

# World War I 92d Division Artillery "Corona 3" Typewriter

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ANYONE who served in the Army before the advent of the computer age is all too familiar with the "clickety-clack" of the company clerk's typewriter, indispensable for the production of routine paperwork, whether in garrison or in the field. The use of such "modern contrivances" in unit orderly rooms predated the First World War. The 1917 edition of the *Officer's Manual* contained the following guidance for junior officers under the caption "Labor-Saving Devices and Conveniences":<sup>1</sup>

**Typewriter.** It goes without saying that now-a-days no office is complete without at least one typewriting machine, which can generally be obtained from the Quartermaster Corps on memorandum receipt.

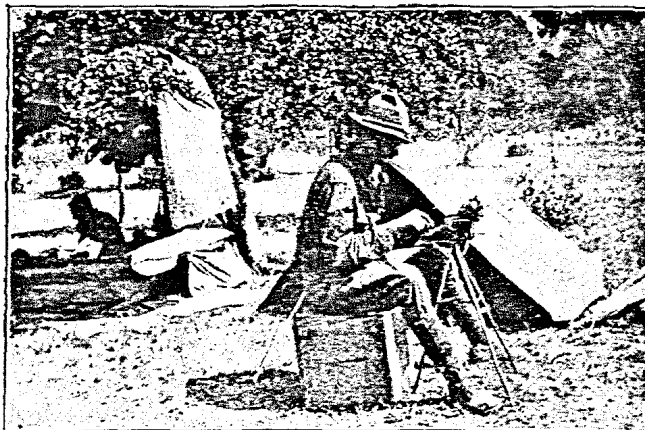
It is suggested that a Corona machine, which is used throughout the service, be obtained for field work. Not only is this machine much less bulky and very much lighter than other machines, but it will also stand harder usage. The Corona folding stand adds very much to the machine for field use.

For organizations unable to "hand receipt" a "Corona machine" and required to acquire one through purchase, the 1917 *Officer's Manual* conveniently included an advertisement depicting a soldier, seated on a ration box in front of a pup tent, using a tripod-mounted Corona typewriter. The ad offered to sell the "portable writing machine" for the princely sum of \$50, with an additional \$5.00 charge if the purchaser desired the portable tripod. The depiction described the machine as measuring 10 x 11½ x 4¼ inches when cased, and weighing only nine pounds. Because of its aluminum and steel construction, it touted its product as "practically indestructible."<sup>2</sup>

The item advertised in the *Officer's Manual* was marketed (and continues to be known to contemporary collectors) as the "Corona 3." Manufactured between 1912 and 1940 by the Corona Typewriter Company of Groton, New York, the Corona 3 featured a hinged carriage assembly allowing the paper roller and ribbon spools to be folded over on the keyboard when stored in its case.<sup>3</sup> Two metal guides, designed to serve as a paper easel, also folded down, providing the user with a truly portable machine.

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## CORONA

*The Pen of the Army*

Note the ease with which this portable writing machine may be used under service conditions.

Its parts never work loose or drop off. It has no attachments and does not take down.

You can carry Corona anywhere for, case and all, it weighs but 9 lbs. and measures only 10 x 11¼ x 4¼ ins.

Being built almost entirely of aluminum and steel, Corona is practically indestructible.

The Corona Folding Stand adds greatly to the convenience of using Corona in the field. This stand has three telescopic brass legs, stands 24 ins. high and collapses to 10¾ ins. It weighs 2 lbs.

*Price of Corona and case, \$50*

*Price of Folding Stand, \$5*

**Corona Typewriter Co., Inc.**  
GROTON, NEW YORK

FIG 1. Corona advertisement from the *Officer's Manual*.

Several years ago, the author was fortunate to acquire a Corona 3—still in perfect working order—with a provenance of military usage. Its serial number places its date of manufacture in mid-1918. The portable typewriter also bears a number "3" on the base of the keypad and proclaims that it was manufactured by the "Corona Typewriter Co. Inc. of Groton, N.Y., U.S.A." The dimensions of its storage case roughly correspond to those cited in the advertisement.

The most interesting feature of this artifact, however, is the unit designations painted on its case. The cover fitting over the typewriter bears the inscription "Battery 'F'/351st F.A./Am. Ex. Forces." As readers of a recent *MC&H* article entitled "African-American Divisional Shoulder Insignia During World War I" will recall, the 351st Field Artillery Regiment

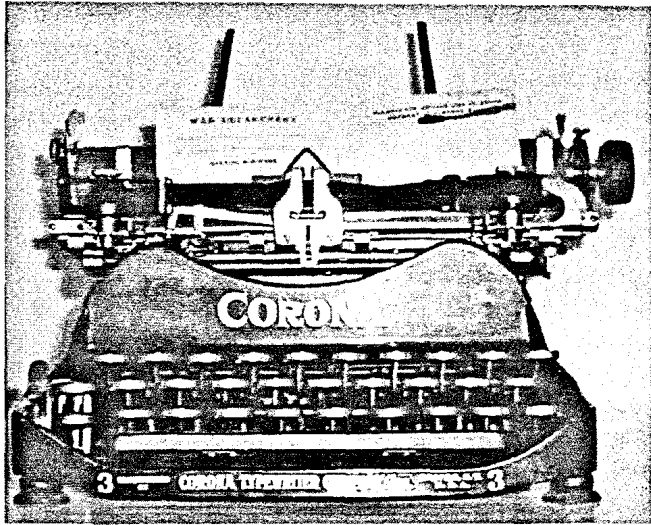


FIG 2. Corona 3 Typewriter. Photo by the author.

was part of the 92d Division.<sup>4</sup> As such, the regiment constituted one of the very first African-American artillery units in the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF).<sup>5</sup> The reverse side of the carrying case features an insignia that confirms the hypothesis in the *MC&H* article that the artillery brigade of the 92d Division adopted a swastika as its unofficial unit insignia. As the accompanying picture shows, it bears a painted white swastika emblem upon which a red disk is superimposed. Although that color combination varies somewhat from that on the shoulder insignia depicted in the *MC&H* article (a maroon disk on a red swastika), many divisions in the AEF, such as the 2d, 35th, and 89th Divisions, adopted different color combinations of their basic organizational insignia to differentiate among various subordinate commands. CMH

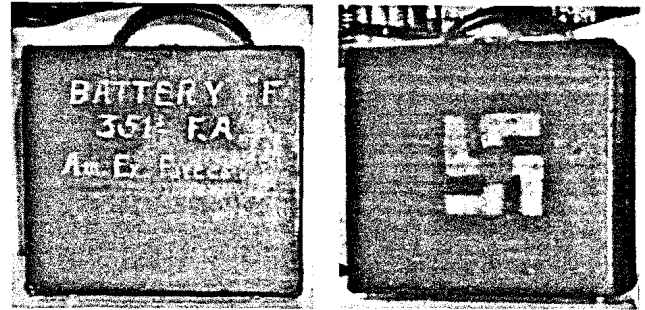


FIG 3A & B. A. The front of the carrying case and B. the reverse of the carrying case showing the swastika emblem and red disk. Photos by the author.

Fellow Bob Borrell, an authority on all artillery matters and a contributor to the *MC&H* article, confirms that the color variation on the cover insignia could likewise reflect a distinct regiment within the parent artillery brigade. At this time, however, the author has been unable to break the code.

#### Notes

1. Col. James A. Moss, *Officer's Manual* (Menasha, Wis.: George Banta Pub. Co., 1917), 111.
2. *Ibid.*, unnumbered page following 616.
3. S. L. Johnson Typewriter Page, "Corona Tribute" located at <http://homepage.mac.com/sljohnson/typewriter/corona/Corona-3.html>. (visited on 18 March 2005).
4. *MC&H*, 56, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 269–270.
5. Roger D. Cunningham, "Black Artillerymen From the Civil War Through World War I," *Army History* (Spring 2003): 14–17. According to the author of that article, the 351st FA was equipped with 155 millimeter howitzers.

#### French Marine Service Chevron Clarification

In my article on French Marine uniforms, 1778–1783 (*MC&H*, 57, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 114–120), I inadvertently typed "honorary" instead of "honorable" when describing the service stripes used by this corps in the opening paragraph on page 118 and on the caption to the Troiani figure on page 115. Thus, on the latter, it should read "he wears a chevron on his left sleeve denoting eight years' honorable service." I apologize for this proofing error.

J. Kochan.