

The Gritzner Machine Co. Ltd

Every so often we come across promotional material from sewing machine manufacturers that may be of interest to other collectors. We are also aware that many ISMACS members enjoy collecting machines made by German manufacturers in the 1900's rather than those of an earlier date which can be rare not to mention expensive so we hope the following is of interest.



A Potted History of the Gritzner Company

One of the giants of German sewing machine manufacture was the Gritzner Company. The firm was established by Maximilian Gritzner at Karlsruhe, Durlach in 1872 with the first machines being modelled on the Singer 12. The business grew rapidly, then in 1881, a fire devastated the factory which had to be substantially rebuilt but within months the firm was back in production.

In 1886 the company went public with Max's sons Rudolph and Julius as board members, the new company continued to expand and not content with producing sewing machines the company diversified in 1897 when it started producing bicycles and then in 1903 motor-cycles. This makes its production figures quite remarkable as by 1902 a million sewing machines had been produced with the two million mark being reached just eight years later.

In 1925 Gritzner took over one of the few other major German sewing machine manufacturers Frister & Rossmann before merging with Pfalzische Nahamaschinen & Fahrradfabrik formerly Gebr Kayser. The company survived the Second World War and continued to develop new machines before being sold to Pfaff in 1957.

We don't know when the company entered the British market but as Gritzner & Co. Ltd they were advertising machines such as the Model A and Original Graziosa (Model D) in the 1880's

The company later changed its name to The Gritzner Machine Company Ltd and Ad. Ries & Co., 45 Hatton Garden, London were the company's wholesale agent for many years before being replaced by Fred Dickson, 23 Bucklersbury, London by the early 1900's

The Illustrated Catalogue.

We picked this illustrated Gritzner catalogue up at a flea market for a couple of pounds sadly it's not dated but there are a couple of clues to its age, firstly it mentions the company's latest chief award – The Gold Medal of the Paris World's Exhibition 1900 and secondly it refers to the company's Motor Cycle department which makes it post 1903.

According to the catalogue the factory had the capacity to produce 100,000 machines a year and employed 2,400 workmen. The range of machines is quite extensive and covers both treadle and hand machines. A letter identifies each model type, a number designating the style of cabinet work and a sub number (in roman numerals) giving the style of cover. This sequence is continued throughout the entire range.

The A Handsewing may be converted into No. 3 and 4 machines for hand and foot by adding a stand with table.



GRITZNER No. 6 A

Low arch Handsewing on wood base with ornamental square cover.

The Range of Machines.

It's interesting at this late date the company was still marketing a fiddle-bed transverse shuttle machine although in the catalogue it does make the point that the High arm machines are generally preferred!

These machines were designated as the model Family A and the range was as follows:

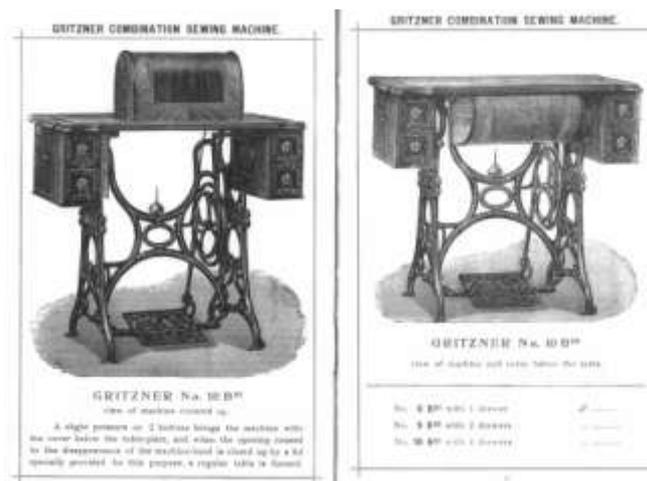
- No. 1 A without cover
- No. 2 A I with ornamental square cover
- No. 2 A IV with ornamental bent cover
- No. 3 A without cover
- No. 4 A I with ornamental square cover
- No. 4 A IV with ornamental bent cover
- No. 5 on an iron base without cover
- No. 5a A on wood base without cover
- No. 6 A I on wood base with ornamental square cover
- No. 6 A IV on wood base with ornamental bent cover



The difference between the No. 2 A and the No. 4 A machines is that with the No. 2 the table is curved and the machine attached directly to it. With the No. 4 A machine the table is straight edged and the machine has its own base. The No. 5 A and 6 A machines are the hand versions.

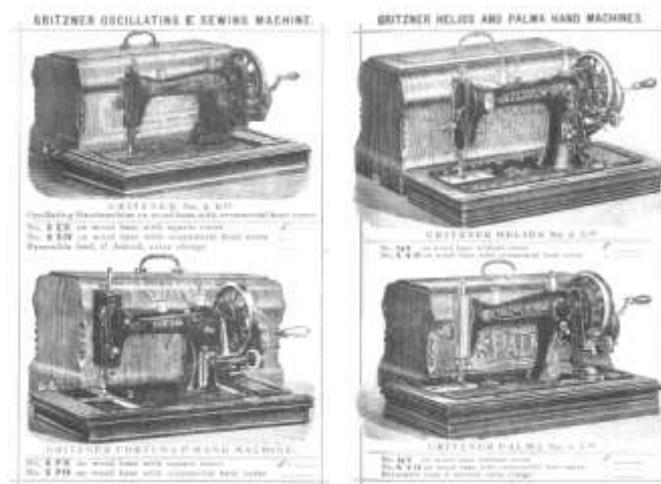
The High Arm Family transverse shuttle machines are the model B again there is a full range of variants from the No. 1 B treadle without cover through to the hand machine with square cover – the No. 6 B II.

Then there are additional types of cabinet work including a drop head cabinet, work box sewing machine, fancy wood cabinet and shown below an unusual combination sewing machine.



The Gritzner C range was the company's High Arm Medium transverse shuttle machine there were four models which differed only in the style of cover provided. No model D is listed but the Models E and F were oscillators. The E was suitable for Families, tailors and manufacturers and was available in seven styles. The F was for extra heavy work and was available with or without a cover. They could be fitted with a roller presser foot and wheel

feeder as well as with reversible feed at an extra cost of course. The Gritzner Oscillator could produce up to 1500 stitches per minute.



The Gritzner Helios machine is referred to in the catalogue as “the latest invention and most simple and absolutely reliable construction”. In the treadle version the machine was offset to the right, this meant the flywheel was outside the stand and the needle was above the middle of the tread plate which “ensured a comfortable position for the operator”. Other advantages claimed were “rotary motion throughout and a stationary and centrally situated bobbin absolutely noiseless”.

The Helios was available as:

Helios No. 1 N without cover

Helios No. 2 N IV with ornamental bent cover

Helios No. 5a N on wood base without cover

Helios No. 6 N IV on wood base with ornamental bent cover.

A 1/10th HP electro motor could be fitted to this model.



The Fortuna machine was available in nine styles similar to those already mentioned but with the addition of a combination hand machine with treadle stand – the Fortuna No. 4 P. The

machine was designed for family use, tailors and manufacturers. It was claimed to have a simple mechanism, rotary motion and was designed to be extremely durable and absolutely reliable with all parts subject to friction being hardened and adjustable.

Vibrating Shuttle machines were available in the form of the Selecta R for family use and the Selecta S a High Arm machine for tailors and manufacturers.

Both machines were produced in the following forms:

No. 1 R or S without cover

No. 2 R or S IV with ornamental bent cover

No. 4 R or S IV for hand and foot with ornamental bent cover

No. 5a R or S on wood base without cover

No. 6 R or S IV on wood base with ornamental bent cover

No. 7 R or S with 4 drawers and ornamental bent cover.

Again reversible feed was an optional extra.



A full range of Central - Bobbin machines known as Palma were produced with two models - the V for domestic & light industrial and the W for extra heavy work which had a larger passage under the arm. Top of the range appears to have been the No. 20 V a drop head model which had four drawers with wood handles.



Finally there were the Saxonia machines, Gritzner produced two models G and H. The model G was a low arm transverse shuttle machine with fiddle bed. Three types of cover were available for this model, square, bent and ornamental bent. The model H was a high arm transverse shuttle machine with rectangular bed. Covers were as per the previous model but with an additional ornamental square cover. The machine I'd really like to see an example of however is the model H not on a wood base but on an iron one!



Our Gritzner(s)

Despite being made in huge quantities we do not come across Gritzner machines that often and it maybe many were sold as labelled machines. We only have one definite and one possible in our collection.



The first (left) would have been designated according to the catalogue a High Arm Saxonia hand machine with square cover. Saxonia No. 6 H II. The serial number is 1819892 which, if the reported production is reasonably correct, would mean it was made c1907.

The second does not carry the Gritzner spider Trade Mark rather it has been labelled as a Collier No.3 for J. Collier & Sons Ltd 134 to 142 Clapham Road, London. It has a serial number of 2164481 which would mean it was produced c1912.

Whether it is a Gritzner or not it's a good excuse to show such a stunningly beautiful machine! The photographs simply do not do the machine justice, it has tiny Mother of Pearl stars every half-inch around the bed, with a gold dot pattern and blue and red flowers in scroll to the corners.



This delicate pattern is however surpassed by a wonderful bouquet of roses in the centre bed; each flower head is created from Mother of Pearl. It is absolutely exquisite!



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