

the American scene because it does not readily lend itself to mechanization.¹⁰ Individual producers are unwilling to consolidate operations, partly because of their traditional independence, partly also because they are unwilling to give up entrepreneurial status, no matter how large the gain in income. Another obstacle is the continued emphasis on high quality production: both manufacturers and workers are unwilling to shift, for example, to producing leather work gloves, or to the less expensive varieties of dress gloves. Because of these attitudes, Fulton County glovemakers have failed to take advantage of opportunities which might have provided them with steadier employment and income.

A further contributory factor to the local industry's weakness is the fact that Fulton County concentrates on women's leather gloves rather than on men's leather gloves. Because competition from imports in women's leather gloves is stronger, the industry is to that extent more vulnerable.¹¹

The leather glove industry consists in the main of small family-type enterprises. In 1954, 54 of the 143 establishments reporting to the census employed 1 to 4 employees, with an average of 2.4; only 2 establishments had over 250 employees, and only 1 of them over 500.

In 1939, New York State accounted for 66 percent of the total of 233 leather dress glove factories in the country, 62 percent of the total wage earners, and 60 percent of the total value of product. In 1947, the corresponding figures were 83 percent of 252 establishments, 73 percent of wage earners, and 77 percent of total value of product. In 1954, the percentages were 78 (143 establishments only), 73, and 74. Practically all of these establishments are in Fulton County.

Glovemaking is a labor-intensive industry. In 1954, 56 percent of value added by manufacture was made up of production workers wages, as compared with 40.1 percent for manufacturing as a whole. The manufacture of leather dress gloves is essentially a handicraft industry, the only machines used being a sewing machine for machine-sewn gloves, and a diecutting device for the cheaper grades. Cutting of gloves determines their quality and price. High-quality table-cut gloves use only the very best skins. Lower quality skins are used for pattern and clicker-cutting. Cutters are always men and are the most skilled and highly paid workers.¹²

The sewing machine operators, chiefly women, usually specialize in one type of stitching, but not in any particular operation. After having been sewn, the gloves are dampened and fitted on heated hand-shaped forms of proper size to be pressed (laid off). Men perform this operation. Finally, the gloves are brushed, provided with buttons or snaps, inspected, and prepared for shipment.

¹⁰ In this respect, the situation facing the leather glove industry is the reverse of that in which the glass and china industries find themselves.

¹¹ In men's leather gloves, Fulton County competes with the Midwest. Rather than on style, as in women's gloves, competition in men's gloves is based on efficiency of production and variety of price line.

¹² Sewing of gloves is done by machine in the United States, because handsewing is too expensive at domestic wage rates. Labor costs have in many instances been reduced by shipping glove trunks to the Philippines for sewing by hand, or to Puerto Rico where they are either hand or machine-sewn.