

Early Featherweight Variations
Our Collection – Singer 221 Featherweights
Pam & J.C. Elliott

Part #2 Early Featherweights

In Part #1 written and photographed by William “Penn” Schooley Serial #AD541547 the 2nd Featherweight was featured. A unique Featherweight - the second Singer Model 221! In Part #2 I hope to show how to identify early Featherweights and demonstrate some of the early changes that would eventually determine the machine most of know as “the Singer Model 221 Featherweight”.

In the early years of the Singer Featherweight design engineers tried many and varied adaptations in perfecting their newest portable machine. Some became upgrades that continued though the lifespan of the 221 while others were just experiments and if found became one-of-a-kind. In this article we’ll focus on some of the adaptations attempted in the 1st Production run of Featherweights with serial numbers assigned by Singer Oct 1933-Sept 10, 1934. The changes made in this first run were significant and played a major role in the Singer “Featherweight” becoming the most beloved and best selling sewing machine in history.

We’ve been fortunate in acquiring two of the 1st 100 machines. Our first AD541590 (#44) from the estate of **Etta Wolf Josephson** of Chicago. Second, a very special AD541637 (#91) from fellow collector **Jane Lynch** of Massachusetts. Also included are pictures of another of the 1st Series Featherweights AD542154 or #608 off the assembly line that we acquired from our collector friend **Lynn Rowe** of British Columbia.

The most notable changes are those that are visible but more importantly are those that affected the operation of the machine itself ie, the throat plate, the hook assembly, the casting, the foot controller, and thread guides, etc. I am not an engineer, historian, nor am I a “technician” and won’t attempt to guess “why” these changes were made but only hope to show through pictures how to identify the earliest of our beloved Featherweights and to grow an appreciation for these +octogenarians!

Case

Foot Controllers

Decals - bed, vertical and horizontal arm

Throat plates

Thread take-up Levers

Hook assembly and bobbin case

Base castings & serial number boss/ escutcheon

Bobbin winder tension unit

* A final caveat; you will see parts on each that “may have” been changed over time as all the machines pictured have been pre-owned, yet, they are unique - Enjoy!

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The first Style Case

- * Flat formed, almost square leather handle with 2 leather keepers and “H” shaped brass handle hardware, locks, and hinges.
- * Greenish-blue interior fabric with opening in the tray allowing the foot controller to hang
- * metal strap machine hold-down attached to the inside of the lid



Center bed decal - either the standard extended “Celtic” design or the very rare Celtic “Bud” pattern



Rear arm decal

Note: the “height” of the leading letters on the rear of the horizontal arm the “T”, the “S”, the “M” and “C” are shorter than those found on later Featherweights...



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Belt Guard & Vertical arm decals

Note: the size/ length & number of loops in the belt guard decals both on the front side and the rear.
Also the number of loops on the decals of the front and rear (by the motor) vertical arm decals



AD 541590

AD 543535



AD 541590

AD 543535



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Two foot controllers...

We've found that sporadically you'll find two different ampere foot controllers ie .6 ampere and .7 ampere. The .6 ampere being far more uncommon. Both have fabric covered wiring exiting the metal controller from the "right" side.

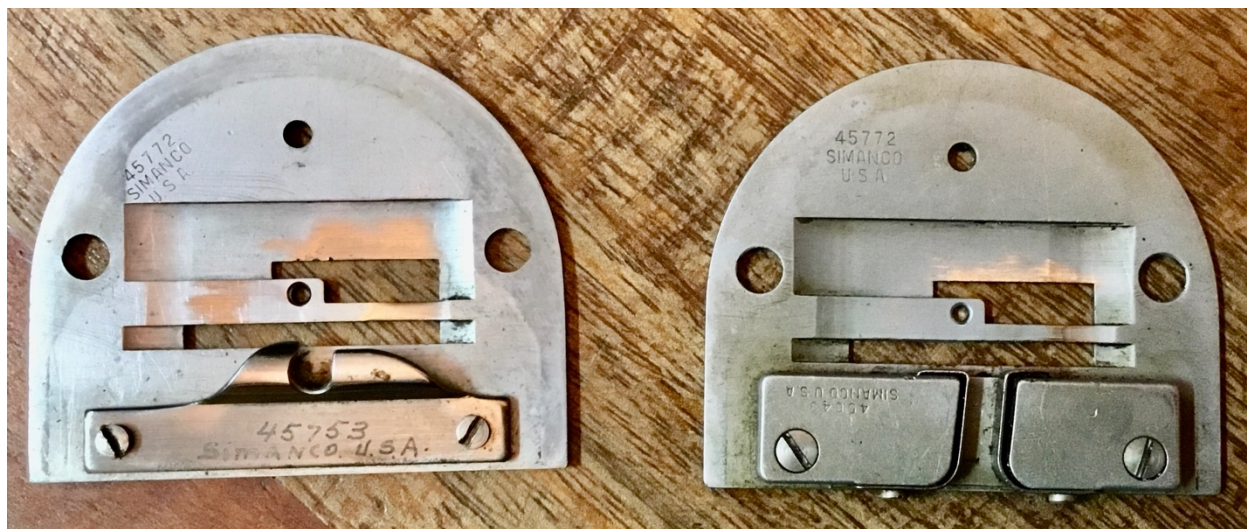
(On 1946 & some 1947 controller Singer once again used the metal foot controllers but the wiring exited from the "left" side - they are not fabric covered!)



Throat plates

Again two very different models found on the early-early Featherweights...It's been said that the first style was replaced because thy made a "clicking" noise". The second style has small spring buffers that eliminate the "click"

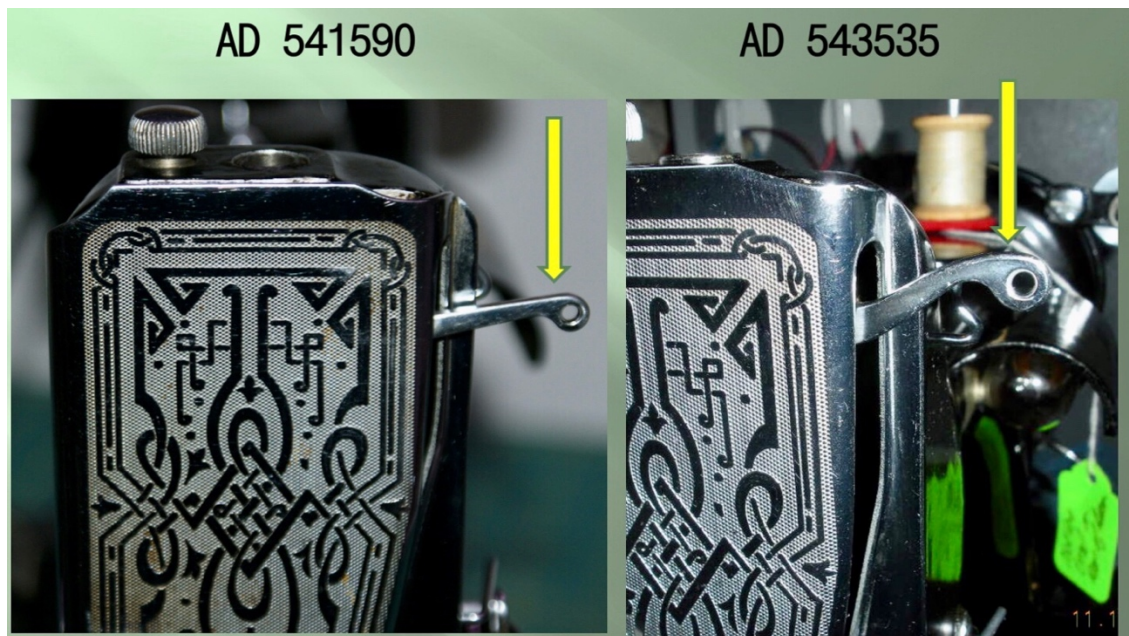
1st variation (very rare) on the left - soon replaced by the second on the right with dampening springs.



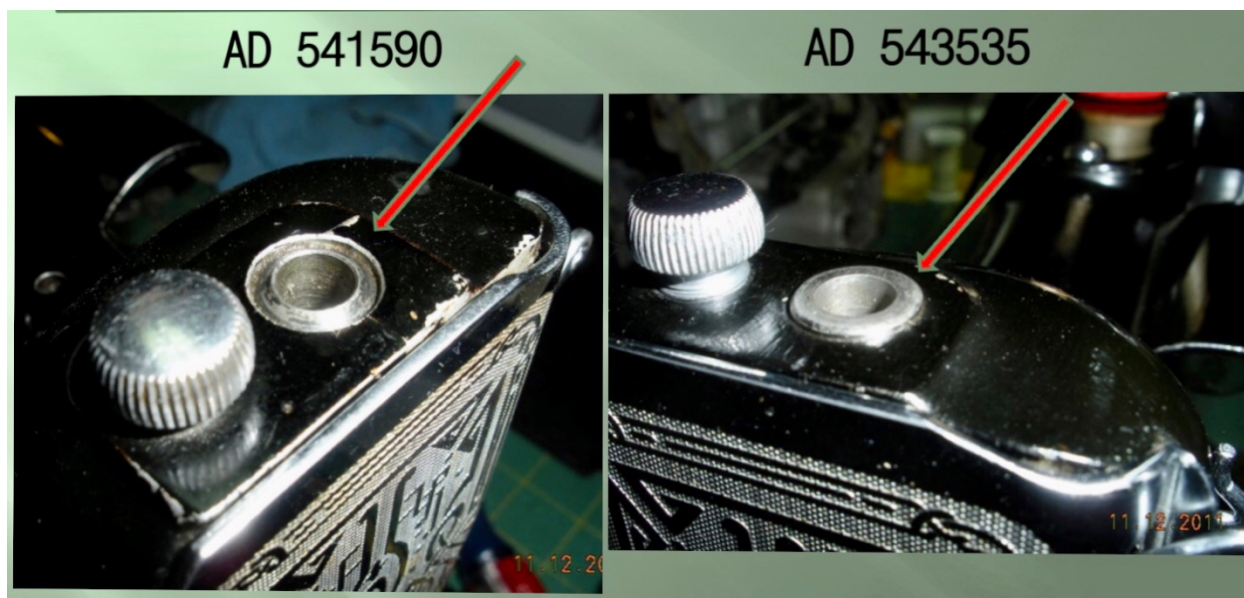
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Thread take-up levers

Again you “might” find a straight take-up lever vs the much more common “S” shaped.. Good Luck!.
The straight lever was a carryover from an earlier model Singers?



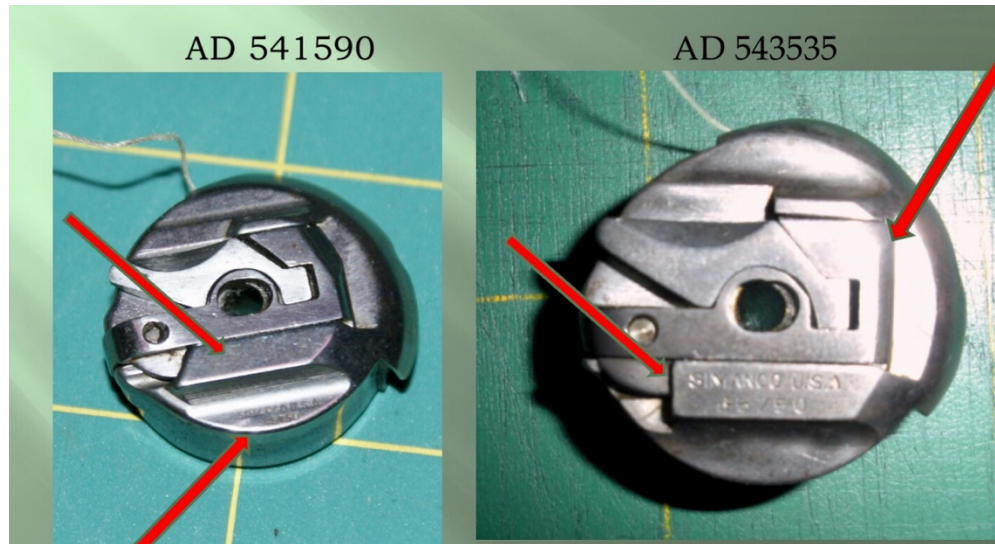
Needle Bar Guide / Adjustment sleeve



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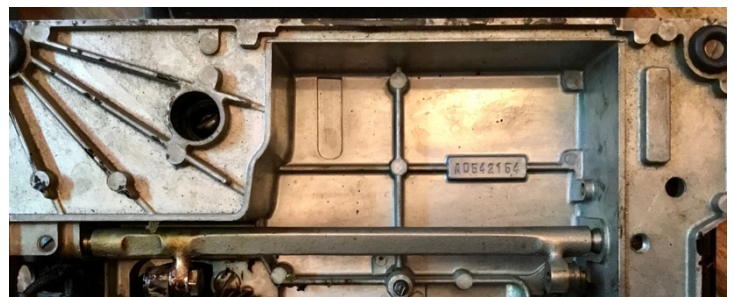
Hook assembly and bobbin cases

The early AD bobbin cases are identified by a slotted gib screw hole. Later ones have round holes. Note the part # and the various cuts/ shapes of the bobbin cover



Base castings & serial number boss/ escutcheon

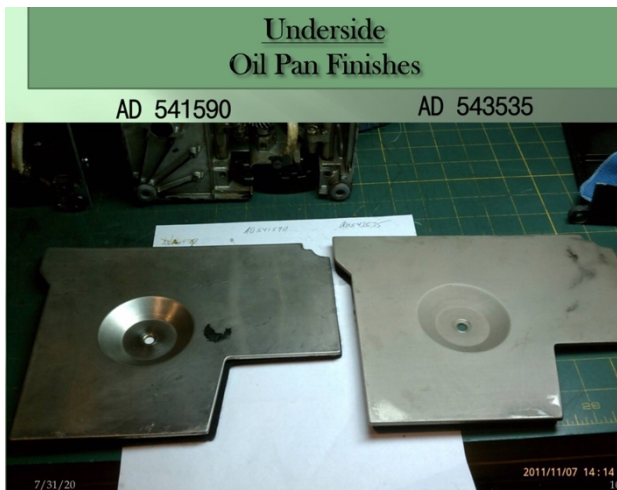
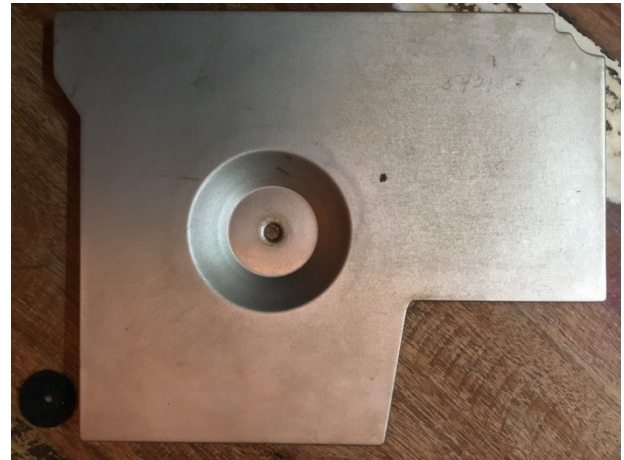
It's important to compare William Schooley's bottom photo on the top with mine below...you'll notice many variances...particularly in the molded webbing on the upper left, the serial number font sizing, and location of the serial number boss/ escutcheon etc...AD541547 on the left and AD542154 on the right. Also note the second serial number boss already molded into the case 608 machines later!



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Drip/ Oil Pan

Note on Mr. Schooley's #2 AD541547, the rounded corner in the upper right (also it was black). Compare to the photo of our #44 AD541590 with scalloped corner shaping in polished silver coloration. Also the shape of the indented center attachment hole. Deep w/little side taper in #2 vs #44's very slanted edges



Regarding the drip pan note that the color of the early pans ie, #2 was black, #44 on the left was a "polished" silver and #1989's-AD543535 pan pictured on the right is a brushed chrome.....
Yes that's getting down-in-the-weeds!

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Folding rear hinge bed-stop.

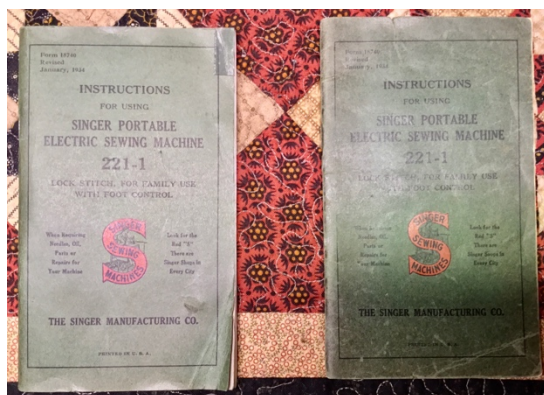
An early change to casting of the folding bed resulted in a stronger unit. On very early Featherweights you can find a “Bed-Stop” built into both the main bed casting and in the rear hinge of the Folding bed. The formation of the stop in the bed was weak resulting in breakage/ necessary replacement as seen on the right



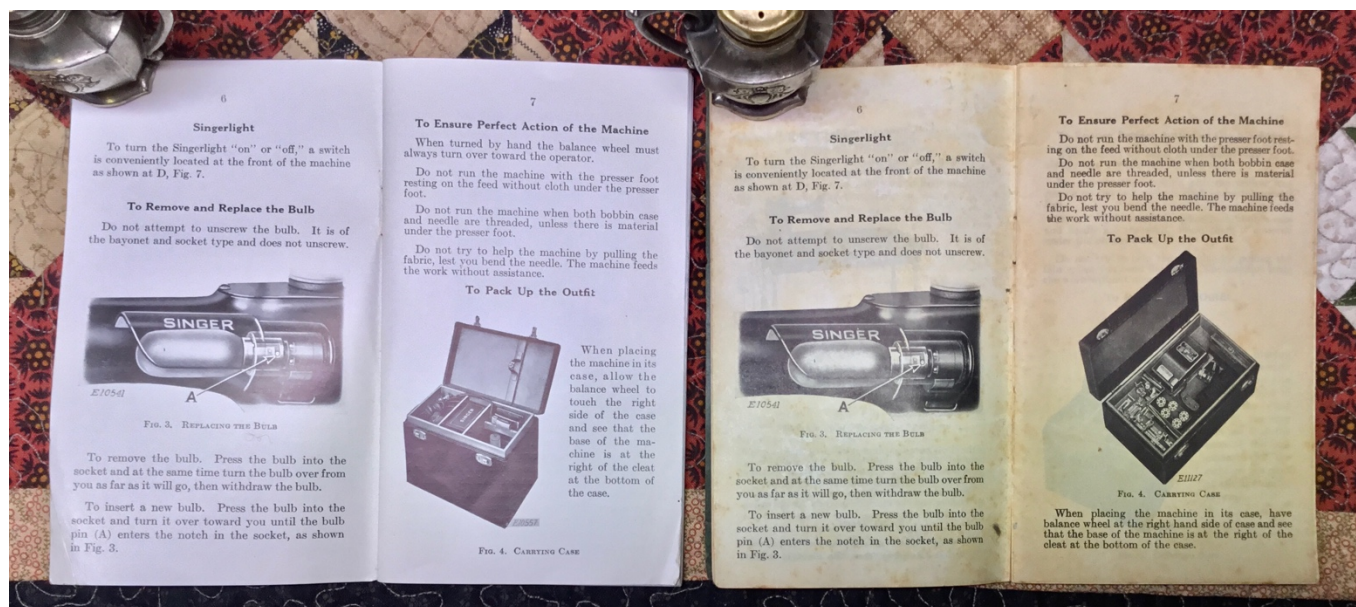
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Early Featherweight Owners Manuals

There were “3” manuals that were issued in the first year of the Featherweight. The very first is dated on the upper left corner “November 1933” - I do not have a copy to photograph but know that it exists! This manual was soon revised and reissued with a date of “January 1934”. Curiously Singer decided then again to make a correction to that manual by pasting a new page “7” over the existing page 7 rather than print an entire new manual. The difference is easy to spot and the value to all “3” has gone through the roof. If you find them - Treasure them! Pictured side-by-side are the two January 1934 Manuals!



The 1st January 1934 owners manual pictures the 1st Style Case on page 7
The 2nd January 1934 owners manual w/ pasted page features the 2nd style case.
Easy to see both cases when held up to a light!



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Bobbin Thread Tension Assembly

And finally one of my very favorite parts, one I've only seen on Featherweight #91 - AD541637 from Jane Lynch of Massachusetts, the "extended" bobbin winder tension assembly. Compare it to your standard "School Bell" of the 1934/ early 1935 version. I can only assume it was designed to allow the Featherweight to be inserted into the new Model 608 Featherweight table? (I'll include a few photos!) Cool isn't it?



Hope you found some tips to identify your early "AD" Featherweight....Please ask any questions and let us know if you find other odd features....

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