

There was living at Cambridge a young friend and schoolmate of the inventor, named George Fisher, a coal and wood merchant, who had recently inherited some property, and was not disinclined to speculate with some of it. The two friends had been in the habit of conversing together upon the project of the sewing-machine. When the inventor had reached his final conception, in the fall of 1844, he succeeded in convincing George Fisher of its feasibility, which led to a partnership between them for bringing the invention into use. The terms of the partnership were these: George Fisher was to receive into his house Elias Howe and his family, board them while Elias was making the machine, give up his garret for a workshop, and provide money for material and tools to the extent of five hundred dollars; in return for which he was to become the proprietor of one-half the patent, if the machine proved to be worth patenting. Early in December, 1844, Elias Howe moved into the house of George Fisher, set up his shop in the garret, gathered materials about him, and went to work. It was a very small, low garret, but it sufficed for one zealous brooding workman, who did not wish for gossiping visitors.

All the winter of 1844-45 Mr. Howe worked at his machine. His conception of what he intended to produce was so clear and complete that he was little delayed by failures, but worked on with almost as much certainty and steadiness as though he had a model before him. In April he sewed a seam by his machine. By the middle of May, 1845, he had completed his work. In July he sewed by his machine all the seams of two suits of woolen clothes, one suit for Mr. Fisher and the other for himself, the sewing of both of which outlasted the cloth. This first of all sewing-machines, after crossing the ocean many times, and figuring as a dumb but irrefutable witness in many a court, may still be seen at Mr. Howe's office in Broadway, where, within these few weeks, it has sewed seams in cloth at the rate of three hundred stitches a minute. It is agreed by all disinterested persons (Professor Renwick among others) who have examined this machine that Elias Howe, in making it, carried the invention of the sewing-machine farther on toward its complete and final utility than any other inventor has ever brought a first-rate invention at the first trial. It is a little thing, that first machine, which goes into a box of the capacity of about a cubic foot and a half. Every contrivance in it has since been improved, and new devices have been added; but no successful sewing-machine has ever been made, of all the seven hundred thousand now in existence, which does not contain some of the essential devices of this first attempt.

Toward the close of 1850 we find him in New York, superintending the construction of fourteen sewing-machines at a shop in Gold street, adjoining which he had a small office, furnished with a five-dollar desk and two fifty-cent chairs. One of these machines was exhibited at the fair in Castle Garden in October, 1851, where, for the space of two weeks, it sewed gaiters, pantaloons, and other work. Several of them were sold to a boot-maker in Worcester, who used them for sewing boot-legs with perfect success. Two or three others were daily operated in Broadway, to the satisfaction of the purchasers. We can say, therefore, of Elias Howe, that besides inventing the sewing-machine, and besides making the first machine with his own hands, he brought his invention to the point of its successful employment in manufacture.