

History of the sewing machine essay



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Hand sewing is an art form that is over 20, 000 years old. The first sewing needles were made of bones or animal horns and the first thread was made of animal sinew. Iron needles were invented in the 14th century. The first eyed needles appeared in the 15th century. The story really starts in 1755 in London when a German immigrant, Charles Wiesenthal, took out a patent for a needle to be used for mechanical sewing. There was no mention of a machine to go with it, and another 34 years were to pass before Englishman Thomas Saint invented what is generally considered to be the first real sewing machine.

Charles Wiesenthal first patent in 1758 John Adams Doge 1818 The English, Thomas Saint was issued the first patent for a complete machine in 1790. The patent describes an awl that punched a hole in leather and passed a needle through the hole. A later reproduction of Saint's invention based on his patent drawings did not work. In 1818, the first American sewing machine was invented by John Adams Doge and John Knowles. Their machine failed to sew any useful amount of fabric before malfunctioning. The first functional sewing machine was invented by the French tailor, Barthelemy Thimonnier, in 1830.

Thimonnier's machine used only one thread and a hooked needle that made the same chain stitch used with embroidery. The inventor was almost killed by an enraged group of French tailors who burnt down his garment factory because they feared unemployment as a result of his new invention. In 1834, Walter Hunt built America's first (somewhat) successful sewing machine. He later lost interest in patenting because he believed his invention would cause unemployment. ? Hunt never patented and in 1846, the first American

patent was issued to Elias Howe for “ a process that used thread from two different sources. ? For the next nine years Elias Howe struggled, first to enlist interest in his machine, then to protect his patent from imitators. His lockstitch mechanism was adopted by others who were developing innovations of their own. Sewing machines did not go into mass production until the 1850’s, when Isaac Singer built the first commercially successful machine. Singer built the first sewing machine where the needle moved up and down rather than the side-to-side and the needle was powered by a foot treadle. Previous machines were all hand-cranked.

However, Isaac Singer’s machine used the same lockstitch that Howe had patented. Elias Howe sued Isaac Singer for patent infringement and won in 1854. Walter Hunt’s sewing machine also used a lockstitch with two spools of thread and an eye-pointed needle; however, the courts upheld Howe’s patent since Hunt had abandoned his patent. Isaac Singer Elias Howe If Hunt had patented his invention, Elias Howe would have lost his case and Isaac Singer would have won. Since he lost, Isaac Singer had to pay Elias Howe patent royalties.

As a side note: In 1844, Englishmen John Fisher received a patent for a lace making machine that was identical enough to the machines made by Howe and Singer that if Fisher’s patent had not been lost in the patent office, John Fisher would also have been part of the patent battle. After successfully defending his right to a share in the profits of his invention, Elias Howe saw his annual income jump from three hundred to more than two hundred thousand dollars a year. Between 1854 and 1867, Howe earned close to two million dollars from his invention.

During the Civil War, he donated a portion of his wealth to equip an infantry regiment for the Union Army and served in the regiment as a private. Elias Howe's design was copied by Isaac Singer and others, leading to extensive patent litigation. However, a court battle in the 1850s conclusively gave Elias Howe the patent rights to the eye pointed needle. The court case was brought by Elias Howe against Isaac Merritt Singer, the largest manufacturer of sewing machines for patent infringement.

In his defense, Isaac Singer attempted to invalidate Howe's patent, to show that the invention was already some 20 years old and that Howe should not have been able to claim the royalties from anyone using his designs that Singer had been forced to pay. Elias Howe died in 1867, the year his patent expired. Patent model of Isaac M. Singer's sewing machine, 1854, Singer received his first patent for a commercial sewing machine on August 12, 1851. Three years later he introduced a domestic model that made him one of the wealthiest Americans of the century.

As with many inventor-entrepreneurs, Singer's success came not from mechanical skills but from a genius for marketing: he aggressively advertised his sewing machines to women consumers and sold them through a nationwide chain of company stores, which featured demonstrations and offered repair service. This model was donated in 1960 by the Singer Manufacturing Company. Isaac M. Singer's 1854 Walter Hunt 1834 Bernina 1860 Elias Howe 1846 The first mechanical sewing machines were used in garment factory production lines. It was not until 1889 that a sewing machine for use in the home was designed and marketed.

By 1905, the electrically-powered sewing machine was in wide use. The sewing machine allowed clothing to become a mass produced item which increased the social acceptance of the sewing machine. Besides the commercial sewing machine, the household machine became very popular when it became electric. If you had electric in your home you could have a sewing machine and it was even easier and faster than the hand powered models. The impact of the sewing machine on America is huge. Specifically the sewing machine greatly impacted the textile industry and women.

Because women were the ones working in the textile mills they were the ones to use the machine, however some believed that this would infringe on their craft as skilled seamstresses. Others thought this to be a wonder and felt it freed them to pursue other things rather than sit home and sew clothes. In some way the women working with the machines gained a new skill, and were seen as important for the industry. The sewing machine also helped other industries grow, for example the need for large quantities of thread for factory machines.

Others benefited from sewing machines such as metal companies for needles and parts, varied machinists to repair the machines when needed, shipping companies got a lot more business because more products were being made. Singer 2012 Today's sewing machine is able to be directed for many different purposes. The sewing machine is not just for the clothing industry, but the machine started becoming an important part in the manufacturing of other goods. Furniture with upholstery, automobile seats, curtains or drapes, towels, toys, even books employed the use of the sewing machine.

Barnett 2010 Janome 2013 Exhibit model represents an interactive timeline of history. As guests walk past the piece; the history is displayed in chronological order. Interactive fabric materials on the floor offers the guests to "see" different textures, styles, and color. Inspirational Image Scale: ? "= 1'-0" Purple panels show the history in chronological order starting with 1755-1905 to present day. Scale Figure: 5' Interactive Fabric Floor (Protected with a glass floor covering) Ribbon band- another aspect of sewing

Vivid colors are eye catching and show all the possibilities that color can emit Tacks represent the Industrial Movement of the 1900s Background fabric represents the threads of sewing TV screens with continuous footage of machine history Note: Overall height of exhibit is 8' Forsdyke, G. (n. d.). International sewing machine collectors. Retrieved from http://www.ismacs.net/sewing_machine_history.html History of the american sewing machine. (n. d.). Retrieved from <http://sewingmachine.umwblogs.org/the-sewing-machine-its-impact-onamerica/> Forsdyke, G. n. d.). International sewing machine collectors. Retrieved from http://www.ismacs.net/sewing_machine_history.html Holmes, C. (2010, April 22). History of the sewing machine. Retrieved from <http://www.moah.org/exhibits/virtual/sewing.html> Askaroff, A. (n. d.). History of the sewing machine. Retrieved from http://www.sewalot.com/sewing_machine_history.htm Perkin, J. (2002, December). Sewing machines: Liberation or drudgery for women?. Retrieved from <http://www.historytoday.com/joan-perkin/sewingmachines-liberation-or-drudgery-women>