, adopting the selling point of it being so easy and simple that even a woman can do it. Initially Remington trained up typists, before the establishment by the Young Woman's Christian Association of the first typing school in 1881. The demand for increased paperwork and correspondence, made possible by the speed of the typewriter created a demand for more clerical workers. Women could be paid 50% of less than men, but stenography and office work often paid much more than factories, combined with the work being less physically demanding. In 1874 only 4% of office workers in the USA were women, by 1900 it had risen to 75%.

Before his death, Sholes remarked of the typewriter, "I do feel that I have done something for the women who have always had to work so hard. This will enable them more easily to earn a living."

Your fibre is inspired by the japanned case of that beautiful early typewriter, we're going to explore more about the technique as this months extra content over in The Fellowship of Yarn.

Happy Spinning

Katie

Fibre Content- In case your parcel is missing the label

25% Shetland

38% Corriedale

37% Bamboo Rayon

Further Reading-

Lots of lovely images of the decorated typewriters here.

<https://www.antikeychop.com/sholesgliddentypewriter>

Article with a video of the typewriter in action

<https://blog.nms.ac.uk/2018/08/11/re-typing-history-the-sholes-glidden-typewriter-and-the-qwerty-keyboard/>

Video describing the history of the typewriter

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSrc0BxVF-Q>