

The Collection

Vintage Sewing Machines



Chatterbox Quilts



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The Collection

My Favourites

If you read the first book in this series you know that I tend to break the wide variety of SINGER® sewing machines into four major groups: *Manual*, *Classic*, *Transitional*, and *Modern*, based on their appearance and (roughly) when they were made. The first group, *Manual*, contains machines made prior to the 1920's. In general, these machines tended to be manual and were not built with electric motors.

The second group were produced after the 1920's and I like to call them *Classic*. They were still designed with what I consider the classic style – shiny black, with gold decals and with the swan-like shape (thin neck), but could be ordered with an electric motor. They often came in beautiful cabinets and bentwood cases that further demonstrated the craftsmanship of the people making the machines.

The third group are the machines that were built after what I call *Classic* and before the 1960's. I call them *Transitional*. They were designed with a more utilitarian or trendy style. Machines from this era sew well and offer features that the classics don't have, but I don't like their style as much. No shiny black and no pretty gold decals.

The fourth group is what I call the *Modern* machines and were produced in a period that spans from the 1960's to today. In response to increased competition SINGER® began producing containing lower quality components (often made of plastic) with uninspired styling, although they offered more features than their predecessors.

My favourite machines are mostly from the *Classic* group and my collection reflects that, however I also have a few machines from the *Transitional* group because I was attracted to their additional features or their iconic styling.

Model Numbers

By now you probably know that various models of sewing machines from SINGER® were identified with a number such as 99, 201, etc. SINGER® used the model numbers for machines that have specific design features, but then sometimes appended numbers to the model to indicate a specific version of that particular model. A good example is the SINGER® 15. This particular model was in production for almost 100 years so there were quite a number of variations produced. SINGER® used this numbering scheme to make the distinction between the type of

motor that was installed. The SINGER® 15-90 uses a belt drive, while the SINGER® 15-91 has a potted motor and is gear driven.

You may have also discovered that a lot of machines have model numbers that also contain letters such as 99K. The letter that follows the model number indicates where the machine was manufactured: they don't indicate any difference in the model. My collection includes *Classic* machines that were made either at the Kilbowie factory in Clydebank, Scotland: the model numbers have a "K" after them, or in St. Jean-sur-Richelieu in Quebec, Canada. These machines have a "J" after the model number.



SINGER® 221K - *Featherweight made in Kilbowie, Scotland*

The Classics

Beauty in Black

Machines from this group are my favourite not only because they have an amazing stitch, but also due to their classic style. The sewing machines were timeless pieces of domestic machinery, essential to the daily function of a household. They were designed and manufactured at great expense to last indefinitely and they have. While it's true that they don't have hundreds of decorative stitches and features, they have been designed to do one thing very well - sew a beautiful straight stitch.

SINGER® 99

Small But Powerful

The first vintage SINGER® sewing machine I purchased was the 99K and it is still one of my favourites. I love the ornate decals, elaborate metal scroll work, and attractive "swan neck" lines on this machine. My machine was produced in 1939 in the Kilbowie factory in Clydebank, Scotland. It is hard to believe that this beauty is over 75 years old and is still running strong.



SINGER® 99K



SINGER® 99K - View From The Back



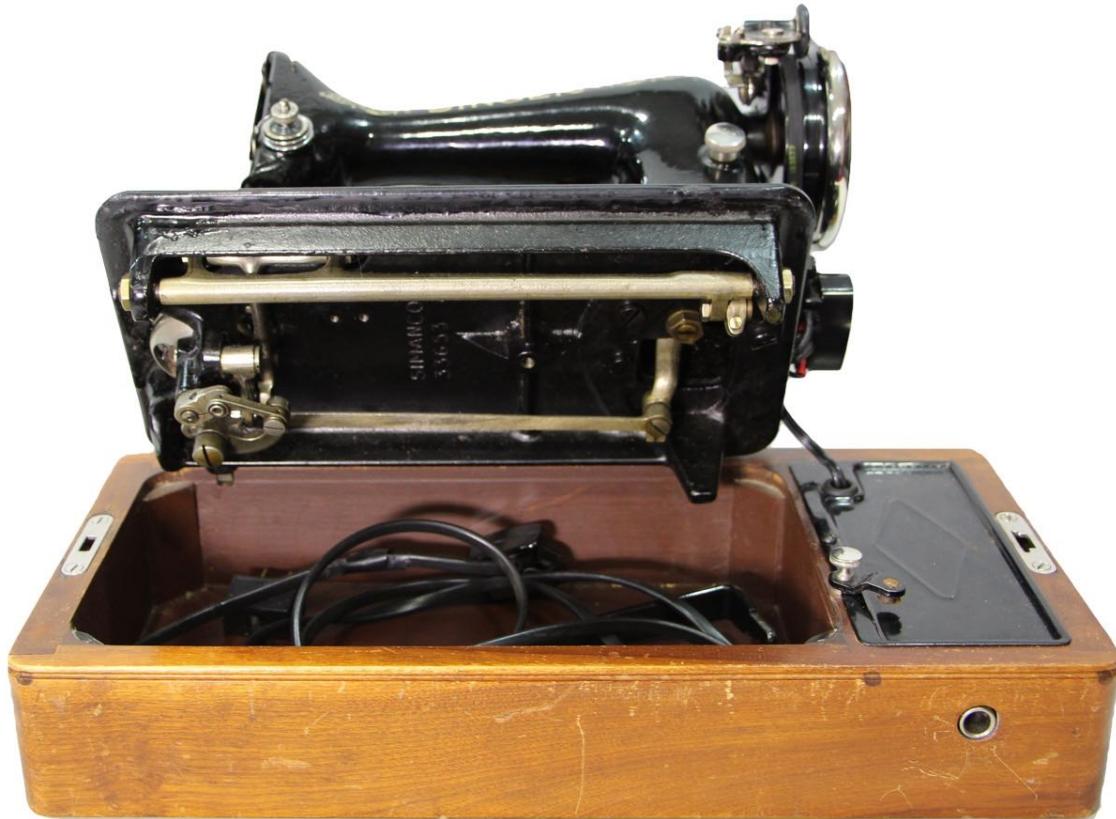
SINGER® 99K - View From The Front



SINGER® 99K - *View From The Rear*



SINGER® 99K - *Bobbin Winder*



SINGER® 99K - Storage Compartment

The SINGER® 99 model was derived from the well-established SINGER® 66. It is actually a $\frac{3}{4}$ size version of the full size SINGER® Model 66 using an identical mechanism and many of the same parts, other than the basic body casting. The SINGER® 99 was first produced in 1911 and production continued until 1958. In 1921 the company introduced the option of an electric motor making the 99 model the first portable SINGER® electric sewing machine.

The SINGER® 99 is a straight stitch, low shank machine that accepts the same needles that are used in modern machines. It uses a class 66 drop-in bobbin. There is no reverse and the feed dogs do not drop. The machine tilts up on its base to reveal a small compartment where the attachments and power cord can be stored. The knee bar is often stored in the lid of the bentwood case.

The SINGER® 99 model sewing machine was very popular with occasional home sewists because at 22 pounds (9.98 kg.) it was more manageable than ‘full size’ machines, which weighed in around 30 pounds (13.6 kg.). They were sold with a bentwood case that allowed them to be easily carried.: although, I am not sure that lugging around 22 pounds of sewing machine is really that “easy”!



SINGER® 99K Bentwood Case

The SINGER® 99K I purchased for my collection also came with the combination table no. 301, which I actually use as my computer desk when I'm not using the machine.. The table has a centre panel that can be lowered so the base of the 99K can be inserted into it. This arrangement puts the machine bed at the same height as the table - providing a large, level area for sewing. The table is designed so that you can use the same knee lever that you would use if you were operating the machine as a portable. When you are finished sewing you can put the bentwood case back on and the machine becomes an attractive piece of furniture or you can store the machine elsewhere, raise the panel and the cabinet can be used as a table.

Original Condition

I found this machine online and was intrigued by the combination of bentwood case and cabinet. When I went to see it I fell in love with the ornate decals and lines on this machine. The bentwood cabinet and the table were also in really good condition. It came with the standard attachments and two knee bars. I discovered the extra one in – you guessed it – the top of the bentwood case.

Unfortunately the wiring was in rough shape and would need replacing. Since this was my first time purchasing a machine, and I didn't know better, I plugged in the machine to ensure that it

would run. I probably shouldn't have done this as the wiring was in really bad shape. I was lucky I didn't get a jolt, which would have quickly ended my collection at one!



Damaged Wiring on the SINGER® 99K

After a little research and some new materials the SINGER® 99K was rewired and ready to be restored. This machine had been sitting unused for decades and needed some cleaning up. It had been well cared for so I only had to add some oil, do a bit of minor cleaning, and it was ready to sew. I was pleased with the condition of the bentwood cover as it can be difficult to find these in good shape. I used Howard Products Restor-a-Finish and Feed-N-Wax on the cabinet, but I didn't need to touch the bentwood case, other than to dust it off.

Vintage Sewing Machine 101

Series

This book is part of the Vintage Sewing Machine 101 Series from Chatterbox Quilts. The series consists of five ebooks that will provide you with all that you need to know about buying and restoring a vintage Singer sewing machine.

Vintage Singer Sewing Machines

Learn what a vintage Singer sewing machine is, how to decide on a model, and why you should buy one.

The Collection

Learn about the features of the various vintage Singer sewing machines by taking a tour of the machines in Kim's collection.

Find a Vintage Sewing Machine

Learn where to buy and how to evaluate the specific machine when you are about to make a purchase.

Restore a Vintage Singer Sewing Machine

Learn how to restore, repair and maintain your new purchase.

Vintage Singer Sewing Machine Projects

Instructions on how to make two projects using your newly acquired vintage Singer sewing machine.