

THE JOSEPH & FEISS CO.  
2149 West 53rd Street

Cleveland South  
17.439740.4591340

By 1921 the Cleveland Garment Manufacturers Association counted 35 members having an annual output valued at \$50 million and employing between 5,000 and 6,000 workers. Although Cleveland was a distant third behind New York and Chicago in both men's and women's clothing, the city in 1927 was said to have the largest single factories in those trades: Printz-Biederman (women's clothing), and Richman Brothers and the Joseph & Feiss Co. (men's clothing).

The Joseph & Feiss Co., the oldest manufacturer of men's clothing in the United States, had its origin in a small general store, Koch, Kauffman & Loeb, opened in Meadville, Pennsylvania, in 1841. In 1845 proprietors Kaufman Koch and Samuel Loeb moved to Cleveland, where they opened a store on Superior Street specializing in tailored men's clothing. As the business grew larger, it saw a succession of partners and successive changes in its name: Koch & Levi (1853), Koch, Levi & Mayer (1855), Koch, Mayer & Goldsmith (1867), Koch, Goldsmith & Co. (1871), and Goldsmith, Joseph, Feiss & Co. (1892). Moritz Joseph (1834-1917) and Julius Feiss (1848-1931) had both joined the firm in the early 1870s. When Jacob Goldsmith retired in 1907, the firm adopted its present name, The Joseph & Feiss Co.

The firm's shift from retail to manufacture has not been documented. It is known that during the late 19th century the firm produced men's garments by the "contract method": goods were purchased, cut, and given out to contractors--almost all of German or Bohemian descent--who assembled the finished garments in small shops attached to their homes. About 1897, the company began a small inside shop at the rear of its building at 630-634 St. Clair Avenue. In 1900 the company built a one-story shop on Swiss (West 53rd) Street. This was enlarged with a two-story addition in 1905, and in 1920 the Joseph & Feiss Co. built what was claimed to be the largest clothing factory in the U.S.

The new "Clothcraft Shops" of Joseph & Feiss (named after the label used to market its products) were designed by Lockwood, Greene & Co., engineers of Chicago, and built by Stone & Webster, Inc. The factory, covering seven acres adjacent to the Big Four Railroad, was built of red brick with sandstone trim. The main manufacturing building, 300 x 420 feet, was two stories with a sawtooth roof. Ramps provided connection between floors. The lower floor housed, among other functions, the machine shop, box room, receiving and shipping departments, kitchen, dining rooms, 1,200-seat auditorium, swimming pool, handball court, checker and reading rooms, and locker rooms. The upper floor housed the cutting, trimming, sewing, and pressing departments.

The adjacent four-story warehouse, 80 x 200 feet, contained the boilers, the design and final examining



Joseph & Feiss Co. factory from the south, March 1921.



Joseph & Feiss Co., coat section, November 1932. Photos  
courtesy of the Western Reserve Historical Society.

departments, and a school for the instruction of new employees. The top two floors were used for the storage and packing of finished garments. Adjacent to the warehouse was a radial brick stack 200 feet high. The warehouse roof supported a 60,000-gallon water tank connected with the plant's sprinkling system.

Until the plant was unionized in 1932, the Joseph & Feiss Co. operated on the model of early 20th-century corporate paternalism, providing its 2,500 workers with extensive recreation and health facilities, classes in English and citizenship, a library, and organized athletic and cultural programs. The company was among the first to introduce the scientific management concepts of Frederick Winslow Taylor into its operations.

After World War II, the "Clothcraft" label was replaced by a series of branded specialties, and in 1957 the company purchased the Samuel Spitz Co. of Chicago, along with the name "Cricketeer." Today it markets five major brands of tailored clothing through department stores and specialty shops: Cricketeer, Country Britches, Geoffrey Beene, Cricketeer Tailored Woman, and Cricket Club. The company's West 53rd Street factory today houses the firm's corporate offices, the design department, and jacket manufacturing units employing 1,300 people. In addition, Joseph & Feiss Co. operates a pants factory on Tiedemann Road in Cleveland, and plants in Lorain, Ohio; Utica, New York; and Harrodsburg and Lawrenceburg, Kentucky. Since 1966 the Joseph & Feiss Co. has been a wholly owned subsidiary of Phillips Van Heusen Corp.

The industry today is still characterized by extensive hand operations, including cutting, sewing, and pressing. The company's warehouse and distribution center has been moved to an automated facility nearby in Brooklyn, Ohio, and computers now track inventory, sales, and the manufacturing process. [Special Supplement to the Cleveland Plain Dealer, May 15, 1921; "A Clothing Plant of High Efficiency," The Manufacturing Clothier, June 1920, pp. 19-23, 31; O. D. Foster, "He Found 'Short Cuts' to Long Steps of Progress," Forbes, October 27, 1923; "Making Suits for a Century," The Clevelander, October 1941, pp. 8, 22; Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio, Joseph and Feiss Company, Records 1847-1960.]

84-INCH HOT STRIP MILL, LTV STEEL                      Cleveland South  
CLEVELAND WORKS (Republic Steel Co.)              17.443620.4589200  
1555 Harvard Avenue

Dalliba, Corrigan & Co. (later Corrigan, Ives & Co.) was one of the leading iron ore merchants on the Great Lakes during the late 19th century. Unable to sell the full capacity of its Lake Superior mines, the company leased or acquired blast