THE

ROYAL SEWING MACHINE COMPANY,

SOLE MANUFACTURERS AND PATENTEES OF THEIR UNRIVALLED

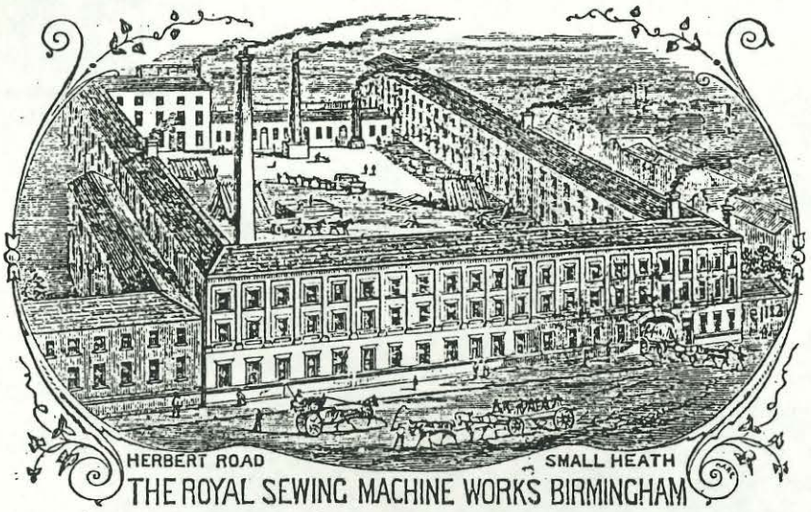
HAND AND TREADLE SEWING MACHINES,

THE **ROYAL**

THE **"TIMES"**

THE **MILTON**

THE **EUGENIE**



THE ROYAL SEWING MACHINE WORKS BIRMINGHAM

THE **SHAKESPEAR**

THE **WINDSOR**

THE **AVON**

(Formerly the CHALLENGE.)

A S.M.C.S. EXTRA By Carol Head

ALTHOUGH THE ROYAL Sewing Machine Company claimed to have been established in 1860, its founder Thomas Shakespear of Small Heath, Birmingham, was listed in an 1860 trade directory, merely as a manager, with no mention of SMs. Three years later he was listed as an agent for Wheeler & Wilson SMs at 32 Union Street.

Thomas Shakespear went into partnership with George Illston to form the Royal SM Co, which was first listed in a directory in 1869. Illston was the factory manager, while Shakespear concentrated on sales. Thomas Bradford & Co of 63 Fleet Street, London was an agent for the RSM Co in 1869.

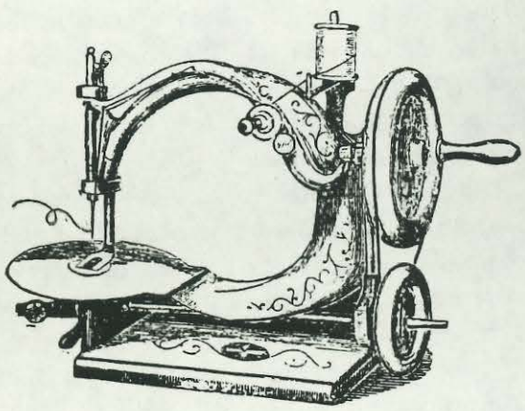
Shakespear & Illston took out patents in March 1869 for the method of driving the carrier in a lock-stitch machine -- used on the Shakespear and G-framed Collier machine (which are identical) and for lock-stitch hook SMs -- Wheeler & Wilson type -- The Royal.

In December 1869 they took out a further patent used for tightening the belt in which the driving wheel could be raised to take up the slack. This may have been used on the belt-driven hand machine that looks as if it may have been the forerunner of Thomas Bradford of Manchester's Anchor machine.

An 1871 directory mentions both the Royal SM Manufactory at 31 Bishop Street and 32 Union Street and Thomas Shakespear and Co at 32 Union Street and works at Bishop Street. Both companies were listed unitil 1880, after which there was no mention of Thomas Shakespear & Co.

In 1872 the Royal SM Co moved to Herbert Road, Small Heath.

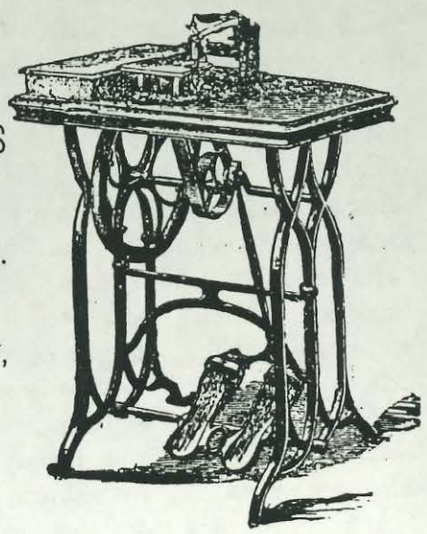
Shakespear and Illston took out a further patent in 1871 for retaining a silent feed in



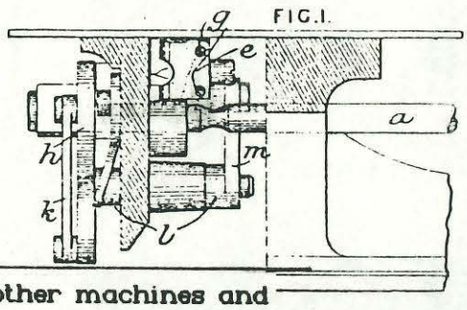
AGENTS—
THOS. BRADFORD & CO., 63, FLEET ST., LONDON.
THE ROYAL SEWING MACHINE COMPANY, BIRMINGHAM.

THE
ROYAL SEWING
MACHINE COMPANY'S
HAND AND TREADLE
SEWING MACHINES.
(Being similar to
THE WHEELER & WILSON,
with many great improvements.)

Price Lists on application.
AGENTS WANTED.



For right: The Shakespear and Illston patent of 1869 showing two methods of belt tensioning, one by an excentric, the other by a sliding pillar. Right: The patent drawing for the carrier-drive mechanism.



Wheeler & Wilson and other machines and another in 1873. George Illston took out a patent in 1880 for winding SM spools, and two more in 1886 by Thomas Shakespear.

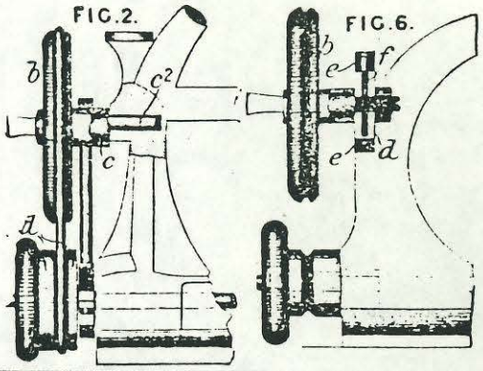
The Royal SM Company did actually manufacture SMs and the factory at Small Heath, built for the purpose, was spacious, lofty, well lit and well ventilated. The premises included a timber store (walnut stored for seven years and used for cabinets and stands), a sawpit, casting shops, annealing furnace, dressing shop, blacking shop, stoves for heating the japanned parts to 350 degrees F, polishing shops, hand finishing, ornamentation and varnishing areas, as well as machine shops where rough parts came from the foundry to be tooled.

Automatic machines made screws of different shapes and sizes out of best-charcoal iron wire. They were then hardened and thus made ready for use. The shuttles were first stamped out of sheet metal and gradually shaped. Before a shuttle was finally finished, it must have gone through 37 processes.

Before the machines were dispatched, they were threaded up and adjusted to stitch perfectly. The stitching was then tested by a woman machinist, and finally double checked by the foreman. All domestic machines were tested with from one to 12 thicknesses of calico. All manufacturing machines were tested with cotton thread and silk on calico, cloth and leather. The wooden packing cases for machines being exported were lined with zinc.

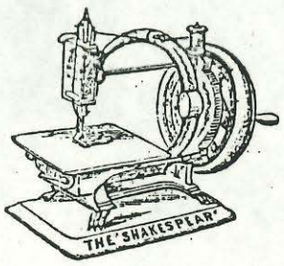
The company produced many different models, some identical with different names. The Shakespear was advertised in 1873 by Smith & Co, 30 Edgware Road, Hyde Park (later Soho Square). They were also marketing the Monarch, identical to the Shakespear and the Regent (chainstitch) identical to the Eugenie, in 1875.

The Royal SM Co had close links with Joseph Harris & Co long before they took over the company in 1878. Joseph Harris visited the USA and developed an interest in the SM industry. He returned to England in 1867 and became a dealer in SMs. However, he wanted his own machine 'embodying the ideas he had brought back from America, and built to his own standards'.



THE SHAKESPEAR,

Complete, £4 4s.

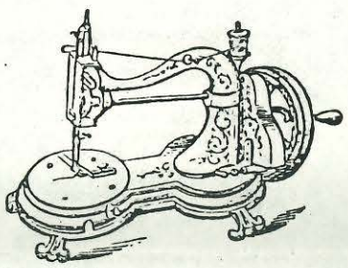


The SHAKESPEAR Shuttle Lock Stitch Machine requires no screwing or fixing to table. It is known to occupy the foremost position in the market as a durable, simple, and effective Lock-Stitch Hand Machine, and can be instantly affixed and worked with Treadle without the slightest trouble.

THE WINDSOR,

Complete, £4 4s.

The WINDSOR Shuttle Lock-Stitch Machine, Ornamented with Gold, and complete with Tools, £4 4s. This Machine is recommended on account of its strength its simplicity, and the length, under the arm for all general sewing.



This machine was appropriately called 'The Challenge' and was 'designed specially for Joseph Harris and the design was registered by him'.

The Royal SM Co were to supply Joseph Harris with 40 machines per week at £2-5s per machine. Shakespear and Illston were 'prohibited from manufacturing the machine for any other person; nor were they to undersell Mr Harris with a machine of the Challenge type' (The Avon is identical to the Challenge.)

In January 1878 the RSM Co took over J Harris & Co of Franklin Works, Park Road, Soho and Joseph Harris continued his interest as one of the managers. The company continued to manufacture the Imperial, Agenoria, Eureka, Birmingham and Challenge machines.

The RSM Co also took over A Maxfield & Co in 1877 (Maxfield having founded the Agenoria Works in 1872 and produced Agenoria machines identical to Joseph Harris.)

The RSM Co became the Royal Machine Manufacturing Co Ltd about 1882 and produced bicycles and they stopped trading around 1888 and R C Haviland who manufactured bicycles took over the Herbert Road factory.

The Men and the Machines
A list compiled by Jim Andrew

JIM ANDREW at the Birmingham Museum of Science and Industry has also been fascinated with the complex history of the Royal Company.

As part of his delving into the SM manufacturers of Birmingham he has unearthed the following information:

J Harris & Co applied on 3 February 1876 to register several trademarks including 'Imperial', used since 1869; 'Challenge', since 1870; 'Birmingham', since 1871 and the 'Eureka' since 1873.

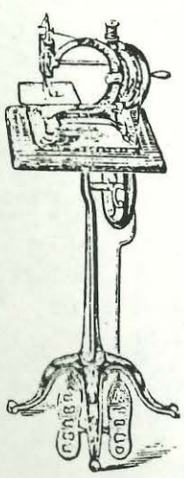
In the same year Thomas Shakespear and George Illston, trading as the RSM Co were at the registry department laying claim to Shakespeare's head (in use for three years), The Royal (eight years), The Shakespear (six years), The Milton (four years), Eugenie (three years) Avon (two years) Windsor (two years).

One year later in the name of the Royal SM Co, The Monarch (three years) and the Regent (two years) were registered.

When the Royal company made a further application in 1879 to register the Agenoria it was claimed that the name had been used by them and their "predecessors in business' for 10 years.

Mr Andrew has also produced potted histories of the various men, models and manufacturers. Because of the value of independent research these are produced here, with his kind permission, without attempting to integrate them with the Carol Head work.

THE AGENORIA: produced by Franklin SM Co from about 1868. Also produced by A Maxfield & Co from about 1872 when some connection existed with Franklin's since one example carries both names. About 1874 Joseph Harris took over the Franklin Works and produced the AGENORIA possibly still supplying Maxfield. About 1877 Maxfield ceased trading and the Royal SM Co took over the AGENORIA name from Harris, registered the trade mark in 1879 and used the name until at least 1883.



The Shakespear was offered on the universal, bought-out monopod for an extra £1 5s.

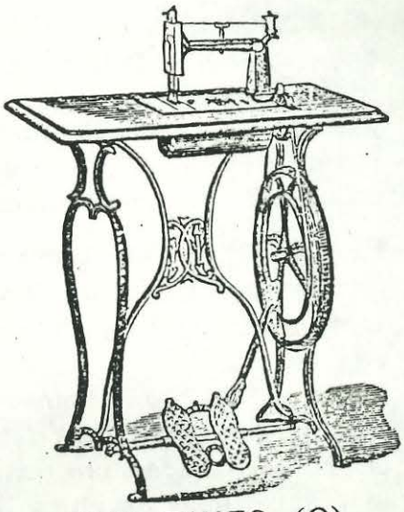
THE AVON made by The Royal SM Co from about 1874.

BIRMINGHAM: claimed by J Harris & Co as a trade mark used on SMs from 1871.

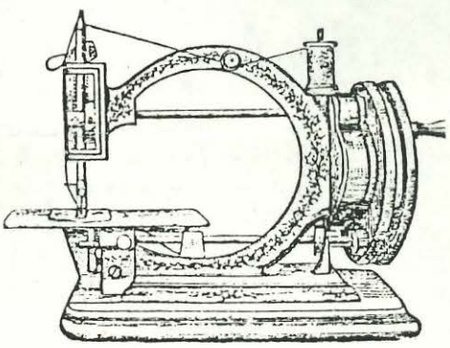
CHALLENGE: Claimed in 1876 by J Harris & Co to have been made since 1871, possibly by Franklin SM Co. Some examples are marked 'Imperial SM Co' which seems to have been formed by J Harris & Co to operate the Franklin Works after they took it over. The trade mark passed to The Royal SM Co when they acquired Harris' SM business about 1877 and was still in use in 1873. The design was registered in 1871.

THE EUGENIE: Claimed by The Royal SM Co as a trademark used on SMs from 1873.

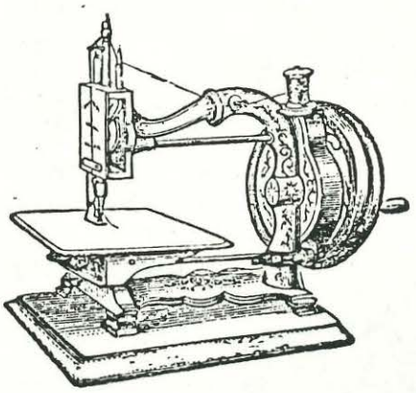




THE TIMES (C).
New Patent Treadle Machine.
£7 COMPLETE.



THE EUGENIE.
Single Thread.
£3 3 0.



THE CHALLENGE.
£4 4 0.

Above: Three machines featured in a Royal advertisement of 1878. Only the Eugenie is a chain stitch model and was, clearly, the cheapest machine in the company's range.

EUREKA: Made by J Harris & Co who claimed to use the name from 1873. An example No.539, currently in Australia, is a hand machine. Not mentioned after 1875.

FRANKLIN SM CO: Founded at 328 Park Road, Soho, Birmingham about 1868 made various machines including Royal Franklin and Agenoria. It had close links to Agenoria with A Maxfield & Co Works, products, etc. taken over by J Harris & Co about 1874. Franklin Works made SMs until 1877 when it became a rope and twine works.

JOSEPH HARRIS & CO: Established prior to 1860 as a dyer and cleaner at 40 Bull Street, Birmingham. Started dealing in SMs about 1866 and manufacturing the 'Imperial' a Wheeler & Wilson type about 1869. Took over Franklin business about 1874 and sold SM interest to Royal SM Co about 1877. Still trading as dry-cleaners.

GEORGE ILLSTON: Sometimes spelt Ellson, partner of Thomas Shakespear in founding Royal SM Co. Appears to have managed the factory while Shakespear was more involved in sales.

IMPERIAL SM CO: Named as manufacturer on some machines made by Joseph Harris & Co. Possibly this was the name of the manufacturing side of the business. There is no entry under his name in the Birmingham Directories.

IMPERIAL: Claimed to be made by J Harris & Co from 1869. A Wheeler & Wilson type of machines.

A MAXFIELD & CO: Arthur Isaac Maxfield settled in Birmingham as an iron founder about 1871 having possibly been in business for a number of years elsewhere. He founded the Agenoria Works, 71 and 72 Spencer Street, Birmingham about 1872 producing the Agenoria machine



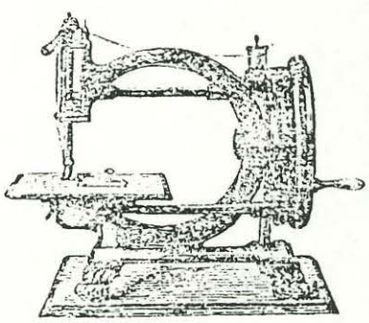
"THE SHAKESPEAR" WITH STAND.



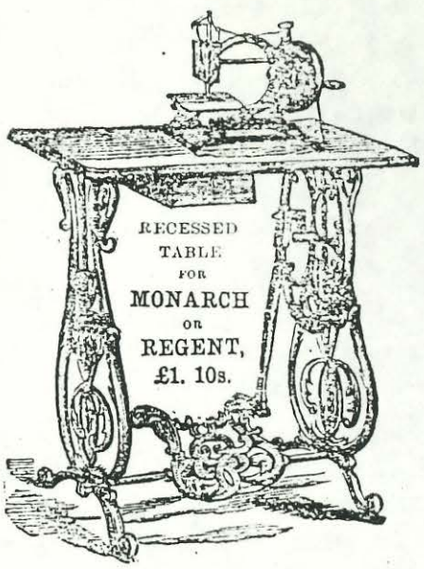
"THE TIMES" A.

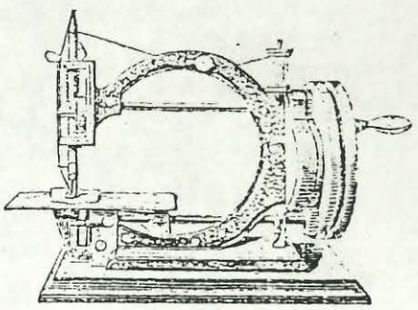
SEWING MACHINES OF EVERY DESCRIPTION,

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL.



THE MONARCH,
£4 4s. 0d.
Lock-stitch Machine.





THE REGENT,
£3 3s. 0d.
Single-thread Machine.

It is absurdly claimed for almost every Machine, of whatever description, that it is superior to all others, for all kinds of work SMITH AND CO., having no interest in selling any particular Machine, are enabled to recommend impartially the one best suited for the work required to be done, and offer this GUARANTEE to their Customers: Any Machine sold by them may be

EXCHANGED, within One Month, for any other kind, without Charge for Use

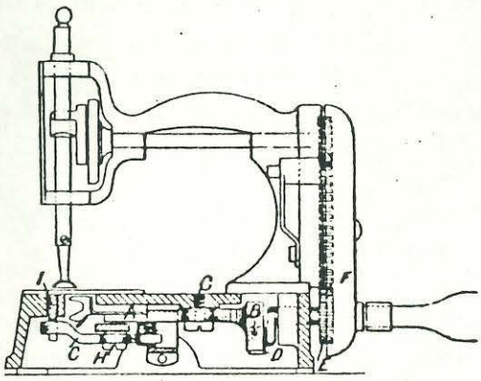
SMITH AND CO.,

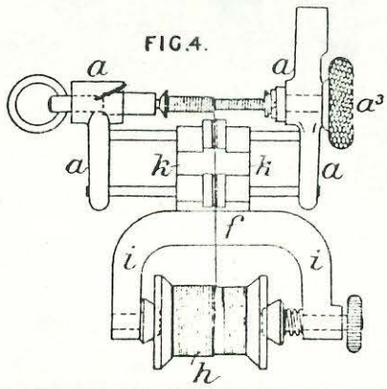
30, EDGWARE ROAD, HYDE PARK

(CORNER OF SEYMOUR STREET), AND

4, CHARLES STREET, SOHO SQUARE, W.

More from the Patent Library





For left: Shakespear's 1886 patent for a feed mechanism. Left: One from Illston in 1880 for a spool holder with the thread running over rollers to wind the bobbin.

in various qualities from 4 gns, including 'as supplied to HRH the Princess of Wales, 6 gns'. Used St George and the dragon as a trade mark. They had close links with Franklin SM Co, even, possibly, buying complete machines from them. They tried to register trade mark in 1876 but other firms had identical marks. By 1876 Maxfields were selling a range of machines but ceased trading before 1878. Business may have passed to either Royal SM Co or to Newton Wilson & Co.

THE MILTON: Claimed by the Royal SM Co as a trade mark used on SMs from 1872.

THE MONARCH: Claimed by the Royal SM Co. as a trademark used on SMs from 1874.

PIONEER: Produced by Maxfield from about 1875 and 'suitable for exportation'.

THE REGENT: Claimed by the Royal SM Co as a trademark used on SMs from 1875.

ROYAL SM CO: Founded about 1868 by Thomas Shakespear and George Illston with Illston as manager. Operated at first at 31 Bishop Street and Shakespear's premises at 31 Union Street. Moved to Herbert Road, Small Heath about 1871. Sold through Thomas Shakespear. About 1877 they acquired the SM interests of J Harris and A Maxfield but not the manufactory sites. They may even have had showrooms in Harris's premises about 1880. They became the Royal Machine Manufacturing Co Ltd about 1882 and added cycles to their products, ceasing to trade

How They Rate Today

THE HIGH QUALITY of the machines in the Royal range make them prized pieces to today's collectors.

Commonest of the collectable models is the Shakespear, followed closely by the Challenge.

When fitting their models to treadles Royal used a recessed table in which to site the machine rather than actually bolting it down. These treadles are very rare, especially the monopod design which looks from illustrations to be the same universal, bought-out item also used by Weir, Wanzer, etc.

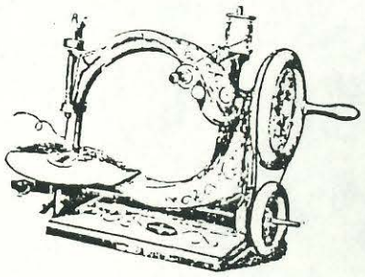
The Agenoria has a charm of its own and a good-condition version is a real crowd-puller, especially when fitted with the engraved cloth plate.

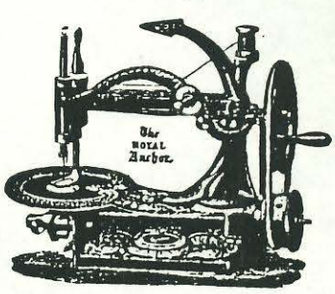
But the real rarities are the Monarch -- a machine very little different to the Shakespear and Royal's two down- market machines, the Regent and the Eugenie.

The MS collection has one of the two chain-stitch models but it is unnamed and from all available illustrations there appears to be no discernable difference between them. Possibly the name was changed as a marketing exercise.

Regents and Monarchs are well worth seeking out but the remainder of the Royal range are common enough to wait for a really nice example to come along.

GF





Back in the days of the old joint magazine I wondered if the Royal (above) gave inspiration to Thomas Bradford for his Royal Anchor machine. Bradford was operating in 1869 as a London agent for Royal .

about 1888 when R C Haviland, cycle manufacturers, moved into the Herbert Street premises.

THE ROYAL claimed by the Royal SM Co as a trademark used on SMs from 1868.

THOMAS SHAKESPEAR: In 1860 he was a manager (business not stated) living in Small Heath, Birmingham. In 1863 he is listed at 32 Union Street as an agent for Wheeler & Wilson SMs. About 1868 he helped found the Royal SM Co and acted as their sole agents while still handling other makes at 32 Union Street. Thomas Shakespear & Co continued to act as agents and manufacturers (intimately linked with Royal SM Co) until about 1880.

THE SHAKESPEAR: Claimed by the Royal SM Co as a new trademark on SMs in 1876.

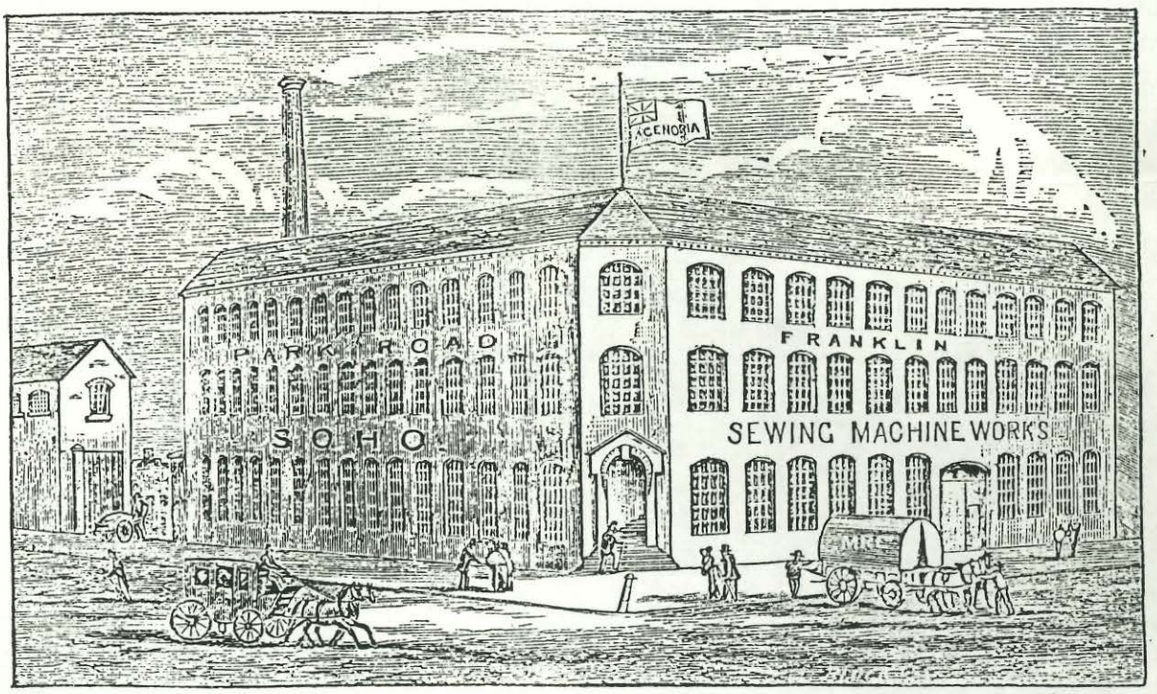
THE WINDSOR: Claimed by the Royal SM Co as a trademark used on SMs from 1874.

JOSEPH HARRIS & CO.'S

GENUINE AND CELEBRATED

"AGENORIA" SEWING MACHINE.

The "AGENORIA" was the first Hand Sewing Machine introduced to the public, and maintains its position in the estimation of the Public to the present time.



JOSEPH HARRIS & CO.'S WORLD RENOWNED

"CHALLENGE" LOCKSTITCH SEWING MACHINE,

HAND OR TREADLE.

With New Patented Stitch Indicator Adjustable Sewing Case, being two of the very best improvements yet applied to this Sewing Machine, rendering it strictly reliable and very durable under hard wear, and other very special improvements.

PRICE £4 4s. COMPLETE.

JOSEPH HARRIS & CO. also manufacture Machines suitable for Dressmakers, Bootmakers, Tailors, and other manufacturing trades,

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MARK THE ADDRESS:

THE ORIGINAL FRANKLIN WORKS, PARK ROAD, SOHO,

OFFICES AND SALE ROOMS:

ORIEL HOUSE, 41 BULL STREET, BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND.