

Elias Howe Encyclopedia Article

Elias Howe

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Elias Howe

1819-1867

American inventor who patented the first sewing machine in the United States. As an apprentice, Howe mastered machinery processes. He observed his wife sewing to create a machine that duplicated human motions. Howe patented the machine in 1846, but American manufacturers refused to buy it. A London factory owner purchased his machine but stole Howe's profits. Returning home, Howe successfully sued rival inventors who had appropriated his design. He later established a sewing machine company that thrived.