

A Stitch in Time: Sewing Machines

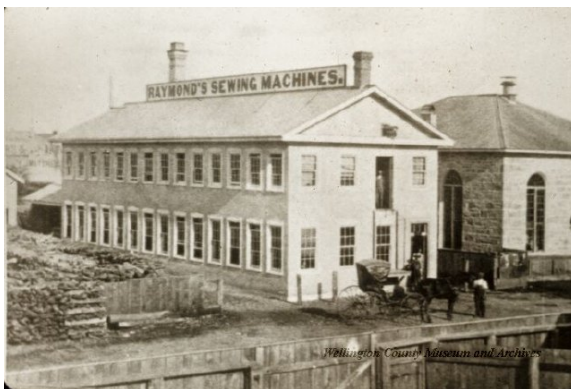
Sewing Machines are considered one of the first domestic machines to be mass-produced. Tailors and housewives are no longer expected to do tedious hand sewing anymore. While sewing a coat by hand used to take 16 hours, the same work now only takes 40 minutes on their new machines.

The sewing machine was responsible for the first commercial pattern companies and industries needed to provide spare parts. Both were unexpected offshoots to the sewing machine industry in the late 1800s.

Although the invention is not credited to a single individual, many consider **Barthélemy Thimonnier**, a French inventor, as the first person to patent the sewing machine for commercial use on July 17, 1830. In 1845, he organized the first French sewing-machine company in Paris. In the United States, many consider **Elias Howe** as the developer of the first completely successful patented sewing machine in 1846.

The sewing machine industry came to Canada in the 1860s. Companies located along transportation routes that were close to the shipping centres on Lake Ontario and railroad routes, as well as having easy access to coal, iron and steel. By the 1860s the sewing machine was the leading Canadian export.

The Raymond Sewing Company



Caption: People, horse, carriage outside the Raymond Sewing Machine factory, circa 1870.
Credit: Wellington County Museum and Archives (WCMA), Slide 7695, A1985.110.

The Raymond Sewing Company of Guelph was one of the most notable nearby companies of Wellington County. It was originally operated by Charles Raymond and exported its products to Great Britain and the colonies. Charles Raymond was the principle rival of R.M. Wanzer and Company out of Hamilton. In 1858, Charles Raymond and his business partner William Nettleton, started the Raymond Sewing Company in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

By 1862, Raymond moved to Guelph bringing with him fifteen men and by 1869, he owned one of Guelph's largest factories, employing forty people.

The **Raymond Household** was The Raymond Sewing Company's version of the portable table top, hand cranked operated sewing machine of the late 19th century. This one was used by Miss H.C. Watson of Guelph. Patented in April 18, 1872, the beaver became the Charles Raymond's company trademark and appears on many of his machines.



Caption: Raymond Household, 1878-1885.
Credit: WCMA, 1960.1.1.03.

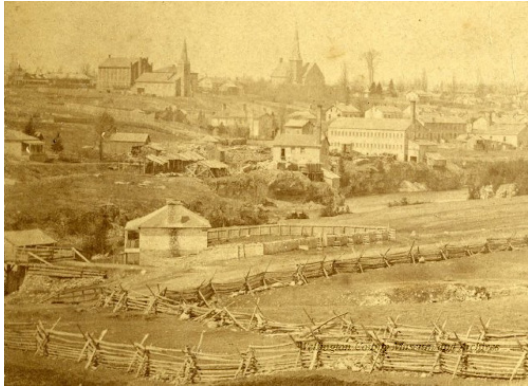
The chain stitch mechanism for the **New England** sewing machine was first manufactured by Charles Raymond in 1858. He first started producing machines in Vermont, USA before moving to Guelph, Ontario in 1862.



Caption: The New England, 1870-1885.
Credit: WCMA, 1987.24.25.

In 1897, Raymond Sewing Machine Company was sold to the White Sewing Machine Company of Cleveland, Ohio and the plant was renamed “Raymond Manufacturing Company” until 1916.

Fergus Manufacturing Company



Caption: Factory building (Fergus Manufacturing Company) along St. Andrew Street.
Credit: WCMA, ph 11037, A1992.90.

One of the least well-known sewing machine companies in the County was the Fergus Manufacturing Company developed in 1875 and 1877. Very little is known about the company. It produced a simple, sturdy machine called the Barclay and was designed by Robert Barclay, a watchmaker from Paris, Ontario.



Caption: **Barclay** Sewing Machine, 1880.
Credit: WCMA, 1952X.205.1.

The floor model treadle sewing machine was made with a wooden tabletop with a drop leaf

that went to the left side. It had black cast iron metal legs and foot pedal. Casted in raised letters on the foot pedal is "Fergus Mfg. Co." Inscribed on the machine is "Barclay". On the bobbin and metal plates is inscribed "Patented 1868".

This Barclay model was owned by the Louttit family. The family of William Sr. (1821-1893) and Mary (1828-1913) lived on Lot 14, Concession 5 in West Garafraxa Township. They had seven children (Margaret, Marian, Christian, Elizabeth, Alice, William Jr. and Annie).

A Toy Sewing Machine That Will Sew!

By 1919 the Sears Roebuck & Company catalogue were advertising toy sewing machines that could sew. They were marketed as popular girls' toys used to make dolls' clothing. The mechanisms were designed to work easily for a child.



Caption: The Tabitha Sewing Machine.
Credit: WCMA, 1988.80.3.

Many sewing machines were sold not as toys but smaller versions of full-sized models. Small, and durable, this rare brass sewing machine called The Tabitha (made in 1886-1890 by Daniel Judson & Son Ltd., London, England) was used by Edith Holder Durham while emigrating from Birmingham, England to Canada in 1914.

For more information on the WCMA Museum Sewing Machine Collection please visit our online collections catalogue wcma.pastperfectonline.com.