



Wednesday 12 August 2009

Welcome to another edition of Midweek Moments. The historic quest for the first functional sewing machine gets nasty this week, as American inventor Elias Howe discovers, with lawsuits, court cases and near bankruptcy. Read on, to find out how these events unfolded.

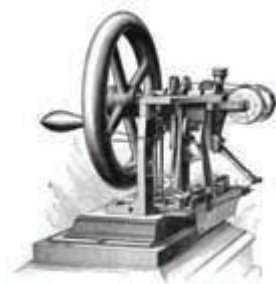
[Sew 'n' Sews Part 3](#)

A brief and roughly stitched together history of the people who invented the sewing machine

Elias Howe - patent wars and legal battles



In 1846, the first American sewing machine patent went to inventor Elias Howe, who successfully refined the disparate ideas of many sewing machine pioneers before him into a fully functional machine that used a lockstitch design. Unfortunately, while Howe may have had a mechanically brilliant mind, his marketing and business skills were poor, and he struggled for many years trying to generate interest in his invention, both in the U.S. and England.



Even worse, lots of other inventors began copying Howe's design and were "inventing" their own models. The most famous of these copycats was Isaac Singer, who Howe eventually took to court and attempted to sue for infringing the patent on his lockstitch design. The legal wrangling dragged on for years, sending Howe's family to within a whisker of bankruptcy, even forcing the mortgage of his father's farm. Finally, in 1854, the courts upheld Howe's patent, enabling him to extract a license fee for each machine produced by Singer and his other rivals. This resulted in Howe's annual income jumping from \$300 to \$200,000, although it came at great cost to his health, which had

always been delicate. He died at the age of 48 in 1867, ironically the year his patent also expired.

Bizarrely, the 1965 Beatles movie *Help!* is "respectfully dedicated" to Elias Howe, as the "inventor of the sewing machine". Any Beatles fans out there who might be able to explain the connection???

Next week: How Isaac Singer went from "copycat" inventor to household name

[Online Fabric Specials](#)

This week and until sold out we have some great fabrics on special. The specials are available only online and include fabrics from the ranges below. The price for these fabrics have been reduced to **\$15 per metre**.

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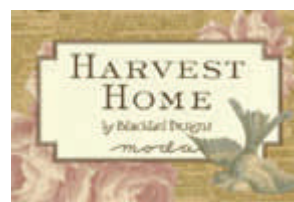
Click here to view the specials or click on the fabric range name below.



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Butterfly Fling
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Flirt



Fig & Plum
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Odelia
Rose Garden Tea for Two



Harvest Home
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Specials

[Tutor Profile on Susan Carr](#)

A veteran of creativity

To use her own words, Susan Carr had "done just about every craft known to man" by the time she finally discovered patchwork and quilting.

I'd tried most crafts; folk art, leadlighting, you name it, I'd given it a go," she says. "I particularly liked working with glass, and leadlighting is kind of like patchwork with glass. I'd done furniture restoration and I liked to include leadlight pieces in the furniture."



"Of course, sewing also figured prominently in this creative kaleidoscope. As a qualified dressmaker, Susan had her own dressmaking business for a number of years and had also taken her skills overseas where, rather unexpectedly, she found herself working for the U.K.'s Hello magazine.

"The magazine would run celebrity-themed competitions and I'd make wedding dresses as part of those promotions," she explains.

Later, back in Oz, it was Susan's mum, a regular Blueberries customer, who persuaded Susan to become a tutor. Susan says she was hesitant at first, but has now been at Blueberries for 12 months and has enjoyed the journey enormously.

"I believe that when you're surrounded by creativity in some form, it's almost inevitable that you'll take it up yourself," she says. "I have four daughters and three of them love sewing, so I must be doing something right."

Til next week!
The Blueberries Team