

THE

# McLOUGHLIN BROS. TYPE WRITER

by Martin Howard  
antiquetypewriters.com



*McLoughlin Bros. factory as shown in their 1886 catalogue cover at left*

Photographs by Tony Casillo and Martin Howard

This early and primitive looking index typewriter always intrigued me, with its stacked disks rising up, its dark and gloomy appearance, and its great rarity.

With the recent addition of a McLoughlin Brothers Typewriter to my collection, I have now been able to explore the quality and elegant simplicity of this typewriter.

In comparing my McLoughlin with Tony Casillo's McLoughlin, we were surprised to notice how many differences there are between them. It had been known that there were two versions of the McLoughlin. Jos Legrand spoke about this in 1986 *Kwbl*, April, 3.4 pp 42 45 : "The two machines shown here differ in many details but a comparison would only make sense if all other known McLoughlins of the clan could be included." With the clan now numbering eight, it seems an opportune time to examine the differences between the two known versions and to present a fresh look at the McLoughlin Brothers Typewriter.

The McLoughlin Brothers have a prestigious history and are well known today by game and book collectors. They began business in 1828 as publishers in New York City, pioneering the use of color printing

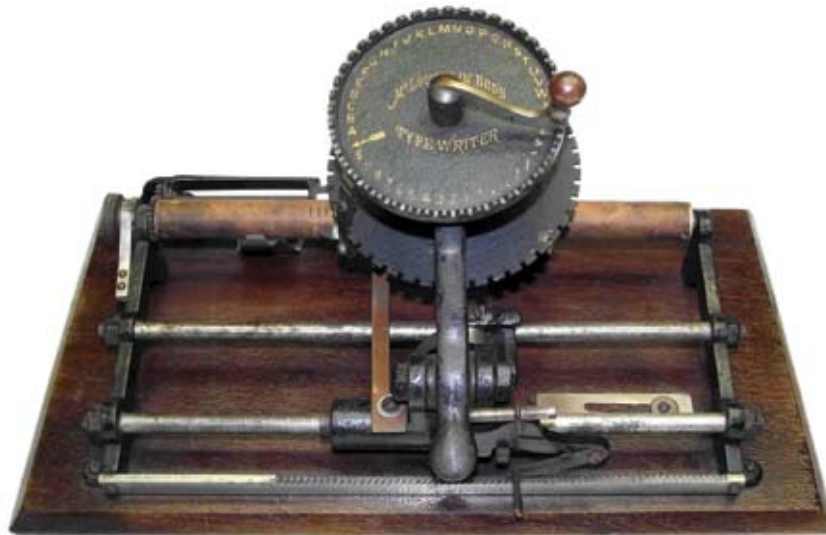
technologies in children's books. John McLoughlin, Jr. founded the company and determined its creative path. In 1855 he made his younger brother Edmund a partner. The following year the firm published a wide range of items including cheap pocket books, large folio picture books, linen books, puzzles, games, and paper dolls. In 1920, the McLoughlin Brothers ceased game production when the division was sold to Milton Bradley, but continued to publish picture books and a successful line of mechanical paper dolls called "Jolly Jump Ups" until 1951.

The McLoughlin Brothers are considered the preeminent American children's book and game makers of the late 19th century and today their board games represent many of the earliest and most valuable American collectible board games.

Luckily for us collectors, the McLoughlin Brothers also produced a typewriter. When it appeared on the market in 1884, it sold for 10. A hefty sum, but far less than the 100 cost of a keyboard typewriter. It has the distinction of being the first typewriter marketed for children. The one element that clearly fits the toy criteria is the alphabetical order of the letters on the index dial. However, it is a solidly built machine, with a one piece hardwood base and cast and machined parts, and was therefore made to the standards of the few contemporary adult index typewriters.

The McLoughlin Brothers also wanted adults to buy their typewriter. The manual in the Clark collection boasts that "Businessmen will find this Type Writer invaluable for correspondence, circulars, etc."

According to the company's general catalogue of 1886, "Although especially designed for young people, its practical perfection as a machine, its low price, simplicity and thorough reliability in the work it turns out, make it desirable alike to professional men, clergymen, business men, &c., &c., who would occasionally use a machine if they had one, but do not think it advisable to



*McLoughlin Bros. typewriter, Casillo collection*

purchase one at a high price.” The full page advertisement can be seen at my website.

There is some ambiguity over the precise name of the typewriter. Whereas on the cover of the McLoughlin manual it is “The McLoughlin Rapid Type Writer,” at the bottom of the page it is simply the “McLoughlin Type Writer.” Inside the manual it is referred to as the “Rapid Type writer” and again the “McLoughlin Type Writer.” An ad in the 1886 *Ladies’ Home Journal* Kerschbaumer coll. boldly presents “The New Rapid Type Writer.” The actual name on the dial of the typewriter, “McLoughlin Bro’s Typewriter,” should probably be taken as the official name. It seems likely that “Rapid” was used as a descriptor and then picked up and used in some advertisements.

### Using the McLoughlin

To type, the handle is rotated to select a character, including the arrow symbol, which gives a space. When the handle is then depressed the carriage assembly, which is hinged on the front horizontal bar, sinks down, bringing the type disk into contact with the paper. The escapement engages the rack on the very front rail.

The type disk *below* has electrotyped copper characters. Inking is accomplished with two felt rollers.



Here is a colorful description from the manual. “The method of printing is so simple that a child can operate it without instruction, as the movement is similar to the hand organ, as you simply turn the crank and grind out the



words by the yard if necessary” Clark coll., McLoughlin manual. “Grind out the words” is an apt description as the spring used for the printing assembly is overly strong, and requires a good push to depress. To make matters worse, the amount of push required increases significantly as the distance to the fulcrum lessens, for instance when the lever is moved around to the six o’clock position. In the hands of an adult, the McLoughlin would have been laborious and in the hands of a child, hard to imagine.

The typewriter came with type disks, which are easily changed with the loosening of one screw. “These writing machines are packed in cases, complete with Type Disks, pads, &c., and there are no additional charges to be paid” Clark coll., McLoughlin manual.

### Comparing the two McLoughlins

The major difference between the two McLoughlins is the method of aligning the type. One uses holes in the type disk, which are engaged by a pin when the disk descends during printing, making use of a coil spring. The type disk on the other one has a notched edge, which engages with a vertical blade to give correct alignment and uses a single leaf spring images 1a & 1b, 2a & 2b.

Differences can also be noted with the spring loaded paper handling arm and the fixed paper guide positioned behind the platen. It is interesting to see that both spring loaded arms are connected to the platen with gears, a

seemingly over engineered feature images 3a & 3b.

The platens of the Howard, Casillo, Clark, and Gehring McLoughlins are constructed of tightly wound paper over a metal shaft, not rubber as stated in Adler or leather as stated by the 1892 #8 *Phonographic World*: “The paper is inserted over a leather covered roller at back” Kerschbaumer coll. These other materials may have been used, but have not been seen at the writing of this article.

It is interesting to compare two different period illustrations of the McLoughlin. One shows a third disk positioned under the type disk and the index disk *p. 5, bottom left*. With an opening at the printing point, this third disk is clearly an ink guard. The other ad *p. 5, bottom right* shows what all known McLoughlins look like, a two disk version with no ink guard. In fact there is no need for an ink guard, as the central shaft that supports the disks is pitched at an angle, allowing only one side of the type disk to make contact with the paper when typing. Perhaps a McLoughlin will show up one day with this guard in place, or maybe the ink guard only appeared on the patent drawings; however, no patent drawings have been found to corroborate this. ■

*I am grateful to Bert Kerschbaumer and Jos Legrand for generously sharing their McLoughlin typewriter files, to Dennis Clark for his kind effort in providing the McLoughlin typewriter manual, and to Tony Casillo for the discussions about and the photographs of his McLoughlin Brothers typewriter.*

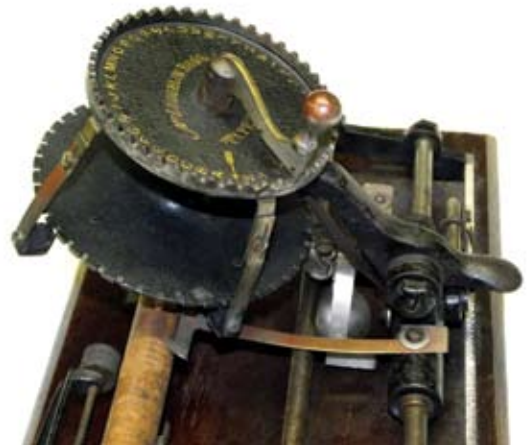
#### Known McLoughlin Brothers Typewriters no serial numbers

Casillo	USA	notched type disk
Gehring	USA	notched type disk
Rauen x2	USA	both versions
Howard	Canada	holed type disk
Barbian	Germany	holed type disk
Clark	USA	holed type disk
Royal Scottish Museum	Edinburgh	holed type disk





1a Howard



1b Casillo



2a Howard



2b Casillo

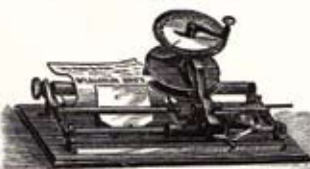


3a Howard



3b Casillo

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