

Early Singer Machines Without the Singer Name

The main reason the Singer Manufacturing Company manufactured machines that did not carry their name and were not sold through Singer agents or agencies was to allow the company to enter markets where customers prioritised cost above quality, without hurting the reputation of the Singer name.

The New York Favorite Sewing Machine



Figure 6:

The New York Favorite sewing machine. It has no serial number

Introduced in the mid to late 1880s, Singer's New York Favorite sewing machine (**Figure 6**) was developed to compete with small, inexpensive German-made, hand-driven machines. It was made exclusively for the Export Agency. At first, it was mainly to be sold in Latin American countries. Because they were not labeled as Singer machines, the usual sales and territory restrictions did not apply, and when the Hawaiian Hardware Co., Ltd. asked for 250 New York Favorite machines, the machines were promptly shipped. Upon receipt of the machines, they advertised:

*"The New York Favorite is a machine built by the original Singer Manufacturing Co., at their extensive works in New Jersey and upon identical lines as the improved Singer. We import them from the factory in car loads . . ."*¹⁵

One has to wonder if the Singer Manufacturing Company executives approved this ad.

The only US dealer that was told of these machines was W. B. Fry in San Francisco, as he acted as an intermediary between Singer and the company in Hawaii. When one of his agents complained of unfair competition, as he often sold Singer machines in the Hawaiian territory, he was told to explain to customers it *"was in no sense a Singer machine"*.¹ Singer did allow that agent a small quantity of the New York Favorite machines, to be sold only in Hawaii, to meet this competition.

Machines were soon sent from Elizabethport to the United Kingdom to be distributed to European countries. An 1886 factory price sheet sent to a foreign agent shows his cost for a New York Favorite head on an iron base to be about half the cost of a plain New Family head on a wood base. A portable case was optional. Internal documents refer to this machine both as 'New York Favorite' and 'N.Y. Favorite', but no number designation.

The original hinged bed plate on the machine was changed in 1888 to a one-piece design, with the head integral to the bed. One of these, carefully selected to be a very good example, was shipped to Singer's Clydebank factory in September 1888 to be used as a model for a pattern to make the N.Y. Favorite sewing machines at that location. Alexander Anderson, manager at the Clydebank factory, had suggestions for improvement,¹ and so did George Neidlinger, the company's manager in Germany, who had sold some of the earlier version of the machine.

Suggestions for changes to the machine included:

- Making the machine look heavier and more attractive
- Making the presser foot broad enough to cover the feed dogs

- Having a better fitting shuttle, a heavier presser bar spring with screw adjustment on top of the arm similar to the V.S. No.2
- Marking the gear wheels for easy reassembly
- An improvement to the needle clamp, including allowance to admit the use of regular sizes of I.F. and V.S. No.2 needles

Since so few of these machines have been found, it is unknown how many of these suggestions were implemented. The machine shown in Figure 6 (which is missing the bobbin winder and shuttle) does have the screw adjustment on the top of the presser bar, so it is assumed this is one of these later machines.

Although communications between New York and Clydebank suggested the machine was to be produced in Clydebank, it is unknown if this actually occurred.

The general managers of the Singer Manufacturing Company were enthusiastic about the initial orders for the New York Favorite sewing machine, and felt it answered demands in certain countries for a machine of this type, but by 1895, it had been discontinued, and no more were in stock at Elizabethport.

One machine has been found that appears to be identical to the machine shown, except it has the name 'Singer' on the arm instead of 'N. Y. Favorite'.¹⁶