

One of the more interesting of the patents, however, was for the box or sewing case for which Grover was issued U.S. patent No. 14,956 on May 27, 1856. The inventor stated "that when open the box shall constitute the bed for the machine to be operated upon, and hanging the machine thereto to facilitate oiling, cleansing, and repairs without removing it from the box." It was the first portable sewing machine (fig. 36).

Though the Grover and Baker company manufactured machines using a shuttle and producing the more common lockstitch, both under royalty in their own name and also for other smaller companies, Potter was convinced that the Grover and Baker stitch was the one that eventually would be used in both family and commercial machines. He, as president, directed the efforts of the company to that end. When the basic patents held by the "Sewing-Machine Combination" (discussed on pp. 41-42) began to run out in the mid-1870s, dissolving its purpose and lowering the selling price of sewing machines, the Grover and Baker company began a systematic curtailing of expenses and closing of branch offices. All the patents held by the company

and the business itself were sold to another company.<sup>63</sup> But the members of the Grover and Baker company fared well financially by the strategic move.

The Grover and Baker machine and its unique stitch did not have a great influence on the overall development of the mechanics of machine sewing. The merits of a double-looped stitch—its elasticity and the taking of both threads from commercial spools—were outweighed by the bulkiness of the seam and its consumption of three times as much thread as the lockstitch required. Machines making a similar type of stitch have continued in limited use in the manufacture of knit goods and other products requiring an elastic seam. But, more importantly, Grover and Baker's astute Orlando B. Potter placed their names in the annals of sewing-machine history by his work in forming the "Combination," believed to be the first "trust" of any prominence.

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<sup>63</sup> Domestic Sewing Machine Company. See *Union Special Sewing Machine Co. Sales Bulletin*, vol. 3, ch. 15, pp. 58-59.