

Vintage Sewing Machines

and Why You Should Buy One



Chatterbox Quilts



Table of Contents

Vintage Sewing Machines	1
What is a Vintage SINGER® Sewing Machine	2
The History of SINGER® Sewing Machines	2
Categories	5
Manual Sewing Machines	6
Classic SINGER® Sewing Machines	8
Transitional SINGER® Sewing Machines	10
Modern SINGER® Sewing Machines	12
Why You Should Buy A Vintage Sewing Machine	13
Stitch Quality & Value	14
History	15
Durability & Reliability	17
Style	19
The Thrill of the Hunt	20
Things to Consider	22
Considerations	22
Applying Your Decisions	28
Vintage Sewing Machine 101 Series	30

Vintage Sewing Machines

Beautiful Machines With A Long History

A vintage SINGER® sewing machine should be a consideration for anyone who is thinking about purchasing a sewing machine. The production of SINGER® sewing machines began in the 1850's with millions of machines eventually being sold to eager customers. The beautiful cabinets, well-made machines, and practical improvements made a SINGER® a must have for the average household. In fact, the quality of these early machines was so good that there are still many of these sewing machines in use today.

Older SINGER® sewing machines are a great choice because of the variety of models, their great quality and the availability of machines and replacement parts. It is possible, however, to become overwhelmed by all the various models when you start looking for a vintage machine. SINGER® produced so many sewing machines over its long history that it can be difficult to choose from the wide range of machines available. With perseverance and a little research, not only will you get a dependable workhorse of a machine but you may also end up with a work of industrial art that you can proudly display in your home.

I have acquired quite a few (15 and counting) vintage sewing machines over the years. Some are over 100 years old and are still going strong. Each one is unique and has its own story about how I acquired and rejuvenated it. One thing that they all have in common is that they all sew a beautiful stitch.



SINGER® 99K

Things to Consider

Why Do You Want It

Probably the single most important thing to consider before looking for a sewing machine is how you are going to use it. With that knowledge you can decide which models you are interested in and where you might purchase them. Possible intended uses could be:

- Display or home decor
- Occasional home sewing such as mending or making clothing
- Frequent/professional sewing such as making drapes, slipcovers, clothing
- Sewing heavy goods (upholstery, canvas, etc.) such as slipcovers, tents, sails
- Resale – buying to fix up and resell

If you are buying strictly for display or for resale, the condition of the paint and decals will be more important than the mechanical condition of the machine. If, however, you intend to use the machine for sewing, the mechanical condition will be more important. It's always nice if the machine looks good, but ultimately you'll want it to sew well! Let's look at some things to consider before you start actually looking at a machine

Considerations

Straight Stitch vs Specialty Stitches

If you need a machine that does specialty stitches, rather than just a straight stitch, this will affect the machines that will be available to purchase. You can't get a classic look in a machine that has built-in specialty stitches, *but* you can buy attachments that allow these machines to do some specialty stitches. For example, you can purchase a zigzagger which allows you to do a zigzag stitch as well as some decorative stitches or a buttonholer that enables you to do various types of buttonholes on garments. You will have to decide if the benefit of having specialty stitches built-in is important because only the Transitional and Modern models have this feature.



SINGER® 500 Specialty Stitch Controls

Portable vs Cabinet

Cabinets are great if you've got the room for them. They provide a stable work surface and a convenient place to store your machine. In many cases they are also an attractive piece of furniture by themselves. Cabinets can be restored with just a little tender loving care. A word of caution though: if you become an “enthusiastic collector” you may find that you run out of room in your house for additional cabinets. If you do run out of space, you can continue to add to your collection by choosing from the large number of portable machines that are available.

Portables have the advantage of, well, portability. The flexibility to set up the machine in places where a cabinet wouldn't fit or the ability to take the machine with you to another location can be a significant benefit. Portables are fairly compact, so they are easy to store out-of-sight when they are not in use. Portable SINGER® sewing machines come with their own case that carries the machine and its attachments. Some older machines come with a beautiful bentwood case that is almost a piece of furniture in itself.

A note of caution about the designation “portable”. Although these machines can be carried to different locations, most of them (especially the older ones) are still quite large and heavy. Often, they are just a full sized machine that has been attached to a base rather than a cabinet. In fact, it could be said that the only true portables that SINGER® made prior to the modern era are the 221 and 222 also known as the “Featherweight”.

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.