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Members Spotlight Favorites from their Collections

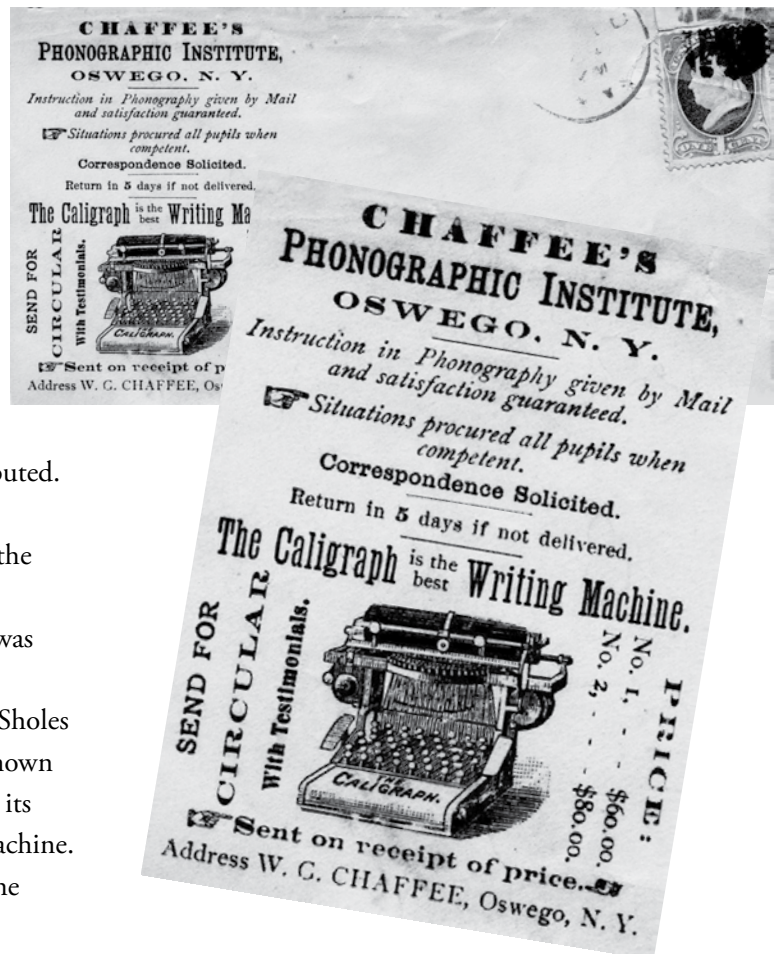
The Caligraph Writing Machine

William Sibler

For some time I have been accumulating covers with illustrations of earlier ways of communicating. This includes pens, ink, copying books, shorthand, and typewriters. The cover shown here was for W. G. Chaffee's Phonographic Institute—suggesting the firm's primary business was teaching shorthand. Almost half of the advertisement, however, is devoted to the Caligraph Writing Machine, which Chaffee distributed. I believe the illustration is of the original version, Caligraph No. 1, whose failings were corrected in the Number 1 Ideal and the Numbers 2 and 3.

According to several web pages, the Caligraph was introduced in 1880. The first typewriter, Sholes & Glidden, appeared in 1874, developed by Messrs. Sholes and Glidden and manufactured by Remington (known for firearms). Remington subsequently introduced its own typewriter based on the Sholes & Glidden machine.

Several individuals who had been involved in the Scholes & Glidden-Remington effort decided to design and market their own machine, apparently at a lower price than the Remington models. This was the American Writing Machine Company's Caligraph, introduced in 1880. The No. 1 machine had only capital letters, numbers, and punctuation. There were two space bars, one on each side of the machine (see illustration). There were a number of other problems that interfered with the Caligraph's functioning, so in 1882 two new models were put on sale. The Number 1 Ideal retained the capital-letter-only keyboard but enjoyed improved mechanics. It is thought to have been in production until 1896, although the Number 2 (which was the first machine with lower and upper case type on the same



keys) was more popular.

On none of the Caligraph machines was it possible to read what had been typed without advancing the paper or making some similar inconvenient approach. The Oliver typewriter, a very strange looking machine indeed, was the first that allowed the typist to see what had been typed.

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