

Great Scott!

By Scott Goodman



Scott Goodman, owner of Sewing Machine Warehouse & Kneedle.com has been servicing the sewing public since 1976.

Over the next several issues, Great Scott! will extoll the virtues, features, and benefits of all major brands of embroidery sewing machines.

How Do I Love Thee... Singer

Imagine a time...say, circa 1846. Picture two guys; Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs, in steampunk style. Woz has a great idea and Jobs knows how to bring it home. Now, think of Elias Howe, a techie, trying to perfect a machine that can make continuous stitches and rapidly join two pieces of fabric together. The race to market is highly competitive, as several designers across the Atlantic are close to perfecting their concepts in a machine that would change the world. Isaac Singer, who left a dysfunctional home and went “carny” at age 12, was the charismatic connect-the-dots man that started by knocking-off Elias Howe’s patented concept and ultimately brought it all together into the largest company in the world.



This was a time when it took over 14 hours to make a shirt or blouse. Clothing was virtually custom made. SINGER’s lock-stitch sewing machine changed the world. SINGER changed the world in many other ways. The post-Civil War era was rife with excess cast-iron and metal-work capacity and the beginning of standardized parts. SINGER, one of the first multi-national manufacturers, opened factories throughout Europe, Asia, Great Britain and South America. While Americans think of SINGER as an American company, Brits think of it as an English company and Germans believe that SINGER was founded in Germany. The French had a different idea. So grateful that sewing machines transformed their workforce, it is rumored that the face of our Statue of Liberty was modeled after one of Isaac Singer’s former wives. Check out Isabella Eugenie Boyer on Wikipedia.

Just as Elon Musk (Tesla Motors, Space X) is currently building a battery mega-factory to solve his electric car production bottle-neck, SINGER was the first vertically integrated industrial company. SINGER owned the forest, producing the trees that were harvested and transported by train on a company-owned railroad to their mill, which finished the lumber that was crafted into beautiful cabinetry, housing the machine that any homemaker would be proud to display in her living room. The SINGER Company became the largest producer of home furniture in the world. If your family purchased a dining room or bedroom set from Sears in the ‘50s or ‘60s it was likely made by a division of SINGER.



SINGER is part of our shared, cultural DNA and has touched all of our lives. What is your earliest SINGER memory? Drop me a line: GreatScott@kneedle.com or friend me: [Facebook.com/GreatScottSews](https://www.facebook.com/GreatScottSews)

How could a 19th century household afford such a technologically advanced tool? SINGER was the first company to offer their product with “affordable” \$3 monthly payments. SINGER also offered trade-ins that were destroyed in the back room and taken off the market, lest they be resold. With the same creative energy vibe as your local Apple store, the local SINGER store, was the place to exchange fashion ideas while purchasing fabric and more appliances, like vacuum cleaners, radios, phonographs on your convenient SINGER charge account.



Picture New York at the turn of the century. This high-tech (steampunk equivalent) multi-national company, needed a headquarters worthy enough to house their high-powered management team. Completed in 1908, The SINGER building in Manhattan was the world’s first skyscraper. Isaac Singer, in 1890s style, needed to move rapidly through town and did so, in a carriage teamed with six high-spirited horses (think Ferrari or Lamborghini) that impressively transported him, Tony Stark style, from home to office to meetings. Talk about shock and awe.

In the 1920s, electricity became available, and treadles gave way to foot and knee actuated speed controls. SINGER produced motors, for themselves and others. Their Diehl Motor Products Division, produced power tools for Sears under the Craftsman label. If your family owned a Craftsman drill, saw or router, there is a good chance that it was made by SINGER. The Motor Products Division was purchased by Ryobi Limited in 1988 and still manufactures quality power tools.

SINGER grew and morphed in many directions throughout the 20th century, with divisions that produced airplane simulators (Link Aeronautical), side arms, torpedo and missile guidance systems (Kearfott Guidance and Navigation) postage meters and computerized cash registers (Friden), power meters and more. This cross-division diversity helped create the first electronic computerized sewing machine- the SINGER Touchtronic 2000.

In the 1970s, liberated women left their home in the suburbs, donned affordable ready-to-wear fashion, and went to work. Sewing machine sales declined and SINGER divested their retail stores. Victimized by leveraged buyouts and looted by predatory owners, the remaining company suffered a bankruptcy in 1999. Today, SINGER is now part of SVP Worldwide; the S.V.P. representing SINGER, VIKING and PFAFF. Their broad product line offering a model for any price range or skill level.

SINGER still markets a wide range of affordable sewing and embroidery products. The SINGER XL580 FUTURA is an affordable sewing and embroidery machine with a 10” x 6” sewing field, endless embroidery hoop, multi-hooping and more. SINGER’s product line includes basic craft sewing machines, overlock machines, steamers, presses, irons and high-speed industrial models.



Source: The SINGER Company