

*Welcome to Gates Museum and Gallery.*

*Thank you for taking the time to visit us, we hope you find our collection interesting and inspiring.*

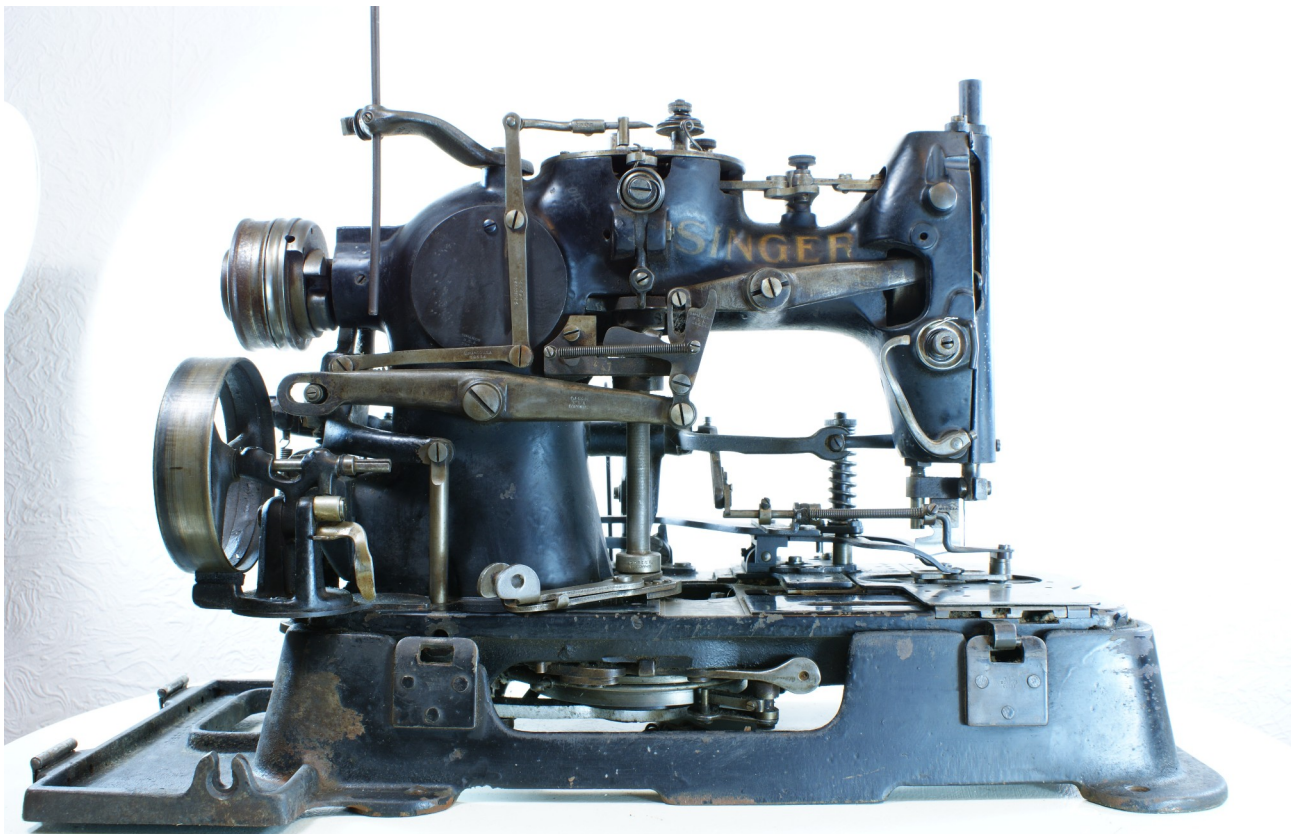
## **Introduction**

The collection comprises some 300+ sewing machines that were manufactured between circa 1875 to the mid 1930's.

We do not collect machines from the first 25 years of the sewing machines development as we believe other museums have already covered this period. Our aim is that the machines in our collection will be used and therefore we started the collection at the point at which sewing machines became 'user friendly' and 'usable'. We end our collection at the point in time when they started to be fitted with electric motors.

We do have a few examples at either end of this time period for demonstration purposes. i.e. so you can see where the 'modern' family sewing machine came from and where it went once electricity became available on houses and factories.

Our museum is split up in to 'galleries' that roughly split the collection into time periods from the mid 1870's to the mid 1930's. We also have further 'galleries' dedicated to industrial sewing machines as well as a workspace with the 'largest' industrial sewing machines are housed.



*Singer Industrial Button Hole Sewing Machine*

## Gallery 1 – *In the beginning...*

We start our story with some examples of '*old rusty*' and neglected hand crank sewing machine that were destined for the scrap metal yard as was the fate of the majority of the '*millions*' of old black cast iron sewing machine over the past 50+ years.

These examples typical of those discarded can be seen on the first gallery on the display shelves at the start of the museum's collection displays.

We include these examples as they were the inspiration to '*save*' unwanted and neglected machines from being thrown away. This began when I came across around 20 old sewing machines on the pavement outside a charity shop in Horsham, Surrey some 20 odd years ago. On enquiry in the shop I discovered that they were awaiting collection to be taken to the scrap metal yard and '*weighed in*' for scrap.

I asked if I could take the machines home with me for a donation and so started the **GATE's** '*collection*'. 20 years later the museum was opened to the public on the start of their new journey to be loved and used by today's and future generations.

In the first gallery examples of the early machines can be seen including the Howe and Singer machines that started the sewing machine revolution.

You can also see early examples of the '*parlor*' cabinets buyers commissioned to house their precious and valuable machines. In the early years sewing machine manufacturers didn't bother to make the cabinets in many cases they were ordered from cabinet makers books and personalised to the individual buyers choice. It is for this reason that so many different examples and styles of cabinets exist.

We have collected some of the more common examples of early cabinets as well as some of the more unusual ones. All of these cabinets are very rare today and only the odd example may come up for sale at auction once in a couple of years!

These early cabinets are interesting as they show how the makers were trying to come up with the best design for housing a sewing machine as this was an entirely new piece of domestic furniture that had to be designed.

The early examples often featured '*clever*' top cover boxes that opened up to form a sewing work space.

In the first gallery you will be able to see sewing machines that featured the early '*type*' of '*shuttle and bobbin*' often referred to as '*bullet*' or '*boat*' style ones.

These early machines '*moved*' the shuttle backwards and forwards in a straight line and so were referred to as '*transverse*', '*vertical*' or '*horizontal*' machines.

The early machines took their design from the '*revolutionary*' Singer Family sewing machine known as the Model 12. This basic format or layout finally standardised the domestic sewing machine in the same way that motor cars eventually reached a point where their layouts were mostly standardised so the public would know how to drive in any car.

## Gallery 2 – The rise of the treadle ...

Moving into the second gallery we move forward in time to the 1880's and 90's. Here you can see many fine examples of the popular and rare sewing machines that came to define an industry.

During this period many German manufactures produced highly decorative versions of the early Singer models. These German machines often featured very elaborate '*decal*' patterns on the machines as well as highly decorative '*marketry*' on the wooden table tops and covers.

Also housed within the second gallery are many examples of American designed and made machines for this period. These machines often featured elements not present on European or British machines. Specifically the 'thread tensioner' mounted on top of the machine or cases featuring decorative machine carved embellishments.

You can also see many examples of treadle designs from this period where styles and features were applied in order that a given machine might stand out from the crowd.

We also have a wonderful collection of Wheeler and Wilson Number 9 machines in both hand crank, treadle and cabinet. These group of machines are all the examples of the popular Wheeler and Wilson machines featured on a poster used to clear the stock following the takeover of the company by Singer in 1903. This monumental take over was like nothing before in terms of scale but was a strategic move by Singer to stay ahead against their biggest competitor.

We also have examples of the No 9's sold by Singer in the first couple of years following the takeover when Singer badged the No 9 prior to developing and launching their own example using the popular rotary shuttle and bobbin invented by Wheeler and Wilson. It was this 'technology' that Singer wanted desperately to own as they realised it was the future for all sewing machines.

This period was like many since where the biggest manufactures try to dominate the market and squeeze out the competition. Singer bold and strategic move ensured the global dominance for the next 50+ years.

Following the purchase of Wheeler and Wilson Singer turned over the giant Bridgeport, Conn. factories to the making of industrial machines for Singer. This started by developing the Wheeler and Wilson Model 11 & 12 into Singer variants. These models formed the basic design of almost all Singer Industrial machines since. It was these and future market leading industrial machines that enabled Singer to totally dominate the emerging Sewing Factories for the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century. Almost all industrial machines in use were either made by Singer or under license from Singer by companies in Germany or Japan.

A notable machine in the second gallery is the '*quirky*' pedal powered Bradbury No 2 designed by Mr Ward and only manufactured for 2 years (**1885-6**) in very small production runs as they didn't take off! This was at a time when the Bicycle didn't really exist in the public space so pedals weren't known or understood by most people of the period during which this fantastic machine was made.

## Gallery 3 – It's all about the design & style

Moving into the third gallery we move forward in time to the 1890's and 1910's.

First we have a beautiful collection of Jones Cabinet machines based on the American design that can be seen opposite together with its original patent (*the cabinet patent*). These Jones cabinets show perfectly the sewing machine evolving with domestic fashion to stay desirable with the finest Edwardian homes.

Of particular note is the Deep Red Mahogany (*solid not veneer*) that was made for some fine house hold during the first world war in 1917. We have its original receipt to prove it. This cabinet would have been like ordering a fine Rolls Royce of the same period.

We also have a couple of the very popular Singer Parlour/ Drawing Room cabinets that they (*Singer*) manufactured over many decades such was its popularity. We have it in its original Victorian Form along with its patent documents as well as its Final form from the 1920's at the cusp of Electric machines changing everything (*cabinet wise*).

At the far end you can see some very interesting '*Domestic*' brand machines as well as some very interesting New Williams (*Canadian*) machines. Note the Hand Crank on the New Williams is the same unique design as on the '*Domestic*' brand models. This design of Hand crank was unique to Domestic so seeing it also featured on the New Williams is very unusual.

We have a large collection of American designs in the 3<sup>rd</sup> gallery both hand crank as well as many treadle examples. The American machines have their own design style that is markedly different to the European/British models. Many of the big American brands are featured here in the collection.



*Fine and very rare example of an American 'Domestic' Treadle machine*

## Gallery 4 – The fall of the treadle ...

Moving into the forth gallery we move forward in time to the 1920's and 30's. The noticeable evolution seen here is the decline of the Victorian Treadle design and a move to the more modern Wooden table/cabinets. This is being driven both by fashion as well as the imminent arrival of the electric motor powered domestic machines.

We can see different manufacturers trying out designs without any frame of reference as almost all previous treadles were using the Cast iron frame legs. One of the most important issues to overcome was the fear of machines toppling over without the weight of the cast iron legs. Another feature was the 'Arts and Crafts' design and manufacture movement. Many early 'wooden' sewing machine table/cabinets used this format of look despite the fact that they were in fact being mass produced the very factories the movement was so against.

We can also see the move to the *Art Deco* Period with the arrival of 'curves'!

The machines of this period also featured the use of highly polished and gleaming chrome plating.

Gone was the 'dull' Nickel plating of the earlier models or even the simply 'polished' bare steel seen on many earlier machines. During the 1920/30's the sewing machine technology didn't evolve much but the manufacturing and finishes made the machines look fresh and modern despite the fact that they were really still Victorian machines.



*American Free Wooden Table/Cabinet*

## **Gallery 5 – The arrival of Electricity ... All Change**

In the gallery no. 5 we see the arrival of the electric motor powered domestic sewing machine for the first time in the very late 1920's and early 1930's. This was a time when many houses still didn't have electricity!

We have a great example of the first electric sewing machine designed and manufactured by Singer - the model 101. The model 101 was designed and manufactured by Singers industrial (*old Wheeler and Wilson*) factory as they believed that the provision of an electric motor would seriously increase the wear on the machines moving parts. This was a good idea that went bad as the Singer 101 is an excellent Electric Direct Drive Oil Lubricated machine that was simply too well designed and built. Subsequently it was far too expensive to market and sell to the average consumers of the early 1930's. (*think 'great depression'*). The 101 was only made available in the American market so only 110v electric motor. This was a further limiting design choice that 'hobbled' the product from the outset.

There was one saving grace in that the wooden table/cabinet designed and manufactured especially for the 101 (*Electric sewing machine*) was so popular that it became the main format sold by Singer for the following 2 decades. It was so successful that other manufacturers notably Jones in Britain produced almost identical copies of the format.

We also have Singer second follow-up electric machine the 201k that went on to earn the reputation of the best Singer sewing machine every produced. Still sort after by sewers today as the most excellent machine to sew on such was the quality of manufacture and superiority of its design.

You can also see here examples of the first ever domestic sewing machine that did something other than sew in straight lines! The first Singer '*ZigZag*' machine the 206. This format went on to define '*pattern*' sewing with the subsequent model 306 and 319 with their '*fashion*' disks that enabled many stitch forms to be produced. It was a bit like when home PC's and Printers were given '*Fonts*'.

You can also see here one of Singers most iconic sellers the model 99 in its early electric format launched at the 1934 Chicago Century of Progress Fair and its subsequent re-launch 30 years later in the 1960's with a plastic cover tray fitted to the underside of the still cast metal body. Both these examples show Singer ensuring it stays on top despite competitors moving nimbly onto their ground by designing and producing technically advanced, higher quality machines and using modern designs and materials of the post war period namely '*Plastic*' and '*Aluminium*'

Finally we see in this gallery the closing gasps of the cast iron treadle designs attempting to stay modern by some manufacturers notably the German makers with the new modern straight and geometric designs leaving the '*swirly*' Victorian influences in their wake.

We have fine examples by Adler, Frister & Rossmann and Berka that admirably demonstrate these modern lines with the angular shapes.

## Gallery 6 – Tailors get their own machines ...

In the gallery 6 we can see the manufacturers efforts to design and build machines that addressed the needs of the tailor. These typically had larger sizes of domestic models as well as larger table tops (*working areas*) and larger treadle wheels to make the machines run at higher speeds. They were effectively geared up like modern day racing bicycles.

These machines are rare and often miss understood as being simply industrial models. They were only produced for a limited period before tailors were sold general industrial models. We have some very rare examples of this form. Notably the Wheeler and Wilson 11's and the Phoenix from France.

We also have some examples of machines made specifically for tailors namely '*basting*' machines that ran a long widely spaced stitch used by tailors to loosely construct a garment prior to final machining once fittings had been completed. We have 2 very rare examples of '*Basiting*' machines made by Bellow of Britain notable by their distinctive green paint and very heavy build.

We also have a particularly rare complete and original example of a Wilcox and Gibbs High Speed machine in Tailors format.



*Rare Wilcox and Gibbs High Speed Tailors Treadle machine*

## Gallery 7 – The dedicated Industrial machines ...

Around one third of our collection comprises Industrial sewing machines. Mostly but not all Singers due to their total dominance of the industrial marketplace following their skilful take over of their main competitor Wheeler and Wilson in 1903. Since the Singer had turned over the giant Bridgeport Conn. factory to the production of industrial machines (based on Wheeler and Wilsons design)

Singer made literally hundreds of job specific machines so they had a machine for every sewing task. Where a competitor produced a design that they didn't have they would simply 'copy' it!

This can be seen again and again with key markets such as glove, hat, shoe etc. machines. Singer had the scale and resources to out produce any competitor in the industrial machine space.

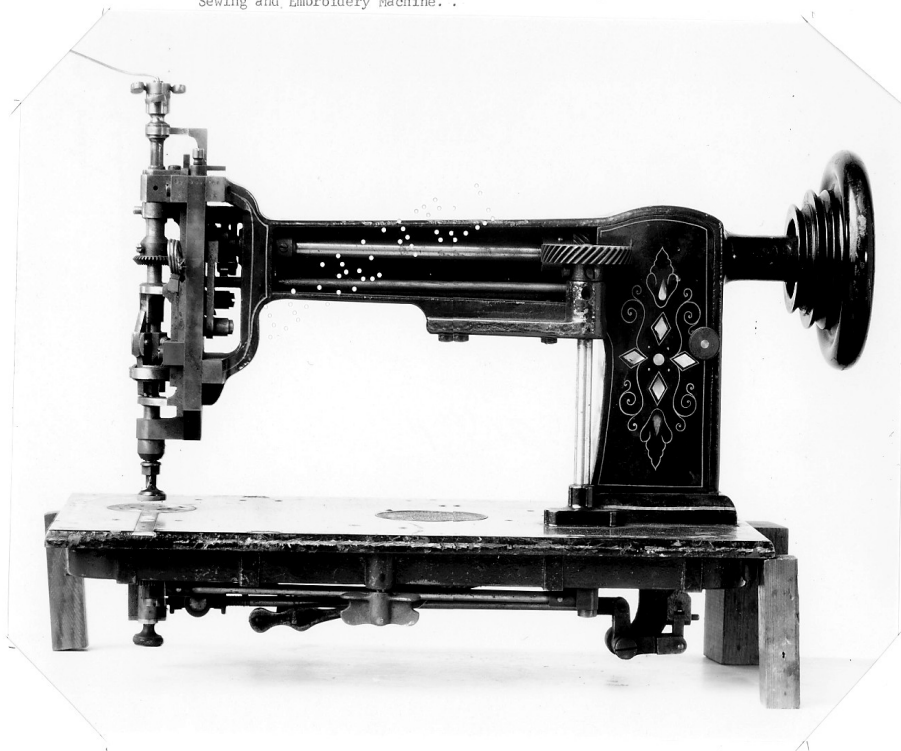
We have selected many of the key job specific models of Singer and other to represent the broad range of factory based sewing tasks.

You can see machines for making button holes, sewing on buttons, adding patterns to the backs of leather and other gloves. Machines for producing blind stitches such as with hems of garments and curtains. Machines that produce specific stitch types as needed for specific items be they giant parachutes to small and delicate items made in fine fabrics such as silk.

We have an excellent collection of early machines produced at the Wheeler and Wilson factories by Singer. You can see the WW models alongside the Singer versions continuing to only Singer versions as the decades pass.

We have many very rare examples of job specific machines of particular note is the Cornely Hand Embroidery Sewing Machine never beaten in design and still produced and used in China to this day I the exact same format at launched by Mr Cornely in the 1860s.

Neg. No. 18105-B. Pat. 219,225, Emile Cornely 1866 Paris, France, Sept. 2, 1879, T.6541, Acc. 89797  
Sewing and Embroidery Machine. .



## **Gallery 8 - The work room – The might ones ...!**

In our last space we refer to as our work room as it is where machines will be demonstrated and used by all who wish to participate. We also use this space as our studio to produce all the museum unique photographic art original image scans.

Also in this wonderful period space we house a collection of the largest industrial sewing machine ever produced for commercial sale.

We have examples of might machines used for making and repairing ships vast sails as well as machines designed specifically to darn the holes in the bottom of giant wool sacks.

We have a couple of unique examples of factory machines used in the shoe and boot industry to sew the soles of shoes to their uppers. We have the original Victorian example of the famous Goodyear Outsole Stitcher as well as its rival Blake insole stitcher. Both these machines transformed the way shoes were manufactured for ever allowing for a truly watertight seal to be achieved where the sold joins to the upper leather parts of the show or boot. These 'welted' designs are back in fashion today with the focus on quality hand manufactured leather traditional welted shoes and boots.

Mr Goodyear Jnr invented the Outsole design and Mr Blake followed up with an insole alternative. Both these machines are still in production today and have never been beaten in terms of design to achieve the task.



*A trio of Singer Fur (Glove/hat) sewing machines.*

*We hope you have enjoyed your tour of the collection, much more to see..... Thank you*