

Mission: Raven Hill provides a place that enhances hands-on and lifelong learning for all ages by connecting science, history & the arts.

Photo Journal: Oliver typewriter c. 1906

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One of the unique artifacts in Raven Hill's ET or Evolving Technology Building is the Oliver typewriter from 1906, which was one of the first typewriters that allowed the typist to see what they were typing. The keys are in two arches to the right and left and above the roller. According to Wikipedia, Thomas Oliver was a Methodist minister. Oliver began to develop his first typewriter, made from strips of tin cans, as a means of producing more legible sermons. He was awarded his first typewriter patent, US Patent No. 450,107, on April 7, 1891. After four years of development, a "crude working model" composed of 500 parts had been produced. Oliver resigned his ministry and moved to Epworth, Iowa, where he found investors willing to provide \$15,000 (\$461,000 in 2020) of capital, and leased a building in which to manufacture his machines. The general design of Oliver typewriters remained mostly unchanged throughout the company's history. The Olivers are "down strike" typewriters, meaning the type bars strike the platen (also known as the roller) from above, rather than from below ("up strike") or from the front ("front strike"). Unlike the "up strike" method, which prints text out of sight on the underside of the platen, the "down strike" is a "visible print" design, meaning the full page is visible to the typist as the text is being entered. The relatively greater striking power of the "down strike" design led Olivers to be preferred for specialty uses such as stencil cutting or "manifolding" (copying using carbon paper).