

Vintage Flat Cams

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As we were leaving our favourite thrift shop last week, I noticed some interesting items that I had missed when I made my tour of the store. The two low-shank buttonholers weren't of much interest since I already own several of them, but the third item – a box of vintage attachments – caught my attention.

I'm always on the lookout for extra attachments to go with my various vintage machines, so I always check out a box like this, which is like a treasure hunt: you never know what it might contain. This time, I wasn't prepared for the bonanza that awaited me inside this box.

Turns out that the box did contain a couple of vintage presser feet, but to my delight, it also contained a whole bunch of vintage flat bakelite cams. It wasn't quite a complete set, but it was pretty close, and the box even included several cams that I didn't already own.



As you may know, Singer produced many machines that use these cams. I don't own every

one of those

models, but I do have a few. Each machine came supplied with the same five cams; the rest – some 31 in all – were sold separately.

Not everyone bought the complete set, so those cams are relatively rare today. But this box contained most of them. Wow.





A few years back, I was lucky enough to find the boxed set that contained most of the remaining cams in the series. Which I believed to number 31, as shown in this information sheet.



However, my latest find actually contains several cams that I hadn't known about, including #37 and

a few that were marked with higher numbers: #350, #352, #353, and #355). I think these ones must have gone with some of the later models that use flat cams, since they seem to be mostly re-issues of earlier patterns.

32	Blind Stitch	
37		
350	Blind Stitch	
352	Solid Scallop	
353	Solid Pyramid	
355	Banner	

The upshot is that I now have a second complete set (# 1-31), along with those few extra cams. All I need is a suitable container to put them in.

SINGER Fashion Disc (Flat Cam)	
1	Zig - Zag
2	Multi Stitch
3	Blind Stitch
4	Scallop
5	Arrowhead
6	Domino
7	Shell Edge
8	Solid Scallop
9	Icicle
10	Banner
11	Key
12	Walls of Troy
13	Solid Diamond
14	Zig Zag Point
15	Long Oblique
16	Shingle
17	Pennant
18	Three Step
19	Ball Stitch
20	Curved Mending
21	Thunderbird
22	Semaphore
23	Solid Pyramid
24	Open Pyramid
25	Spiney
26	Block
27	Faggoting
28	Comb
29	Pavilion
30	Platform
31	Crescent



Eureka: as luck would have it, I happen to have on hand two of these Oakley Metal Vault sunglass cases, picked up at the thrift store a couple of years ago. At the time, I wasn't sure what I'd use them for; I just really liked their industrial chic look. Turns out they are just the right shape and size to hold an entire set of these round flat cams, in numbered order. Perfect!



Each bakelite cam has its number stamped on, but because the raised numbers are the same dark colour, they are sometimes difficult to make out. I'll want to do something about that.





Time to haul out my trusty Dymo label maker and load it with 1/4" black label tape.

I daubed each cam with a bit of alcohol to remove any traces of grime or oil before applying the

Dymo-printed number. The white imprint stands out against the dark colour of the cam, and is much easier to see when I'm searching for a specific pattern. I was careful to position the numbers consistently on each of the cams, for easier reference.



A boxed set of these cams is currently listed on ebay for \$133.91 plus \$35.20 shipping (for a total of \$169.11 CDN). The full sets are rare, as I said, so it's not surprising that the price is so high; in fact, it might even be a bit of a deal, since the cams range upward from \$15 each when priced individually. You'll forgive me if I celebrate a bit: this group of 27 or so cost me only \$12, plus another 50 cents for that perfect case. I'm chuffed.

Quite apart from the inherent pleasure of assembling a complete set of cams, I must say that I'm really impressed with the crisp, beautiful decorative stitches they produce, and I regularly sew on the machines that use them.



In fact I'll be adding one more machine to the group this summer: it's a stunning model 316G that belonged to my late brother, who used it for projects from upholstery to formal wear.

I can't wait to bring it home and get sewing on it with my complete set of flat cams. I'll think of him with every stitch.