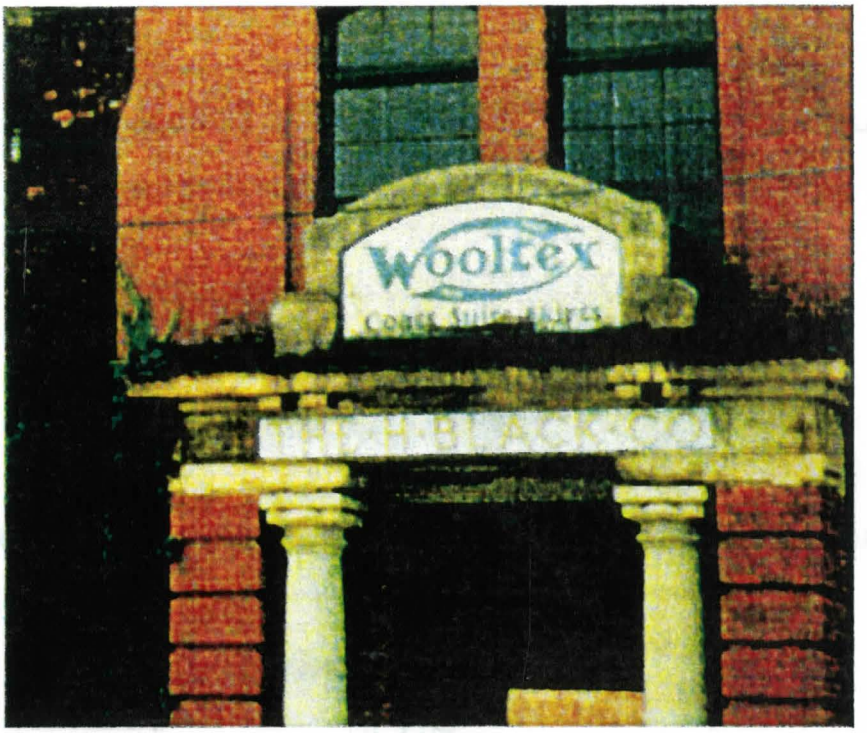


WOOLTEX: the Vanguard Ready-to-Wear Garment Manufacturer; Welfare Capitalism in Cleveland, Ohio 1885-1920

Wooltex the Vanguard Ready-to-Wear Garment Manufacturer

Welfare Capitalism in Cleveland, Ohio 1885-1920

by

Allison J. Ruggles

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the

History

Program

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

August, 1995

Wooltex the Vanguard Ready-to-Wear Garment Manufacturer

Welfare Capitalism in Cleveland, Ohio 1885-1920

by

Allison J. Ruggles

I hereby release this thesis to the public. I understand this thesis will be housed at the Circulation Desk of the University library and will be available for the public access. I also authorize the University or other individuals to make copies of this thesis as needed for scholarly research.

Signature: Allison J. Ruggles 10/12/95

Student Date

Approvals:

[signature] 10/25/95

Thesis Advisor Date

[signature] 10/26/95

Committee Member Date

[signature] 10/26/95

Committee Member Date

[signature] 10/27/95

Dean of Graduate Studies Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks are due to the following people who assisted me in the preparation of this thesis.

Dr. Fred Viehe, my adviser and first reader, was extremely helpful in offering valuable suggestions that improved the content and style of this study from the first draft through the final revision.

Dr. Martha Pallante, my second reader, provided additional comments and suggestions which clarified points and strengthened the organization of the paper.

Ms. Jean L. Druesedow, the director of the Kent State University Museum, suggested that I look into the garment trades in Cleveland, which I did, and Wooltex was discovered. A special thank you to Carol Litty, whose confidence in my ability helped me go on when the going got tough.

My father, David Ruggles, and my mother, Myrna, not only read my final drafts, but helped me stay directed and motivated throughout the entire process. To this I am deeply indebted. My brother Jon was extremely helpful in suggesting different approaches of writing and organizing my research, his ability to see clearly, through a mass of notecards enabled me to write the first draft.

Final thanks goes to my husband Vince who dealt with my continuous preoccupation with Wooltex. Your faith in my ability was the spur that kept me going.

PREFACE

From Chants Democratic: New York City & the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850, Dr. Sean Wilentz concluded, "Above all else, it was the very transparency of exploitation, the self-evident inequalities of power and material expectations at every level of production, that made the sweated trades the most degraded crafts in New York." My intended purpose is not to argue that Dr. Wilentz's conclusions were incorrect but rather to offer another perspective of the ready-to-wear industry at the turn of the century. Records indicated that Cleveland became an effectual leader in garment manufacturing, and differed greatly from New York, Boston and Philadelphia, other garment manufacturing giants of the time. This essay challenges Wilentz's conclusions, implying that his findings were not a universal phenomena of garment manufacturing but an environmental characteristic of New York City.

"Wooltex", a coat and cloak manufacturer, will be the focus of this study in order to identify and determine what made Cleveland's garment industry so atypical. Wooltex's value to history comes from its company magazine -- The Wooltex News which was published from 1910 to 1917. Although it was dubbed a worker's paper--For Wooltexers By Wooltexers--it was obvious that the paper spewed company rhetoric. Thus, the researcher will investigate the practice of welfare capitalism through the "eyes" of the company from

the "top down". Looking at Wooltex's welfarism through the management's perspective proved educational and enlightening. It was the company's implementation of psychological programs and activities throughout the factory that changed the garment industry in Cleveland.

Wooltex grew to be the largest garment manufacturer in Cleveland by 1910. The owners Herman and Morris Black were progressive in their thinking. Wooltex received recognition for its humane treatment of employees and was used as a model for other industries. My argument that welfare capitalism was successful and rewarding to owner and worker lies in the fact that prominent garment affiliated unions were kept out of Cleveland until 1917. The defeat of the garment workers strike of 1911 proved that working conditions in Cleveland and relationships with management and owners were agreeable. Head union representative, John Dyche, stated in The Cleveland Plain Dealer that Cleveland's working conditions in the garment trades were excellent.

This study is important because it illustrates how the effects of welfare capitalism could transpose a traditionally abused industry into one of stature at the local level. The evidence gathered substantiates that welfarism elevated Wooltex to become a vanguard company--A company to be admired and emulated. Its decline signified the end to an inventive, idealistic philosophy.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Wooltex garment industry's tenure in Cleveland, Ohio, left the legacy of a unique example of American welfare capitalism around the end of the Nineteenth Century and the advent of the Twentieth Century. Although the company was only in the Cleveland area for roughly forty years, the ramifications of its existence influenced many facets of America's social, political, and economic spheres. The rise of Wooltex to the most vanguard garment company of the time set an example for others. By 1920, Wooltex declined as the result of government supported organized labor coupled with turbulent economic viability within the market and changes in fashion trends.

This thesis's goal is to demonstrate how Wooltex, a premier ready-to-wear garment manufacturer in Cleveland, used a system of welfare capitalism to bridge the capitalism and socialism theories of labor-management relations. The positive worker reaction at Wooltex and phenomenal growth in production and sales resulted in nationwide attention. This concept worked so well Cleveland garment manufacturers were able to defeat a monumental labor strike in 1911 and ward off the threat of unionism until intervention of the U.S. government during World War One. Questions pertaining to this thesis will be addressed:

(1) What role did Cleveland play in the formation of Wooltex? (2) How did immigration change garment manufacturing in Cleveland?, in Wooltex? (3) How did ready-made clothing capture a large market in America? (4) What made Cleveland's garment manufacturing different from the rest of America? (5) How did Wooltex lead other companies in welfare capitalism (6) What was the relationship between labor and management in the Wooltex factory? (7) What caused the decline of Wooltex?

For one to understand Wooltex, the realization of Cleveland's emergence as a complex urban center is crucial. The city's auspicious location within the transportation networks of the Great Lakes, the canals, and the railroads facilitated an influx of industry and people. The concomitant boom in population furthered by immigration westward, provided a healthy supply of labor for Cleveland's newly born factories. Furthermore, an unbridled attitude towards capitalism, unique to Cleveland, provided for a perfect entreprenurial atmosphere. Lastly, the city proved to be more open to immigrant labor than many of its counterparts in the East. This enabled some companies, such as Wooltex, which were deeply rooted in immigrant management and labor, to prosper.

The early years of Wooltex are synonymous with the life of the Wooltex pioneer, Herman Black. Black was a Jewish immigrant of Hungarian decent who started a notions house in

Cleveland in the late 1870s. He had an astute mind for business and was one of the first to observe the growing demand for ready-made clothing. In 1884, he established his first manufactory at 88 Bank Street. He engaged a small number of ethnic employees who made children's clothing and inexpensive cloaks. Although garments sold well, Black desired to do more and thus tapped a previously untouched market, women's apparel. By investing in capital improvements, purchasing the newest and most technologically advanced factory equipment, and expanding his labor force, Black created a high quality and high volume product.

However, Black was not the cliché slave-driving, immigrant- exploiting factory owner. He was very progressive for his day. His personal interest in his workers and their welfare fostered growth in the size and productivity of his business. Nineteen years after moving into its initial factory on Bank Street, the H. Black Company had evolved into a mature firm. This was accomplished under the leadership of his son, Morris Black and soon this company entered the more upscale national market. With its emergence into this wider market came a new name, Wooltex with its marketing philosophy: "Quality, styling and affordability unsurpassed."

Immigrant labor was an important aspect of industrialization in America. With hindsight, the influx of immigrants to the United States allowed aggressive

businessmen to surpass Europe in manufacturing. Despite the drawbacks of factory work, there were more benefits here for immigrants than in Europe. Unlike the factories on the East Coast described by Sean Wilentz, a historian who studied the working conditions of sweat shop variety garment factories in New York, the conditions in the Midwest differed greatly. The Midwest had experienced the political fervor of populism and socialism. All strata of society embraced this philosophy. Perhaps, immigrants favored this political agenda because it offered them more opportunities for economic security. Some businessmen such as Morris Black were greatly influenced by it, and incorporated some of its ideals into their factories. Immigrants heard this and began a huge migration to the Midwest. Although capital improvements of industry in Cleveland required fewer skilled and unskilled workers to run, factories did not cut back numbers of employees. They simply bought more machines and expanded their business. Thus immigrants had much to gain from moving to Cleveland.

Wooltex's business was booming by 1910 and garment manufacturing within Cleveland was unchallenged in the Midwestern economic sphere. The owners of ready-to-wear manufacturing were experiencing growth, wealth and prominence. Despite the corruption and greed that success can foster, Wooltex owners put much of their profits back into their company creating a model factory in physical

appearance and worker democracy. Following Black's footsteps, other Cleveland manufacturers built huge, clean factories and paid their workers relatively well. Cleveland benefitted from this responsible economic distribution. As a direct effect of this prosperity, workers' disposable incomes increased. Thus, their ability to pay for luxury goods was multiplied. Fashionable dress was traditionally for the wealthy, but by the turn of the century, workers could purchase affordable, stylish and quality goods from ready-to-wear garment manufacturers.

Fashion was an integral aspect of developed urban society. With the emergence of a sophisticated middle class in latter nineteenth century America, the demand for fashionable and affordable clothing reigned supreme. Starting in the latter 1890s, fashion became an element of desire rather than one of need. This pursuit of current and fashionable goods would bankrupt manufacturers who tried to hold on to old practices and trends, i.e., detachable collars and corsets. Likewise for manufacturers--such as Wooltex--who watched fashion and followed the trends, fortunes were made.

Wooltex's cloaks, suits, and skirts were designed to be stylish and practical. It was extremely pertinent to the success of the company that the latest look from Paris be obtained immediately. Thus, a Paris fashion bureau was established. Morris Black hired Madame Jeanne Savarie, a

sophisticated American fashion magazine editor, to buy and steal the newest fashion trends before they came to America from the Parisian designers.[1] Wooltex now had an edge on new styles. In addition to fashion pirating, ready-to-wear manufacturers in Northwestern America organized an association to agree on and promote particular styles. Wooltex and the other Midwest firms set styles before New York City and Eastern manufacturers did.

Advertising was instrumental in creating a consumer goods society, one that valued superfluous wants rather than genuine needs. It gave fashion a new importance to the middle class. Early garment manufacturers such as Wooltex benefitted by this change. Wooltex prided itself on being progressive in its advertising and innovative with its sales force. Cleveland was a seller's market. Black's salesmen used the same techniques as advertisers to compel the prospective buyer to purchase. The Wooltex salesmen were so successful they became one of the largest sales forces for any Ohio garment manufacturer.

After the death of Herman Black, Morris Black took control of the factory and continued his father's principles of management. Morris, a Harvard graduate, would make substantial additions of his own. His political awareness would encourage him to implement a radically different relationship between labor and management. Morris Black's system became a paradigm of welfare capitalism, a style of

management that benefited the worker yet still favored the owner. Perhaps Herman and Morris Black were affected by William Howe Tolman's energetic speeches that extolled the benefits of welfarism. Stuart Brandes, in his book American Welfare Capitalism 1880-1940, identified the charismatic Tolman as a director of the Industrial Betterment foundation from 1900-1910 and claimed the man devoted his life to the cause.[2] Tolman believed the fight for mass implementation of industrial welfare practices was a worthy pursuit. Welfarism was based on the ideology that a happy worker was a productive worker. This view held the opposing labor unions at bay for a while, but by the 1920s the forces of organized labor overpowered welfare capitalism.

The union strike of 1911 was the first test of welfare capitalism in Cleveland's garment industry. The concept had not been in place for long before the challenge. The unions had been successful in liberating labor in the 1909-1910 International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) strike in New York city. The IGLWU strike was successful because many New York garment manufacturers had treated their workers poorly. However Cleveland's workers were not in the same situation. Cleveland workers had a more fair and reasonable relationship with their bosses. Cleveland had prospered from the 1909-1910 strike in New York. It filled orders that New York could not, and expanded its markets in the process. Union organizers were not able to break the ties between

labor and management in Cleveland. The ILGWU lost $300,000 trying to unionize the Cleveland garment industry. Not until an economic pinch affected the workers in 1918, due in part by World War One, would they decide to unionize and then only by the insistence of the National War Labor Board.

1. Madame Savarie, "Talk on Style by Madame Savarie," The Wooltex News (Cleveland: The H. Black Co., 1911), vol. 2, no. 2, 7.

1. Stuart D. Brandes, American Welfare Capitalism 1880-1940 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 21.

CHAPTER I

Cleveland's Growth as a Garment Manufacturer and The Herman Black Company as an Infant Industry.

The United States began as a rural nation with a steadily growing population and small pockets of industry which served local and regional markets. By the latter 1880s it became a bustling urban complex marked by geometric population increases, heavy manufacturing and industry, and a national marketing structure.[1] Cleveland, Ohio was one of these industrial centers. Thomas F. Campbell and Edward Miggins, both labor and urban studies scholars, concluded from researching Cleveland, "Many of the general statements made about trends in nineteenth-century America, describe more accurately the transitions that took place in Cleveland than what went on in the older cities of the Northeast such as New York, Boston or Philadelphia."[2] Cleveland's birth as a modern city, although still referred to as the "Forest City" dates to 1865. Cleveland, similar to other northern cities, benefited industrially from the Civil War. At the beginning of the war, the manufacture of ready-made clothing was in infant stages and focused primarily on men's clothing. Military uniforms were one of the pioneering ready-wear garments produced. These small garment workshops continued to grow in the post-war years due to their conducive geographical location.

By 1870, a hub of aspiring cities evolved which Cleveland was a part. The Great Lakes, the Ohio River and the canal system created a transportation network which increased distribution and created intermediate linkages with the East Coast. While Cleveland was developing into a poly-industrial city, it was mass manufacturing that dramatically changed its physical appearance, rendering it virtually unrecognizable to the hypothetical prodigal son.[3]

Campbell and Miggins continue, "in Cleveland, the garment industry was concentrated in the warehouse district, but it spread to other areas of the city as well, on both the east and west sides."[4] The first large manufacturing complex was the landmark building of the Cleveland Worsted Mills. This was established by a German-Jew, named Kaufmann Hays. In addition to garment manufacturing, Cleveland's geographical setting made it receptive to many other business and manufacturing ventures. Beal and Weiner, when composing a statistical study of Cleveland for Campbell and Miggins, discovered:

> In fact Cleveland's advantages permitted a diversified industrial base; the Census Bureau reported that all sixteen of its national categories of industrial activity were found in Cleveland; in broad terms, these categories included metals and their fabrication, chemicals, clothing, electricity,and transportation related materials.[5]

With these advantages, Cleveland became one of the fastest growing cities in the West and soon overshadowed Ohio's

other industrial city, Cincinnati.

Entrepreneurs of Cleveland had relied upon a continuous influx of talent and combined it with native innovations to create the industrial rise of 1865-1929. Cleveland was unique. Her mixture of immigrants and lack of stringent social convention, allowed for opportunities not found in New York, Boston and Philadelphia. Cleveland was a place to come to and succeed no matter who you were.

The unhampered industries were kept in check by owners who were deeply affected by the populist and socialist movements in the 1910s. As a result of this philosophical thinking owners implemented "welfare capitalism" practices in their factories. Furthermore the workers benefited from its educational programs and it warded off union movements. As a developing urban center largely a result of ready-to-wear garment manufacturing, early industrial Cleveland exemplified the opportunity on which America was built.

By 1910, Cleveland's garment industry, led by factories such as Wooltex, moved from regional prominence to a larger more powerful national identity.(plate 1) Cleveland, like the rest of the country, was experiencing huge increases in population. In 1870 Cleveland had just under 92,000 people, by 1910 it was the sixth largest population center in America with more than 560,000.[6] By 1920 Cleveland became the fifth largest city in the United States with a population of 796,841 persons. David Van Tassel and John

PLATE 1

Wooltex News Tuesday, February 15 Page 7

Designer Berger

The Factory

The complexity of designing is illustrated in the first picture where Mr. Berger is working. The second picture shows the grand Wooltex factory in the winter of 1914.

Grabowski, who have written a condensed history of Cleveland's early urban developments claim, "The garment industry probably reached its peak during the 1920s, when Cleveland ranked close to New York as one of the country's leading centers for garment production."[7] This stage marked the pinnacle of Cleveland's national success and identity as an entity--people, community, business and industry. George Condon, a local Cleveland author, agreed that during the 1920s Cleveland enjoyed a premier position in the industrial United States. "The city's future never looked brighter" concluded Condon, "than when the turbulent twenties reached their peak in 1925."[8]

In Cleveland, local factors played their part in the decline of the industry, but the rise of ready-to-wear as well as its decline paralleled the industry nationwide. Despite strong local and regional ties to her markets, Cleveland's ascent to the national market during the twenties increased her vulnerability to economic disasters. From the latter teens to early twenties the introduction of the business merger descended gradually over the city. Cleveland businesses merged with other corporations and the decision making powers left and relocated in stronger financial urban centers. Local government feuds added to this breakdown. George Condon, in Yesterday's Cleveland, illustrates that the non-alignment of government affected the collapse of business and manufacturers. "Cleveland's

fragmentation was present long before the 1920's" concluded Porter "it was obvious that the community needed to grow as a whole and not as congeries of individual squabbling municipalities."[9]

Edward Miggins agreed with Condon that Cleveland manufacturers suffered economically and socially from the lack of unanimity within government. As a product of local political stratification, company mergers, and an economic depression, Miggins asserts, "A city whose creative entrepreneurs had once been a magnet that drew immigrants from around the world now became, like most other American industrial cities, little more than an urban labor pool, dependent for its well being on the decisions of absentee owners and far-off capitalists."[10] Family roots, traditions, or civic pride no longer played the decisive role in determining whether Cleveland business expanded, shut down, stayed in town or moved away.[11] This significantly wounded Cleveland industry, as the crux of the ready-to-wear factories moved to New York city. Cleveland's challenge to New York as a garment manufacturing center was no longer serious. With much of the industry and manufacturing closing up or moving out of town, Cleveland became a different city. Miggins, however concludes on a positive note. Stating, "A city of toilers became increasingly a city of clerks," he wrote, "but time has shown that a city fares better in the long run wearing a

white collar rather than a blue one."[12] The positive elements of Cleveland's upward economic and industrial mobility were seen in the formation and maturation of the Wooltex Company. What had started out as a one man operation would at its peak employ 1,500 workers.

Among these laborers were Jewish immigrants who came to Cleveland from Europe as they did to other cities in America to escape terrible social, political, and economic persecution. Although Jews demonstrated a talent for all types of entrepreneurship, clothing manufacturing was one of their principle pursuits. David Van Tassel and John Grabowski, who wrote The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, have ascertained, "The early entrepreneurs of the clothing industry in Cleveland were often Jews of German or Austro-Hungarian extraction."[13] Many of them became tailors because they were familiar with that trade. Furthermore, previous experience in retailing prepared them for the transition to manufacturing, and wholesaling in the ready-to-wear industry.

Herman Black came to America from Hungary between 1850 and 1860. According to the available information, Black came from semi-modest means and was trained in tailoring and sewing. His first retail establishment sold sewing supplies, this venture did well. Therefore, he expanded into a small clothing producer and founded the H. Black Company. Black produced ready-made clothing based on his own designs from

European patterns.[14] He saw the opportunity ready-to-wear manufacturing offered, took the initiative to open a firm and addressed the people's need.

Frank Martinec, the second employee of Herman Black, remembered how simple the garment industry was, "The H. Black Company was one of the oldest established garment houses. There was very little competition in those days in and around the Cleveland market. Of course there was competition from New York."[15] At that time there was no established division of labor. The boss worked among the employees and most workers could do all the jobs necessary to produce a garment. With boss and worker together all day, doing the same jobs, a positive relationship developed which necessitated friendship. Although the early garment workplace was unsanitary, complaints were limited. At least this was the case at Herman Black's factory. When workers complained, Herman Black decided first hand whether they were valid; if so, changes were made.

Despite the hardships of early factory work, it was important to Herman Black to provide other physical activity. Records in the Wooltex News showed there was a small factory baseball team sponsored by the first H. Black factory.[16] This was an early paternalistic step that The H. Black Co. took to keep up the worker's morale. Factory sponsored sports teams made the workers happy, thus it fostered the idea that a happy worker was a good worker.

There were not many records of the H. Black company in its formative years. Few financial records were kept if any at all. All the information about the early years were taken from personal recollections and testimonials recorded in the company's monthly magazine called The Wooltex News. The best source for this information came from men and women who worked for H. Black from the beginning. On January 14, 1884, Paul Gabel joined H. Black in his garment manufacturing operation. He stated in the Wooltex News that he, "came to Cleveland in 1883 and worked as a tailor. At that time the tailoring season lasted around three months."[17] Tailoring was not a very stable occupation. Although it was a rather decent paying job, it could not be relied on for a steady paycheck.

Not unlike traditional garment workshops on the East coast, Cleveland's first garment factories were not pristine. Fred Joseph, the sixth worker to be hired by Black, remembered the first building as "dirty, not well kept, and it had a water powered elevator."[18] He continued to report that there were plenty of fat rats, which some employees named and some boys befriended. At that time only six people were employed. Mr. Black's shop must have resembled the small sweat-shop environment of those in New York city.

Paul Gabel's comments about Black's first factory further supported the contention that early Cleveland

garment factories were not model perfect from the start. "We used to all work in one big room," remembered Gabel, "and we used to have whole families working for us."[19] This was not uncommon for the small factory. It improved work efficiency when all the processes were going on in the same room. Without electricity factories were ventilated by fans powered by engine shafts, and machines were worked by foot-power.[20] This made the air heavy with dust, soot and woolen an cotton fibers. Black's attempt to get air into the sewing rooms was a model step to help his workers, but since he worked there, it benefited him as well. Even poor ventilation was better than none.

Frank Martinec came to work for the H. Black Company in May of 1884, only a few months after they started.[21] He remembered a small staff with no men tailors, two reasons for this were, (1) the first garments made by Black's company were childrens' which needed very little detailed design or construction, (2) existing tailor shops still hired skilled men as tailors and apprentices. In the early days, H. Black's wages were slightly lower than skilled craftsmen could demand in tailor shops. Martinec, who desired to be a tailor, recalled the first H. Black factory, as having ". . . two cutters, about three pressers and I should think, not more than forty machine hands, they all used foot powered machines and made mostly cheap children garments."[22] The patterns for children's clothes were made

by trial and error, they cut and re-cut and ripped and re-ripped until the garment would fit.

Herman Black knew how to do everything in the production of a garment. Besides Black's good cutting and sewing skills, he also designed all the styles.[23] At first Black was not concerned about the latest Paris fashion. His first market catered to children's parents. Parents were more interested in durability and low price. Black was aware of their priorities, and therefore was not up-to-date with fashion trends.

Alvino Berno in his story, "Twenty-five years ago", attests to the quality and conditions of early factory life. "At first we just made children's coats. We made them to sell as low as $1.25 a piece. Most of them were satinette with printed figures. This printing was done with something so poisonous that it made the girls noses red and the pressers' arms were red up to the elbow."[24] These coats were very simple. Because the garment's quality was mediocre, a girl could turn out four or five coats in one day.

The editor of the Wooltex News remembered that prior to 1903 the Wooltex label and concept did not exist.[25] It was not surprising that a company would not want to create a reputation on cheap quality garments. Limited repeat customers required a need for new markets all the time. Perhaps the forward thinking Herman Black had a quality

ready-to-wear line of clothing in mind and did not want a previous label to stigmatize his prospects. If this was not his plan, he still benefited by not having an identifiable name for his children's wear.

Alvino Berno recollects his attempt by trial and error to design H. Black's first ladies garment. "When I first came here we made jerseys and linen dusters and raglans. We didn't make any tailored garments at all. Then we made capes. I made the first cape ever made here, and the first skirt, and it took two weeks to make that first skirt."[26] As the company made progress they decided to try women's coats in 1886; they had never made any women's coats, and didn't try them again for about three years after that. Moving into any new product line was a slow transition. As H. Black & Company made their next move, they decided to change their quality and style provisions. Berno continued, "The house has made a steady improvement all the time from year to year since I came. They have never gone backward."[27] The employees saw the upward trends of the business as successes that would open the door of opportunity for them also.

The introduction of electric power to the factory was the golden opportunity for H. Black. Electric power was put in "nearly twenty years ago"(1890) according to Mr. Gabel, "before that we used the warth cutting machine, in the very beginning everything was cut by the knife."[28] The

differences between man power and electric power were startling. For instance, the draw knife could cut five or six garments at a time; with the chop knife one could cut fifteen at once. Electric machines cut 50-100 pattern pieces at a time. With these technological advancements, garment manufacturers would make huge increases in their production. H. Black was a man that held some things sacred, but unlike others who feared technological change, he embraced it, therefore his advancement was almost assured.

But similar to any person, organization, or factory who was trying to lead, there were mistakes. Gabel said, "we made suits at one time from $3.75 and up, twenty years ago, we had to change our whole stock because bustles went out of style. We had to work overtime until the coats and suits were made several inches smaller around the hips."[29] Continued Gabel, "now we don't cut stock too far ahead of time, and are not liable to be caught that way."[30] Because of this episode, it was not surprising that H. Black took a sudden interest in what was fashionable and therefore started what would become the Wooltex fashion bureau in Paris. A man who was aware that fashion and style were important to the garment business demonstrated that he was sensitive to emotional impulse and its integration to decision making. Black's qualities as a owner and boss deserve a closer analysis.

Sources indicated that Black was a no-nonsense, frugal

man who had a stern but kind heart. He needed a sense of belonging even though he was the boss. Herman Black did not spend money on esthetics. Gabel stated, "Mr. H. Black did not believe in spending much for fixtures, and would you believe me, in all those years [99 Bank Street] he had just a packing case to write on instead of a table."[31] His frugal mindedness enabled him to cater to employee situations and compile a nest egg. With his savings and trusted employees, he expanded his operation. Thus the larger factory and capital improvements created a more efficient workplace. Although the building was larger and more people were employed, Black still tried to foster a personal relationship with his employees.

Black was interested in everybody's affairs. He knew all the employees' troubles and tribulations and he would often grant anything that was reasonable. Frank Martinec appreciated that "Mr. Black was among the people in the factory most of the time."[32] This characteristic demonstrated Black's many good qualities as a boss. As an owner who took a personal interest in his factory, he was able to see what needed to be improved and what would help speed up the manufacturing processes. James Vanek, who worked for Black in 1885, distinctly remembered, "Herman Black was such an economical man that if he saw any waste he would come to us and show it."[33] It was said, as reported by the editor in the Wooltex News, Mr. Black hated waste

more than anything. He would spend five hours relaying patterns on the cutting tables to save two inches of extra fabric.

The H. Black Company had one other secondary boss or authority. His name was Samuel Kaufmann. The Kaufmann family had already established a name for themselves in Cleveland. They were primarily engaged in retail and distributing.[34] Kaufmann, though in the firm, was on the road mostly as a traveling salesman. Kaufmann instructed two additional traveling men for the soon to be Wooltex force, thus creating one of the most successful Cleveland garment industry sales staffs. The H. Black Company's increasing clientele was the reason for a new larger, more efficient factory. Due to increased sales, Wooltex became the top garment manufacturer in Cleveland in 1910.[35]

Because of the success the H. Black Company was enjoying the company decided to move to a larger building. The relocation of the Wooltex company was explained by Frank Martinec, "We moved from 99 Bank Street to 81 Bank Street, and after that we moved into our own building on the corner of Bank and Lake."[36] Their third move in 1900 was to a large well designed building. Sam Lesser who wrote "Growth of our Factory" for the Wooltex News, said, "The new building was put on the opposite corner and we surely had the finest cloak factory in Cleveland."[37] Unlike garment factories which were cramped into buildings not suited for

them, Black tried something new, a garment factory built specifically for the manufacturer. Lesser claimed in his article, "It was one of the first cloak factories owned by the manufacturer who occupied it."[38]

It was in his third building that Black made his first steps toward cleaning up garment manufacturing. He could now afford to set higher standards. Employees who worked in the building on Bank and Lake, said the factory was better because there was plenty of light and much better air. However, it was not the ideal, model factory yet.

After his third move, in 1903, Herman's son Morris, took over running the plant. The concept of Wooltex had begun. According to the editor of The Wooltex News, under Morris's guidance the Wooltex idea and Wooltex ideal were born, and as a result the company soon outgrew what was considered a large and beautiful factory.[39]

Wooltex, like its name suggested, made primarily wool clothes. It wanted to create a better type of women's clothes made by "better" people in a factory with a better atmosphere. Wooltex established a name which meant craftsmanship, quality and affordability. Gone were the days of cheap children's clothing and a predominately local market.

These changes and goals were attributed to Morris Black, who learned shrewd business techniques from his father but also had many innovative ideas of his own. Morris

Alfred Black was born in 1868 in Toledo, Ohio. He was given every advantage the family could afford including a college education.[40] Black graduated from Harvard University with a A.B. degree in 1890. Although he underwent years of schooling, Morris wanted to be involved in the garment business. Herman Black displayed no favoritism in the factory to Morris. When Morris graduated, "he began that same year in the factory as a shipping clerk."[41] Later he would become a designer. Herman Black felt it was necessary that Morris learn his trade from the bottom up, enabling him to make good, honest decisions in the best interest for the business and factory and not just the pocketbook.

Morris was president of the company from 1903-1922. During this time he made great strides in the company's respectability and prestige. Under his guidance, Cleveland became one of the chief garment centers in America. Wooltex was the vanguard industry, one to be admired and emulated. Where H. Black established a welfare capitalist foundation, Morris built an ethical empire. Wooltex was now housed in a specifically built building unlike any factory of its time. The design would become a model for future garment factories and its reputation as a worker-orientated facility would become legendary. Morris Black wrote an opening statement in the first Wooltex News which identified his position and beliefs on Cleveland, Wooltex and worker:

> In America there is more work of this kind - work that is play, than there is in any other

> country, and that is the kind of work that all of us here at the Wooltex factory want to do, work that is pleasant, work that is enjoyable because it is useful, because it is progressive.[42]

1. Thomas F. Campbell and Edward M. Miggins (eds.), The Birth of Modern Cleveland 1865-1930 (Cleveland: Western Reserve Historical Society, 1988), 19.

2. Ibid., 55.

3. Ibid., 39.

4. Ibid., 28.

5. Ibid., 39.

6. George E. Condon, Cleveland: The Best Kept Secret (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 56.

7. David O. Van Tassel, and John J. Grabowski (eds.), The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University and Indiana University Press, 1987),433.

8. Condon, Cleveland: the Best Kept Secret, 57.

9. ------, Yesterday's Cleveland : Seemann's Historic City Series no. 30. (Miami: Seemann's Pub., 1976), 9.

10. Campbell and Miggins, The Birth of Modern Cleveland 1865-1930, 67.

11. Ibid., 67.

12. Ibid., 69.

13. Van Tassel and Grabowski, The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, 433.

14. Ibid., 433.

15. Frank Martinec, "Twenty six Years Ago," The Wooltex News (Cleveland: The H. Black and Company, 1910), vol. 1, no. 4, 13.

16. Fred Joseph, "Recollections," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 5, 15-17.

17. "Mr. Gabel Resigns," The Wooltex News, 1915, vol.4, no. 9, 1.

18. Fred Joseph, "Recollections," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 5, 15-17.

19. Frank Martinec, "Twenty-six Years Ago," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 4, 11.

20. Paul Gabel, "Twenty-six Years Ago," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 3, 9.

21. Ibid., vol. 1, no. 3, 7.

22. Frank Martinec, "Twenty-six Years Ago" The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 4, 11.

23. Alvino Berno, "Twenty-five Years Ago," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 2, 7.

24. Ibid., vol. 1, no. 2, 4.

25. Paul Gabel, "Twenty-six Years Ago," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 3, 4.

26. Alvino Berno, "Twenty-five Years Ago," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no.2, 6.

27. Ibid., vol. 1, no. 2, 6.

28. Frank Martinec, "Twenty-six Years Ago," The Wooltex News, vol. 1, no. 4, 13-14.

29. Paul Gabel, "Twenty-six Years Ago," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 3, 8.

30. Ibid., vol. 1, no. 3, 9.

31. Ibid., vol. 1, no. 3, 3.

32. Frank Martinec, "Twenty-six Years Ago," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 4, 11-12.

33. James Vanek, "Twenty-five Years Ago," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 6, 3.

34. Lloyd Gartner, The Jews in Cleveland (Western Reserve University Press, 1988), 38.

35. "Strike Cripples Many Factories," The Cleveland Plain Dealer, 8 June 1911, sec. A, p. 2, col. 3.

36. Frank Martinec, "Twenty-six Years Ago," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 4, 13.

37. Sam Lesser, "The Growth of Our Factory," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 3, 19.

38. Ibid., vol. 1, no. 3, 19.

39. Ibid., vol. 1, no. 3, 19.

40. Van Tassel and Grabowski, The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, 522.

41. Ibid., 523.

42. Morris A. Black, "Greeting," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 1, 3.

CHAPTER II

Economics and Immigrants in Wooltex's industrial development - a crucial and necessary mix.

> "Ironically, while social historians have filled shelves with studies of New England villages, frontier settlements, commercial entrepots, and immigrant neighborhoods, they have left largely unexplored the economic development of the great manufacturing centers such as Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Cincinnati, and Cleveland."
>
> Thomas F. Campbell and Edward Miggins

Because topics about the Midwest have been left largely unexplored by historians, studying the correlation between its growing urban centers and the emergence of its ready-to-wear manufacturing illustrates the causal-effect relationship of capitalism. While the first ready-to-wear clothes in this country were probably made in New Bedford, Massachusetts, important technological developments were made in New York and Boston.[1] While these developments were occurring on the East coast during the 1830s, the earliest record of garment production in Cleveland was 1845. Its growth to a prominent local industry relied on demand created during and after the Civil War.

The market for men's clothes developed first in the Midwest because single and enlisted men had limited access or funds to pay a tailor. Therefore, ready-to-wear clothes in standard sizes offered a solution. Children's ready-to-

wear was another good market. Here too was a demand for inexpensive garments. Not until the turn of the century, did women's ready-to-wear clothing come into vogue. Herman Black was the first children's garment manufacturer in Cleveland. He soon saw an opportunity to establish a manufacture of women's garments. Thereafter, he got out of the children's market and focused on women's needs only. Cleveland, by the turn of the century, would monopolize the women's clothing industry more than menswear or childrens.[2]

Starting a business just prior to the twentieth century required strong commitment and hard work, but only a small amount of funds. Amy Maher reported in her research of the Cleveland garment manufacturers that, "The entry-level manufacturer in [1870s-1880s] needed relatively little capital to launch a garment factory."[3] This resulted from the few financial restrictions placed on the early entrepreneur. There were no taxes, no license fees, no governmental fees, and no payment for workers insurance. Although this may not have benefited the worker, the owner saved a lot of money. Even if a business venture failed, the individual could rise again. For example, P. T. Barnum, the great circus and entertainment mogul, who lived during this period, had many costly failures, but he usually bounced back from these misfortunes.

Herman Black had foresight. Using his talents in textile construction and organization, he opened a dry goods

and notions house in the late 1870s. Ten years later, he went into garment production. Black's business began in a small rented room in downtown Cleveland. Initially there were only five employees. With his keen business sense and excellent financial management, his company grew to 300 employees within fifteen years. Eventually under his son's management the company became the internationally acclaimed Wooltex. Herman Black was instrumental in developing Cleveland as the powerful Midwest center for garment manufacturing.

As Cleveland's industrial growth intensified, disorder in the flats and crowding of the retail districts occurred. This was tolerated by the inhabitants because it represented physical evidence of economic prosperity. Campbell and Miggins investigative study explained the land distribution situation. The valuable horizontal strip of land that comprised the city's core was a beehive of daily activity; of 2,100 business establishments operating in Cleveland in 1870, fifty-eight percent of them were located there and employed sixty-three percent [19,400] of all Cleveland's workers.[4] Closeness, filth and pollution was endured because along with it came jobs. Condon reports, "During the 1880s the number of manufacturing concerns had grown to 2,300 and the number of products doubled, as had their value."[5] Three times the number of employees were now on payrolls, and three times as much capital was invested. With

this type of increase the garment industry of Cleveland could not be ignored in the national economic arena. Van Tassel and Grabowski discovered, "For approximately fifty years after 1890, about seven percent of Cleveland's work force toiled in the garment factories."[6] With the quick growth in the industry it was essential to construct new buildings and it was necessary that they were close to the worker's homes. When transportation devices such as the trolley and cable cars were developed, it was not imperative for factories to be close to residential homes.

Van Tassel and Grabowski explain their findings on employment, "Unlike in New York where the majority of shops employed five or fewer workers in sweatshop conditions, in Cleveland by 1910, eighty percent of the approximate 10,000 apparel workers were employed in large well equipped factories."[7] This occurred because Cleveland manufacturing in its early stages had the ability to move outward, whereas cities already established, resembling New York, could only move upward, which created a cramped and unhealthy atmosphere. Rose Marie Jollie, author of the history of Cleveland's Central National Bank, found through financial documents, "Permits were issued in 1911 to erect 3,627 new buildings and 4,233 additions in Cleveland, at a cost of $16,900,000."[8] The abundance of new construction required strict guidelines for safety. Cleveland's building code was considered to be the best in the country.

The first tailor shops employed mainly men. These men did the designing, cutting, construction and pressing of the garments. The few women employed did the tedious finishing work such as hemming, lining, and buttonholing. At first the division of labor by sex was the same in the large manufacturing plants as it was in the tailoring shops, because garment manufacturing still required skilled labor. As mechanization changed the process of garment construction in the factory, the need for skilled workers diminished. Therefore, women who were not trained in all the tailoring processes could now perform the simplified tasks of piece work. By 1910, a large number of women worked in the industry. Maher's statistics suggest that women's employment was steadily increasing. She states, "From 1914 to 1927 the percentage of women in the field went up from 55.29% to 74.82%."[9] Women who worked did so out of necessity. Women of the lower classes, had few choices when it came to wage earning. Domestic service and factory work were two options. Once the women were married, if economic stability could be attained, family responsibility took precedent.

Early manufacturing and industry functioned under dismal conditions prior to the progressive era. Soon a tremendous change in the working environment occurred. In 1911 the government took legal steps to protect workers. Mildred Hickman's study of garment worker conditions, commissioned by the federal government stated, "The law of

Ohio required that every employer having three or more employees carry Workman's Compensation Insurance."[10] At that time insurance rates for clothing manufacturers were $.10 per $100.00 of the annual payroll per worker. The financial welfare of the workers was now being accounted for by government and employer.

Although the manufacturing of clothing was labor-intensive and required long, hard hours, Cleveland garment workers toiled fewer hours than others. Hickman continued, "Ohio industries as a whole have an average schedule of 50 hours a week, but the clothing industries of Ohio have a work schedule of 44 hours or less a week."[11] Campbell and Miggins strengthen Hickman's point, "While it employed a percentage of workers twenty times higher than the national average, the clothing field also paid the lowest wage annually ($404) of any Cleveland industry - in contrast to paints and varnishes the highest ($855)"[12] Garment workers were laid-off during slack periods tied to fashion seasons. While yearly they might not have earned as much as a iron worker or chemical mixer, they earned more per hour and worked fewer hours a week. Garment manufacturers often made a single or limited number of items, therefore layoffs occurred when they were not in season. For example, Wooltex's wool coats could not be worn year round. Furthermore, to optimize profits there was no need to run the factory at full speed year round. Not until

manufacturers produced items that were needed for every season would they keep all their employees all year. In 1916, Wooltex claimed they had drastically reduced the number of their lay offs. Additional items, primarily the lightweight wash skirt, kept the factory running all year. The Editor of the Wooltex News in an informative editorial entitled "Do You Know" stated, "200 more people are employed at present [1916] than at the same time last year. This is due to the extreme popularity of wash skirts."[13]

Wooltex claimed that even though their business was seasonable, they kept more people working than any other cloak house. During the next year, there were even fewer lay-offs due to the popularity of sport coats. However, the lay-offs that did occur came from the wash skirt department. This point illustrates the power that fashion held over the garment industry. Style changes could drastically effect employment. During the slack season, a great many were laid off, but Black often insisted workers with seniority remain. When there was nothing else to do, these workers would clean windows, whitewash or other activities as long as they kept working.

Factory wages were divided by skilled tasks into different levels: sewing, finish work, measuring, cutting, grading, pressing. Opportunities abounded at Wooltex for the worker to elevate his status and job situation at the factory. In her study of garment trades, Mildred Hickman

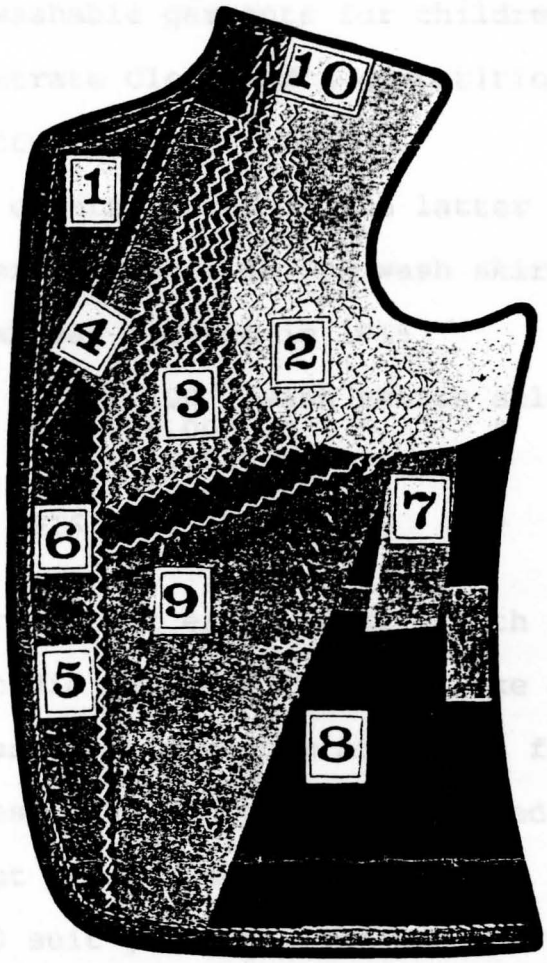
uncovered, "Wages for 75% to 90% of machine sewing and hand sewing operations were paid by the piece rather than by the hour."[14] In most of the garment factories, expert operators were selected to make models for the company's traveling salesmen. These operators were paid weekly ten to twenty percent more than piece work wages.[15] Although this was less strenuous work, it was far more exacting. Unlike others, Wooltex stated they did not have such specially made items for their salesmen. They believed their general stock was very good and were not afraid to display it.

When electric machines were put to use in factory work it was no longer necessary for one individual to know how the entire garment was put together (plate 2). Each worker performed one function. Some garments required 10 to 100 different operations to complete. Hickman again finds that garment production was a unique procedure to each factory. "One company makes a man's coat in 50 distinctly separate operations, whereas another company requires 107 operations for a similar style coat."[16]

The Kaynee blouse factory was not a direct competitor with Wooltex because they made different products, however in size and in welfare capitalism, they were always competitive. A. Booster in her analysis of the Kaynee Blouse company ascertained that "Kaynee cut on average about 20,000 garments a day."[17] It was estimated that Kaynee used about 12,500,000 yards, or 375,000,000 feet of cloth in the

PLATE 2

her. As compared to a great many factories a clothing factory is not very noisy. At worst, one hears a loud hum rather than a resounding clang and deafening crash.



Cut showing the construction of a coat.

Each of the following parts is sewed by a different worker.

1. Many tiny stitches keep the lapel in shape.
2. Wool felt builds a comfortable, well fitting shoulder.
3. The hair cloth is made of hair from Russia.
4. The bridle-stay keeps the crease in the right place.

This picture taken from Mildred Hickman's research demonstrates the separate applications it took to make a jacket. Each worker had a separate function to perform.

year 1915. Meanwhile, Wooltex claimed to have the most beautiful and functional building in 1910. Booster responded that Kaynee's factory was, "The largest, most modern building in the world devoted exclusively to the production of washable garments for children."[18] These examples demonstrate Cleveland's competition for ideal garment manufacturing facilities.

Wooltex's orders peaked in the latter 1910s. In 1916, there were orders for over 45,000 wash skirts. This was 10,000 more than was ordered in 1915.[19]

1912 - 500 wash skirts sold
1913 - 6,000 " " "
1914 - 17,000 " " "
1915 - 36,000 " " "
1916 - 50,000 " " "

These numbers represent exponential growth in this item. However, growth did not last forever. Like any fashion trend, there was great momentum at first, followed by dwindling success. The Wooltex News printed other statistics about production. From 1915 to 1916, Wooltex produced 18,150 suit jackets. The wool skirt department made 21,350 garments, up from 13,600 in 1914.[20] This growth lead the manufacturers to claim the yearly garment output of Cleveland would fill 100 of the largest warehouses in the city.

The garment industries fared well until the late 1920s. In 1925 men's clothing accounted for 2.33% of the value of manufacturing produced in Cleveland, a total of $24,388,614.

Women's - 2.18% a total of $23,862,628.[21] Since 1925, Cleveland's share of the women's clothing industry had been decreasing. Most of women's manufacturing moved to New York city. Cleveland's attempt to tighten the reigns on the New York fashion scene failed. By 1928, there were only 100 clothing factories left in Cleveland.

Cleveland's loss of competition with New York, derived not from their companies lack of ability to produce a fast, inexpensive, quality product but in the grand scheme of colossal corporate mergers. At first, smaller local businesses merged with each other, perhaps this created clothing lines that spanned the entire year. While these mergers produced a temporary feeling of stability, nothing was farther from the truth. Thriving Cleveland businesses under the assumption of the merger lost control. Jobs and factory ownership went elsewhere. Cleveland's tremendous progress and unique approaches to worker welfare was lost. Condon attributed the downfall of Cleveland's manufacturing and industry to, "The stock market crash of 1929 and the depression of the 1930s, which dropped Cleveland to her knees, and there were times in the ten years that followed when even her most enthusiastic boosters were ready to concede the ten-count."[22]

The great expansion of the ready-to-wear industry coincided with and was partly the result of the tremendous urbanization and the great wave of immigrants that the U.S.

experienced in the last decades of the 19th and early 20th century.[23] The foundation of the garment industry in America lay primarily in the hands of the immigrant. In Cleveland, the first garment factories were run by Germans. Jewish immigrants worked for them. In time, the more ambitious Jewish worker soon became a contractor himself or owner of a small factory.

Immigration of particular ethnic groups came in waves into Cleveland. In 1870, the state census takers found that 41.8% of the city's population was foreign born. The majority were Irish, Germans and Czechs. The 1870s also brought Jews and Bohemians. In the 1880s Russians, Ukrainians, and Poles arrived. By the 1890s Italians, Greeks and more Slavs filled out the rest of Cleveland's ethnic population.[24] It is important to make distinctions between immigrant ethnic groups, because as they came to America, the division of ethnic labor had been pre-determined in some industries.

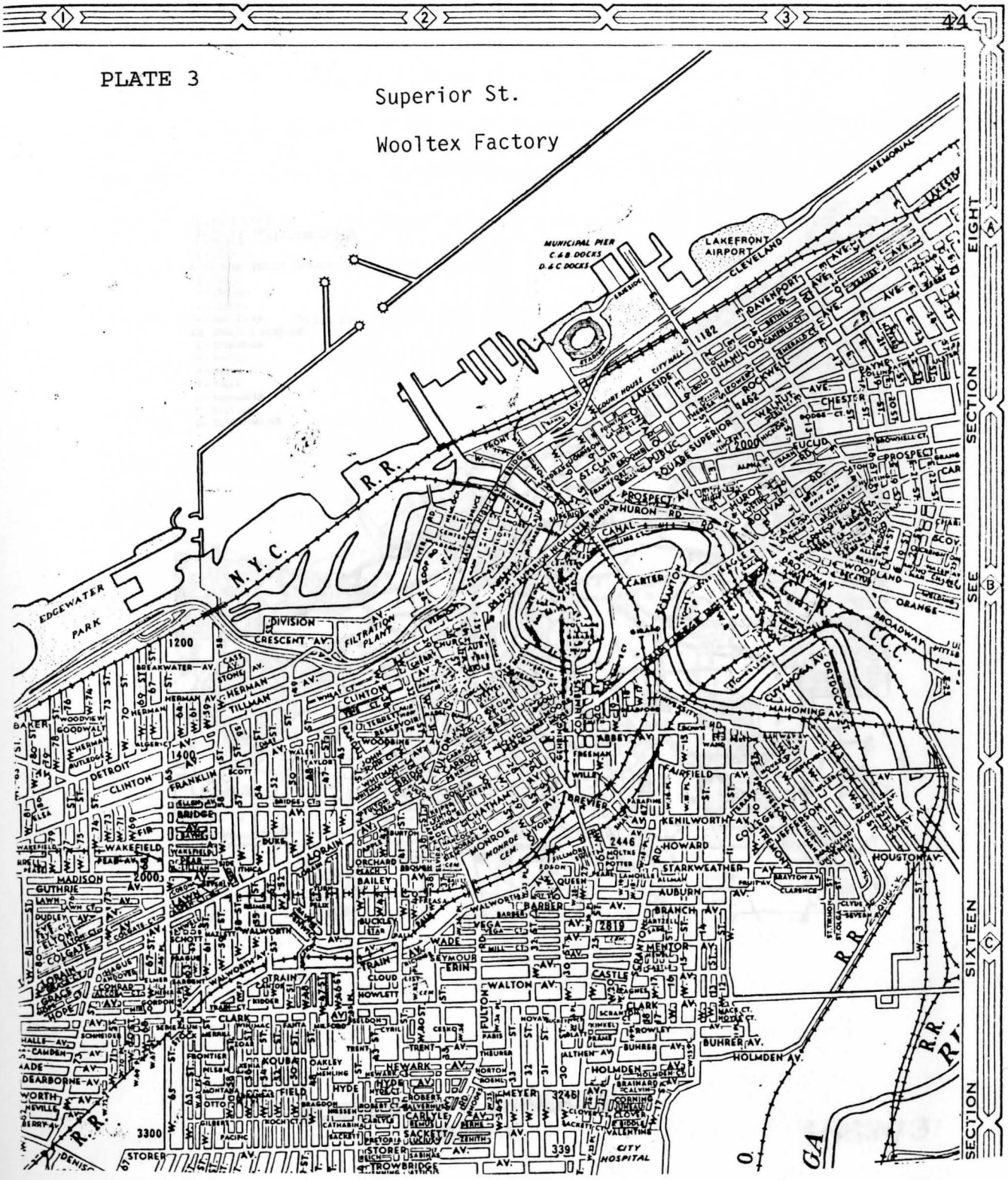
Some immigrant groups held less desired occupations in the factory. For example, Italian women mostly did hand sewing, the easiest and most mundane work in the factory. Only a few would be promoted. Wooltex, although liberal and progressive in some areas, did discriminate against some races. It is interesting to note that although there were a substantial number of African-Americans in Cleveland at the turn of the century, they were seldom employed in the

garment manufactures.[25]

Garment manufacturing relied on intensive labor. Many times the factories were located in, or near ethnic neighborhoods where they drew their work force. In Cleveland, Wooltex, Joseph Feiss, Lion Knitting, Cleveland Worsted Mills and Richman Brothers located close to their workers.[26](plate 3)

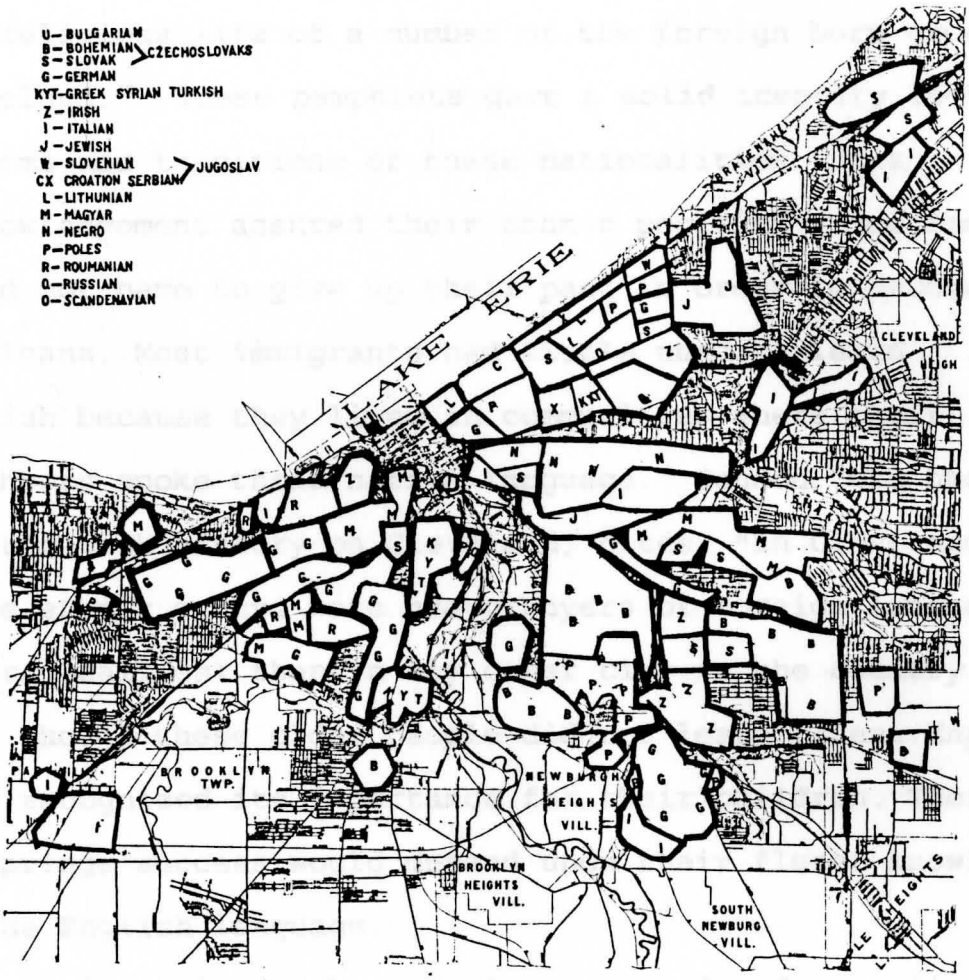
Immigrants came here to make a better life for themselves and their children. J. E. Greenbaum wrote in the Wooltex News that, "Cleveland attracts a very desirable class of immigrants. They have heard of this city's pre-eminence as a cloak center and settle here. They easily find employment."[27] The ethnic diversity in Cleveland grew to large proportions (plate 4), each area of the city had a population with the same ethnic background. Although they lived among others similar to themselves, they managed to get along with other ethnic groups in the mills and factories. Despite cooperation in the workplace, it was taboo to marry someone from a different ethnic background. This was apparent from the marriage announcements in the Wooltex News. Italians married Italians, Poles married Poles, Russians married Russians etc.

America and Cleveland were progressive in economics and politics but the social sphere would remain more traditional due to age old customs and beliefs. The presence of isolated ethnic communities in urban Cleveland prompted



Section of East Cleveland that shows where the Wooltex factory was located. It was very close to the downtown area.

PLATE 4



This map of Cleveland, drawn in 1917, shows where the newly arrived immigrant groups made their communities within the city.

the formation of Americanization committees. In 1917, the committee composed fifty page pamphlets to describe in some detail the customs, characteristics, industries, cultural and religious life of a number of the foreign born groups of Cleveland.[28] These pamphlets gave a solid identity to the customs and traditions of these nationalities. This acknowledgement assured their ethnic position. Thus they would not have to give up their past in order to become Americans. Most immigrants had little need to learn English because they lived in communities where their neighbors spoke their native language. Condon, who has written much history on Cleveland, cites, "in Cleveland the large ethnic groups were heavy buyers of foreign language papers (dailies) than in any other city in the country."[29] Even though these older people did not learn fluent English, they recognized its importance for their children. Their offsprings success would depend upon their fluent knowledge of the English language.

In factories such as Wooltex, a good understanding of English was necessary to move ahead in the company. Wooltex ran easier when all the workers understood the same language. At one point Wooltex had workers of twenty-three different nationalities. Multiple language barriers necessitated the firm to consider teaching English to its employees. The Wooltex News advertised it would offer a free English class to its employees. "In November of 1909, a

school was opened in the Wooltex factory - a school for foreigners only."[30] It was thought, even by the Americanization committee, that English should be taught by the industries. The Cleveland Americanization committee felt, "The factory is the logical place for the first American influences to reach the foreign born workman. It is unquestionably the logical place for the teaching of the language of America."[31]

The first English classes at Wooltex were held after work, but attendance was poor. Employees complained that they were too tired or had other responsibilities. Mr. Jack Berstien, a Wooltex worker who had volunteered to teach the classes, said, "It was then the idea came to me, to have a class during our noon hour."[32] Following this advice, Wooltex offered classes at noon and after work for free. The classes were well attended. The Wooltex News editor reported, "Classes met three times a week, each person was given a book and after the first set of classes were over, about twenty foreigners could read and write English."[33] Although Wooltex stated that its factory English classes were a success, the Americanization committee reported that for other industries the results were less gratifying. They offered the following explanation for the dismal results:

> This failure is not due to the lack of interest on the part of the immigrant himself. He has every reason to want to learn English - for English helps him get a better job and more of the comforts of life. But after a few lessons, he fails to make

> progress and feels he is too old to learn and falls back into his foreign surroundings.[34]

Some immigrants wanted to become American citizens. To do so classes on citizenship had to be taken. The Wooltex News notified its workers in the article, "Learn to Speak English: Become an American Citizen" that, "Every Monday evening at the County Court House the Municipal judges conducted an English and Citizenship class. All can attend and its free."[35] Wooltex wanted the best for its workers. The reason may be twofold, Morris Black believed in the theory that a happy worker was a good worker. If his workers were successful then they would give back to the company that had helped them get there. Secondly, because the Blacks were immigrants to this country themselves, it was conceivable that they wanted to help other immigrants.

It was not uncommon to hear a story such as this about Herman Black. James Vanek, one of the original employees, reported, "Mr. Black bought shoes and dresses for some of the foreign girls who were in need of things."[36] When he would see unattended teenage boys and girls out in the street he would offer to give them work and find them a place to stay.

The Wooltex News paid tribute to it's immigrant work force in a section devoted to their stories each month. A re-occurring theme can be seen in the employees stories. Below are some insights of how immigrants felt about America, Wooltex and themselves:

I, Frank Martinec, learned the tailoring trade in Hungary. In Cleveland, I first worked for Alexander at $3.50. From there I went to Clothier and Son, and did some custom tailoring, then I came to H. Black Company.[37]

Twenty-five years ago [1884] we worked by foot power and I, Alvino Berno, had my White machine taken down there. The last place I was working at I made $9.00 total, and the first week here I made $3.25. I'll never forget that first pay.[38]

I, J. Horesh, never dreamed of a factory like this. The first factory we had contained four floors. One was for the offices and clothroom. Upstairs we did the finishing garments, and there was a runway through the factory.[39]

Since my, L.H. Mark, affiliation with the H. Black Company, which is only a little over twenty-six months, I have regained my health and do my work with ease, while in the other cloak factories I lost my health.[40]

I, I. J. Thomas, wish to say to the Wooltex employees who are not here long, and I say it from
experience, we have the best place for our kind of work in the world, and let us appreciate it.[41]

I, Paul Gabel, think it is most remarkable that mere boys should begin to work in a cloak factory 'Twenty-six Years Ago' and instead of showing the long continuous work and fatigue, should develop into fine, robust men, men that are looked upon as the heads of their profession.[42]

Although I, James Vanek, started here as a mere running boy, it is about a year ago that Mr. Black asked me to assist Mr. Martinec, and now when he
is away, I take charge of the work, and when he is here I am around the cutters, seeing that the work is done right.[43]

We should be proud to work in such an institution, and the city of Cleveland may

> well boast of the finest cloak factory in the world.- Sam Lesser.[44]
>
> As long as I [name not given] worked at the H. Black company which was for five years, I got good pay and good treatment. I now have another kind of business of my own, but I do not want to see the workmen of Cleveland fooled by these agitators. I do not want to see the work driven away from Cleveland. Here the workmen in time get their own homes. In N.Y. none of them have any money and they live in tenements. Here almost all of the old-time workers have money or real estate.

Themes that were frequently mentioned were humanitarianism, benign and beneficial treatment and the glorification of the owners, building and philosophy.

Working conditions in Wooltex were strict yet not always stressful. Alvino Berno remembers how, "We used to sing even during working hours; upstairs and down we'd all sing."[45] Garment factory work was repetitive and exacting. This could be cumbersome and exhausting. The immigrant workers enjoyed singing their ethnic songs. Singing was a good way to pass the time and it was very uplifting. Depending on the area of the factory, ethnic songs, patriotic and popular ones were sung.

Some immigrant workers were very bright and invented new ways to speed up existing processes in the factory. A section in every Wooltex News entitled "Wooltexer Inventions" proudly commented on new suggestions and ideas. In 1914, it reported that, "Emil Novotny had invented a lining stand to hold fabric bolts, this created more table space."[46] Wooltex was very happy with new inventions and

encouraged their workers to try new things. Besides being inventive, some of the immigrant children went on to college. In the Wooltex News there was excitement about one young man who won a college scholarship. An article entitled "Wooltexer Wins" said, "Asher H. Epson a Wooltex office worker wins scholarship to Harvard University."[47]

Wooltex showed its appreciation to its workers by having traditional holiday parties and special awards:

> Before the Wooltex party last Friday evening, mementos were presented to all those connected with the factory for more than ten years. Silver pins with the word 'Wooltex' enameled upon them for those of ten years service. Gold pins, similarly enameled for those of twenty years. Gold watches and engrossed parchments for those of twenty-five years.[48]

At one party, 1100 attended and it was held in the nicest ballroom in the city--Tiffany Hall.[49] To show their appreciation to all the different immigrants that made up Wooltex, the table decorations were flags of various nations.

Cleveland was a pioneer in Americanization planning, a serious step further than the melting pot theory. Efforts for the committee originated in 1911, they gained more support in 1912 but really came into being in 1917 due to the paranoia of World War One. The Americanization Committee created a pamphlet to explain the organization and report its findings, "The welding of a diversified industrial population such as Cleveland's into a community united by

high and enlightened purposes is not an easy task."[50] The stratified ethnic communities of Cleveland who resisted learning the English language resulted in such a movement. Some Americans feared that a large population of immigrants who knew so little about their new country would not make good neighbors. As the committee progressed in its research it determined that the immigrants were not opposed to American ideals but feared losing their own customs and background. Although immigrants remained in their own enclaves, Wooltex had very few problems of them working together.

The young immigrants had many goals and aspirations. Native born Cleveland workers, had minimal resentment against the immigrants in the workplace. Their attitude was the product of a rich and growing community. A conclusion that Campbell and Miggins drew from their research was that, "Cleveland undoubtedly had a native born rural-to-urban migration stream, but it was far overshadowed by the influx of the foreign born and their children."[51] An abundant labor force fed the dynamic economic potential of Cleveland. Garment manufacturers and others would enjoy a prosperity unparalleled to any domestic growth since.

1. Mildred M. Hickman. The Clothing Industry in Cleveland (Cleveland: Cleveland Board of Education, 1929), 3.

2. Amy G. Maher. Ohio Wage Earners in the Manufacturing of Textiles and Textile Products: 1914-1927 (Toledo: Information Bureau on Women's Work, 1929), 14.

3. Van Tassel and Grabowski. The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History , 433.

4. Campbell and Miggins, The Birth of Modern Cleveland, 35.

5. Condon, Cleveland The Best Kept Secret , 35.

6. Van Tassel and Grabowski, The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, 434.

7. Ibid., 434.

8. Rose Marie Jollie, A Brief History of Cleveland and the Central National Bank of Cleveland (Cleveland: Allied Press, 1965), 2.

9. Maher, Ohio Wage Earners, 49.

10. Ibid., 84.

11. Ibid., 78.

12. Campbell and Miggins, The Birth of Modern Cleveland, 42.

13."Do You Know," The Wooltex Bulletin (Cleveland: The H. Black Co., 1916), vol. 6, no. 5, 2.

14. Hickman, The Clothing Industry in Cleveland, 43.

15. Ibid., 39.

16. Ibid., 14.

17. A. Booster, Contrast: The Striking Development of 72 years as shown by a comparison of the Song of the Shirt and the Song of the Kaynee Blouse (Cleveland: The Kaynee Co., 1915), 10.

18. Ibid., 27.

19. "Late Spring and Early Fall,"The Wooltex News, 1916, vol. 6, no. 5, 3.

20. "Production Records," The Wooltex News, 1916, vol. 5, no. 5, 6.

21. Maher, Ohio Wage Earners, 72.

22. Condon, Yesterday's Cleveland, 93.

23. Van Tassel and Grabowski. The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, 433.

24. Hickman. The Clothing Industry in Cleveland, 8-9.

25. Ibid., 93. *In 1929 there is mention that African American workers made up the smallest percentage in Cleveland as compared to other garment producing metropolises.

26. Van Tassel and Grabowski, The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, 434.

27. J. E. Greenbaum, "The Cloak Industry in Cleveland," The Wooltex News (Cleveland: The H. Black and Co., 1910), vol. 1, no. 5, 20.

28. Americanization in Cleveland (Cleveland: Economy Printing Co., 1919), 5.

29. Condon, Yesterday's Cleveland, 11.

30. "A English School for Wooltex," Wooltex News, vol.1, no. 3, 16.

31. Americanization in Cleveland, 11.

32. Joda McLeary, "A 20th Century Idea," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 2, 9.

33. "Learn to Speak English: Become an American Citizen," The Wooltex News, 1916, vol. 6, no. 5, 6.

34. Americanization in Cleveland, 14.

35. "Learn to Speak English: Become an American Citizen," The Wooltex News, 1916, vol. 6, no. 5, 6.

36. James Vanek, "Twenty-five Years Ago," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 6, 3.

37. Frank Martinec, "Twenty-six Years Ago," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 4, 14.

38. Alvino Berno, "Twenty-five Years Ago," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 2, 7.

39. J. Horesh, "Twenty-five Years Ago," The Wooltex News, vol. 1, no.10, 5.

40. L. H. Mark, "I'm Healthy Now," The Wooltex News, vol. 4, no. 11, 3.

41. I. J. Thomas, "Our Wooltex Party," The Wooltex News, vol. 1, no. 9, 6-7.

42. Paul Gabel, "Twenty-six Years Ago," The Wooltex News, vol. 1, no. 3, 9.

43. James Vanek, "Twenty-five Years Ago," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 6, 3.

44. Sam Lesser, "The Growth of Our Factory," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 4, 13.

45. Alvino Berno, "Twenty-five Years Ago," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no.2, 7.

46. "Wooltexer Invents," The Wooltex News, 1914, vol. 4, no.6, 5.

47. Anna Cadek, "Wooltexer Wins," The Wooltex News, 1914, vol. 4, no.2, 8.

48. "A Pleasing Occurrence," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 9, 3.

49. I. J. Thomas, "Our Wooltex Party," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no.9, 6-7.

50. Americanization in Cleveland, Forward.

51. Campbell and Miggins, The Birth of Modern Cleveland, 43.

CHAPTER III

The American Challenge to European Leadership of the Fashion Industry 1880-1920 and Wooltex's fashion pirating.

Fashion's importance is a result of its being ubiquitous. It affects nearly everyone, no matter what social class. During the time period 1880-1920 it became manifest that clothing was a statement to declare a person's wealth and position. Traditionally the leaders of the fashion industry were located in Europe, with the best in France. But a stagnation of ideas and the limited numbers of garments produced by the European designers encouraged American upstarts to produce their own styles. An American fashion movement patronaged by manufacturers, retailers, and advertisers was the outcome of this challenge to the European industry.

Paul Nystrom, the author of The Economics of Fashion, writes that the period from 1907 to 1914 was marked by a fashion campaign with the catchy phrase, "American Fashions for American Women."[1] This campaign was originally sponsored by manufacturers of fabrics and of ready-made goods, but by 1912, it had attracted the attention of some of the leading periodicals. Of importance is the Ladies Home Journal which under the direction of its editor, Edward Bok, promoted an intensive campaign for American style and products.[2] The

real impact of this movement was on the middle class. There are two reasons for this. The first, and most obvious was that of price. American clothing was far cheaper than European, and offered the same or nearly the same quality. The second reason was patriotism. Pride in America and its growing industries made consumers feel good about buying American goods.

Despite the positive reactions from the middle class, wealthy Americans, even as late as 1915, were still convinced that Parisian fashions were superior. Proof of this was seen in the desperate attempt by the wealthy to get French clothes even with acute importation difficulties.[3] While this movement for the most part was popularly supported, there were merchants who profited from importing French clothing, and thus, either treated the movement with contempt or reservation. Nystrom sums up the situation, "Many newspapers throughout the country joined in the campaign in favor of American fashions for American women, but the larger retail department stores with Paris connections for the most part only gave lukewarm support to the idea."[4]

The vehicle by which American fashions would reach their public was also greatly influential on the entire movement. A necessary concomitant to mass production was mass consumption. The department store, with its cornucopia of fashions and accoutrements, served as that vehicle. By

1880 the concept of the American department store was born, and during the ensuing decade a number of them were established in major metropolitan areas. The first stores, housed in very sophisticated buildings, catered to wealthy women. As their popularity grew, and as owners realized the stores' potential to make money, they began to service the growing incomes of middle class women. In time, the department store stocked with the mass produced American designer clothing grabbed market share at an alarming rate to the European couturiers. Eventually, the Parisian couturiers in an attempt to salvage their American markets, decided to use the department store to sell their own goods. For example, Nystrom states, "Paquin [a famous Paris couturier] was probably the first to make a business of selling in a large way to department stores and to wholesalers for resale to dealers."[5] Following Paquin's entrance into the market were Paul Poriet, Madeline Vionnet, Coco Chanel, and a number of smaller couturiers.

Across the English Channel, the British designer Lelong who until this point was immensely popular in America for his expensive clothing targeted at a niche market, changed the focus of his business to mass exports. Lelong produced more than a thousand models a year which catered to the buyers of quantity production.[6] During this period, Lelong's company became one of the most popular suppliers to American merchants.

Along with the American ready-to-wear fashion movement, there was an American couture one. Couture, a select group of designers who originate styles and custom tailor their garments to their clientele's proportions, developed after World War One mostly due to the lack of Paris style models because of France's war-torn economy. While the war affected America it did not affect her demand for fashion. Unfortunately, the couture movement lost its momentum after World War One and again France became premier. Nystrom asserts, "at the very time when American designers might have attained their greatest importance, due to the isolation of France from the rest of the world by war, the movement itself had been deemed hopeless by American producers and distributors."[7] Not until the late 1940's would there be a resurgence of American designers and styles in the fashion scene again. Americans did look to popular entertainers for creative inspiration for new designs.

Fashion is a following of a particular style. Americans often looked at the wealthy and famous for their style trends. When style reached the middle class, the flamboyance was modified limiting the flashy, gaudy appeal it had on stages and in nightclubs. Surprisingly, film stars in America took fashion direction out of the hands of the rich. Gertrude Aretz clarifies from where fashion emanated, "America's fashion-leading class, so far as luxury in dress is concerned, is not to be sought in the exclusive upper

stratum of the plutocracy, but in the chosen beauties of the film world whose tastes are similar in tendency to the luxurious demi-monde of the Old World."[8]

Demi-monde is a French term meaning kept woman. A demi-monde was not restricted by social codes of respectable high society, therefore she could be as daring in dress as she wanted. Her creative approach inspired many new modified styles. In America, the stage actress provided the same opportunity. It was taboo to be strikingly creative with dress in middle and upper class America. Conformity under the unstated guise of etiquette and societal rules controlled upper and middle class women. Women were "blackballed" by other women from social event participation when they went or were suspected of going against convention.

In American society, a division of wealth created social status. Wealth was expressed by the dress or costume of the wearer. It was the first noticeable sign of that individual's class. From the 1880s to 1910, female dress was complicated and restrictive. Diana DeMarly determined from her research, "Women were expected to reflect their husband's wealth and position, so all this dressing up, the new clothes and jewels were all a marital duty, a silent advertisement of status."[9] The lower and middle classes desperately wanted to mimic the rich in fashion, but not until the 1920s would fashion become simple enough in

ornamentation and construction that all classes of women could be fashionable all the time.

Because famous film stars and singers were admired and emulated by the emerging middle class, American marketers benefited by naming styles after them and getting endorsements from them. Paul Poiret, a famous Paris couturier, commented about American's use of stars, "This propensity of all their manufacturers to enter into contract with famous men and women in order to appropriate their names and profit by them is an American characteristic."[10] Poiret summed up American fashion merchandising as such, "American traders appeared to me to practice packing mediocre merchandise under a distinguished label. Americans go by labels only!"[11]

Poiret's designs were daring and innovative and took America by storm. The elderly and churches were belligerent toward the new fashion. The New York Herald stated:

> Cardinal Farley: Director of the Catholic American conscience; a document in which this great prelate put all his flock on guard against the demon of fashion, which constituted a social and moral danger through the liberty, the license and spirit of provocation of the creations of the designers of the day.[12]

Poiret's loose, high wasted flowing garments released women from corseted bondage. Fashion expert Diana DeMarly observes, "The feeling for liberating the body had long been expressed by dress reformers."[13] Although dress reformers advocated a less dangerous costume for women as early as

1880, it would not be until Paul Poiret, Channel, and Vionnet, emerged on the scene around 1910, that freedom resulted. DeMarly points out that, "Madeleine Vionnet claimed she persuaded her house models to give up corsets in 1907."[14] Poiret claimed he liberated women to give up corsets in 1910. A combination of both and the times created the change.

Mass production in America made fashion trends available to all levels of society. The quality of the goods improved and ready-to-wear was able to compete with seamstresses and tailors. However, there were some risks and problems with manufacturing. For instance, if the style the manufacturers choose was not popular and they had produced large numbers of that item, sales would not generate enough income to cover their costs. James D. Norris author of Advertising and the Transformation of American Society 1865-1920 concluded, "All of these conditions and unpredictable shifts in fashion have severely limited the ability of manufacturers to create demand for specific items."[15] The highest of high fashion trends could change overnight. However, in the fashion circles of the middle class, fashion changes were much slower. Therefore, manufacturers had a chance to produce designs before they went out of style.

It was not a good business move to try to dictate fashion. The ideal business venture would involve an insightful yet restrained fashion speculator. The fashion

business had to be watched and followed, if success was desired. The problem for producer and distributor was to promptly find out what lines were waning and which ones were growing stronger. Despite the warnings, manufacturers and retailers always tried to thwart the ever moving pattern of fashion, only to find it did not work. Nystrom's study led him to conclude, "There have been a number of outstanding efforts to change or control the trends of fashion, all apparently fruitless."[16] Manufacturers could not contain fashion to only one part of the country. He continued, "The movement of fashion across the country, from community to community was now very rapid."[17] A fashion that started among smart dressers in New York would reach and be adopted by the fashion leaders of Cleveland, St. Louis, Los Angeles, and even smaller places such as Dayton, Peoria and Spokane within a few weeks. In the beginning fashions that moved so quickly through America originated from Paris often having some minor changes made in America before they were massed produced.

The most creative fashions often emulated from Paris couture houses. The two most influential Parisian designers were, The House of Worth and The House of Paul Poiret. The House of Worth was the oldest Couture house. Worth's designs caught the attention of the European world and America. His two sons, Gaston and Jean, would run the fashion house after his death. Worth established many of the

requirements of a couture house. He was the first to use live models or mannequins. He waited on anyone who could pay him, princess or prostitute. He deplored the idea of mass manufacturing. He believed in hand sewing everything to his clients proportionment. Of his two sons, Jean, the traditionalist, wanted to keep couture as his father had. However Gaston, the progressive, realized that technology could not be restrained. Because they shared equally in business decisions Gaston could only modernize so much. Edith Saunders in The Age of Worth, reports, "Gaston in 1900 opened the London house of Worth."[18] Another of Gaston's useful activities was the founding of the Chambre Syndicale. This was a governing agency for the Houses of Couture in France. Jean held the artistic ability of the brothers and he kept producing highly embellished garments. This suited the Edwardian woman's taste, however by 1910 a new idea of fashion was embarking.

It was a much simpler dress that no longer necessitated the 'S' bend corset (see plate 5). Diana DeMarly's research uncovered that, in "1907, the American dancer Isadora Duncan was performing on the Paris Stage wearing no more than a short classical tunic, with no corset and no stockings."[19] The man who is credited with introducing this new style was the young Paul Poiret.

Paul Poiret was as progressive in fashion as Wooltex was in manufacturing. Paul was born in France to a family of

PLATE 5

A woman in a 'S' bend corset. The Paris designed dress is by Callot Soeurs. The woman's waist measures eighteen inches.

upper, middle class standing. Thus, his lack of labor-intensive work enabled him to pursue and enjoy art, theater and fashion. Poiret asserts in his autobiography, "his fashion tastes were different from his contemporaries and developed early in his life."[20] Couture which had been enjoying an established position since the 1850s was at its height of power when Paul Poiret went looking for a job (about 1895). Poiret attributes 'luck' for getting him his first couture job at the House of Doucet.[21] He was a cocky young man, who launched a daring new style which prompted comments. Jean Worth, of the House of Worth, reportedly, "was shocked at Poiret's behavior and fashion; he had one word for him, it was 'vulgar'".[22]

In 1910 dresses were simple and short enough to show the feet. By 1913, dresses had a wispy appearance, the silhouette being skimpy and undistinguished. This was a dramatic change from restrictive corsets and heavy ornamentation of the 1880s and 1890s. The new look was quickly embraced by the young and courageous. However vulgar some thought it was, this new look would change the world's view of Parisian couture. The new simple lines could be copied by the power-machines of the ready-to-wear industry. Thus once prestigious, Paris designs, were available in some form to all economic levels of society.

The couturiers were not oblivious to the threat of ready-to-wear industries. They knew that although the

originality of design still remained in France, they could be copied. In the heyday of the couture houses couturiers often competed against each other for business and prestige. Now a larger danger was on their doorstep, so despite disagreements amongst them they joined together in a protective venture. Furthermore, the couturiers co-operated for mutual protection in organizing "collections" or "open days" to display their work. This helped limit the copyist's ability to see one house's designs before another. Despite their attempts to limit showings, spies still stole ideas and produced them abroad sometimes before the couture house had even given their first showing. Jane Mulvagh discovered through her research of Vogue magazine, "in Paris, in 1913, the Chambre Syndicale legally outlawed copying."[23] Although many cases were brought before French court, fashion pirating could not be stopped. The lawlessness outraged Poiret. Despite his objections he reported that some of the couturiers came to terms with this notion. For example "M. Patou, who first asserted that the future of La Grande Couture lay in ready-made clothes."[24] However, most chose to fight the copiers as long as they could, such as Paul Poiret and the Callot Souers sisters.

Nystrom concluded that "The copying of Paris models is a highly developed, even if unethical procedure."[25] Europeans stole some ideas from Paris, but the Americans stole the most. Nystrom continued, "American manufacturers

concluded that Paris prestige meant more to insure business success than the promotion of their own artistic skill."[26] Paul Poiret found out how evident this was when he visited America:

> I went into a shop where, by chance, I turned over a woman's hat, which seemed to be pretty, to find out where it came from; and I had the satisfaction of reading my own name: but there were also other very ordinary hats around it, and others again that were absolutely frightful. All bore the label of Poiret. The dresses too bore my name.[27]

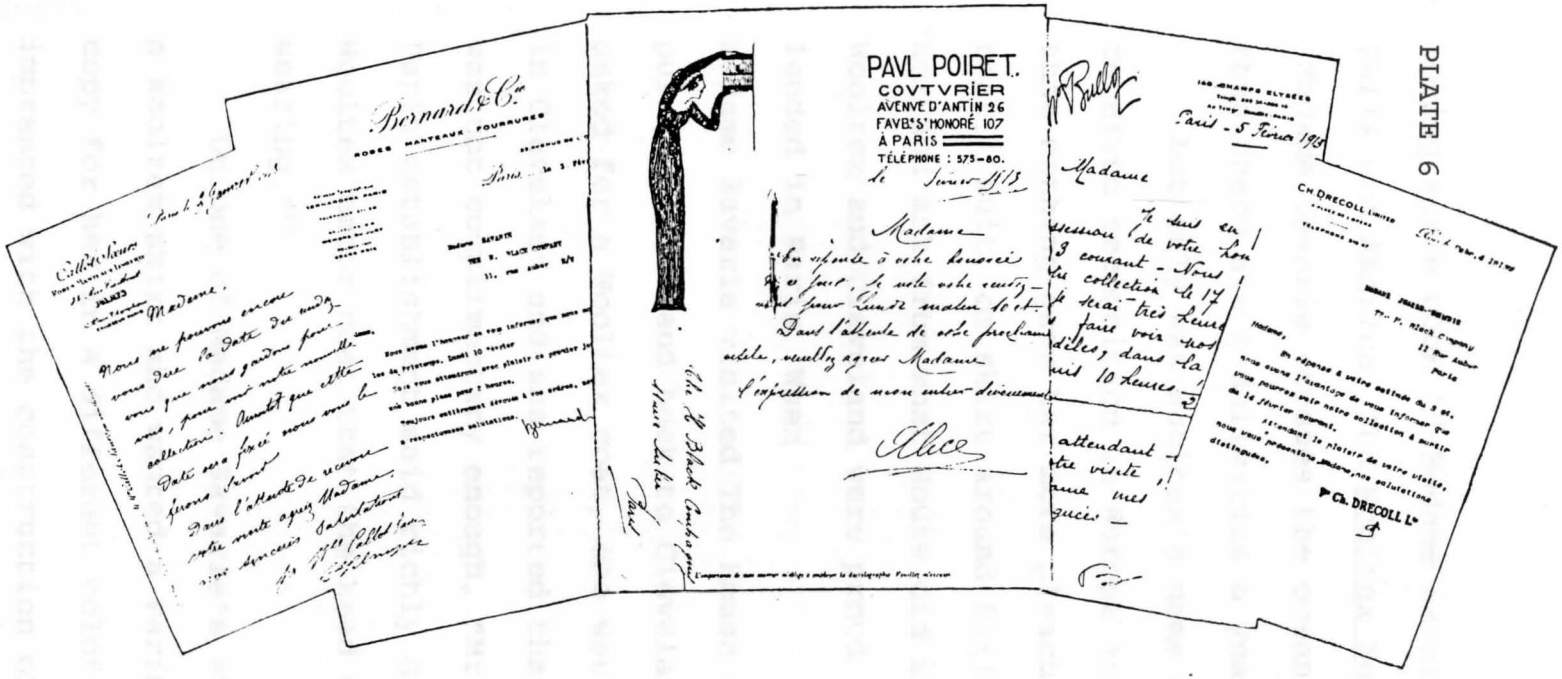
The lure for American business to use Paris labels was intense. The public had been inundated with style books such as Vogue and Ladies Home Journal which lauded Paris fashion as premier. The editor's of Vogue believed "efficient copying companies sprang up in America, largely as a result of the coverage of the Paris collections in the trade papers and magazines such as Vogue."[28]

Paris couture fashions were very expensive, even for large manufacturers who wanted to purchase them for reproductions. Realizing this, American agents became pirates and copyists who would agree among themselves to buy only one dress among ten manufacturers, and then share the model. Manufacturers who wanted the most current fashion often had "several permanent connections in Paris that regularly reported style development by wireless, cable, and letter and even sent over samples of Paris garments."

When the H. Black Company was new, its fashion designers did other jobs in the factory, too. J. Horesh

remembers in the early days, "There was no going to Paris in those days 1886-1895. Mr. Katz, our only designer, went to New York, it seemed, about once in two or three years. He made most of the designs out of his own head. His garments sold well."[29] As the company and the demand for fashionable garments grew, there was a need for Wooltex to know the latest style and trend. Thus the Wooltex Style Bureau in Paris was created in 1909. An eloquent woman of exceptional taste was selected to be the Wooltex correspondent. Her name was Madame Savarie. She was a well educated woman who had previously ran a fashion magazine and lectured on fashion in America. Her job consisted of meeting with the Paris couturiers, selecting items she thought would be the new height of fashion for the next season.(plate 6) She had to hobnob with the wealthy and famous to find out what they were wearing and predicting. She was required to give the Wooltex sales pitch in Paris. While she was in America she was expected to give lectures and style shows around the country that promoted Wooltex styles.

Madame Savarie's job was exciting, but there was a large amount of work involved. A Paris staff helped with her busy schedule. In the Wooltex News the editor reported current Paris news in a section called "News Notes". He reported, "Miss Anne Holton was in charge of various paperwork, Miss Jean Parker of New York has been in Paris for ten days making more of her beautiful sketches for the



Reproductions of letters sent to Madame Savarie by some of the most widely known fashion creators. Two translations of these letters appear below.

In response to your esteemed favor of the 3rd inst., we have the privilege of informing you that you will be able to see our collection at any time after the 14th of February.

Awaiting the pleasure of your visit, we present to you Madame, our distinguished respects.

(Signed) Chas. Drecoll, Ltd.

In reply to your favor of even date I have the pleasure of informing you that I have set aside for you Monday forenoon, the 10th.

Hoping to have the pleasure of seeing you soon, I remain,

Yours respectfully,

(Signed) Paul Poiret.

Letters and invitations written to Madame Savarie and Wooltex.

spring style book."[30] Madame Savarie spent equal time in Paris and America. The Wooltex News reported, "Madame Savarie crosses the ocean eight times in 12 months thus there are 4 deliveries a year of new styles."[31]

Not only was Wooltex's name growing in America but it received recognition in Europe as well. Madame Savarie said that nothing gave her more pleasure than wearing a Wooltex coat, suit, or skirt around Paris and having women approach her and ask from what House did she purchased her clothes.[32] Wooltex and Cleveland were proud to have their designs lauded in Paris. When Madame Savarie visited The House of Worth to make her purchases to send back to Cleveland, "The head woman there asked for a Wooltex coat, one was sent from the stock here in Cleveland and she reported that she loves it!"[33] If this was not complimentary enough, "Mr. Worth, of the famous Paris establishment said richly deserved compliments about a Wooltex motor coat that the head woman at Worth's was now wearing."[34]

On one of Madame Savarie's expeditions she was wearing a Wooltex skirt and wanted a Paris couturier to produce a copy for her in a different color. The couturier was so impressed with the construction of the Wooltex skirt, a Mr. Hirsh, the head of the concern, said, "tell Mr. Black I make him my best compliments that he produces such splendid garments. There is no one in Paris, custom tailor or

manufacturer who could turn out such a skirt at the Wooltex price."[35]

Despite the title awarded to Madame Savarie and her legitimate shopping sprees at the Houses of Couture, she was also a spy. Her job was to find out as much as possible about new lines and when they were to be shown. She had to find out what type of material was being used, and sketch on paper the designs she could not purchase. Paris designs were very expensive, and their designers very obstinate. In Paris, Madame Savarie reported, "you must purchase something from the designers or they will not show you anything again."[36] The safety precautions taken by the Parisian couturiers, were understandable; if the viewers did not purchase, the couturiers allowed themselves to have anyone steal their newest looks. Although it was impossible to stop the sketching, at least the designers were guaranteed a sale from each viewer.

Madame Savarie was endowed with enough finances to buy a large selection of garments for reproduction. The Wooltex News reported that on one occasion Madame Savarie brought a large number of beautiful suits and coats from Paris. These clothes were purchased with the intention of following the same lines but in, a way that makes them unique, a Wooltex. The following prices illustrate the high cost of Parisian Couture:

Paris dress with lots of embroidery = $360.00
Paris Coat with shawl collar = $165.00

> * It was important to note that there was a duty tax of $60.00 for every $100.00 of merchandise. This made this purchase cost: 360.00
> +165.00
> =525.00
> duty tax +300.00
> total =825.00[37]

Considering the average price for a Wooltex coat was $8.00--this included materials, labor, and profit--it was easy to see why Paris Couture only served the very rich while a company like Wooltex that produced very similar copies could service everyone.

When Madame Savarie toured the United States she took the prettiest Wooltex factory girls to be her fashion models. This was a thrill for the young women of Wooltex who qualified. It was an opportunity to travel around America in a glamorous mode. Miss Ravitz accompanied Madame Savarie as a model. She displayed the beautiful dress creations from Paris and also modeled the charming tailored garments made in the Wooltex factory. Wooltex did not overlook smaller towns and cities: Worcester, Canton, Saginaw, Milwaukee, Cedar Rapids, Topeka, and Bloomington.[38]

America's manufacturing prowess and aspiring middle class would now dictate style. While it was clear that fashion originated from Paris, and while elements of Parisian style still influenced American designs, mass manufacturers like Wooltex became the instrument that carried fashion forward.

1. Paul Nystrom. Economics of Fashion (New York: Ronald Press, 1928), 180.

2. Ibid., 184.

3. At the onset of World War One, France was having a difficult time keeping it's couture houses running. The seamstresses were needed for wartime production not wealthy high fashion. Even the famous couturier Paul Poiret was enlisted for his services in the war effort. Still some managed to produce clothes during the war for export. This however was a very expensive and sometimes unreliable venture for the wealthy in America.

4. Nystrom, Economics of Fashion, 180.

5. Ibid., 208.

6. Ibid., 218.

7. Ibid., 181.

8. Gertrude Aretz. The Elegant Woman from the Rococo Period to Modern Times (New York: Harcourt & Brace, 1932), 294.

9. Diana DeMarly. The History of Haute Couture 1850-1950 (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1980), 123.

10. Stephen H. Guest. The Autobiography of Paul Poiret (London: J. P. Lippincott Co., 1931), 273.

11. Ibid., 265.

12. Ibid., 260.

13. DeMarly, The History of Haute Couture, 83.

14. Ibid.,83.

15. James D. Norris. Advertising and the Transformation of American Society 1865-1920 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 100.

16. Nystrom, Economics of Fashion, 12.

17. Ibid., 12.

18. Edith Saunders. The Age of Worth (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), 204.

19. DeMarly. The History of Haute Couture 1850-1950, 83.

20. Guest (trans.) The Autobiography of Paul Poiret, 18.

21. Ibid., 27

22. DeMarly, The History of Haute Couture 1850-1950, 89.

23. Jane Mulvagh. Vogue Fashion: History of the 20th Century (New York: Viking Press, 1988), 3.

24. Guest, The Autobiography of Paul Poiret, 148.

25. Nystrom, Economics of Fashion, 201.

26. Ibid., 176.

27. Guest, The Autobiography of Paul Poiret, 264-265.

28. Mulvagh, Vogue Fashion: History of the 20th Century, 3.

30. J. Horesh, "Twenty-six Years Ago," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 5, 3.

31. "News Notes," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 9, 12.

32. Madame Savarie, "Talk on Style by Madame Savarie," The Wooltex News, 1911, vol. 2, no. 2, 7.

33. Madame Savarie, "Paris Letter - fourth of July: Suggests a Suffrage League: Wooltexers Visit Paris: Will Soon Be With Us Again," The Wooltex News, 1913, vol. 3, no. 5, 4.

34. Jeanne Savarie, " As Others See Us," The Wooltex News, 1912, vol. 2, no. 2, 5-6.

35. Madame Savarie, "Talk On Style by Madame Savarie," The Wooltex News, 1911, vol. 2, no. 2, 8.

36. Ibid., vol. 2, no. 8, 10.

37. "Madame Savarie Lecture Tour," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 2, no. 2, 5.

38. Ibid., vol. 2, no. 2, 5.

39. Ibid., vol. 2, no. 2, 7.

CHAPTER IV

Advertising, salesmen and the establishment of the Garment Manufacturers Association.

The promotion of ready-to-wear goods can be directly attributed to the suggestive selling of advertisements. It is interesting to note that original advertisements were usually short, descriptive bits that informed the prospective consumer as to what the product was and what it would do. Later, advertising focused on creating desire for a product even though there was no real need for it.

According to James Norris, an expert on turn of the century advertising:

> As advertising shifted its function from informing the public to creating demand in ready-to-wear clothing, as well as in a number of other consuming goods industries, it created an artificial need by creating doubt about old ways, about old products, about old values, and even about women's selves.[1]

Advertising brand-name, ready-made clothing followed a familiar pattern and helped to create an environment conducive to consumption ethics.[2] Advertising played a major role in breaking down much of the localism that permeated American economy. The sudden ability to receive information about products that were not local was a powerful and exciting opportunity. In the West, the catalog would become the connecting source for new and fashionable products from the East.

Advertisers believed the American public was very gullible. The designer Paul Poiret said in 1910, "American's believe everything their newspapers say."[3] Perhaps, Americans never expected anyone would take advantage of them. However, advertisers did. Norris stated:

> Apparently, neither advertising executives nor the firms that employed them ever questioned the tactics used to sell products. Nowhere was this failure more apparent than in the shameless use of guilt to sell products to women, that is, if you do not use this, you are depriving your family, your children, your spouse.[4]

This psychological approach to advertising produced enormous sales but at a harmful mental cost to women. Consumers developed a perfection complex and a need to always be on top of the commercial product scene.

Ministers, reformers, and others opposed the unethical means used by advertisers; however the wealthy and powerful advertising firms were able to overcome these critics. Norris contends, "Not content with their own failure to exercise ethical limits in advertising appeal, executives used unbridled economic power to silence criticism."[5] Whatever means advertisers used to exploit consumers, competition and greed were already well-ingrained characteristics of American society.

The fashion market and ready-to-wear manufacturers also practiced unethical, persuasive methods to create demands for their products. The catty hierarchy of society women

were unforgiving to a serious social blunder of distasteful fashion. A Wooltex ad carried the warning even further. "Dame fashion," the ad warned, "will not smile on the women who deviates from the law of style."[6] By 1910, advertisers insisted that self-confidence depended on being stylish.

Advertising reached everyone; not only were the upper strata of society effected by its claims but the middle and lower classes also followed its guidelines. Norris explained:

> In connecting consumption to the achievement of social acceptance and status, given the modern reality of decreasing cost industries and mass production, advertising simply put the old wine of materialism and conformity into new bottles seemingly available to everyone.[7]

Mail order catalogs would be another popular means of advertising products. The first general catalogs were: Montgomery Ward (1872), Sears (1893), Spiegel, May, Stern & National Bellus Heiss (1895). The Sears catalog, a very large publication, paved the way for presentation and style for other smaller scale ones.[8] In Cleveland, Browning & King Company's catalog featured mens and boys clothes. They also included a standardized size chart for their clothes in 1899. Norris deduced, "Mail order houses slanted the appeal of their advertisements toward rural consumers, and for many an isolated farm wife, the large, lavishly illustrated catalog became an important cultural document."[9]

The publication of catalogs quickly became an art. A

mail order firm's very existence depended on the effectiveness of its advertising. Popular magazines such as Harper's Bazaar 1867, Vanity Fair 1868, and Vogue 1892, advertised gowns, cosmetics, lingerie, jewelry, yarns patterns, fashionable women's ready-to-wear clothing, fabrics, and household items.[10] Norris researched the magazine and catalog mogul, Arthur Presbrey, and discovered that he kept track of the current trends in advertising. His findings indicated out of all the products advertised, demand for ready-made clothing increased most rapidly.[11]

Wooltex attributed much of the success and growth of its company to advertising. Its first serious advertisement campaign in 1905, led to its biggest success (see plate 7) and its best merchandise was made in 1903, 1904, 1905.[12] Retailers often benefited from Wooltex's national advertising scheme. The Wooltex News printed this response from a retailer. "We consider your national campaign", wrote the A. B. Caldwell Company of Washington, PA, "when properly followed up with our newspaper advertising, a great help to our ready-to-wear department."[13] Wooltex did a series of advertisements in fashion magazines. The goal of these advertisements was twofold. The plan was not necessarily to get customers interested in coming to Cleveland, as it was to create desire for the product, with hopes that customers would go to a local retail establishment that had Wooltex, or demand that it get Wooltex. Quite a few letters were

PLATE 7

Reprinted from *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1905.

A not so coy national advertisement for Wooltex coats in 1905. Wooltex was still a new concept of the H. Black Company at this time.

printed in the Wooltex News from women who established a Wooltex department in their town. Naturally the national ad campaign created a need for the Wooltex Style Book.

Wooltex created a catalog that illustrated the current styles offered. It also had a standard size chart for orders. Style books were a direct method of advertising and the best way to promote Wooltex fashions. Wooltex goods and prices were comparable to other women's coat and suit industries, such as The National Cloak and Suit Company of New York. The style books used popular methods to lure customers. For instance, National Cloak and Suit Company paid the most popular artist of 1909, Howard Chandler Christy, to draw their style book's cover. (plate 8)[14]

It was not unusual for Wooltex's advertising department to receive requests for style books from women in distant countries. The Wooltex News' editor reported, "A record, however, was made when among other inquirers, two were received from New Zealand, one from Saskatchewan, one from Hawaii, and one from Philippines and Japan."[15] Because of the popularity of Wooltex's suits, coats and skirts, The News continued, "women from 22 countries have inquired about Wooltex".[16]

One method of distributing style books was through their salesmen. Wooltex's fleet of salesmen covered the entire United States. Beside selling clothing to retailers they also gave out stylebooks. In the article, "Awards to

PLATE 8

The National Cloak and Suit Co. stylebook was popular because of the cover drawing by the popular artist Christy. Wooltex was in direct competition with large firms like this.

Our Salesmen", it was announced, "the number of style books a Wooltex salesmen put out in his 3 or 4 state territory was 76,000- very impressive."[17] By 1910, the company had an entire department for advertising purposes only. "This department was responsible for creating the Wooltex Style books."[18] In addition to the catalog, they also designed advertisements for magazines, store promotions and contacted famous stars for their endorsements. In 1912, Wooltex did a two page hand colored spread of their outfits in the Saturday Evening Post. They also pictured a famous stage star with the caption "Actress Wears Wooltex Coat on the Stage". She was the leading actress in The Stranger, and the style coat she wore became one of Wooltex's best sellers for that season.[19]

In addition to, national advertisement campaigns, many retailers did so well with Wooltex merchandise they focused on Wooltex in their own advertisement campaigns. A retailer in West Virginia was so pleased with the quality and sales of Wooltex garments he built a road sign, reading "Pedigo's- The Home of Wooltex". The sign's dimensions were twenty-three feet high, one hundred and twenty-five feet long and it took sixteen thousand feet of lumber to build.[20] In Cleveland, Wooltex often held an exhibition in one of the local department stores to showcase its garments. In The Wooltex News, the editor lauded, "The Wooltex exhibit at Linder's during Wooltex Week was visited by many women."[21]

Advertising and sponsored events paid off, and Wooltex's sales skyrocketed. Nineteen-fifteen was their best year and proved the advertising department was worth its expense. For example, "June tenth, 1915, The Denver Dry Goods Co. placed the largest single order ever placed with Wooltex, 541 coats and 330 suits."[22] Wooltex's Rose Barhard reported the advertising techniques worked well.

> Below is a list of the five best selling coats, suits and skirts. It is interesting and gratifying to note that in the suits and coats, eight of the ten were the models selected by the style committee [which] shows the numbers chosen for advertising were carefully picked and the advertising was right.[23]

Salesmen were an intricate part of the success and growth of Wooltex not only locally, but nationally as well. Cleveland's market was different from New York City. Cleveland, a smaller and younger city, was located on what was considered the edge of the wilderness. Because of this, Cleveland had to go to her customers. She was a selling market. Therefore it was necessary that she develop a sales force that went to outlying towns and the countryside so women could purchase Wooltex goods. New York, on the other hand had a buying market. The retailers, buyers and customers traveled there to purchase merchandise. New York was suitable for this type of market. It manufactured a wide variety of goods. Located on the east coast it was the first to receive Paris models and was America's financial center. Cleveland's aggressive nature and willingness to take risks

in garment manufacturing and sales tactics was an attempt to make the Forest City more competitive with New York.

To send out salesmen, the fashion styles had to be decided very early. Salesmen had to go out and get orders before the season started so as to have ample time to make the garments. While the designers in New York had not decided what their styles would be, Cleveland salesmen were already out on the road. Thus Cleveland garment manufacturers such as Wooltex were setting styles in America.

It was estimated that 200 salesmen radiated from Cleveland to promote and sell ready-to-wear clothing[24]. Wooltex's staff fluctuated, however, many of the original salesmen stayed on. A job as a Wooltex salesmen paid well, but there were many months on the road. The Wooltex News printed stories that the salesmen told of their adventurers. One salesmen met an Indian tribe in Arizona and the chief's daughter tried on the Wooltex coats. Although the salesman snapped a picture, the tribe took his camera. Sales work appeared to be a very interesting occupation. Wooltex had sales contests for their salesmen and big bonuses were paid to salesmen who sold more than their quota.

Wooltex also boasted they had the shortest lay-off period for their workers. One of the reasons was attributed to their sales force. J. E. Greenbaum suggested in his

article in the Wooltex News, "It is the liberal use of salesmen and advertising that has made possible the early activity of the factory, when almost every other garment factory has been idle."[25] This early activity was necessary because Cleveland clothing houses sent their salesmen into selected retail stores in every state, other Cleveland manufacturers limited sales to the Midwest, and a few sold in Ohio and neighboring states only.[26] The Wooltex salesmen would leave very early to start selling a season's new line. For instance, The News reported, "Salesmen leave to sell Spring line Dec. 1 through Dec. eighth. The salesmen carried with them a line of 37 coats and 30 suits."[27] With such an early start, the workers hoped that the factory would be in full operation by Christmas. Sometimes no matter how ready they were to leave, the salesmen were delayed. Most of the time it was attributed to bad weather. While the salesmen had find customers it was just as important that the clothes be original, stylish and quality made.

American manufacturers were not strictly copiers of Paris fashion. They also designed clothes themselves. Jane Mulvagh wrote a colorful account of emerging American designs. She stated, "The American tradition of the shirtwaist, a tailored dress with a bodice like a mannish, tailored blouse, had been introduced many years earlier, was ideally suited to the present requirements of simple practicality."[28] Their popularity was formally launched

after Paris had claimed them as their own. American women truly loved the creation of the two piece outfit because the pieces were interchangeable. Wooltex was at the center of this development and benefited from its popularity for thirty years. The Wooltex two piece outfit was worn in Europe as well as America. The overall style of suit and skirt and blouse remained popular for years; however, each season the decorative trims and perhaps the cut were modified. Hickman explained to her readers, "Women do not care to buy a dress or coat unless it is the latest style".[29]

Because the desired style that women would choose for the new season was often difficult to determine ahead of time, stores dared not risk buying large stocks lest the style change overnight. Despite this risk, manufacturers had to decide on the styles they were going to produce, and purchase materials before the season. In order to alleviate some of the risk of picking the wrong trend, manufacturers formed domestic coalitions and international fashion bureaus which among other goals strove to restrain changes.

Wooltex and other Cleveland garment manufacturers were affiliated with The National Cloak, Suit and Skirt Manufacturing Association. This group was comprised of all the prominent manufacturers of the Midwest.[30] The object of their meetings was to promote interest of the cloak industry through co-operation. Examples of issues addressed during

their meetings were tariff revision, factory systemization, efficiency, employee welfare, and style ideas. Although they officially competed against each other, this oligopoly association provided fiscal security. Although not detailed in their meeting notes, there were indications that price fixing was occurring.

The idea of fashion fixing seemed a necessary thing for manufacturers because of the huge risk of being wrong and losing a hold in the market. The associations became very sure of themselves and their predictions, and went public with them. In an article, "The New Style" the editor of the Wooltex News informed the workers, "At the National Cloak, Suit and Skirt Manufacturers' Association, which assembled in Chicago, style resolutions were adopted for spring garments."[31] These statements on how fashion was going to be for the spring outraged the garment manufacturers in New York and the East coast who had not even met yet to discuss the newest trends. The acid comments from New York challenged the Midwest:

> With a flourish which seems to imply a dictum to the trade throughout the land, the style committee representing 155 manufacturers of coats, suits, and skirts in Chicago, Toledo, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and St. Louis, report having fixed the styles for 1913. What will Paris, New York and Berlin have to say now that the wild and wooly west has enacted a decree for 1913? Will our 1,274 prominent manufacturers sit idly and accept the dictum of the progressive 155?[32]

It was a strange phenomena that the established East would

think the young, somewhat wilderness West, could be so pretentious. Realizing its limitations, the Midwest went above and beyond, with technological advancements in order to compete with the East.

Cleveland was anxious to be the western fashion capital. The "Forest City" hosted many fashion exhibits put on by the Association of Women's Wear Manufactures, the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, Retailers, and women's groups. The Chamber of Commerce demonstrated a keen interest in Cleveland's promotion of fashion manufacturing. Perhaps this was because during the years 1913-1916 their president was Morris Black who was also president of Wooltex. The Wooltex News proclaimed that Cleveland was America's emerging city for fashion. One fact was strikingly evident, "Sixth city garment manufacturers originated styles, just as they copy and adapt the good fashion changes that are created elsewhere."[33] The style shows provided excellent opportunities to draw retail purchasers to Cleveland. Wooltex did not miss its chance to show off its magnificent factory. Although media and communication was limited during the latter 19th century and early 20th century, the Cleveland Style Show became a permanent institution and did much to bring Cleveland to the attention of merchants and buyers from around the country.

Wooltex worked to achieve a name for Cleveland's garment industry. However, it could never loosen the strong

hold that New York had on the market. Therefore, in early 1917, Wooltex opened permanent show rooms in New York City at 244 Fifth Avenue. (plate 9) Unchecked competition had made a location change inevitable if the company was to survive. No matter how impressive the Cleveland factory was, some merchants preferred to go to New York.

PLATE 9

The Wooltex News

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

By Wooltexers, for Wooltexers

Vol. 7 March, 1917 No. 5

ONE CORNER OF OUR NEW YORK SHOW ROOM

The accompanying print, fellow Wooltexers, is a picture of our New York Show Room. It is not as large as our Cleveland Show Room, probably two-thirds as large. You will note that at one end a platform, stage like, has been built for the display of Wooltex to our many merchants.

The color scheme, in itself is very artistic. The entire back ground is grey with a very pretty border decoration running around the entire room. One of the most interesting features of the decorations is the design of a peacock, which is used thruout. It is most artistic in itself and harmonizes splendidly with the rest of the decorations. Hanging from the ceiling are four very beautiful daylight lamps, which give a light of day all the time, whether it be cloudy outside or not. The large rug is of many colors, green predominating. To harmonize

This is a picture of Wooltex's New York show room. It was only two-thirds the size of the Cleveland show room.

1. James D. Norris, Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865-1920 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 68.

2. Ibid., 100.

3. Guest, King of Fashion: The Autobiography of Paul Poiret, 278.

4. Norris, Advertising and Transformation, 167.

5. Ibid, 167.

6. Ibid., 104.

7. Ibid., 15.

8. Stella Blum, Everyday Fashions of the Twenties: As pictured in Sears Catalog (New York: Dover Pub., 1981), 9.

9. Norris, Advertising and Transformation, 15.

10. Ibid., 40.

11. Ibid., 51.

12."Women From Twenty-two Countries Inquire," The Wooltex News. 1913, vol. 3, no. 2, p.4.

13. A. B. Caldwell Company, "The Mail Box," The Wooltex News, 1911, vol.2, no.1, p.24.

14. Women's Fashions of the Early 1900s: An Unabridged Republication of "New York Fashions, 1909" National Cloak and Suit Co. (New York: Dover Publications, 1992), see publisher's note.

15.Wooltex News, vol.2, no.8, p.5.

16. Ibid.,

17. "Awards to Our Salesmen," The Wooltex News, 1912, Vol.2, no.10, p.18.

18. Sarah Reynolds, "To the Editor," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol..1, no.2, p.18.

19. "Actress wears Wooltex," The Wooltex Bulletin, 1910, Vol.1, no.11, p.17.

20. "Late Spring Business," The Wooltex News, 1916, vol.6, no.4, p.4.

21. "Purely Personal," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no.4, 16.

22. "Sales Record," The Wooltex News, 1915, vol 5, no.2, 5.

23. Rose Barnhard, "The Best Sellers," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol.1, no.5, 10.

24. J. E. Greenbaum, " The Cloak Industry in Cleveland," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 5, p.19.

25. Ibid., vol. 5, no.4, p.1.

26. Hickman, The Clothing Industry in Cleveland, 57.

27. "Spring Season Week Old," The Wooltex News, 1915, vol. 6, no.1, p.4.

28. Jane Mulvagh. Vogue Fashion: History of the 20th Century (New York: Viking, 1988), 45.

29. Hickman. The Clothing Industry in Cleveland, 73.

30. "Convention of the National Cloak, Suit and Skirt Manufacturers Association, held at Toledo, Ohio," The Wooltex News. 1913, vol. 3, no.3, 9.

31. "The New Styles," The Wooltex News, 1912, vol. 2, no.9, 17.

32. Morris Black, "What will Paris and New York Say?," The Wooltex News, 1913, vol. 3, no. 3, 21.

33. "Spring Style Show Great Success," The Wooltex News, 1913, vol. 2, no. 12, 15.

CHAPTER V

Wooltex: The Vanguard Welfare Capitalist

There has always been conflict between capitalism and socialism. In American industry, welfare capitalism offered a middle of the road solution to the complex problem of labor relations. Cleveland's progressive attitude made her a candidate for this philosophy. After it was implemented in garment factories, it appeared to have worked well. Many Cleveland industries, primarily manufacturing giants such as Wooltex, benefited from this liberal program. What then caused the demise of welfare capitalism in American labor history? The Wooltex Company of Cleveland provides plausible answers to this historical problem.

The early Wooltex factory represented the typical industrial situation. The small, ethnic-run factories were similar around the United States--dark, stuffy, damp and basically unhealthy. The working conditions were at times completely intolerable. However, a change in the way garment manufacturers operated their factories occurred, not in New York, or Boston or even Philadelphia, but in Cleveland. The products were not going to differ much nor were the people that worked there. The real changes were in the ways they made their products, and the ways the employees were treated.

Cleveland had big ideas about business. The typical

garment manufacture consisted of few workers and very labor intensive work. Cleveland immediately moved away from the traditional approach to manufacturing. Although the first factories in 1884-1890 were of smaller scale, ten years later, large buildings had been built and large numbers of employees hired. Cleveland was soon making a name for itself in the garment trades. The Cleveland industries boomed very quickly as a result of agreeable economic conditions and the implementation of welfare capitalism which facilitated rapid success and growth.

Welfare capitalism was a myriad of social and economic attitudes that when applied, produced an ethical and humane working environment. At the turn of the century aspiring businesses had very few stipulations on how they were to be run. The United States favored capitalism as a guide to its economic activity. While this predominately open market structure provided excellent opportunities for the entrepeneuer it limited the social and economic mobility of the laborer. No laws regarding ethical treatment of employees and no standard wage was enforceable under the capitalistic system. Therefore, workers were often abused by management and company owners.

In time, some felt there was no merit to the capitalistic system at all. They made their judgements on the basis of the social abuses to workers. Socialism became the popular alternative. Socialism's proponents desired that

all are workers for the state, therefore abolishing the stratification of labor. This idea, however ideal, did not appeal to the American public entirely. Another option was to organize labor, thwarting any injustice by owners. This movement steadily gained support. Yet there was one enlightened idea that combined the two--welfare capitalism. It opened doors to create a business and rewarded the initiative of the creator and yet treated their workers with respect, fairness and allowed mobility, a combination that extreme capitalists and socialists felt would not work. Stuart Brandes, in his book American Welfare Capitalism 1880-1940, asserts that welfare capitalism existed as early American industry itself. He also believed that it blossomed under the urban growth of the 1900s. In Cleveland, under the Wooltex enlightened management, welfare capitalism did work. It worked so well it acquired a national reputation not only for its products but also for its worker democracy.

Stuart Brandes provided an educational perspective on the origins of welfare capitalism:

> The first crude statement of welfarism theory appeared in a influential treatise on technique of cotton manufacturing in 1832.. A cotton mill owner, James Montgomery warned other mill owners that labor relations were a 'a very tender point' . . . he continued, factories can never be managed more profitably, and more to the satisfaction of their proprietors, than when there exists a good feeling and good understanding between the managers and the workers.[1]

Herman Black attributed the freedoms in America for the

basis of his success. He felt that others with ambition should also have an opportunity to make America work for them. With this philosophy, Black gave back to his employees. He believed that prosperity was a result of efficiency and positivism. Laborers should be in the best condition, mentally and physically to do their work. After all, he worked for many years right next to his employees. He had done every task and worked the same long hours. He knew from first hand experience what it was like to work in poor conditions. He wanted to make his workers proud of working for him and he wanted their loyalty. Perhaps Herman Black's capital and social improvements were not due to a cognitive purpose, but they attained the outcome he desired.

If Herman's improvements were not specifically directed, his son Morris's were. Morris's decision to build a factory that was beautiful in design was intentional. He wanted to make a statement about garment manufacturing. It said that not all garment manufacturing was dirty and depressing; there were manufacturers who were enlightened and treated their workers well. Wooltex's goal was to include the workers suggestions and desires into their planning and growth. Management made efforts to thank employees and reward them for innovative ideas and jobs well done. Wooltex made its workers welfare an important aspect of the company. This was unlike many industries who cared

little for their workers other than wanting to exploit their labors.

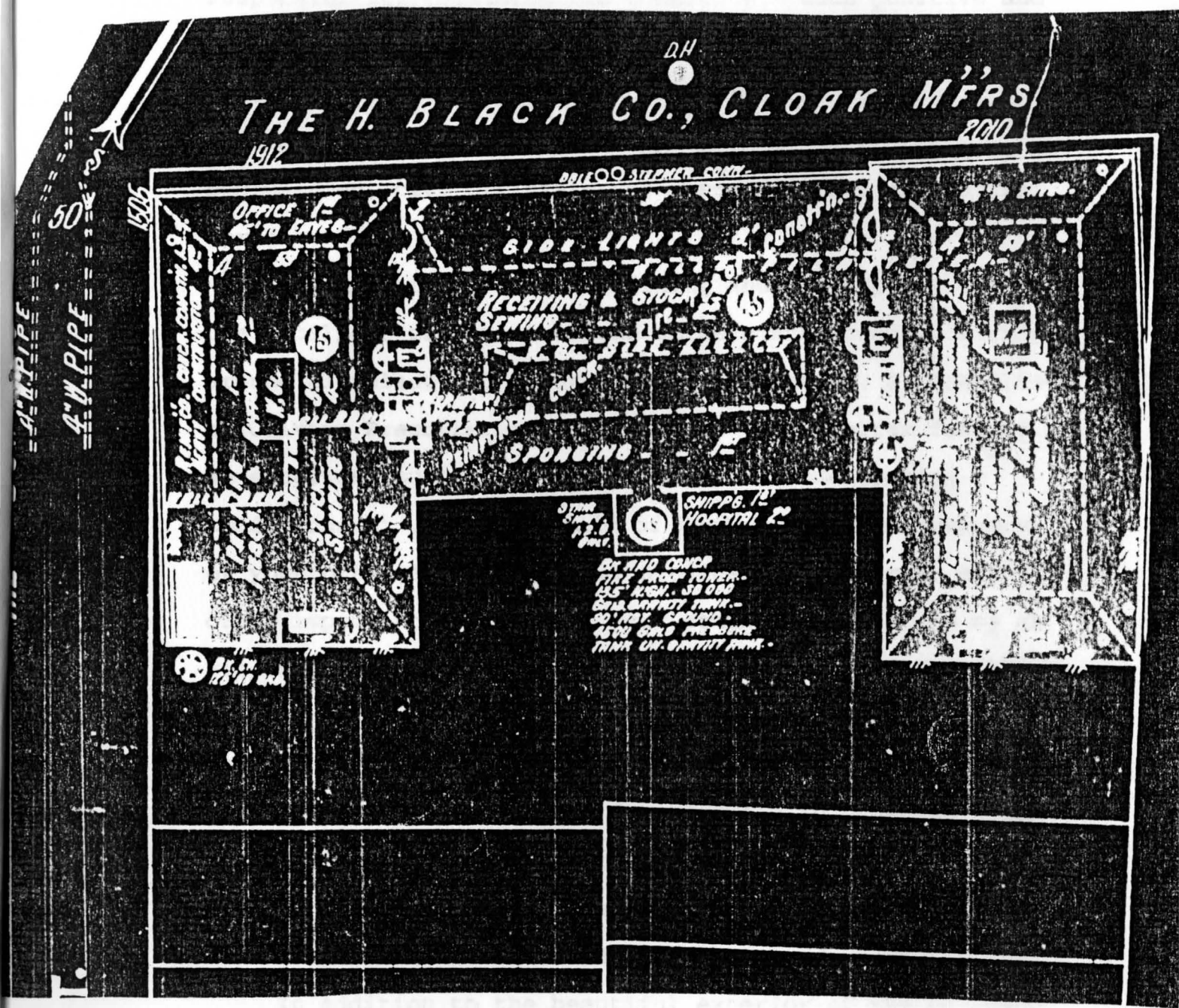
To see just how welfare capitalism worked we shall look at the company in a ten year span (1907-1917), when this concept was fully developed. The following commentary, drawn from company bulletins, provided insight of Wooltex worker's attitude toward their factory:

> Wooltex was the first cloak and suit factory to locate on Superior Ave. The factory floor space equaled five and one half acres. The highest total number of employees was 1,257. Half of these employees were women. There were sixty-seven superintendents and foremen and the average yearly production was 250,000 garments.[2] (plate 10)

In the fiscal year 1912-1913, 726 styles were made. In a single week they finished 8,500 garments. There were over 500 sewing machines. The button hole machines made five button holes per minute. Electric cutting machines cut sixty-five pieces of cloth at a time. There were thirty-seven specialty sewing machines on the factory floor. At full capacity Wooltex clothed one out of every 250 women in the United States.[3]

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported the Wooltex factory's building was a rare instance of beautiful factory architecture. It was of brick, with a long, low facade with a red tile roof. The necessary water tank was enclosed in a graceful tower. Flowers at the windows, and trimmed lawns completed the setting. Morris Black wanted an exterior with a pleasing esthetic. He felt it was important that factories

PLATE 10



Map of Superior Street between East Nineteenth Street and East Twenty-first Street, the Wooltex factory in 1912.

add to the city in a becoming way. He believed in corporate responsibility regarding his community. Such positive and flattering remarks from the Bureau of Labor Statistics placed Wooltex on a pedestal to be emulated by other manufacturers. The Wooltex showplace was visited by businessmen, city officials and customers from around the world.

The appearance of the building and the reputation of the excellent treatment of the workers attracted attention around Cleveland and other places. Reverend T. S. McWilliams of Calvary Presbyterian Church said, "The Wooltex factory is an excellent building and provides wholesome working conditions."[4] A visitor said of Wooltex, "the arrangement of your offices, that of your president, treasurer, and other important officers of your company, suggest to me an air of democracy. It seems as though they are accessible to anybody passing through the lobby and that is splendid."[5] When T. Stern visited America he admired Wooltex so much that he traveled many times from Germany in order to learn about its welfare system. Other leading manufacturers in America came here to see the factory and went away saying that they had never realized what Wooltex meant.[6]

In addition to the beautiful exterior of the building, inside the structure, many physical improvements and innovative ideas were implemented. The Wooltex News ran an article about the safety features of the factory, "The new

factory was admired by all for it's light and airy rooms and absolute fire proofness."[7] Fire hazard was a primary concern. This danger was brought to the forefront after the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire in New York, a tragedy where many women lost their lives due to the lack of safety features. Wooltex took every precaution to prevent such a disaster. Wooltex installed a sprinkler system, and extra wide aisles where no materials or debris were allowed to accumulate. Management also installed emergency exits, a water tower, and practiced routine fire drills. The fire wardens were so impressed with Wooltex's fire safety precautions they made it a role model for all industry in Cleveland.[8]

Not only were city, state and federal inspectors impressed with what they saw at Wooltex, but many manufacturers, salesmen, women's groups and school children were also. In the section "Hits and Strike-Outs" in the Wooltex News, an accident insurance agent visited one week and commented, "he had been investigating factory accidents for thirty years and he had never seen any other factory as clean and safe as Wooltex."[9] Wooltex had confidence in their building and worker methodology; they would allow anyone to inspect. To protect their workers from woolen fiber in the air, management asked a chemist to measure if the woolen dust could be harmful. Chemist White's report appeared in the Wooltex's bulletin:

> City chemist White made an inspection of the Wooltex factory to see if any of the Wooltex workers were in danger from breathing too much lint. Wooltex passed the test in summer (with windows open) but he has to check in the winter with windows closed.[10]

Thus Wooltex was always looking for ways to improve.

The building that housed Wooltex was an important part of its welfare capitalism. Its beautiful outward appearance was not necessary for a factory. It did not improve the quality of the product, nor did it add to its productivity. Despite its non-utility features it made a good company a better company. It instilled pride in the workers because they worked in such a beautiful and safe place. It made the owners proud to say that this was their factory and it added to the presence of the community. Its underlying statement was that manufacturing did not have to be a cruel, ugly, and abusing occupation.

While improving the outward appearance of manufacturing Wooltex was also changing the way the inside was run. Mildred Hickman, who studied the garment manufacturers in Cleveland for the Board of Education, said in her report, "A few of the Cleveland clothing factories have met not only the legal requirements in constructing proper workshops, but have found it good business to go far beyond them."[11] There was no one forcing these factories to create social programs that favored their employees. This philosophy was implemented by the owners. When Professor Felix Adler, president of the ethical culture society of New York and one

of the most prominent sociologists in America, visited Wooltex, he said, "The exterior of the building was different from the others, the building was excellent from a sanitary standpoint, and contained a carefully developed welfare plan."[12]

The Federal Report on Industry in 1912, found the welfare capitalism at Wooltex admirable. "The most interesting feature of the firms welfare work is its democracy . . ."[13] Because of the positive remarks made about Wooltex, its reputation as a model factory soon began to spread. Wooltex was called the pride of the American cloak industry. There was constant approval from visitors whom came to the factory. The head operator in the Wooltex office reported to the bulletin that it was pleasant to hear the different remarks business people make as well as visitors on entering the building. Despite the growing reputation of Wooltex some still did not realize the magnitude of the company until they visited in person. Mr. Williams and Mr. Cunnyngham, retailers from Chicago who bought large quantities of fashions from Wooltex, said, because Wooltex's ideals were founded on honor and betterment, they were bound to maintain their position of leadership in the woman's ready-to-wear industry.[14]

From available documentation concerning Wooltex, it appears most of the workers were happy with their situation. It must be emphasized that in welfare capitalism there still

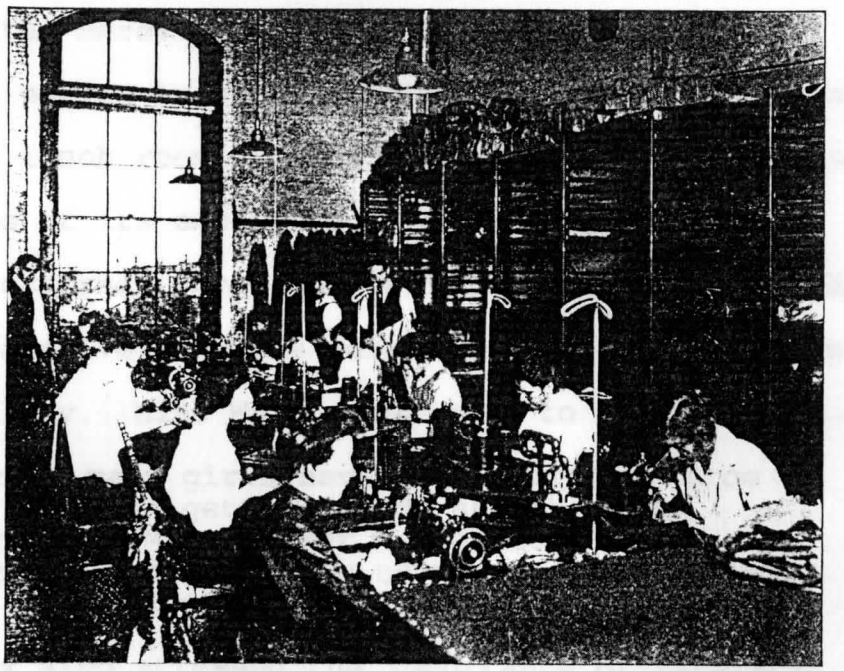
was an employer who made the final decision and made most of the money. However, in comparison to other worker relations at that time, opportunities and programs available to workers were undoubtedly better. For instance, Wooltex advocated carefully chosen section work. Each employee did the work he was best fitted to. However, it was possible that certain ethnic groups were discriminated against under the pretenses that they were not "best fitted" to doing that particular work. For example, women rarely were promoted to a more skilled job in the factory -- sewing versus cutting.(plate 11)

As early as 1910, employees were given a designated vacation, paid holidays, and Saturday afternoons off. They also received an entire hour for lunch. A lunch room was constructed for the employees on the top floor of the factory. This idea was suggested by an elected committee of workers. They served for three months and then elected their successors. The committee originally looked after the sanitary conditions and cleanliness of the shop, but as the factory grew so did their responsibility. Eventually after a suggestion of the committee a full time nurse was employed.

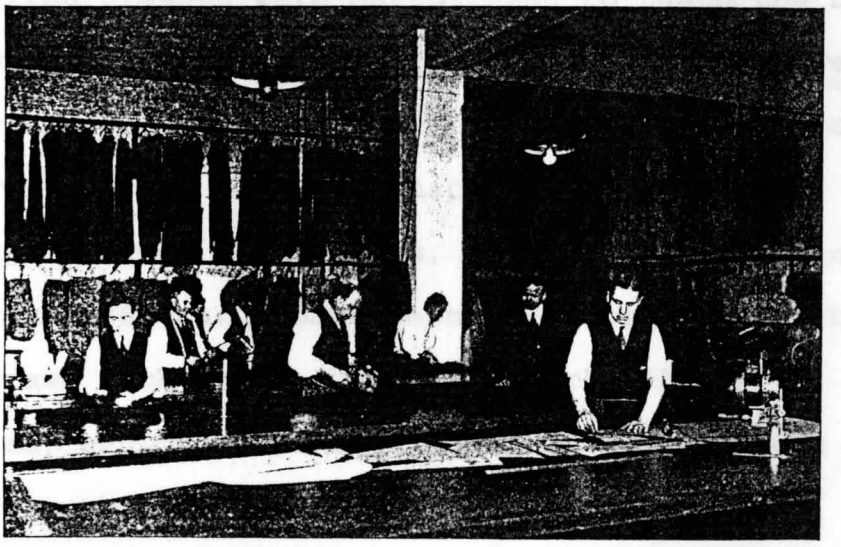
A mini-hospital run by the registered nurse took care of all minor injuries. Six month injury reports in the Wooltex News listed the following ailments: Headache - 116 cases, Earache - 22 cases, Toothache - 40 cases, Sore Throat - 25 cases, Boils - 24 cases, Indigestion - 40 cases,

PLATE 11

Page 6 Tuesday, February 15 Wooltex News



Section A



The Cutting Room

Pictures of the inside of the Wooltex factory around 1914. Notice the white collared men. Notice also that women dominate the sewing room - section A, while men work in the cutting room where wages were higher.

Needle in Finger - 24 cases, Burns - 18 cases, Cuts - 54 cases = TOTAL - 616 cases. With such a large number of headaches, the nurse surmised they were the result of workers not eating breakfast. She soon set up a breakfast meal in the lunch room from 6:30 to 6:50.[15] Wooltex required vaccinations of its employees especially when local epidemics occurred. Shots and medicines were free of charge. Other preventative measures were taken in order to keep the workers healthy. Miss Walker reported to the bulletin that:

> A great many girls have been suffering from wet feet and getting colds and the flu. Therefore, Miss Walker has added some slippers and stockings to the emergency room, and any girl may obtain a pair.[16]

Wooltex also stressed the importance of literacy. Special English classes were established to teach the newly arrived immigrants. In addition to these classes, there was a library where any employee could check out a book. Books were acquired mostly through donations. In 1910, The Wooltex News informed the workers, "There were 354 volumes in the library. 262 cards have been taken out and about 40 books are drawn each month."[17] Along with other opportunities, employees of both sexes were encouraged to participate in theater, social clubs and sports.

Sports were a big part of Wooltex's welfare capitalism. Their teams often won the league championships. As early as 1885 there was a baseball team. In 1902, the cutters organized a bowling club. They became league champions in

1909 and also sponsored an annual dance. In 1910 Wooltex "was the first factory team to take up football. A college quality football was donated."[18] Women formed cheering sections for the sports teams. Sports offered a refuge from the monotony of factory work. Factories sponsored leagues and provided uniforms for their teams.

Women had activities of their own as well. "A girls industrial club was formed which met at the YWCA." Membership cost was $1.00, but this included a dinner at each meeting and free instruction in reading, writing, spelling, grammar, embroidery, basketry, crocheting, stenciling, travel and music.[19] The Wooltex Fortnightly Club had a membership of men and women and gave a series of weekly singing concerts during the lunch hour.

Van Tassel and Grabowski said that in addition to Wooltex, the Joseph & Feiss Company, and the Cleveland Worsted Mill provided clean, well run cafeterias, clinics, libraries, and nurseries for children. These programs, though not necessary to run a factory, were added benefits for the workers' morale. Although these activities were enjoyable for the workers, they would never take place of full involvement in factory decisions.

With the looming threat of organized labor, Wooltex felt it necessary to allow more worker input in the determination of new rules. Thus the workers formed a rules committee in 1916. This worker-elected committee met to

discuss and to amend new proposals created by the owners and management. By 1917 there was a lot of discontent on the part of the workers. Sales of cloaks and wool suits were starting their decline. Additional pressure and propaganda put out by union shops was gaining interest and support. The rules committee at first was successful in getting their demands met. For instance, they wanted a forty-eight hour work week and they got it. Soon they wanted a increase in pay and Wooltex would not agree to it. This added dissention would eventually cause the end of the welfare capitalism at Wooltex and in Cleveland. The garment workers union would become the laborer's bargaining platform and thus created a division between management and workers. The union became the intermediary and as in the movie Metropolis (1926) would further indicate the mediator between brain (management) and muscle (laborers) would be the heart (union).[20]

Despite the benefits welfare capitalism provided, the workers lacked an identity. They began to identify themselves as union workers rather than Wooltex workers. As the workers were educated by union representatives, they realized they had bargaining power. In a labor intensive industry, such as garment manufacturing, a limited number of workers could cripple production.

Prior to World War One, American workers suffered from ravages of inflation. When war time prosperity began the employees felt an increase in income was justifiable. All

the wonderful programs and activities supplied by the company were not worth much when workers could not afford to buy food. Thus, the reality of welfare capitalism could not adjust to satisfy the demands of the workers, nor the complexities of a ever changing economic system. Wooltex and welfare capitalism was on its decline.

1. "Factory Facts," The Wooltex News 1914, vol. 4, no. 8, 6.

2."Do You Know," The Wooltex News 1913, vol. 3, no. 7, 22.

3. Sam Lesser, "Growth of Our Factory," The Wooltex News 1910, vol. 1, no. 3, 19. "

4. Rev. T. S. McWilliams, "A Bouquet for the Wooltex Factory," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 12, 20.

5. "A Visitor's Remark," The Wooltex News, 1913, vol. 3, no. 6, 24.

6. Sam Lesser, "Growth of Our Factory," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 3, 20.

7. "Safety From Fire," The Wooltex News 1913, vol. 3, no. 5, 6.

8. Ibid., vol. 3, no. 5, 6.

9. "Hits and Strike-Outs," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 1, 16.

10. Chemist White, "A Test Made," The Wooltex News, 1915, vol. 5, no. 9, 2-3.

11. Hickman. The Clothing Industry in Cleveland, 79.

12. Professor Felix Adler, "Lauds Wooltex Factory," The Wooltex News, 1913, Vol.3, no. 6, 15.

13. Mr. Williams, "As Others See Us," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 2, no. 8, 8.

14. Ibid., vol. 2, no. 8, 8.

15. Miss Walker, "Dry Feet," The Wooltex News, 1916, vol. 6, no. 4, 1.

16. Ibid., vol. 6, no. 4, 1.

17. "Lots to read at the Library," The Wooltex News 1912, vol. 3, no. 3, 12.

18. G. J. Eyler, "Sporting News," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 4, 17.

19. "A New Club for Girls," The Wooltex Bulletin, 1910, vol. 1, no. 5, 6.

20. Metropolis

CHAPTER VI

A Strike to Wooltex and Welfare Capitalism

Cleveland garment industrialists invested in welfare capitalism to catapult their production above their competition on the East coast. This was a gamble because their labor force was primarily foreign. At first, the paternalistic nature of the welfarism eased the workers transition from their homeland to America. As the immigrants grew more familiar with their surroundings, their pride did also. Garment workers began to see how the system did not cater to all of their needs and they looked to a centrally powered union to fend for them. Nystrom adds:

> There have been so many abuses of labor in the earlier days of the apparel industry, and there are very few industries in which the problems of labor have been so bitterly fought as the apparel industry.[1]

The absence of legal repercussions toward industry at the turn of the century allowed business owners to exploit their employees. The lack of fairness in negotiations between owners and workers encouraged the disgruntled laborers to organize. Unionism was created so workers had collective bargaining power to negotiate for a decent, safe workplace and a living wage.

However, not all owners were cruel and money hungry. In the early twentieth century the socialist and populist

movements in America breathed life into the welfarism philosophy. This attitude favored the worker and encouraged equality. During 1910-1912 there were small Ohio towns which elected mayors on the Socialist ticket. Brandes contends companies were, "affected by the progressive milieu, even to the extent of the ambitiousness of its aims, while managing to remain apart from it."[2] Owners wanted to be fair to their employees however they did not want to share the ownership of their company with them. These worker-oriented ideas were grasped by humanitarian manufacturers such as Morris Black "to the extent that practitioners of welfare capitalism sought to recast employees in a business mold -- to build a New Capitalistic Man -- their goals were not only ambitious but also utopian."[3]

Perhaps enthusiasm in the outward success of welfare capitalism blinded the optimistic owners to the worker's plight. The appeal of unionism to workers was complex. Laborers had to decide whether to give up their sovereign decision making ability to the collective bargaining power of the group. The paternalistic relationship between boss and worker would be replaced by the cold formality of management and labor. The decision to unionize at Wooltex was spurred by the emotional fervor of the New York strikers' success. Van Tassel recounts how the unions reformed the troubled garment trades of New York, "In 1900 a number of small craft and trade unions joined together in

New York city to form the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. (ILGWU)"[4] By 1909 the union shop in fashion manufacturing had taken a firm hold in New York. It was fitting that the union formed there first as New York was the site for all types of labor-management disputes. Sweat shops developed in garment manufacturing and ruined the industry's reputation all over the United States. However, despite the success of the union in New York and elsewhere, "The union was unable to organize complete worker support against the Garment Manufacturers Association in Cleveland."[5]

The implementation of welfare capitalism in Cleveland warded off organized labor. Because of the threat of unionism, large Cleveland garment factories provided additional amenities for their employees such as worker-elected committees and increased their wages. The U.S. Department of Labor's bulletin on wages, No.183 in 1915, "dealt with the conditions in the women's garment industry, finding that working conditions, wages, etc. were the best in Cleveland."[6] The Department of Labor ranked the major garment producing centers as follows: (1) Cleveland, (2) Boston, (3) Chicago, (4) New York, (5) St. Louis.[7] At that time, Cleveland garment workers annual income allowed for a generous lifestyle. Cleveland's blue collar workers could afford to buy property. An old employee of the Wooltex company said that strikes were not talked about in the

formative years of the factory:

> There has never been a strike at this factory (1884-1910). Once we had a sort of imitation one, about seven years ago (1903). I don't know the real cause, but I believe it was agitation from the outside. Only the tailors participated.[8]

The unions tried to sell the workers on added benefits; however the company already provided these. This was illustrated by Wooltex's concern about their employees health. The management had always paid employees for the time they lost as the result of injuries occurring at work. Employees also received pay for New Year's Day, Decoration Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas.[9]

In 1911, Cleveland saw its first critical labor strife in the garment industry. Union demands were presented to all Cleveland garment companies on June third, this included: a fifty hour work week with Saturday and Sunday off, an increase in hourly wages, no charges to use the machines and materials, and a closed shop on subcontracting. On June sixth, the employees of Wooltex walked out and up to 6,000 of Cleveland's garment workers followed them.[10] According to Van Tassel and Grabowski's report, it appears that all Wooltex workers walked out. This was ironic because Wooltex workers were apparently the first to leave, yet they came from the best equipped and best worker oriented factory in the city and already had half of Saturday and all Sunday off.

According to the Wooltex News this was not the case. Only some left and they were from particular departments. "As of the strike," read the report, "80% of the cutters remained, a large majority of the pressers remained, 80% of the women remained but almost all of the tailors were on strike."[11] Wooltex' reaction to the stike was illustrated in a printed rebuttal:

> Address to Workers Concerning the strike called for June 7,1911. Until now we have had,
> (1) 28 years of peaceful relationship between workers and management.
> (2) During the economic panic of 1893 and 1908 no workman was discharged nor were wages reduced.
> (3) The annual earnings compare favorably with any other craft in the city and superior to other cities.[12]

Wooltex felt the union uprising was not directed toward improving conditions for the workers, but rather a pure economic move to stifle Cleveland temporarily so that New York manufacturers could get production back. The primary goal of the union was to secure uniform conditions for all garment factories in America and force universal union recognition. This step was necessary for New York workers who did not have Cleveland's benefits. Despite their previous convictions, union officers noticed that Cleveland manufacturers had a different approach to labor. More money and fewer hours were more important to Cleveland laborers not better working conditions. Wooltex claimed, "It was impossible to create discontent among the great majority of

the workers of the Wooltex factory, so fear, intimidation and violence were resorted to."[13]

The union organizers from New York knew that Cleveland's garment factories were not in bad shape. John A. Dyche, the secretary of ILGWU and head union spokesman in Cleveland, admitted to the Cleveland Plain Dealer, "the conditions in the shops of the trade in Cleveland from a standpoint of sanitation, lighting and ventilation are very good." He later added, "the unions main goal in coming to Cleveland is to establish a union shop here."[14] Because terrible physical working conditions were absent from Cleveland the union had a difficult time convincing the workers to strike. The evidence indicates that emotion was the key element union spokesmen used to arouse the crowd for support. Unfortunately, too much emotion turned the rallying workers into an angry mob. The Cleveland Plain Dealer reported that the strike organizers were having difficulty conversing with the laborers because of the many languages spoken.[15] The workers were easily excited and became too involved as a result of their vehemence.

The strike received national attention because of its violent nature. "Strikers stormed the Printz-Biederman factory" according to historian Van Tassel, "and dragged accused strike breakers from their homes."[16] There were sixty assaults against workers of the Wooltex plant. Thirty-eight homes were also attacked. Three murders were

committed, one was a tailor who merely expressed his desire to go to work at Wooltex.[17] This aggressive behavior stemmed from tensions not always apparent to Morris Black and the management of Wooltex. Beside being hostile over working conditions or pay there may have been ethnic disputes.

At first, the public rallied behind the idea of a union shop in Cleveland, but then they were disturbed by the behavior of the strikers. The Cleveland Plain Dealer and other local newspapers, which had initially supported the strikers, slowly turned against them as the violence continued.[18] Two weeks into the strike the prominent thirty-five garment manufacturers headed by Wooltex ran half page advertisements in the newspapers to discredit the ILGWU's attempt to unionize. According to Van Tassel and Grabowski, although the original union movement did not have the best interest at heart for the Cleveland worker and city, the manufacturers "played games" in order to rid themselves of the union menace. While the real causes of violence cannot be accurately determined, there was evidence that the manufacturers encouraged such action in order to turn sentiment against the strikers. "One member of the picket committee later admitted" according to Van Tassel and Grabowski, "that he had been paid $10.00 a day and all expenses by the Cloak Manufacturers Association to instigate violence."[19]

When the union finally gave up their intentions it was

mostly related to a lack of funds. "Unable to meet the financial requirements of the strikers" according to one account, "the international finally called off the action, October 22, 1911, with out gaining any concessions."[20] Attempts to negotiate a settlement failed, and by October, those who could returned to work. The strike cost the unions more than $300,000. The strikers, many who had participated the entire length of the strike, found themselves out of work. They held the national union leaders responsible for the failure of the strike.[21]

Since the strike, 30,000 garments that might have been made by the Wooltex workers in Cleveland were made elsewhere, therefore creating a loss of $100,000 in earnings. The employers who had categorically rejected all of the demands and refused arbitration were still able to fill their orders despite the strike. Wooltex announced in their bulletin, "Despite attempts to break up the Cleveland cloak industry and transfer business to another city, this factory has been able to ship to its customers over 90% of their orders on time."[22] This statement appears to contradict another Wooltex claim. Wooltex was still getting 90% of its orders out on time so it seems unlikely that there was any truth to the statement that they were losing money. This statement was printed in the bulletin in order to create sympathy for Wooltex. Neither garment companies nor union shops could be relied upon for accurate

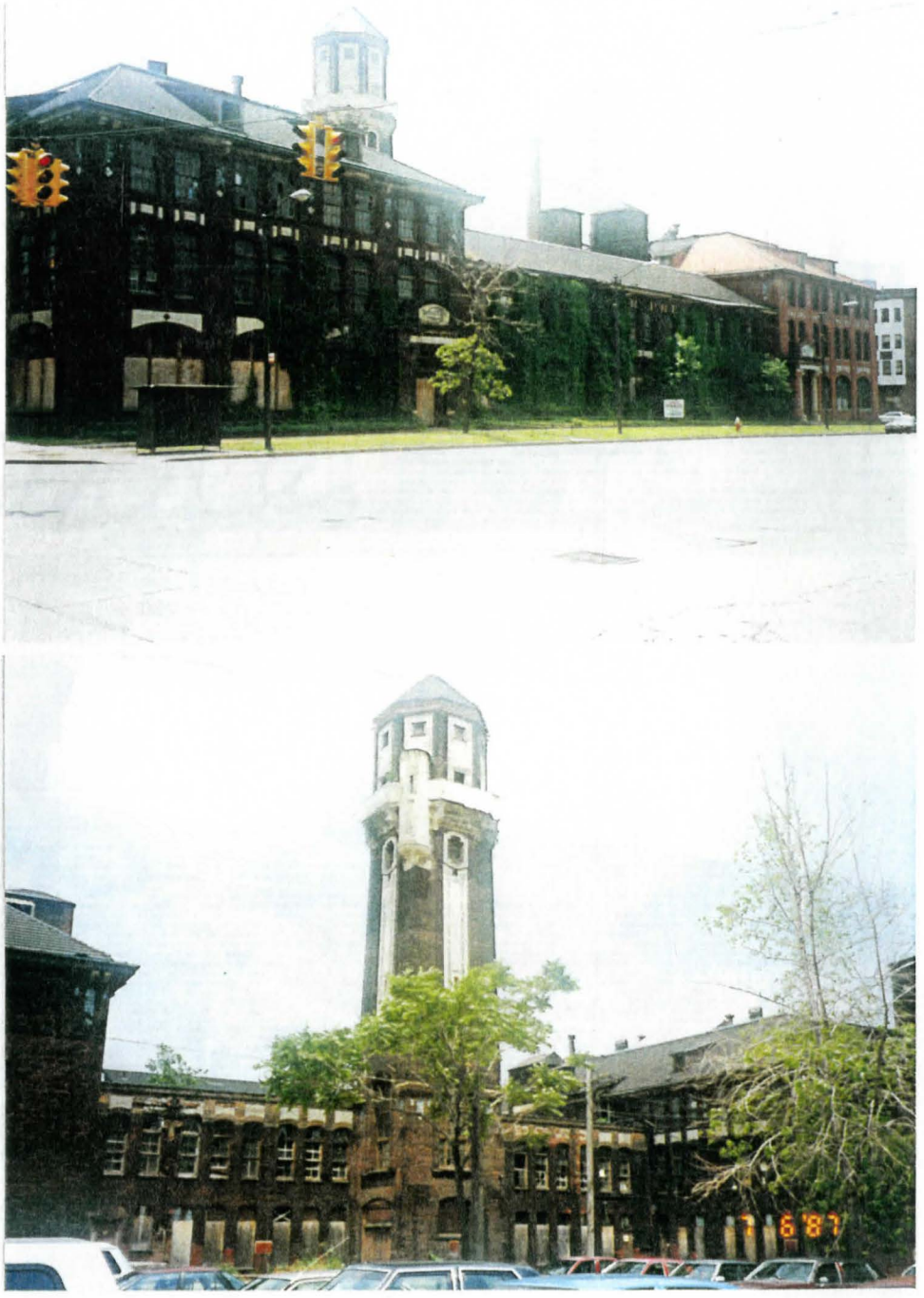
information as to the real situation.

As the tension of the strike eased, there was not another attempt of garment union organization in Cleveland for six years. By 1915, however, discontent was again growing among the workers. Black decided to attach suggestion boxes throughout the plant where workers could put comments or complaints anonymously. A worker-elected rules committee was formed in order to give worker approval or disagreement on new management proposals. The rules committee met and discussed factory policy. This "worker's voice" discussed slack time, forty-eight hour work week, paid holidays, etc. The forty-eight hour work week would be established mainly because of the rules committee.[23] During his career, Morris Black attempted to stabilize the garment industry by making agreements for impartial arbitration. However, there was bound to be a time when disagreements would overshadow one man's attempt to strong hold the company.

In 1917, when America was entering World War One, there was an economic lull in the community but the waning garment manufacturers were given a war-time production boost due to the production of uniforms. The ILGWU decided to take advantage of wartime prosperity and organized another massive work stoppage in Cleveland--it involved approximately 5,000 workers. In addition to union recognition, the Wooltex workers wanted a pay increase.

Management said no, but eventually a "five percent increase was added to those earning $100.00 or less. This was called the Emergency War Bonus."[24] However, in the spring of 1918, the threat of a garment strike in Cleveland put the nation at risk. In order to enforce uninterrupted production, the government decided to enter negotiations. Only during the war did congress allow government to intervene in business affairs. "To avoid a long strike, the secretary of War and Cleveland Mayor Newton D. Baker intervened and forced an agreement" according to historian Valerie Jean Conner, "The National War Labor Board gave the workers a substantial increase in wages."[25] This watershed event ended the special relationship between management and labor in Wooltex and other Cleveland garment industries.

PLATE 12



The Wooltex factory as it looks in 1995

PLATE 13

Picture of the Wooltex factory as it looks in 1995

1. Nystrom. Economics of Fashion, 422.

2. Stuart D. Brandes, American Welfare Capitalism 1880-1940, (Chicago: University Press, 1970), 37.

3. Ibid., 36

4. Tassel and Grabowski. The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, 434.

5. Ibid., 436.

6. "Cleveland Leads: Government Report Shows Conditions Best in Market," The Wooltex News 1916, vol. 6, no. 9, 8.

7. Ibid., vol. 6, no. 9, 8.

8. Frank Martinec, "Twenty-six Years Ago," The Wooltex News, 1910, vol. 1, no. 4, 14.

9. "Pay for Holidays," The Wooltex News, 1915, vol. 5, no. 9, 6.

10. Van Tassel and Grabowski, The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, 434.

11. The H. Black Company, "To Our Wooltex Workers Concerning the Strike called June Seventh, 1911," The Wooltex News, 1911, vol. 2, no. 1, 4.

12. Ibid, vol. 2, no. 1, 4.

13. Ibid., vol. 2, no. 1, 6-7.

14. Editorial, The Cleveland Plain Dealer, 6 June 1911.

15. "Riots Bring Call for Extra Police in Zone of Strike," The Cleveland Plain Dealer, 10 June 1911, Sec. A, p. 1, col. 1.

16. Tassel, The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, 435.

17. The H. Black Co., "To Our Workers Concerning the Strike...," The Wooltex News, 1911, vol. 2, no. 1, 6.

18. Van Tassel and Grabowski, The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, 453.

19. Ibid., 436.

21. "Strike Ended But Not Declared Off," The Cleveland Plain Dealer, 22 October 1911, Sunday sec. B, p. 10, col. 2.

20. Ibid., 436.

22. The H. Black Co., "To Our Workers Concerning the Strike...," The Wooltex News, 1911, vol. 2, no. 1, 9.

23. "Garment Manufacturers meet at Cincinnati" The Wooltex News, 1916, vol. 6, no. 7, 4.

24. Mr. Joseph, "Message From the Executive Committee to the Factory Council," The Wooltex News, 1913, vol. 7, no. 10, 4.

25. Valerie Jean Conner, The National War Labor Board: Stability, Social Justice, and the Voluntary State in World War One (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983),9.

EPILOGUE

Wooltex could not compete with the drastic changes in the American economy at the advent of World War One. With the accelerating cost of living, increases in pay were necessary to keep workers on the job. Valerie Conner in her book, The National War Labor Board, explained, "[in 1917] food costs were eighty-five percent above the 1913 average; clothing 106 percent; and medicines 130 percent!"[1] Inflation and increased demand for industrial labor due to wartime production, encouraged workers to strike for more benefits. Wooltex workers struck for union recognition in late 1917.

With labor unrest on the rise, employers fought to retain control of their companies. In addition to labor challenges to business owners, fear of agitation caused the American federal government to be apprehensive over business' steadfast ability to organize and produce goods if necessary for war. Thus, the government created a new agency to abridge internal labor/management strife--the National War Labor Board. This board, established in 1917, enforced general cooperation between workers and owners in the name of democracy.

The agency was created because of the long standing belief that, "the antipathy of the American people to a powerful central state had produced a federal bureaucracy ill-equipped to mobilize the economy in a national emergency."[2] Unlike previous government positions that had

favored business owners, the National War Labor Board placed the advantage with labor. Never before had the federal government authorized pervasive policies to govern working conditions in American industries. World war One brought President Wilson of the United States and the American Federation of Labor together. The National War Labor Board, was deemed the hybrid child of progressivism.

This agency appeared necessary for the security of the nation. However, it changed the relationship between labor and management forever. While unions benefitted greatly from their newly found voice and bargaining power, many owners fought the legislation and negotiations. Invariably, systems such as welfare capitalism would disappear. The union shops would never replace the "family relationship" and paternalistic values companies had practiced. In hindsight, company sponsored programs were a monumental loss to modern day business and society.

Without welfare capitalism, companies like Wooltex would fall to the side. In 1922, after holding on for four years after the war, Wooltex merged with the Printz-Bierderman clothing company in Cleveland. The Wooltex mystique was gone. Eventually the Printz-Bierderman company would also disband.

As the unions were firmly established in Cleveland, Hickman contends they did much to make the worker's voice heard. "The United Garment Workers of America an American

Federation of Labor Union" according to Hickman, "have a Cleveland local with membership from some custom tailoring shops and clothing factories."[3] The ILGWU had six locals for different crafts; cutters, pressers, coat and suit, tailors, etc. They too were affiliated with the American Federation of Labor and represents a large percentage of employees in the coat, suit and dress factories in Cleveland. Each union was governed by it's own constitution which determined the kind of benefits it paid its members.

1. Valerie J. Conner, The National War Labor Board (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), preface vii.

2. Ibid., 17.

3. Hickman, The Clothing Industry in Cleveland, 85.

APPENDIX I

The Wooltex News

The Wooltex News was a company organized magazine/bulletin created to enlighten the workers to happenings in the factory. It was under the guise that it was a worker-written and worker-focused paper. In the very first addition, the editor stated, "This is to be your magazine. We mean you who are reading it. You are to furnish everything that goes into it."[1] In every issue a message was printed stating the editor would gladly welcome any contributions or suggestions.

The Wooltex News ran for seven years. The news was printed on a technologically advanced press inside the factory. The first issue was printed in 1910. The News was issued monthly and its regular publishing date was the second Friday of each month. There appears to be a break in the publication of the magazine during the garment workers strike in 1911, however the volume numbers and dates are not interrupted. The only indication that this occurred is by the reports inside which explain events late after they had happened.

The Wooltex News was a well rounded company bulletin. It covered all aspects of the factory and the men and women who worked there. Social and economic issues were covered as

well as some political happenings. Below are some sections included in the News. They are to numerous to include all of them. Dependent upon current events the sections were constantly changing. Here are some examples to illustrate what the News was all about. They had a "personal recollections" section where the longest employed workers would tell their stories about the company's early days. They had monthly lists of all the titles of "books donated" to the library. There was a monthly report from the Paris fashion bureau until it was disbanded in 1916. The "salesmen's stories" of road trips and their successes were included. A "Marriage, Birth and Death" column kept the workers up to date on social happenings. The current "sport team" successes and failures had an entire page for up dates. "Article of Interest" allowed for novice writers to print their work. Poetry, songs, and cartoons were favorite submissions. Letters with positive or negative comments from visitors and customers were printed in the "Mail Box".

All of these submissions, especially the social oriented ones illustrated the culture of the workers of Wooltex. We can conclude from our observations that the workers liked the outlet the bulletins provided for their creativity. What the bulletins do not demonstrate, was the relationship the workers had with the company and how the company felt about their workers.

The Wooltex News was an excellent medium to use for in

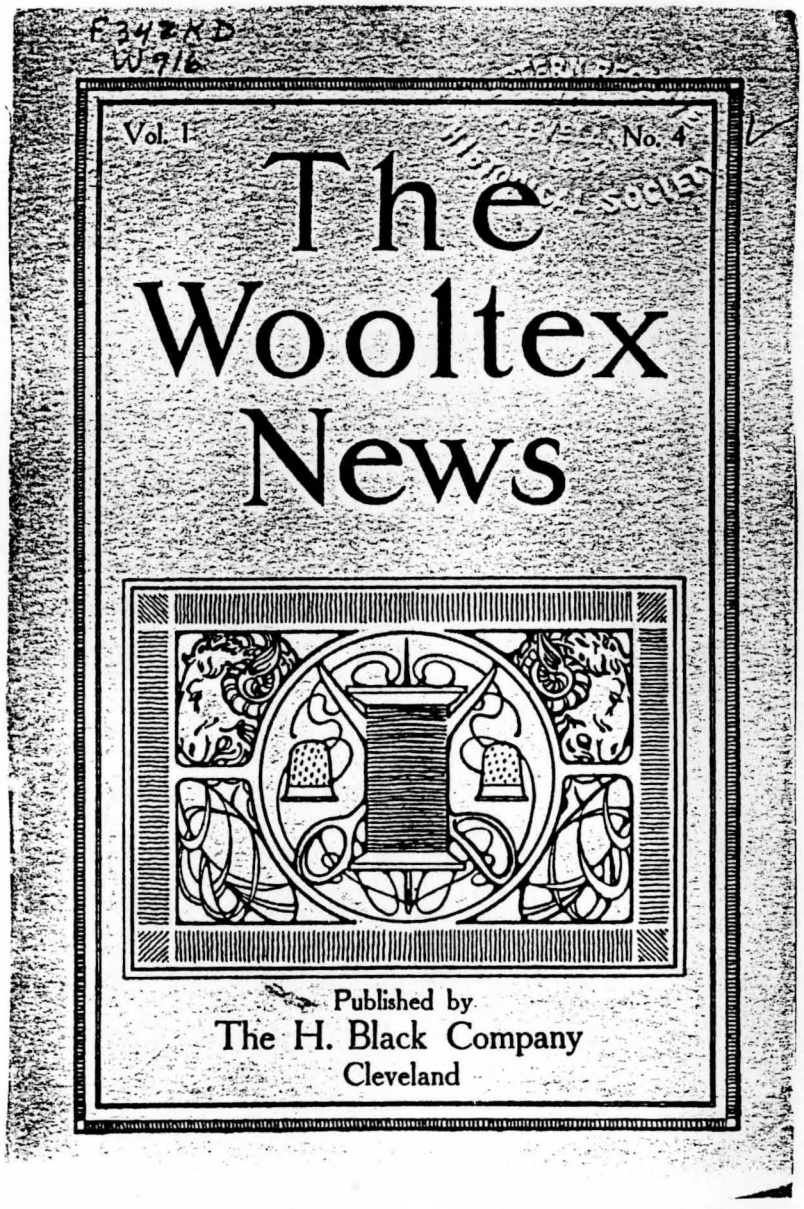
house propaganda. The workers were the primary receivers of this publication. Therefore, its main purpose was to promote welfare capitalism doctrine that a happy worker is a good worker. Every worker received a copy for free. The company positive tone of the magazine was intended to quell possible dissatisfaction and initiate psychological conditioning that if you are happy you will work longer, harder and better. This glossing over of the realities of factory life appeared to be successful.

The News, in its fourth year, advertised that it wanted one person from each department to become members of its staff. It wanted a photographer, artist and various reporters. It is interesting to note that the bulletin was only printed in English. There were far more immigrant workers who could not read English as they were those who could. Although there is no way of knowing if the majority of workers read the paper, it could be that those that could read English would translate the news to the others.

This study was possible because of the availability of the complete seven years of this bulletin. During the reading of these bulletins it was discovered how the collection of bulletins existed fully intact: "The librarian of the Historical Society of Cleveland has asked for a file of the Wooltex News to be placed in the Historical Museum."[2] Perhaps another collection of these magazines exists at the Library of Congress. In the eighth issue, the magazine

mentions that the librarian of congress had requested each issue of the Wooltex News for the official files.

PLATE 14



Cover of Wooltex News

1. Editor, "A Statement", The Wooltex News , vol. 1, no. 1, 14.

2. Editor, "News Note", The Wooltex News, vol. 1, no. 9, 12.

APPENDIX II

Opposing views on Herman and Morris Black

While researching Wooltex, Lloyd Gartner's book History of Jews in Cleveland appeared to be a worthy source to investigate. Although the book received excellent reviews and was based on substantial primary material, the sections pertaining to my subject disagreed with my findings. This short appendix was written to alert the reader that research does not always support ones conceptual thesis. My primary sources discount Gartner's evidence on Wooltex and the Blacks. He has taken his position from secondary sources that must be mistaken.

Gartner contended, "The start of the cloak industry in Cleveland was led by H. Black until his death in 1880."[1] This is plainly untrue because the Wooltex workers remember working next to him in 1884 when he opened his first garment factory. Gartner continues to argue that: "Black's nephew Morris (one of whom became Black's son-in-law) inherited the firm and transferred it to New York in 1893, but by that time it appears to have declined in standing."[2] This statement is ambiguous. Gartner never states what firm he is talking about. From the direction of the assertion, one assumes he is speaking about the H. Black Company, if so his position is completely wrong. The H. Black Co. was strong in

1893 and was soon to become Wooltex in Cleveland. It did not move to New York until 1917.

Gartner's last contention involving the Black family focuses on Morris Black. Gartner is correct when he explains that Morris did go to Harvard and did aspire to political office, however he did not "win election to the shabby city council and die in 1896 at the age of thirty."[3] Gartner does not even mention Morris' middle name. Perhaps there was another Morris Black who led a very similar life. Morris Alfred Black, affiliated with Wooltex, did not die until the 1930's.

While the general aspects of Gartner's work coincide with my findings, his assertions about the end of Herman and Morris Black's lives does not. The Wooltex News , The Cleveland Plain Dealer and Van Tassel and Grabowski's works, I believe, are the most credible sources for determining the activities and deaths of these two important men.

1. Lloyd Gartner. History of the Jews in Cleveland (Western Reserve Historical Society and Tel-Aviv Univ. Press, 1988), 73.

2. Ibid., 73.

3. Ibid., 99

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Primary

A. Books

Aretz, Gertrude. The Elegant Woman from Rococo Period to Modern Times. New York: Harcourt & Brace Co., 1932.

Booster, A. Contrast: The Striking Development of 72 years as shown by a Comparison of the Song of the Shirt and the Song of the Kaynee Blouse. Cleveland: The Kaynee Co., 1915.

Bryner, Edna. The Garment Trades. Cleveland: The Survey Committee of the Cleveland Foundation, v. 19, 1916.

Guest, Stephen H. (trans.) King of Fashion: The Autobiography of Paul Poiret. Philadelphia & London: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1931.

Hickman, Mildred M. The Clothing Industry in Cleveland. Cleveland: Cleveland Board of Education, 1929.

Maher, Amy G. Ohio Wage Earners in the Manufacturing of Textiles and Textile Products: 1914-1927. Toledo: Information Bureau on Women's Work, 1929.

B. Bulletins

The Cleveland Trade Bulletin. Cleveland: St. Clair Printing, v. 1-3, 1904-1906.

The Wooltex Monthly. Cleveland: The H. Black Company, vol. 3, no. 6, 1914.

The Wooltex News. Cleveland: The H. Black Company, 1910-1917.

C. Directories

The Blue Book of Cleveland & Vicinity Social Directory. Cleveland: The Blue Book Publishing Co., 1891-1910.

The Classified Business Directory of Cleveland. Cleveland: Chamber of Commerce, 1907-1917.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Primary

D. Pamphlets

Americanization in Cleveland. Cleveland (Cleveland Americanization Committee of the Mayors War Board): Economy Printing Co., 1919.

Cleveland: Sixth City - The City Beautiful - The Trade Center of Surrounding States. Cleveland: Chamber of Commerce (Manufacturing and Wholesale Merchants Board), 1912.

The Industries of Cleveland: Facts, Figures and Illustrations- Historical, Descriptive and Biographical. Cleveland: Chamber of Commerce, 1879.

E. Catalogs

A Treatise Upon Tones in Artistic Dress: For Men, Boys and Children for all Occasions. Cleveland: Browning, King & Co., 1899.

Women's Fashions of the Early 1900's: An Unabridged Republication of "New York Fashions, 1909 of the National Cloak and Suit Company". New York: Dover Publications, 1992.

F. Newspaper

The Cleveland Plain Dealer. June - October 1911.

G. Maps

Street Atlas of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County. Cleveland: Commercial Survey Company, 1932.

Map of Cleveland. 1912.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

II. Secondary

A. Books

Barton, Josef J. Peasants and Strangers - Italians, Rumanians, and Slovaks in an American City, 1890- 1950. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975.

Brandes, Stuart D. American Welfare Capitalism, 1880-1940. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Campbell, Edmund H. and Edward Miggins ed.. The Birth of Modern Cleveland 1865-1930. London: Associated University Press, 1988

Chapman, Edmund H. Cleveland: Village to Metropolis. Cleveland: Western Reserve Historical Society, 1964.

Cigliano, Jan. Showplace of America: Cleveland's Euclid Avenue, 1850-1910. Kent: Kent State University Press, 1991.

Condon, George E. Cleveland: The Best Kept Secret. New York: Doubleday, 1967.

_____, Yesterday's Cleveland: Seemann's Historic City Series no. 30. Miami: E. A. Seemann's Pub., 1976.

Conner, Valerie J. The National War labor Board: Stability, Social Justice and Voluntary State in World War One. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983.

DeMarly, Diana. The History of Haute Couture 1850-1950. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1980.

Gartner, LLoyd P. History of the Jews of Cleveland. Cleveland: The Western Reserve Historical Society and The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978.

Ginsberg, Madeleine. Paris Fashions: The Art Deco Style of the 1920's. New York: Gallery of Books, 1989.

Jollie, Rose Marie. A Brief History of Cleveland and the Central National Bank of Cleveland. Cleveland: The Central National Bank of Cleveland, 1965.

Kusmer, Kenneth L. A Ghetto takes Shape: Black Cleveland 1870-1930. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1976.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

II. Secondary

A. Books

Mulvagh, Jane. Vogue Fashion: History of the 20th Century. New York: Viking, 1988.

Norris, James D. Advertising and the Transformation of American Society, 1865-1920. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990.

Nystrom, Paul H. Economics of Fashion. New York: The Ronald Press, 1928.

Penn, Irving and Diana Vreeland. Inventive Paris Clothes 1909-1939. New York: Viking, 1977.

Saunders, Edith. The Age of Worth. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955.

Van Tassel, David O. and John J. Grabowski. The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History. Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University and Indiana University Press, 1987.

B. Pamphlet

American Living: Turn of the Century. Fashion Institute of Technology & National Endowment for the Arts, 1979.

C. Catalog

Blum, Stella. Everyday Fashions of the Twenties: As Pictures in Sears and Other Catalogs. New York: Dover Pub., 1981.

D. Thesis

Hansen, Karen. Fashion Trends 1875-1900 With an Emphasis on Cleveland, Ohio. Kent: Kent State University., 1980.