

**Grab and Go**

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# Just his TYPE

Syracuse resident collects 122  
Smith Corona Typewriters

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PHOTO EDITOR

David Hawxhurst walked into a Syracuse antique shop looking for nothing in particular, and he walked out with what became a 25-year-long obsession.

"It started with one typewriter; I thought, 'This would look nice in an office someday,'" Hawxhurst said.

He never had his own office, but he had the "collection gene."

Now, tucked neatly in Hawxhurst's North Syracuse two-bay garage, 122 Smith Corona Typewriters are meticulously organized and displayed. The real estate broker, who works from home, has spent over two decades searching and compiling one of the world's most complete collections of the once Syracuse-based company's machines.

He views the collection as a bridge to the past, a way to physically see the progress of the city and nation. In the 1900s, Syracuse became an epicenter for the writing mechanism, and at one point, produced 75 percent of all the world's typewriters, earning Syracuse the nickname, "Typewriter City."

The typewriters sit on five-tiered metal grate shelving units that line the garage's interior. Hawxhurst, 59, was drawn to the ornate metal ornamentation on the Smith Premier One, produced in the 1880s. He fell in love with the hand-stenciled "Made in Syracuse" labels and wanted to collect every color of the Smith Corona Portables produced in the 1950s.

"It just kept getting bigger and bigger, and I started putting them on these racks and started seeing the gaps," Hawxhurst said.

Filling the gaps became an insatiable quest. It started with one and the treasure hunt



1. DAVID HAWXHURST has been collecting Smith Corona Typewriters for 25 years, and now has 122 typewriters sitting in organized shelving units in his garage.

2. In addition to the comprehensive collection of typewriters, Hawxhurst also displays advertisements, cleaning supplies and accessories released by Smith Corona Typewriters.

3. The company that produced the typewriters was founded in Syracuse and once made 75 percent of the world's typewriter supply.



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## TYPEWRITER

began “snowballing into a collection frenzy.”

In the middle of the space, two long tables covered with a white patterned table cloth hold ribbon tins, binders filled with old advertisements and cleaning accessories. Large display ads from the ‘40s and ‘50s peer down from the top shelf proclaiming:

“NO FINER GIFT than a Smith Corona.”

“BEST HELP TO BETTER MARKS.”

With more than 600 pieces of Smith-Corona memorabilia, Hawxhurst estimates having spent “tens of thousands of dollars” on the collection. He’s bought museum quality, functioning pieces at antique shows, yard sales, auctions and online from 44 states, four Canadian provinces and three foreign countries, he said. His collection is rare in that it boasts only one company’s product.

But Hawxhurst is now journeying on another quest: to find a better home than a garage for his collection.

“It’s just sitting out here in the dark, collecting dust pretty much,” said Hawxhurst as

he looked at his collection. “I just felt it was time to see what I could do with it, explore other possibilities to get it out there so the public could view it.”

Based on collectors’ estimates and online research, Hawxhurst said he could sell the pieces for an estimated \$100,000, but wants the Salt City products to stay in Syracuse, where they were designed, manufactured and sold.

# 1,000

The number of people hired to manufacture typewriters in Syracuse at the beginning of the 20th century

In 1886, a Syracuse inventor approached local gun manufacturer Lyman Cornelius Smith with a typewriter design. Foreseeing the future of typewriters and their potential to revolutionize the world, Smith decided to fund the project. Along with his three broth-

ers, he opened the first Smith Premier factory at the corner of Clinton and Onondaga streets in Syracuse.

Over the years, the company changed names due to consolidation and union trusts, but the company’s factories remained in Syracuse until 1960. Like so many Syracuse manufacturing companies, such as Syracuse China and Carrier, the typewriter factories left the city to rebuild on its own.

“My primary goal is to have it displayed here; it’s a sense of community pride,” Hawxhurst said. “It helped build this city, it provided a lot of jobs, so it was a great income for a lot of people.”

The Onondaga Historical Association is one possible destination for the display. Tom Hunter, curator of OHA’s Museum Collection, said the association has discussed acquiring the collection and that he thinks the collection highlights Syracuse’s deep-rooted history with the machine.

“There were a few manufacturers in Onondaga County — L.C. Smith & Brothers, Remington and Krandel were here as well,” Hunter said. “In terms of employment, it was a big industry in Syracuse and employed over 1,000 people in the beginning of the 20th century.”

Hawxhurst has reached out to other local institutions such as Armory Square’s Museum of Science and Technology and the Center of Excellence, located where one of the Smith Corona factories used to be.

He has even written letters to Syracuse University Chancellor Kent Syverud trying to pique his interest in obtaining the collection for the university. In the letter, he cited the strong connection between L.C. Smith, who helped found the engineering school, and SU.

Hawxhurst has received offers from collectors and museums outside the city, but wants to do everything in his power to keep the collection in Syracuse. He admitted that it won’t be easy to see his “labor of love” leave his backyard.

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