

Corona

Continued from Page 1A

Some could say he found his muse on the keys of a gift given to him on his 22nd birthday, July 21, 1921 by then fiancée, Hadley Richardson — a Corona 3 typewriter, made in Groton, New York.

That typewriter became Hemingway's tool of choice while serving as a war correspondent for the Toronto Star in France, where in 20 months, 88 stories with Hemingway's byline were filed from the ribbon of the small, compact machine.

In the early-20th century, Corona typewriters, the Number 3 in particular, dominated the press tents of killing fields around the world. They were inexpensive, lightweight and portable, the first typewriter to fold into itself and fit into an easy-to-carry case.

The device became so commonplace, the company legacy even extended to pop culture. Heavy-weight champion Jack Dempsey's famous fall through the ropes in front of 80,000 at the Polo Grounds in 1923 ending on top of a card table and a sportswriter's Corona 3. (The punchline became: "Firpo could take out Dempsey, but he couldn't take out the Corona.")

Though a good chunk of their products were manufactured in the company's plants in Cortland and Syracuse, among other locations, that little Number 3 spurred the creation of one of the most enduring brands in literature; writers including Kurt Vonnegut, Gore Vidal, Truman Capote and journalist Walter Cronkite all used Smith-Corona electrics.

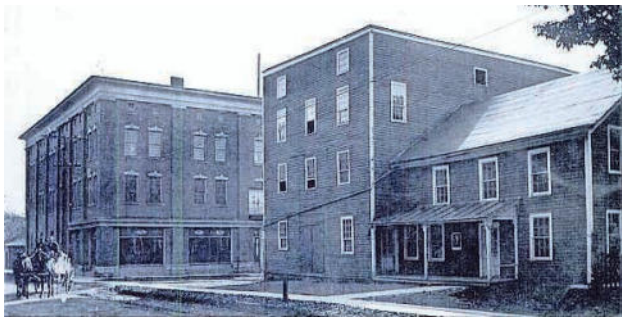
For years, the tiny Tompkins County town of Groton was the starting point of some of the greatest books and stories ever written.

Then, 30-some years ago, it all went away.

Groton, a senator and a typewriter

The seeds of Groton's success were planted in a New York City loft occupied by Frank Rose, who developed the earliest version of the Corona 3 with his invention of the Standard Folding Typewriter. It was a good design, but a design he wouldn't see the success of; Rose died May 23, 1905, just three weeks shy of his 49th birthday, leaving control of the company to his son, George.

Though the product was sound, the company was not and with a weak marketing strategy, the future of the typewriter was doomed to sink on Rose's watch. Then, in 1909, Rose was introduced to Groton Sen. Benn Conger, who had become enamored with the Standard Folding Typewriter on a



LANDMARKS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY, NEW YORK BY W.T. HEWITT
Standard Typewriters first production facility, right, alongside the Groton Carriage Works building on the left, circa 1894. Corona moved into the vacated Carriage Works building in 1909 and moved into a new facility in 1916.



NICK REYNOLDS / STAFF PHOTO
Corona typewriters, progressing from an early model to late model electrics, sit on a shelf at the Groton Historic Society.



NICK REYNOLDS / STAFF PHOTO
Groton village historian Lee Shurtleff holds a 1920s-era Smith typewriter with a folding typebar on the second floor of the Groton Historical Society, where a room filled with old typewriters is.

train ride to Albany after seeing one in use by a fellow passenger.

"George's biggest contribution to the typewriter community was actually selling the design to Conger," Hartford, Connecticut-based typewriter historian Greg Fudacz said.

The sale, it seemed, was timely for both.

Conger, an influential state senator, was under pressure from his constituency to find a suitable replacement for the Groton Carriage Works, a 175-employee operation at its peak that had gone bankrupt in 1905 or 1906. The culprit was the start of the mass-produced automobile in America, an era initiated by Oldsmobile's first mass production run in 1901.

At the same time, Groton's other major industry, the 160-employee Groton Bridge Co., had been purchased and liquidated by Morgan's American Bridge Company, which was looking to eliminate competition. (The plant was later repurchased by Conger and reopened, Groton Town Historian Lee Shurtleff said, only to be closed because of growing state regulations, competition from Pittsburgh and Conger's involvement in the typewriter industry.)

Mass production of typewriters was an industry no longer just in the hands of large-scale pioneers like Remington or built in the boutique workshops of small-time machinists, but a more efficient, profitable market spread across hundreds of small-scale operations nationwide.

With the typewriter, Conger brought along engineer C.F. Brown and moved into the vacant carriage works building with 20 workers and Ohio designer Otto Peterman. Peterman wanted to make a more elaborate machine, but it was too expensive and the powers that be wouldn't have it. So the Number 3 was the result and was marketed at \$50 a pop (more than \$1,100 in today's currency).

Though Groton had brief success with the award-winning Crandall Typewriter Co. (shuttered in 1896), Corona, with its new design, would become the town's first truly successful company in the 20th century.

By 1915, production had outgrown the Carriage Works and a new factory was built, one that would produce Hemingway's typewriter and, for the better part of the 20th century, would serve as Groton's beating heart.

"It was the first truly

successful American typewriter," Hartford, Connecticut-based typewriter historian Greg Fudacz said.

"That sales pitch was probably why," he added. "They didn't invent the portable typewriter, but they perfected it. Before that, most were big, office-sized 35-pound typewriters or index machines, which didn't have keyboards. This machine was foldable and pressed-steel, weighed just about 10 pounds, an added shift and two-color ribbon ... more than anything else, the marketing team did a good job selling them."

Selling including changing the name to Corona — "crown" in Latin — as "Standard Folding Typewriter" didn't translate so well to the now-lucrative European markets. Despite the renaming, for nearly 30 years, the machine was the standard, with more than 675,000 units produced, outselling its closest competitor, Blick, by a wide margin.

The Corona Era

As the company grew, the village's west side became Corona's domain. Policemen were assigned to direct traffic at the corner of Cortland and Main

streets, to direct traffic as the factory's 1,600 or so employees came to or left work each day.

An opera house became the Corona Theater, and the still-standing Corona Club was built on the company dime to provide entertainment to its workers.

Money was sunk into West Cortland and Spring streets, the factory lining the avenues with rows of single-family homes, boarding houses and tenements, which were rented out to the workers. For those looking to own and settle down, a Corona worker could finance his home through the factory's own Savings & Loan, who would deduct the worker's mortgage payments from each paycheck.

"It was a real company town," Shurtleff said. "They were a real big part of the social fabric. All of the social activities were centered around Corona. They had a marching band that led all the parades, a fire company, they even had their own semi-professional baseball team that traveled the circuit."

Even businesses in town, like Tom Hefferin's cafeteria, made their cut from the trickling of Corona's wealth. It was at Tom's catering business

"It's a changing of the times I guess.

That's what's happened to all these small towns."

BOB WALPOLE
OWNS RED AND WHITE STORE

Groton mainstay Bob Walpole would come each summer between 1961 and 1965, starting work at 6 a.m. Each day, Walpole would roll the coffee wagon to the factory filled with doughnuts, coffee, "anything you could want," Walpole said.

Before then, he worked at the Red and White, one of several grocery stores in town. Fully stocked, it had its own butcher shop; at lunch hour it was regularly filled with factory workers.

Today, Walpole owns the store, only it specializes in gifts. The meat market is now a liquor store, also run by Walpole. The Victory market, the last grocer in town, is long gone, along with the factory and the money that kept it afloat.

"It's all small mom and pop shops now," Walpole said. "So much has changed everywhere and they're all gone, not just here. It's a changing of the times I guess. That's what's happened to all these small towns."

For Corona, that change came from across the Pacific when a new wave of technology felled it.

"In the late '70s, they were fighting what we call a Japanese dumping," Shurtleff said. "Under the terms of the trade agreements at the time, Japanese manufacturers were introducing typewriters into the U.S. at a cost less than it took to manufacture them."

Shurtleff recalled his father, a representative on the Tompkins County Legislature at the time, took a trip to Washington to lobby a change in the trade agreement to stop the bleeding. The efforts failed.

By 1983, Corona was gone. The factory was torn down a year later and since, Groton has never grown beyond its population of around 6,000.

"We hate to use the term, but we have become a bedroom community," Shurtleff said. "We've tried to get some industry here, but as far as anything the size of Corona? No."

Today, there's no sign, no memorial on the corner of Main Street and Spring Street, no indication anything — much less one of Tompkins County's greatest industries — stood there once. There are no policemen directing traffic, no place to buy groceries, save for Walpole's or the Dollar General on the other side of town. But there is a gas station.

Tax

Continued from Page 1A

Across Tompkins County the total value of all taxable property increased by about 5 percent from \$6.93 billion in 2015 to \$7.29 billion in 2016. However, no town outside the city increased by more than 5 percent.

The assessed value of property in the Village of Trumansburg rose by about 9.5 percent. No other village had changes of more than about 4 percent.

Tompkins County Department of Assessment attempts to keep assessments at market values, according to Jay Franklin, director of assessment for the county. This year assessments were exam-

ined in detail in the City of Ithaca, the towns of Dryden and Lansing, outside villages in those towns, the Town of Ithaca, and the Village of Trumansburg.

The tax roll will be final July 1. Before then, property owners still have the ability to contest their assessments on May 24, the annual Board of Assessment Review day.

The Tompkins County Board of Assessment Review will take appointments for 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. May 24 and then on a first-come, first-served basis from 4 p.m. onward, Franklin said in an email to The Ithaca Journal. Franklin said the board will stay in session until all who come are heard. In recent years that has been 8 p.m. and was until 2 a.m. in 2002 and 2003, according to Franklin.



SIMON WHEELER / STAFF PHOTO
The Collegetown Terrace apartment complex off East State Street, seen in August of 2014, is one of the newest large additions to the tax base in the City of Ithaca.

Prior to May 24 property owners can appear before local advisory boards to ask for changes to their assessment. The town and city advisory boards can

make a recommendation to the county board, but the county board doesn't have to agree with that recommendation, Franklin wrote.

"The more opportunities an owner has, the more likely they will either get the reduction they deserve or an answer as to why their assess-

ment is correct," Franklin wrote in the e-mail.

Of the 35,253 parcels in Tompkins County, 10,376 have had a change in their assessment in 2016. After preliminary notice of assessment changes were sent out, 968 asked for a review of their preliminary assessments.

On Friday the Assessment Department will send notices to 1,625 properties that their preliminary assessments have been changed. The 657 changes to preliminary assessments that were not requested by property owners were made to properties similar to those that requested and received changes to maintain equitable assessments, Franklin wrote.

Follow Simon Wheeler on Twitter @IJPhotos.