

# The Six Sisters

WWII had ended. The troops were home. A new wealth was on the horizon. Families were growing creating what we now refer to as the baby boomer generation. Singer had ceased production of its namesake sewing machines between mid-1941 thru 1945 due to the *Defense Production Act* and these new families were demanding production be ramped up.

Singer's Sales & Marketing Division realizing this pent-up demand and having had success with specialty badges in the past, seized on this and their 100th Anniversary marketing opportunity to fill the needs of their devoted customers.

A major labor strike at Singer in 1949 had been quelled in part due to the efforts of the Production Manager Herbert J. Goosman, the inventor and designer of the model 221. His passion, the Featherweight, would be a major factor in the campaign and would outsell all other sewing machines becoming the top selling model ever.

A specialty badge was created to commemorate the event with a blue and gold ring and the wording "A Century of Sewing Service 1851~1951". That badge is now referred to as the *Centennial* badge. These badges were first applied to machines already in Singer's warehouse stockpile, some having been cast as early as August 1947. In 1950 they began adding the badge to new production models including some of the industrial and toy machines. This included those machines cast in Scotland, those assembled in Canada, and machines meant for worldwide delivery.

The Featherweights featured in this article are our American-made *Centennials* that we call collectively the "Six Sisters."

As in most families, sisters resemble each other but each is unique, each has its own story. The first four of the six, the quadruplets were assigned to a production run of 50,000 Featherweights to commence October 26th, 1950.

\* **Mabel - AJ897408** Originally purchased by Mabel Christine (Pepper) born 1891 in Mountain View, Ca. (rural San Francisco at the time) She and her first husband Harry Pinto operated a wholesale egg- chicken operation. Harry passed away in 1942 and Mabel re-married to Theodore J. Riley and moved to Santa Rosa and eventually Klamath, Ca. where she owned and operated a fishing resort and motel. Mabel's Featherweight was purchased by us complete with original sales receipts, attachments, home sewing course and the rare *Centennial booklets*. A Treasure!

\* **Marge - AJ905875** Mary (Marge) Lois (Matheny) Chamberlain born in 1917 in Minneapolis, Mn. She married Earl Chamberlain and they relocated to Modesto, California. Her husband worked his way up and became the plant manager of Norris Stamping & Metal Fabrication Company. The Norris Co. made bumpers for Ford automobiles among other things and during the War they made artillery cartridge cases, mortar shells, nose caps for bombs! Marge purchased her "**Centennial**" Featherweight in Modesto. Marge and Earl's son Keith Edwin became a golf pro at several golf courses in Modesto.

\* **Jean - AJ908359** - Originally purchased by Jean Anna (Randall) Kierstead of Laconia, New Hampshire. Jean (Joan) was born in 1932 to her mother Eva and father John Randall, a filling station proprietor. Jean became a secretary/ bookkeeper. Her Featherweight was purchased by us with original "Time Payment" application and "Paid" letter.

\* **Alice - AJ920408** – Our non- "Century of Sewing Service 1851-1951" badged Featherweight. It was originally purchased by Thomas M. & Alice V. (Casper) Squires - who both worked for Singer in Elizabeth, New Jersey home of The Singer Manufacturing Plant in the US. as did Alice's mother. We treasure this outstanding machine for its non-conformity as we do our daughters. This Featherweight is unique in that it was assembled *without* the Specialty Centennial Badge in a time when all others of that production run did. We find it

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curious that this non-standard Featherweight was purchased by an employee? Leaves one to wonder. Were employees offered the duds? the mistakes? the forgotten? We cherish it!

Our 5th Centennial badged American made Featherweight was born in the following production run of 50,000 with a birthdate of Jan 29th, 1951.

\* **Jeanne - AK116466** - Winona "**Jeanne**" (*Au*) *Andres* born 1926 in Buffalo, New York. Later of Cheektowaga, Erie Co. New York. She married Edward Andres and moved to Minneapolis, Mn. Jeanne was a Fashion model in the 50's & 60's, cut patterns on the kitchen table and sewed many of her outfits with her Featherweight as well as mending clothing for her children as told by her son.

Our 6th and youngest of the sisters now 70 years of age, of our Centennial Featherweights was part of a 3rd production run of 50,000 Centennial 221s with a birthdate of May 10th, 1951.

\* **Esther - AK407993** - A Mint! American "Century of Sewing Service 1851-1951". Originally owned by Esther (Kazaroff) McPherson of San Bernardino, Ca. Esther was born in 1922 of Armenian & Mexican descent. Esther's father John was a city garbage collector. Esther herself worked at the Douglas Aircraft Plant in El Segundo, Ca. during WW II, a bona fide "Rosie the Riveter". Esther's Featherweight came to us with the original "Singer Salesman 100th Anniversary" business card.

Given there were potentially +270,000 "Centennial" Featherweights made between March of 1950 and May of 1951 in the US alone, they are somewhat plentiful, but finding them with original documentation has been our collecting goal and challenge. The lives that accompany our Featherweights endear them to us. We appreciate them for what they are and what we assume they meant to the original owners. That they were and are *Very Special Featherweights*.