

The Story of Singer 221K1 #EG303841 "Centennial"

Our collecting goals have changed over the years. In the land of "use-ta" (a term Pam came up with) we searched for anything black and portable. The shinier the better! Our focus now is finding those machines or accessories with connections - either historical documentation or specific event decals or badges. We're always asking ourselves, "Does it have a story? What's different? and What brings it to life?" Originality is the driving force of our collection while condition takes a backseat. Used condition shows a life lived and is more than welcomed! Finding a well-cared for machine is a bonus especially with documentation!

I was drawn to this special Featherweight because the ad pictured the original paperwork. Also because it had the blue-rimmed "Century of Sewing Service 1851-1951" Singer badge. A 221 that would fit nicely in our collection of "Centennial" machines, each with their own story. I could not see a serial number or buyer's name in the pictures in the ad but assumed it was a typical American "Centennial" machine in great condition with documented history. We were eager for it to arrive! This 221 had a story to tell! As it turned out, it was sort of an "American Dream" story!

When it arrived and was unpacked I immediately reached for the paperwork included. We have plenty of machines, I wanted the story! Included was the original owner's manual dated July 1950, original time payment application, the completed payment booklet, lesson coupons with owner's name and address, tune-up service charges receipt, and a letter from Singer stating her machine was paid in full in Jan 1953. A complete historical treasure given it accompanied a collectible, well cared for, Singer Featherweight.

Using the documents, the internet, and my limited *Ancestry.com* skills I uncovered the original buyer *Sofia C. (Cavaletto) De Martínez* (1896-1994) born in the small town of Le Colorada, Sonora, Mexico. Her father was Giuseppe Agostino Cavaletto (1864-1940) an Italian immigrant originally from Rivarolo, Torin, Italy. He had come to Sonora to work in the "Le Colorada Silver" mine, one of the largest silver/ gold mines in Mexico. Sofia's mother Angelita Maria Trejo (1873-1965) was from Guaymas in Sonora, a short distance from the silver mine.

Giuseppe and Angelita along with their five children immigrated in 1912 from Le Colorada to Nogales, New Mexico a distance of 70 miles by foot & donkey wagon. In Nogales their 6th child Victorio was born. The family then moved once again, this time to Tucson, Arizona where Giuseppe and Angelita opened a Pañería (bakery) (see attached photos).

Sofia, their eldest daughter, met Santiago Lopez Martinez, a mattress maker in Tucson. They married Nov. 17th, 1917 (54 years before Pam and I married.) Santiago and Sofia made their home at 1428 S. 8th Ave. in Tucson.

The family made their final move to the Sun Valley area of the San Fernando Valley in California. They rented a home at 3939 Brooklyn Ave., now known as "Cesar Chavez Ave." There, Santiago opened his own mattress-making business. Sofia remained busy caring for her children, now numbering 12!

On Dec 15, 1951, at age 55 *Sofia* visited the *Singer Store* at 605 Broadway in Los Angeles and purchased this "Centennial" Featherweight. The price was \$149.50. She applied for Singer's time payment plan paying \$9.58 per month after her down payment. In late February 1953 Sofia received a letter from Singer Co. informing her that her account had been paid in full and that they welcomed her to take advantage of all the services they offered in the future.

Sofia lived until the age 97 passing away in Los Angeles in July of 1994. Santiago passed away at age 81 in 1977.

The machine's features presented somewhat of a conundrum however. The machine purchased in Los Angeles had a *Scottish* serial #**EG303841**. The number wasn't pictured in the ad and I didn't think to ask! I was focused on the story! That serial number indicates it was made in Clydebanks, Scotland with a commissioned date of Dec. 18th, 1950. A year later it would be purchased on the other side of the world in California by an Italian/ Latin woman whose husband made mattresses!

Our next step was to compare key features found on four of our other Scottish machines of the same vintage from our collection. We now know this Featherweight was cast in Scotland but assembled elsewhere with some American parts. This was not an entirely new concept as early Canadian Featherweights also were imported from Scotland and assembled in St. John's, Quebec. Differing from the British versions of that period are the light switch location, the foot controller, the motor, owner's manual, the case, and the faceplate. Those parts were *American* made. We call it our "**British-American Centennial**".

Our The Scottish machines are detailed below for comparison
(Highlighted in red are Sofia's Featherweights features) note: all the variations.

1) #EG079074 British Centennial purchased in Hull, England

- * **221K1 - Birthdate Oct. 9th, 1950**
- * **2nd style scrolled faceplate**
- * **the light switch is mounted in the bed of the machine near the badge**
- * **230-250v CAK 6-12 motor - electrical connection pins are flat**
- * **2nd style British case with aluminum hardware. Wave pattern fabric on the tray and in the case.**
- * **"Made in Great Britain" decal on backside of the arm**

2) #EG303841 British-American Centennial - Sofia C. De Martínez San Fernando, Los Angeles, Ca.

- * **221K1 - Birthdate Dec 18, 1950**
- * **striated faceplate**
- * **light switch in bed of machine**
- * **110-120v CAT 3-120 motor made in Elizabeth, N.J. - round pin connectors**
- * **non-ribbed case handle**
- * **American case w/ left side tray - non-description fabric - American shiny aluminum hardware**

3) #EG308708 French-Canadian Centennial - Quebec

- * **221K4 - Birthdate Dec 18, 1950**
- * **2nd style scrolled faceplate**
- * **light switch on the lampshade - the bed light switch hole is filled with a round black plastic plug**
- * **110-120v CAK 6-8 motor made in Great Britain for use in French speaking Quebec - round pins**
- * **ribbed case handle**
- * **2nd style British case with aluminum hardware. Wave pattern fabric on the tray and in the case.**
- * **"Fabrique en Grande Bretagne" decal on the backside of the arm**

4) #EG312605 British Centennial - Leonard G. Tucker of Camberwell, Eng. as a wedding gift for his wife

- * **221K2 - Birthdate Dec 18, 1950**
- * **2nd style scrolled faceplate**
- * **the light switch on the lampshade - The bed light switch hole is filled with a round black plastic plug**
- * **210-230v CAT 6-11 motor made in Great Britain - electrical pins are flat**
- * **2nd style British case with aluminum hardware. Wave pattern fabric on the tray and in the case.**
- * **ribbed case handle**

5) #EG437111 British Centennial

- * **221K4 - Birthdate Mar 29, 1951**
- * **2nd style Egyptian scrolled faceplate**

- * the light switch on the lampshade, The bed light switch hole is filled with a round black plastic plug
- * 230-250v CAT 6-12 motor made in Great Britain - flat electrical connection pins
- * ribbed case handle
- * 2nd style British case with aluminum hardware. Wave pattern fabric tray/ case.
- * graduated throat plate

The documents that lead us to Sofia's history along with her prized Featherweight have become a cornerstone of our Scottish "Centennial 1851-1951" collection.

Sofia Trejo Cavaletto De Martínez and her Featherweight



