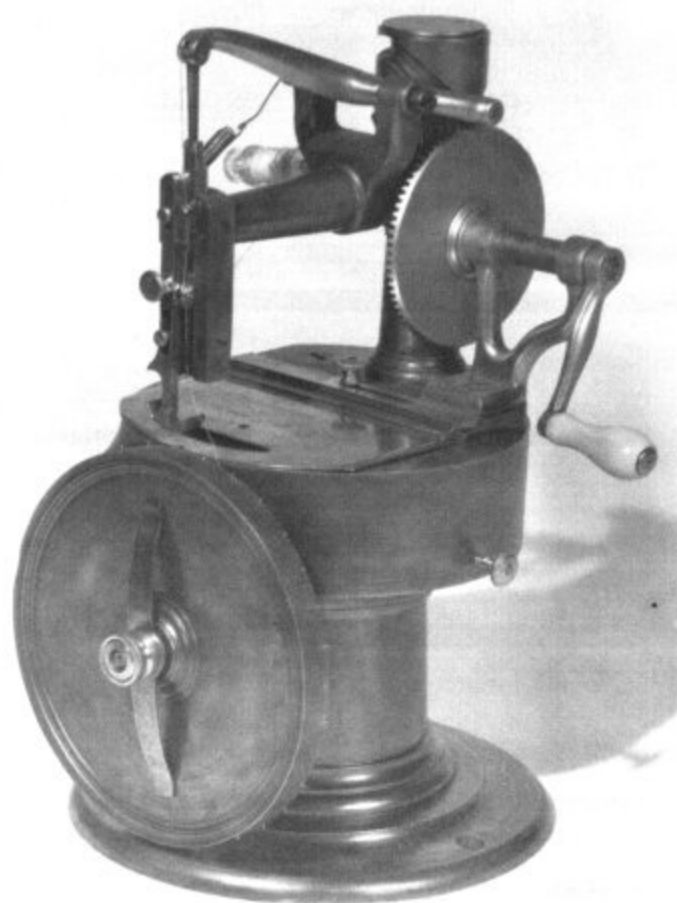


Figure 21.—BLODGETT & LEROW SEWING MACHINE, 1850, stamped with the legend "Goddard, Rice & Co., Makers, Worcester, Mass." and the serial number 37. Below: An original brass plate marked "No. 38"; this plate fits the machine perfectly. (Smithsonian photo 48440-E; brass plate: 48440-J.)



machines was greatly increased at home and abroad. Elias took this opportunity to gain entry into the manufacturing business by persuading Amasa to let him build a factory at Bridgeport, Connecticut, and manufacture the (Amasa) Howe machines. Two years passed before the factory was completed, and Amasa's agents were discouraged. The loss could have been regained, but the machines produced at Bridgeport were not of the quality of the earlier machines. Amasa attempted to rebuild the Bridgeport machines, but finally abandoned them and resumed manufacturing machines in New York under his own immediate supervision.<sup>45</sup> Elias formed his own company and continued to manufacture sewing machines. In 1867 he requested a second extension of his patent, but the request was refused. Elias Howe died in October of the same year.

Meanwhile, another important sewing machine of a different principle had also been patented in 1849. This was the machine of Sherburne C.

Blodgett, a tailor by trade, who was supported financially by John A. Lerow. United States patent 6,766 was issued to both men on October 2, 1849. In the patent, the machine was termed as "our new 'Rotary Sewing Machine'." The shuttle movement was continuous, revolving in a circle, rather than reciprocating as in the earlier machines. Automatic tension was initiated, restraining the slack thread from interference with the point of the needle.

The Blodgett and Lerow machine was built by several shops. One of the earliest was the shop of Orson C. Phelps on Harvard Place in Boston. Phelps took the Blodgett and Lerow machine to the sixth exhibition of the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics Association in September 1850 and won a silver medal and this praise, "This machine performed admirably; it is an exceedingly ingenious and compact machine, able to perform tailor's sewing beautifully and thoroughly."<sup>46</sup> Although Phelps had

<sup>45</sup> *Sewing Machine Journal* (July 1887), pp. 93-94.

<sup>46</sup> *Report of the Sixth Exhibition of the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics Association, in the City of Boston, September 1850* (Boston, 1850).