

catching as possible. The 1870s was also the decade of many new innovations in styles and methods of adding drawers or drop leaves to the less costly table or stand.

The American sewing machine had won international favor at the London exhibition in 1862, the Paris one in 1867, and the Vienna exhibition in 1873. With this it had not only become an important export item around the world, but it was also widely copied by foreign manufacturers. At the 1876 Centennial exhibition in Philadelphia there were thirty American exhibitors of sewing machines in Machinery Hall. Decorated marquees housed the machines, and show cases exhibited examples of the work that the machines could produce. The Singer company, the largest sewing-machine manufacturer at this time, housed its exhibit in a building of its own. The major patents expired the year after the Centennial, and many new companies blossomed into existence. Some of these were companies that manufactured specialized sewing machines for very limited manufacturing tasks.

1880s

The motor could have been the new addition to the sewing machine in 1880. Although it is evident that it was possible this early, the practical application of electricity to operate the sewing machine did not come into use until electricity was in the home. Electric sewing machines were still several decades away. Reportedly, new ideas of lowering heads into cabinets were advertised. Comparison with figure 116 makes it apparent that the idea was not so new. From the 1880s on, more companies did use this method of lowering the machine to provide a flat surface when the machine was not in use; however, machines continued to be manufactured that required covering the machine head with a box. Oak became an increasingly important wood used in sewing-machine tables and cabinets. By the end of the decade, more and more specialized machines were manufactured each year by such firms as Union Special Machine Company and Merrow Machine Company.

1890s

New sewing-machine names on the market came to mean new styles from an existing company rather than a new company. The drop-head was still considered "new" in some advertisements, and the styles reflect

the everyday domestic furniture of the era. The bentwood—as opposed to being cut into shape—technique was finally applied to sewing-machine head covers. Manufacturing machines had become industrial in nature as the specialization of each type of machine became more and more refined.

STYLES IN THE EARLY DECADES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Embossed wood designs had become an important feature of the cabinets of sewing machines in the first decade. The cabinets themselves are most frequently the "bureau" style introduced earlier rather than the full floor cabinet, although the latter is still found. Electric machines were being offered by most of the major companies by the second decade; however, the production of treadle machines continued to be the more popular for obvious reasons—lower cost and lack of electricity in the home. Hand-turned machines were manufactured by some of the companies, but these were primarily for export. They were not popular in America except for the children's variety. So-called "period style" cabinets appear on the market beginning in the mid-20s. This coincides with the revival of interest in period-style furniture, which sewing-machine manufacturers copied. Portable machines, which had not been popular since the earliest years, became increasingly so after electric machines and electricity were common. A table to house the treadle was no longer a necessity and any household table could serve the purpose; it was less important for the sewing machine to be a piece of furniture.

SEWING-MACHINE COMPANIES

Fanciful names for home sewing machines began to be used in greater numbers in the late 19th century, as noted by such appellations as Minnehaha, Splendid, Queen City, and others. For the most part, each new name represented a new company with a different machine, although the question of "difference" could be debated as many of the machines after 1877 looked alike. The smaller companies, especially the new ones, copied the style of the well-known, established machines. The idea of colorful names was not new in the 20th century, but increasingly became the rule rather than the exception. It was in the last decade of the 19th century that companies—like the newly formed National Sewing Machine Company—began selling their machines in increasing numbers to de-