

idea. Fisher, however, agreed to sell his half interest, and in February 1851 George S. Jackson, Daniel C. Johnson, and William E. Whiting became joint owners with Howe. These men helped Howe to procure witnesses in the furtherance of numerous suits, but more money was needed than they could raise. The following year a Massachusetts man by the name of George W. Bliss was persuaded to advance the money for the heavy legal expenses needed to protect the patent. Bliss did this as a speculation and demanded additional security. Once more Elias' long-suffering parent came to the rescue and mortgaged his farm to get the necessary collateral.

Only one of these suits was prosecuted to a hearing, but this one, relatively unimportant in itself, set the precedent. In it the defense relied on the earlier invention of Walter Hunt to oppose Howe's claims. The defendant succeeded in proving that Hunt invented, perfected, and sold two machines in 1834 and 1835 which contained all the essential devices in Howe's machine of 1846. But Howe showed that the defendant's machine (which was a Blodgett and Lerow) contained some features of Howe's machine which were not in Hunt's. The jury decided the case in favor of Howe. Howe later fought a vigorous battle with Isaac Singer, but after much legal controversy the ultimate decision in that case also was in Howe's favor. The suits and payments to each patent holder for the right to use his idea were choking the sewing-machine industry. Even Howe could not manufacture a practical machine without an infringement. Finally an agreement was reached and a "Combination" was formed by the major patent holders (see pp. 41-42).

In the meantime, eight years of the first term of Howe's patent had expired without producing much revenue. This permitted Howe, upon the death of his partner, George Bliss, to buy Bliss' half interest for a small sum. He became, then, the sole owner of his patent just as it was to bring him a fortune. He obtained a seven-year extension for his patent in 1860 without any difficulty, and in 1867, when he applied for another extension, he stated that he had received \$1,185,000 from it. Though he endeavored to show that because of the machine's great value to the public he was entitled to receive at least \$150,000,000, the second application was denied.

During the Civil War, Howe enlisted as a private soldier in the 17th Regiment Connecticut Volunteers. He went into the field and served as an enlisted man. On occasion when the Government was pressed for funds to pay its soldiers, he advanced the money necessary to pay his entire regiment.

Howe did not establish a sewing-machine factory until just before his death in 1867. One of his early licensees had been his elder brother, Amasa, who had organized the Howe Sewing Machine Company about

1853. When Elias began manufacturing machines on his own, he sunk into the bedplate of each machine a brass medallion bearing his likeness. Elias gave his company the same name that his elder brother had used. As this had been Amasa's exclusive property for many years, he took the matter to the courts where the decision went against Elias. He then organized the Howe Machine Company and began to manufacture sewing machines. On October 3, 1867, Elias died in Brooklyn, New York, at the home of one of his sons-in-law. The company was then carried on by his two sons-in-law, who were Stockwell brothers. In 1872 the Howe Sewing Machine Company was sold by Amasa's son to the Stockwells' Howe Machine Company, which in turn went out of business in the mid-1880s.

ALLEN BENJAMIN WILSON

Allen B. Wilson was born in the small town of Willett, Cortlandt County, New York, in 1824. At sixteen he was apprenticed to a distant relative, a cabinetmaker. Unfortunate circumstances caused him to leave this employ, and in 1847 Wilson was in Adrian, Michigan, working as a journeyman cabinetmaker. The place and year are important, for it was at this time that he conceived his idea of a sewing machine. Because of the distant location, it is believed that he was not aware of similar efforts being made in New England. Wilson became ill and for many months could not work at his trade. By August 1848 he was able to work again and found employment at Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Resolving to develop his idea of a sewing machine, he worked diligently and by November had made full drawings of all the parts, according to his previous conceptions.

In comparison to the monetary returns received by the inventors Howe and Singer, Wilson himself did not receive as great a monetary reward for his outstanding sewing-machine inventions. Because of his health Wilson retired in 1853, when the stock company was formed, but he received a regular salary and additional money from the patent renewals. Wilson petitioned for a second extension of his patents on April 7, 1874, stating that, due to his early poverty, he had been compelled to sell a half interest in a patent (his first one) for the sum of \$200. Also he stated that he had not received more than his expenses during the original fourteen-year term. Wilson also stated that he had received only \$137,000 during the first seven-year extension period. These figures were verified by his partner. The petition was read before both Houses of Congress and referred to the