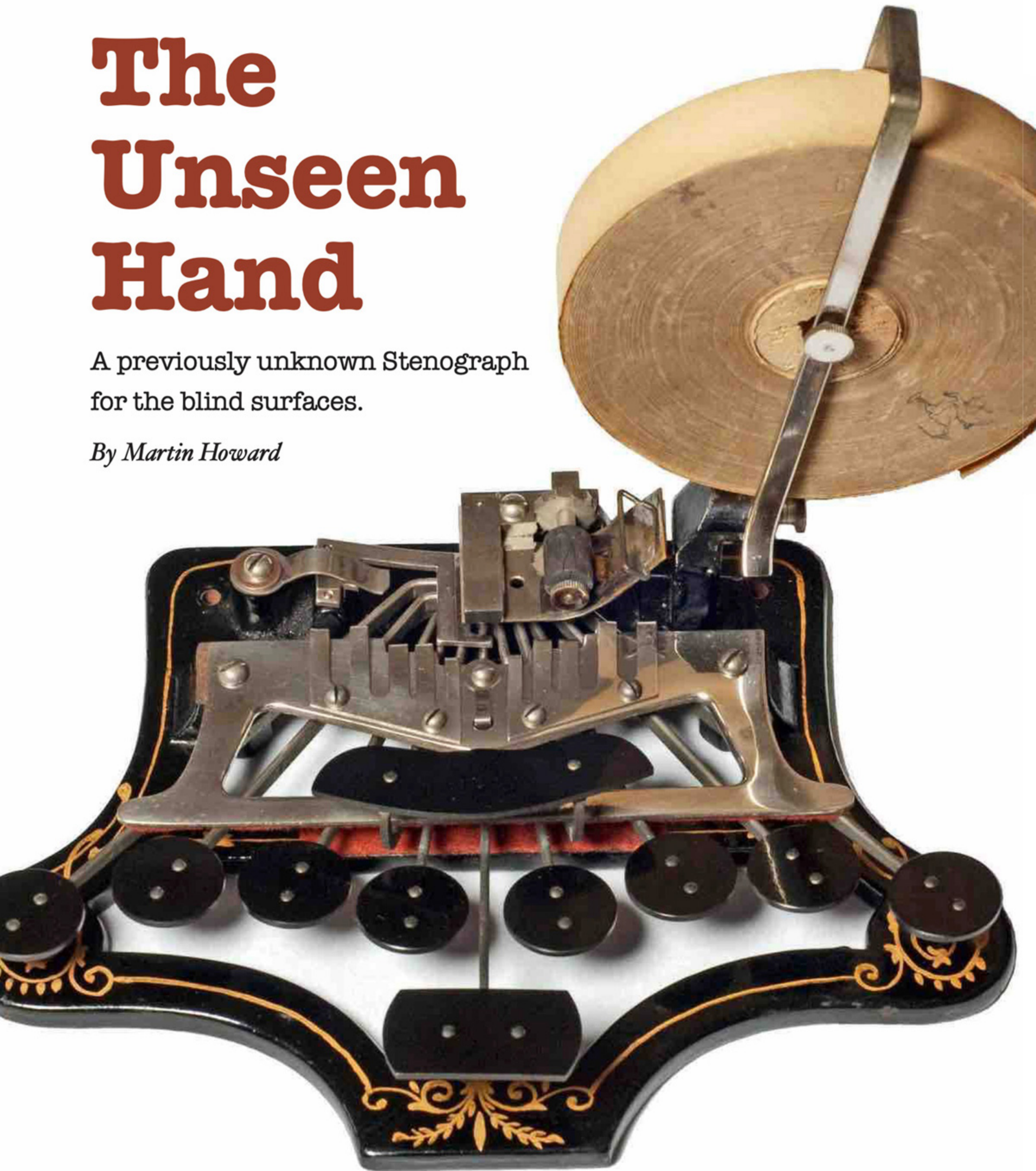


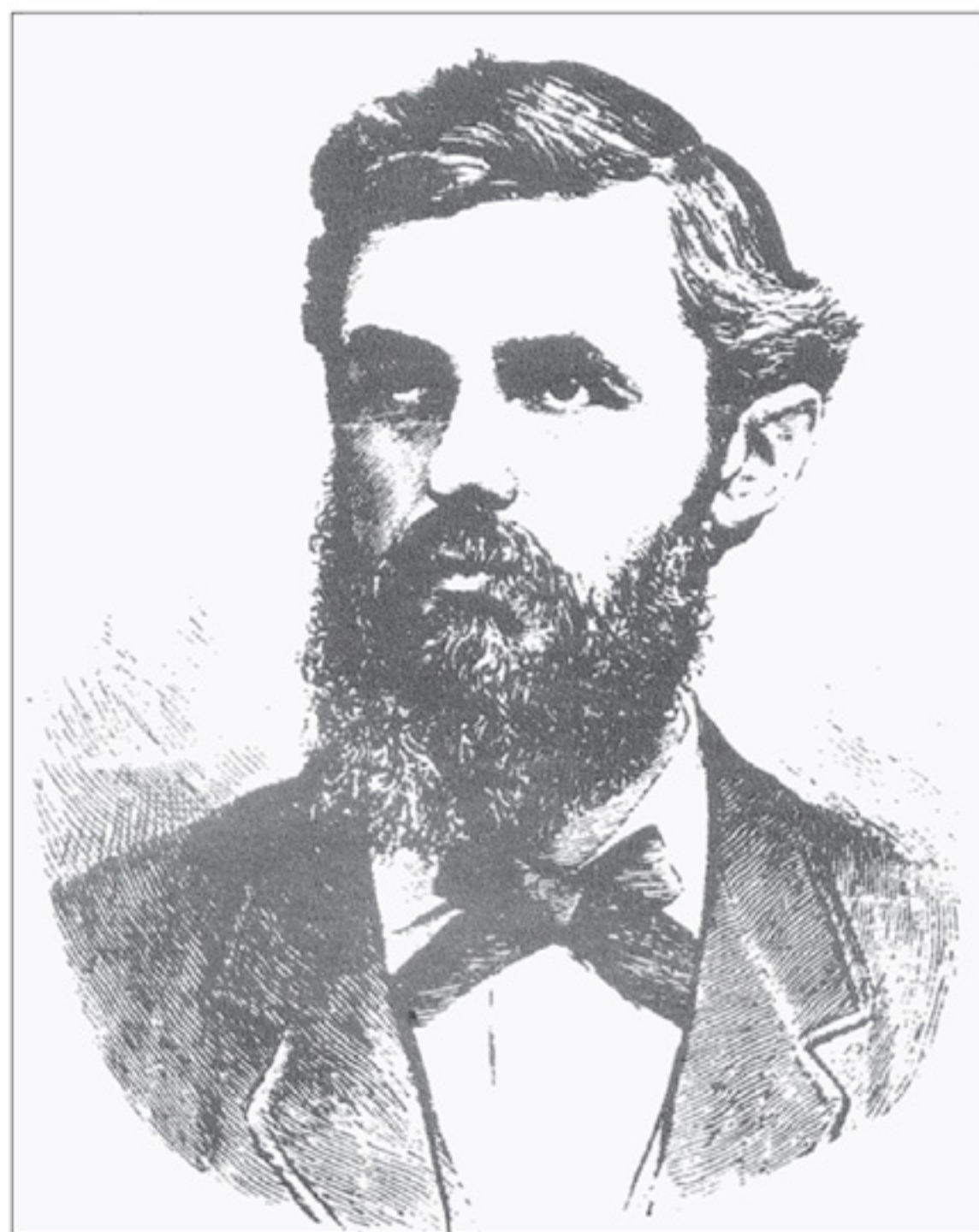
The Unseen Hand

A previously unknown Stenograph
for the blind surfaces.

By Martin Howard



At right: Miles M. Bartholomew, the inventor of the Stenograph, was reportedly fascinated by the art of phonetic writing from an early age.



It took me a while when exploring a somewhat familiar but strange version of a Bartholomew Stenograph from the late 1880s, before I realized the significance of its design. The first clue was that there was no inking ribbon, which struck me as odd as Stenographs normally print with a combination of up to five inked dashes. Only when I removed the back cover plate did I understand, for there were five metal pinheads all in a row waiting to push up into the concave dimples in the cover plate. I was holding a Stenograph for the blind! This exquisitely made and decorated little machine was suddenly very special indeed.

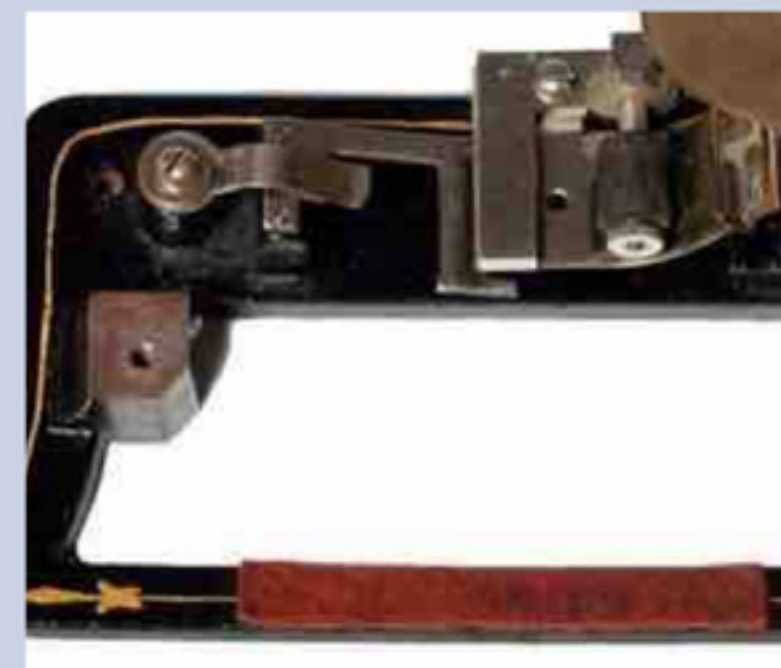
I wondered if anyone else knew about it, so I called Michael Hudson, the curator at the American Printing House for the Blind, where I was surprised to hear that he was actively researching into Stenograph machines for the blind. He had, however, only been able to find information on these machines from the 1940s. He was very excited to learn about this much earlier example, perhaps the first machine of its kind.

I have since spoken to other collectors, with no one being aware of this Stenograph. Is it a prototype? Were any sold? There is no serial number or patent dates to be found on it and my search online for a patent has come up empty handed.

In *ETCetera* No.16 in 1991, Darryl Rehr published a lengthy article on the Stenograph in which he mentioned the existence of an undated advertising folder which contains the line: "This Stenograph — for the Blind — a Wonderful Machine — Price only \$25." This is so far the only known contemporary reference to an actual Stenograph machine for the blind.

Do you have any additional knowledge of this special Stenograph? If so, write in and we will include it in a future issue of *ETCetera*. ■

Stenograph: a closer look



Martin Howard's newly discovered Stenograph looks fairly normal with all parts in place. A closer examination, though, would detect the absence of the usual ribbon mechanism.



With a hinged metal piece raised out of the way, this Stenograph's unique styli are revealed -- five rounded embossing points whose output can be sensed by the touch of the fingers.



A view from the back shows the Stenograph's key arms -- v-shaped connected bars. With these connections, the manufacturer considered the Stenograph to be a five-keyed machine.