1993

The development and use of bib overalls in the United States, 1856-1945

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The development and use of bib overalls in the
United States, 1856-1945

by

Ann Revenaugh Hemken

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department: Textiles and Clothing
Major: Textiles and Clothing

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

1993
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I would like to thank Mr. Bill Pollock, President of Key Industries, for his faithful support of this project, personally and financially. Without his interest in the history of bib overalls, I probably would not have had the opportunity, nor the insight, to work on such a timely topic.

Much credit also goes to Dr. Jane Farrell-Beck for helping me to maintain my focus and momentum. Her wisdom and patience have been greatly appreciated.

And last, but certainly not least of all, thank you to my husband, Phil, for encouraging me to pursue my master's degree and supporting me through every step along the way.
INTRODUCTION

Justification

In the past, costume historians have expended much effort researching fashionable dress. Now scholars are gaining in awareness of the need to also study common, everyday dress. Much of the research done to date has focused on women's clothing, but that, too is changing, with the realization of the need to consider men's clothing. Not only are costume historians beginning to look at everyday clothing, but clothing manufacturers are also interested in learning about the history of their products, because this information can be applied to advertising campaigns and company promotional literature. Perhaps the findings will also shed light on the larger issue of the development of workwear and its diversification to serve different purposes.¹

Bib overalls were, and still are, the everyday apparel for some people. They are perceived as a uniform for the working masses, especially those in agriculture. Historic photographs and mail order catalogs provide evidence that males were the primary wearers through the early 1900's, but these sources also illustrate that the age of the wearers ranged widely.²

Previously unanswered questions about this functional garment included when it was first made, how the garment design evolved, who the intended wearers were, and whether it was first home sewn or commercially manufactured. The Geo. N. Davis and Bro's Catalogue, dated 1856, advertised overalls, vulcanized and solarized, for "provision packers, butchers, fisherman, &c [sic]." By the early 1900's there were many companies producing bib overalls, from Vermont to Kansas to Canada.³

Whether the garment was commercially produced or home sewn, I believe that it was created to meet specific needs of the wearer, as were other functional garments. An example of functional apparel was the garment created by Thomas Lambert. He saw the need for a method of holding a man's vest "in place" without the use of buttons or buckles and obtained a patent in 1862. He joined a vest to a pair of trousers using
elastic bands, thereby keeping the vest down at the waist. Levi Strauss and Jacob Davis obtained a patent in 1873 for riveting the pocket to a pair of trousers in order to provide more durable pants for laborers in the western United States.\(^4\)

Laborers in England's manufacturing plants are known to have worn coveralls, also known as overalls, around 1900, to protect their clothing and themselves. Historic photographs also provide evidence that aprons were worn over clothing, as part of many workers' protective clothing.\(^5\)

I have found no published research on the history of bib overalls, even though they are a staple garment similar to Levi Strauss' riveted blue jeans, which have been the subject of research for at least forty years. I propose to find out who the wearers of bib overalls were, from the first available evidence of the garment through 1945. In the late 1930s the number of patents for bib overalls decreased dramatically, yet use of the garment continued. During World War II, work clothing, including overalls, was considered vital for war production and intimately linked with the war effort.\(^6\)

Other aspects to be discussed include the purpose of the garment, changes in the shape of the garment, manufacturers of the garment during the time period, and methods of advertising.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to learn about the origin of bib overalls in order to provide costume historians and clothing manufacturers a base of understanding about everyday work clothing, its uses, its users, and the changes made to such a garment through time. This study brings together the histories of costume, inventions, advertising, and industry.
Research Questions

1. How did the bib overall design evolve? Was it an adaptation promoted by men who wore aprons over their clothing? Were there other influencing factors?
2. What were the needs (physical, social, and psychological) being met by the design of this garment that other garments did not meet?
3. Were bib overalls first manufactured commercially or home sewn?
4. How many manufacturers were there, through time? Where were they located? Did the geographical distribution change over time?
5. How were bib overalls marketed? Were certain types of merchandise (i.e., agricultural goods) associated with the garment in printed materials, like mail order catalogs?
6. What patents or manufacturing advances aided in the production of bib overalls? Were there patents obtained explicitly for the design of bib overalls?
7. Who wore bib overalls from the earliest evidence through 1945? Were the wearers mainly agricultural workers, as common perceptions hold? Did the type of person wearing bib overalls change through time?

Objectives

1. To trace the evolution of the design of bib overalls.
2. To discover how and where bib overalls were manufactured and distributed.
3. To examine associations between the evolution of the bib overalls and the needs of the wearers in various occupations.
4. To ascertain how much diversity there was among wearers of bib overalls.
Definitions

Apron, Apron-front, or bib overalls: A variety of overalls "made with a small apron covering the breast of the wearer." 7

Bifurcated—"divided from a point into two divisions—trousers, for instance" 8

Bloomers—"pantaloone type of garment, closed by elastic above or below the knee. Named for Mrs. Amelia Jenks Bloomer, American dress reformer of early 19th century" who promoted gathered trousers 9

Chambray—"1. gingham of fine quality, having colored warp and white filling. 2. a similar but heavier corded yarn fabric" 10

Cheviot—"close-napped rough surfaced, all-wool fabric in twill weave" 11

Corduroy—"durable cotton or rayon cut pile fabric in either plain or twill weave with wide or narrow wales, cords, or ribs" 12

Covert cloth—"all cotton fabric of flecked appearance, used for work clothing" 13

Denim—"a heavy twill-woven cotton fabric...dyed in plain colors and loom-figured with conventional stripes and checks. Denim forms the chief material for the manufacture of workmen's overalls, and is also extensively used for jumpers, blouses, and work-shirts..." 14

Drill—"coarse, firm linen or cotton twilled cloth" 15

Duck—"strong, closely woven linen or cotton fabric in plain weave" 16

Fashionable—"conforming to the prevailing mode; approved" 17

Flare—"an outward spreading or widening" 18

Functional—"well adapted for the intended use" 19

Gabardine—"firm, twilled, worsted fabric, having fine diagonal rib effect on one side, with surface hard and smooth or soft and dull" 20

Gingham—"washable cotton fabric...in plain or fancy weave. Woven in solid colors, stripes, checks, or plaids" 21

Hammer loop—fabric loop attached to trouser portion, to support the head of a hammer

Khaki cloth—"sturdy twilled cotton fabric of olive-drab color" 22

Linen—"strong, lustrous fabric woven of smooth-surfaced flax fibers" 23
Overalls: "Loose fitting trousers commonly made of duck, denim or heavy brown muslin, worn by workingmen over their other clothes to protect them from being soiled."24

Patch pocket-"piece of shaped material sewn, on all but upper edge to outside of garment"25

Patent: "A grant of some privilege, property, or authority, made by the government or sovereign of a country to one or more individuals....A grant of right to exclude others from making, using or selling one's invention and includes right to license others to make, use, or sell it."26

Rule pocket-long rectangular pocket applied to the outer side of trouser leg, between the hip and knee

Stand pocket-"pocket opening finished with an upstanding front part"27

Suiting-"fabric having enough body to be tailored nicely; often sturdy, firm cotton"28

Swing pocket-like the deep pockets found on the front of most blue jeans today, with a self-fabric facing and a lighter fabric for the pocket portion.

Taper-"decreasing in size"29

Twill weave-"weave having distinct diagonal line or rib"30

Whipcord-"worsted fabric in diagonal twill weave, with strongly marked, round cords, which may be extremely narrow or as wide as 1/8 inch"31

Assumption

Extant garments, dated photographs, patents, and historic printed materials will be available for study and will provide sufficient evidence for formulating answers to research questions.
Limitations

1. Research will be limited to bib overalls and cannot be generalized to other work clothing.

2. The number of extant garments is limited, may not be representative of early bib overalls, and may not be accurately dated.

3. Research will be restricted to the United States and cannot be viewed as universal.

4. The study of work clothing limits findings to certain socio-economic levels of society.

5. Repositories will be limited and may contain garments with features specific only to that region.

Notes

3Geo • N. Davis and Bro's Catalogue (Boston, 1856), 14; K.W. Pollock discussed the number of manufacturers in a personal interview on 9 March 1992.
4Thomas Lambert, "Improvements in the mode of constructing garments" (Patent no. 34,464; 18 February 1862); Jacob Davis and Levi Strauss, "Fastening pocket openings" (Patent no. 139,121; 20 May 1873); Alvin Josephy, Jr., "Those Pants that Levi Gave Us," American West 22 (July/August 1985): 34.
10Ibid, s.v. chambray.
11Ibid, s.v. cheviot.
12Ibid, s.v. corduroy.
13Ibid, s.v. covert cloth.
15Pickens, s.v. drill.
16Ibid, s.v. duck.
17Baker, s.v. fashionable.
18Ibid., s.v. flare.
19Pickens, s.v. functional.
20Ibid., s.v. gabardine.
21Ibid., s.v. gingham.
22Ibid., s.v. khaki cloth.
23Ibid., s.v. linen.
24Cole, 398.
25Ibid., s.v. patch pocket.
27Ibid., s.v. stand pocket.
28Ibid., s.v. suiting.
29Ibid., s.v. taper.
30Ibid., s.v. twill weave.
31Ibid., s.v. whipcord.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It is important to have an understanding of the general situation of the clothing industry during the period being studied, in order to formulate intelligent conclusions and deductions. Texts such as The History of Costume, recently revised to include such information, were helpful. Articles pertaining to the clothing industry and the machinery involved also gave me added depth of awareness on which to build my conclusions.¹

In the past two decades costume historians have published articles and books which relate to everyday American clothing. Two publications from the Smithsonian Institution, Suiting Everyone: The Democratization of Clothing in America and Men and Women: Dressing the Part, mention the work clothing of average Americans, briefly and without detail.²

Other authors have examined men's clothing specifically, but they have chosen to examine fashion-related items including the three-piece suit or the business suit, or have covered men's fashion in general. Some authors have focused on a popular work garment, riveted blue jeans from Levi Strauss, which have been a topic of interest for at least forty years. Information about the origin of the garment in the most recent article appears to contradict earlier articles, leaving the issue unclear.³

British costume historians have published articles on several aspects of English work clothing. Anne Battenson, in "Industrial Protective Clothing and Equipment," mentions the use of overalls, but the type of garment to which she refers is an overdress, rather than a bifurcated garment. The text Everyday Dress; 1650-1900 also mentions overall-like garments being used on farms, but in this case the reference is to a time before the use of the smock in the mid-eighteenth century, which leads me to conclude that the garment is very different from bib overalls as we know them today.⁴

An unpublished paper written about bib overalls, by an intern at the Texas Panhandle Plains Museum, chronicled bib overalls from 1897 through 1951. Sears, Roebuck and Company and Montgomery Ward catalogs
were used to describe the fabrics used, the styles offered, and the
development of the style. These findings will be compared with my
findings in the conclusion.5

The authors of Real Clothes state that bib overalls were
"originally an apron, but with the advent of machinery in the nineteenth
century, manufacturers attached both trousers and a bib to ensure greater
protection against the capriciousness of machines." I also believe
that the use of aprons as protective garments influenced the development
of bib overalls, but I will argue later that the "capriciousness of
machines" was not the only other factor involved. The "American-style"
overalls were said to have been introduced in 1905, but the authors'
deinition of the term is unclear and the terminology was not found in
other sources. These writers contend that farmers discovered the garment
in the late 1800s and began wearing it year round, over shirt and pants
in the winter and alone in the summer. This is a good example of the
type of literature currently published on the history of bib overalls,
but the statements are not supported by acknowledged, primary sources of
evidence.6

A statement made by costume historian Anne Murray corresponds to
what I have found, that overalls, as well as other men's nether garments,
"are seldom mentioned in books on the history of costume." In her
detailed study of five terms used for men's nether garments during the
eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, she provides a definition for
overalls, a type of nether garment worn from the waist down only. The
original concept was that they were worn over other garments as a form of
protection. The same is true of bib overalls: originally they were worn
over other nether garments, evolving into an independent lower body
garment.7

Notes

1Blanche Payne, Geitel Winakor, and Jane Farrell-Beck, The History
Edward Muller and Paul Groves, "The Changing Location of the Clothing
Industry: A Link to the Social Geography of Baltimore in the Nineteenth


5Beth Nelson, "The Overall Silhouette" (Texas Panhandle Plains Museum, Canyon, Texas, 1982, Photocopy).


USE OF THE TERMS "OVERALL" AND "OVERALLS"

In conducting this research I discovered that there are several different uses for the terms "overall" and "overalls." Margaret Maynard, an Australian author, makes reference to an 1827 publication, *Two Years in New South Wales*, in which the author states that government gangs in Sydney were described as wearing frocks, trousers, or jackets with overalls. Two British patents, one from 1845 and the other from 1853, also mention overalls as possible articles to which their inventions could be applied. In addition, Anne Murray, author of "From Breeches to Sherryvallies," mentions Austrian Hussars wearing overalls as early as 1770. In each of these citations, the garment is not defined, leaving doubt about whether these "overalls" were nether garments, full body coverings, or bibbed, bifurcated garments.1

Horwill, in the preface to *A Dictionary of Modern American Usage*, stated the situation quite well. He commented that "few of us, perhaps, realize what a subtle and frequent cause of misunderstanding lurks in the fact that so many familiar words are used in America with a different meaning, or at any rate with a different implication, from that which they bear in England." Not only is there confusion in the usage between the two countries, but also within our own country the application varies.2

English dictionaries, from 1737, and 1806 to 1814, have no definitions for "overall," "overalls," "apron overalls," or "bib overalls." Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), defines overalls as "a kind of trousers," which are described as a "loose garment worn by males, extending from the waist to the knee or to the ankle, covering the lower limbs."3

Definitions provided in both the 1895 and 1914 editions of *The Century Dictionary* are "an external covering; specifically, in the plural, loose trousers of a light, strong material, worn over others by workmen to protect them from being soiled; also, in the plural, waterproof leggings." A 1908 definition, found in *A Dictionary of Men's Wear*, refers to overalls as "loose fitting over-trousers of duck, denim,
etc. for working wear." The 1916 edition of The Desk Standard Dictionary of the English Language also refers to overalls as loose trousers to be worn by workmen to protect their clothing.  

In a 1927 dictionary, the definition differs; an "outer garment, [plural] protective trousers or suit." Perhaps the use of the term broadened between 1914 and 1927 to include more than one type of garment, but the intended function of the garment, protection, evidently remained the same.  

Horwill reveals interesting details about the term in the 1935 edition of A Dictionary of Modern American Usage. He informs the reader that the use of the term in England was for "a loose outer garment worn by women—e.g., domestic servants—to keep their clothes from being soiled..." The author continues, supplying the American usage, which "denote[d] an outer garment worn by men for a similar purpose," to protect clothes from soiling.  

In 1942, further distinction was made between the singular and plural forms of the word. The singular, overall, was simply "an outer garment worn either in bad weather or to protect other garments," while the plural, overalls, was defined as "high, loose trousers of canvas or like material, worn by workmen over their clothing for protection from soiling and wear." Also provided is the definition from Great Britain, which persisted as "waterproof leggings."  

A search of American patents, 1844 through 1945, clearly demonstrated discrepancies in the use of the term. Some patents, under the heading of overall or overalls, were for nether garments, while others were for a garment with full body covering, including long sleeves. A third type of garment, trousers with a bib attached to the front and shoulder straps, was included under the same heading.  

For ease of reading, I will use the terms "overalls" and "bib overalls" interchangeably, with the understanding that I am referring to the bibbed style, unless otherwise stated.
Notes

1Margaret Maynard, "A Form of Humiliation: Early Transportation Uniforms in Australia," Costume 21 (1987): 63; Charles Keene, "Improvements in boots, shoes, gaiters, overalls..." (British patent no. 10,692; May 1845); Joseph Welch and John Margetson, "Improvement in the manufacture of traveling cases, wrappers, and certain articles of dress..." (British patent no. 17; January 1853); Anne Murray, "From Breeches to Sherryvallies," Dress 2 (1976): 31.


6Horwill, s.v. "overall."


8Emil Weil, "Overalls" (Patent no. 143,947; 21 October 1873); Julius Chait and Herman Raak, "Overalls" (Patent no. 2,187,447; 16 January 1940); Henry Woodward, "Overalls" (Patent no. 153,292; 21 July 1874); Johan Johannesen, "Overalls" (Patent no. 1,844,821; 9 February 1932); Eli Stacy and John Stacy, "Overall" (Patent no. 125,994; 23 April 1872); Charles Wittmack, "Overalls" (Patent no. 2,132,668; 11 October 1938).
PROCEDURE

The procedure I followed will be outlined, not in chronological order; rather, it will be explained as a process, since many steps were conducted simultaneously. The review of literature has been discussed in the section with that heading and will not be elaborated on here.

The first phase of the study was to conduct a survey of costume collections in the United States to gather information about possible repositories for research. I used the *Official Museum Directory* and *The Directory of the Members of The Costume Society of America* to develop the mailing list of sixty-seven museums and universities with costume collections that might hold work clothing from post-Revolutionary America. A form letter and reply postcard were prepared with inquiry about the existence of actual bib overalls, trade catalogs containing bib overalls, and documented photographs of people wearing bib overalls (see Appendix A for complete list of museums and universities, and their responses; Appendix B for form letter; and Appendix C for postcard developed).¹

Some of the respondents suggested other possible resources and I created a second list of museums, in an effort to obtain a representative sample of geographic regions in the United States. Although sixty-seven form letters were sent, forty-seven replies were returned and, of those, thirteen were positive responses.

I visited several sites to collect data. Costume collections at the Kansas Museum of History, the Witte Museum, the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, the Chicago Historical Society, and the Missouri Historical Society each contained at least one pair of bib overalls which were examined and photographed, with notes being recorded on a data collection form developed specifically for use with such garments (see Appendices D and E). The Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, the National Museum of American History Archives, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin Iconography Department, the Pictorial Division and the Library and Archives Center at the Missouri Historical Society all
proved to be fruitful sources of information for trade catalogs, photographs, and advertisements. A data collection form was developed for the use with two-dimensional objects (see Appendix F).

The Iowa State University library holds a variety of resources for patents, dating back to 1844, which I used to search for patents for, or related to, the production of bib overalls. Patents are written to contain a brief description of the invention, its objective, and a detailed narration with illustrations, including enough specific information to "enable any person skilled in the art or science to which said invention appertains to make and use the same."²

To search for early patents, up through 1871, I used the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Patents. The headings of "Manufacture of Fibrous and Textiles Substances," and "Wearing Apparel" were most applicable. For patents dating from 1872 through 1945 I used The Official Gazette. The headings of "bib overalls", "overalls", and "pantaloons" were used to search through 1879, after which the categories of "apron overalls" and "overall trousers" were also included. Most patents were cross-referenced under "overall" and another heading, if appropriate.³

Numerous patents related to the construction and manufacture of bib overalls were found and sixty-eight of the most relevant patents were used in this study. Those used dated between 1872 and 1938 (see Appendix G). A marked decrease in the frequency of patents occurred after 1931, with one applicable patent every few years until 1938. The search was extended fourteen years beyond the obvious decrease, to 1945, to determine if there was an increase at a later time. The information contained in the complete patents will be discussed later, in relation to various aspects of the garment, including the physical structure of the garment, the intended wearers, and needs being met by the garment.

In order to obtain materials from current bib overall manufacturers about company histories, the existence of patterns or prototypes, trade catalogs and advertising materials, and bib overalls, I drafted a form letter and reply postcard to send to the company presidents (see Appendices H, I, and J). Company names were found in the American
Apparel Manufacturing Association Directory and the Million Dollar Directory, under the headings of "Overalls and Dungarees" and "Men's and Boys' Work Clothing," respectively. Thirteen companies were contacted, first by Bill Pollock, president of Key Industries, Inc., and then with my letter of inquiry. Four of the companies returned my self-addressed reply postcard, all with positive responses. The remaining nine were contacted a second time by telephone, with a similar letter sent through the Fax machine, or a combination of the two. Only two additional companies were immediately helpful, offering to mail copies of advertising to me. A third company, known to have helpful materials, was not responsive so the desired materials were obtained from another source.  

I traveled to both Key Industries and OshKosh B'Gosh to collect data from their archives. Unfortunately, much early information at Key Industries had been lost in a flood in 1986. The advertising archives at OshKosh B'Gosh are rich in company history and information about advertising techniques, from about 1910. Oshkosh B'Gosh may be representative of similar companies. OshKosh B'Gosh also had three pair of dated overalls which were examined, using the same data collection forms used for museum garments.  

Determining the dates of the study was a process of evolution. I selected the beginning date of 1856 because that is the date of the first illustrated evidence of bib overalls in the United States. The ending date was rather nebulous, but I ultimately chose 1945 because that is near the time when the frequency of patents decreased. It would also allow for inclusion of World War II.  

Notes


2James Fitz, "Overalls" (Patent no. 471,789; 29 March 1892).  

3Annual Report of the Commissioner of Patents (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1844-1871); The Official Gazette of the
17


5Bill Pollock informed me, during my visit to Key Industries on 9 March 1991 that the company lost many paper materials during an unprecedented flood in 1986.
FINDINGS

Garment Characteristics

Several parts of the bib overalls were examined for changes including the bib, opening, shoulder straps, pockets below the waist, leg shape, and fabrics. Photographs, mail order catalogs, home sewing patterns, patents, and actual garments were the objects used, with at least 100 pieces of documentation, for each of the categories being analyzed. Because I worked from photocopies of most of the printed materials, some garment details were obscured. In some instances, the stance and additional apparel of the wearer concealed certain features; therefore the same subjects are not used for each portion of this analysis. Because the pool of data is large I believe that this is acceptable. This evidence revealed that the design of bib overalls changed through time, from a rather simple form to a more complex style.

The bib portion of overalls underwent several alterations. The most apparent change was the practice of making the bib from an extension of the leg piece, which I will refer to as a continuous bib hereafter, to the later mode of using a separate piece of fabric attached to the waistline of the trouser portion, which I will refer to as a separate bib. The continuous bib was seen almost exclusively through the mid-1880s and was most common through 1900. Between 1885 and 1916 both types were produced. After 1916, continuous bibs were seldom used, except on children's garments, for which separate and continuous bibs coexisted. It is possible that the width of fabrics used was a factor in this change. Nineteenth century fabrics were considerably narrower than those of the late twentieth century, but my sources did not specifically mention the influence of such changes in technology on the method of constructing bib overalls.

Up to 1900, the bib fronts examined were unadorned. Plain bibs persisted in the 1900s and in later years were often found on the least expensive versions of the garment. After about 1930, overalls with a plain bib were common for children and women, with the exception of
waterproof or water resistant garments for men, which had plain bibs during the entire period.

Pockets on the bib were usual after about 1905, the first ones being small patch pockets on the wearer's left side. After 1915, a single pocket might be centered on the bib or there might be two pockets, one on each side of the center. The single, centered pocket could be large or small, but by the 1940's one large, centered pocket was most common, and was frequently divided into several compartments. Patentees advocated complex pockets in the 1890's, but these did not become a reality until at least 1915 when they began to appear in advertisements and photographs. New pockets on the interior of the bib included sections to hold a watch, handkerchief, or memo book. Exterior pockets were also being made in a myriad of shapes and sizes, to receive a pencil, watch, nails, or tools.¹

In conducting this analysis I realized that judging the width and height of the bib is a subjective exercise and that the evidence available is not always conducive to definitive conclusions. A wide bib extends from one side seam of the waistband to the opposite side seam and is wide enough at the top edge so that it might extend from armpit to armpit of the wearer. A narrow bib, on the other hand, is defined as one that does not cover the full width of the waist at the waistline and appears skimpy on the chest of the wearer.

Wide bibs were in use throughout the period, but narrow bibs were only common for men from the 1870s through the early 1900s. It is safe to say that wide bibs were the norm for men after 1920, while both narrow and wide were used on children's garments between 1856 and 1945.

Defining a high bib versus a low bib is once again a judgment call, and is most easily determined when the garment is seen on an individual. The determination is further complicated by bibs with drooping or sagging top edges. This problem is visible throughout the period. I believe a drooping bib is caused by a poorly fitting garment, most likely the result of one that is too large.

I will interpret a high bib as one that reaches at least to the wearer's armpit and a low bib as one that appears to be nipple level or
lower. In general, a high bib was most common and was found at all times between 1856 and 1945. Low bibs are seen fairly often on men through 1911, and on children in the 1930s and 1940s. High and low bibs appear concurrently for children. A wider variety of styles was available for children throughout the period, partly because they could wear the same style as offered to the men, in addition to the more simplified "Brownie" outfits which will be discussed later in more detail.

The outer, vertical edges of the bib possessed one of two characteristics: they were either curved or angled from the side seam of the trouser portion to the top corner of the bib. Both techniques are seen from 1856 to 1945, but the angled type was more common. Out of 126 examples, forty-five percent (57) had a separate bib with angled sides. Garments having a continuous bib with curved sides made up twenty-five percent of the sample (31), twenty percent (25) had a separate bib with curved sides and ten percent (13) were found to have a continuous bib with angled sides. No mention was made in my sources of the advantages of one way of making the side of the bib over the other, but finishing an angled edge, cut on the bias, is more efficient than finishing a curved edge. Garment fit might also have been considered in making such a decision, but visually there is not a great difference in the way the garment fits based on the shape of the side of the bib.

Most bibs, separate and continuous, had visible center front seams. This seems logical for the continuous bibs, as it would make the cutting and construction of the garment much easier, but I have not come to a conclusion on why the separate bibs are made of two pieces. Perhaps, by using two small pieces for the bib, a manufacturer could conserve fabric, using what would otherwise be scraps for the bib pieces. Only about one-third of the separate bibs in this study do not have a center front seam. Curiously, there are several examples of continuous bibs that do not have a center front seam. Because all of these examples are sketches, either in patents or advertisements, rather than photographs, I believe that this is a misrepresentation of the construction details of the garment.
Some adaptations of the bib do not fit into the categories described above. A few of the bibs provided more upper-body covering than those previously characterized, including vest-like versions and close-fitting bibs with high backs. Some bibs were made so that they could be removed, or "detachably connected" as several patents described them, others simply had a rectangular bib with sides that were vertical. The least complicated variation was to curve or angle a high upper edge, which created the effect of a neckline.

The opening on most bib overalls consisted of a slit in the right and left side seams of the trouser portion. Some had a placket for reinforcement, others had the edges turned under or finished off in a simple manner. The earliest examples had a single button and buttonhole closure at the top edge of the opening. After 1900, two buttons, one at the top and one at the center of the opening, were also evident. After about 1930 the two-button closure was seen most commonly on men's overalls and boys' overalls that mimic the men's style. Children's play-type garments continued to exhibit the one-button style.

Several garments, having high bib sides and back usually buttoned up the side seam, the middle of the back or the middle of the front. One unusual high-sided garment, illustrated in patent 1,854,262 from 1923, had a zipper opening on the right side of the chest.3

Other variations suggested in patents, but not usually seen in advertisements, photographs, or actual garments, included sides that were curved below the waistline with attached straps at the sides, a drop seat with a belt to hold the seat up, and a slit or gusset at the center back of the waistline instead of side openings. These suggestions were often prompted by the desire to eliminate the problem of the side opening gaping, thereby exposing the garments below or creating a potential hazard of the garment catching on something.4

One pair of overalls, in the collection of the National Museum of American History, and patent 214,406 (1879) both have a single side opening on the wearer's right. The actual garment has two buttons at the waist and a self-fabric tab with a single buttonhole for closure. The patented garment has a single button and buttonhole at the top edge of
the opening. It is possible that the single side opening was common early in the production of bib overalls, but because the side-waist portion of an illustration is often unclear, I believe that the method of having an opening on both sides of the garment was most common and was used continuously since at least the early 1870s.\(^5\)

Several characteristics of the straps of bib overalls changed through time. Up through 1915, most straps were quite narrow at the point of attachment to the bib edge, the width being a relative judgment. A few straps of medium width are found prior to 1900, after which their occurrence increases and continues through 1945. Starting in the 1920s, narrow straps were found only on children's and women's garments, and in patents.

Wide straps appeared throughout the period, but mainly after 1900. The wider straps apparently were less likely to bind on the shoulder of the wearer, which explains the change from the early narrow straps to medium or wide straps. Many patented or advertised adaptations of the strap were striving toward a more comfortable garment.

The straps were either separate pieces of fabric joined to the back waistline of the overalls or were an extension of the back leg piece. Two methods of attaching separate straps at the back of the overalls existed simultaneously through the entire period. A suspender effect was created either by stitching or buttoning the straps to the back of the waistline. Stitched straps were used mainly for women's and children's garments after the mid-1930s. Men's and boys' overalls were the only ones with the buttoned, or "low-back" style, with detachable suspenders. The majority of the straps that were stitched or buttoned to the waistband were also crossed at the back, to keep them from slipping off the shoulders of the wearer. I discovered very few examples of separate straps that were not crossed. Many suspender-like straps also incorporated an elastic piece somewhere in the strap to allow for greater comfort than the plain straps.

The "high-back" style, which became popular around 1910, presents the appearance of straps being an extension of the back leg piece. There are various modes of joining the two back sections. One method is to
have the sections cross over each other and another is to have a seam extend part way up the center of the back. Frequently the overlapping sections or joining seams were stitched with a diamond shaped series of stitches. In some cases an extra diamond shaped piece of fabric was centered over the seam and stitched at the edges. There is no real waistline at the back of the high-back style, because the would-be waistline edges curve up from the side seam to form the straps.

A third variation on the treatment of the back appeared in the 1920s, called the "vest-back." This design had a fairly full covering back section that resembled the high-back in the way the straps were made from an extension of the leg piece, with the outer edges curving up. The differences were that the vest-back was wider than the high-back, always had a center seam, had a V-shaped edge below the back of the neck, and did not have the diamond-shaped reinforcement (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Illustrations of Bib Overall Back Styles (Sears, Roebuck and Co. catalogue, 1936/1937: 325)

The method of attaching the forward end of the strap to the bib can be classified into three basic styles. The use of a button and buttonhole was the earliest and is seen throughout the period. The button was placed on the bib in most cases, but occasionally the button
was on the strap. If the former method was used, the strap would lay on the outside of the bib, unless some method was devised to hold it elsewhere. The use of a clasp or buckle on the strap end, with a button on the bib, became popular around 1874 and after 1910 was more common than the button and buttonhole form. The many patents for clasps (also referred to as loops) obtained between 1919 and 1933 demonstrated the importance of this feature. A third method was the use of a double loop configuration, similar to a belt loop; I observed this only on children's garments and only after 1930. The practice of making the strap length adjustable apparently gained popularity shortly after 1930.

With the straps, as with other parts of the garment, there were some unusual varieties. I found one unique, patented treatment on a pair of overalls in the collection of the National Museum of American History. There were three narrow straps attached to the back waistline; one at the center, which is referred to as an "intermediate seat-supporting strap," and one on each side of the center. These three straps angled up to the center where they joined, from that juncture two straps extended up to form the shoulder straps. With the exception of straps that were an extension of the front bib, all the other unusual changes were simply modifications of the common forms. 6

Most bib overalls had some pockets below the waistline at front, back, or both. All but a few overalls had pockets at the back; examples without pockets at the front were more common. This may be the result of many sources only showing the front of the garment, thus eliminating the possibility of examining the back of the same garments. My analysis suggested that if a pair of overalls did not have front pockets, it was not likely to have back pockets either, but a garment that did not have back pockets would probably have front pockets. Examples of overalls without front pockets were scattered throughout the period, but after 1930 were only found as women's and children's garments, and in patents.

It was most common to find two pockets on the front of the trouser portion of the overalls. Patch pockets were used throughout the period, but were limited to women's and children's styles after 1930. The use of
a single pocket, at the left or right front, was also evident for the whole era, but, again, after about 1930 it was probably only in use for women and children.

After 1900 swing pockets were as familiar as patch pockets and after 1930 became the norm. Swing pockets were used in pairs and were found with the opening edge angled, or occasionally with a curved edge. A few pair of overalls had pockets worked into the side seam, but this type of pocket did not appear in an actual garment, photograph, or sketch after 1892, although an onseam pocket did occur in a single patent in 1932. In the 1900s bib overalls acquired a small coin or change pocket on the right side, near the waistband, often on the facing of a swing pocket. 7

The Butterick Pattern Company sold a bib overall pattern with angled stand pockets on the front, during the 1870s and 1880s; these substituted for the more typical patch pockets. Other sources did not illustrate the use of stand pockets, so I assume that the patterns were altered and that some other pocket style was used. Further modifications of front pockets on some overalls, around 1930, included extra front pockets with the use of a detachable apron at the waist (see Figure 2). Other examples had large pockets in the thigh of the leg piece.

The back of the overalls usually bore two patch pockets, placed at hip level on both sides of the center seam. Most of my examples of overalls had back pockets. Garments with a single pocket at the back left were unusual. A few more with a single pocket at the back right did surface, but the overwhelming majority had two back pockets.

In the late 1880s, a rule pocket came into use. In all examples it appeared near the right side seam on the thigh portion of the leg. Another addition to the back of the leg, found after 1890, was a hammer loop, most commonly placed on the left side. In its early form the hammer loop was also found on the seat of the overalls or at the right side, as in three cases dated before 1920. A 1937 garment, advertised in a Montgomery Ward catalog, for a paper hanger, had a total of six hammer loops, according to the written description. 8
Figure 2. Illustration of a Detachable Apron (Patent no. 1,764,483)
Front and back pockets below the waist did not exhibit much variety, although one unusual version included the use of a stand pocket at the back, interestingly it is from the same Butterick patterns that illustrated the front stand pockets. Two actual garments, dated 1939 and circa 1940, in the archives of the Oshkosh B'Gosh Company, have back patch pockets with the outer edges extending into the side seam, making them larger than normal pockets. Another less common modification was the addition of flaps over the patch pocket and in one case over the top of the rule pocket, which would hold the contents in and keep out dirt, wood shavings, and other debris.

I examined the shape of the legs to see if there were trends in the general silhouette and compared this with fashionable trousers, which will be described below. One aspect I considered was whether the leg was straight from the hip to the hem or tapered. Both styles were evident throughout the period with tapered legs dominating until about 1910, after which straight legs were more common.

Through 1900, most legs appeared narrow. Between 1900 and 1920 both narrow and wide were equally common, but after 1920 the wide leg became more prevalent. In the 1930s, the leg portion was very wide, almost big enough to cover the wearer's entire foot. In most cases this was not caused by a flare in the lower leg; rather, the legs were simply cut full from the hip to the hem, thus creating a large visual image. Some women's and children's garments of the late 1930s and early 1940s did have a flare in the lower leg, but the effect was very different from that of the men's wide-cut leg.

I had anticipated that some overalls would have a baggy appearance when worn. In many cases it was not possible to determine how the overalls would hang, unless they were actually seen on a person. A baggy or loose appearance could be caused by the leg being too long or the waistline being too wide, allowing the garment to hang and bunch up conspicuously. Photographs throughout the period occasionally had good examples of baggy overalls and, surprisingly, advertisements also illustrated their garments as being baggy, and described them as being "roomy."
This seems to be at odds with present standards of fit for work clothing, but with the increased use of wide legs in the early 1900s, the extra roominess was considered a benefit because it would not crumple the wearer's trousers. An article in *Scientific American*, 1903, extols and illustrates a pair of overalls patented by Eugene Holston, which possessed this advantage. Holston's garment was unique because it covered the entire front of the wearer, but the back was not so protected because it buttoned only at the middle of the back, behind the knees, and at the ankles, leaving other parts exposed.  

An interesting phenomenon occurred around 1915, when advertisements began showing a deeply turned-up hem, producing a cuffed effect. Some illustrations appear to have up to five inches of cuff, especially in the 1930s. This, combined with a full-cut leg, added to the large and bulky image. I did not find any photographs of bib overall wearers with a similar treatment of the hem, which seems logical because such a large cuff would not be consistent with a highly functional garment.

In men's fashionable dress the trouser legs were widening in the early 1900s, reaching their greatest width about 1925. An "oversized" effect was modish in men's suits, especially the trouser leg, until they began to taper again in the late 1930s. Fabric restrictions during World War II affected the fullness of men's suits, although legislation did not deal with cut and style specifically. The fabric shortages did not seem to have the same influence on the shape of bib overalls, but that did not ensure that manufacturers could actually obtain fabric. The production of bib overalls during the war continued because they were deemed necessary for the war effort.  

In several instances, between the 1870s and 1940, a child's overalls were hemmed somewhere between the knee and ankle. These were not worn as a sunsuit by an infant, but as a play suit by a young child. Perhaps this was a prelude to the "shorts" of today which are so enjoyed by children because of their comfort.

Some of the unique adaptations applied to the leg were to draw the lower edge of the pant leg closer to the wearer's leg. Two such patents were obtained in the early 1920s, at the time that wide pant legs were
more common than narrow ones. The patentees realized the potential dangers of very wide pant legs in factories and other situations with machinery nearby.\textsuperscript{11}

The fabrics used for bib overalls were noticeably consistent in actual garments, catalogs, and advertisements containing descriptive materials. Occasionally I also noted unusual fabrics found in photographs, mostly striped fabrics, which were easiest to detect.

By far the most common fabric was denim, from 1856 through 1945. Blue denim was quite frequently mentioned, but manufacturers also offered other colors and styles. Some of the more interesting denims include brown in 1876 and 1880, blue and gold mixed in 1897, 1905, and 1908; extra heavy "red back plain blue" in 1906 and 1908, "red black," which I believe used both red and black yarns, and black in 1908. White-back blue or indigo denim began its career in the 1910s and is still being used today.\textsuperscript{12}

Striped denim was also very popular. The first listing I found, dated 1897, contained a variety of combinations: black and gray stripes, fine blue stripes, fine black and red stripes, black with fine white stripes, and fine stripe. Additionally there were fabrics with blue and white stripes, dark gray stripes, blue shadow stripes, blue and white dotted stripes, gray ground with fine double lines, and brown ground with fine double lines, all offered before 1915. This is not surprising when one realizes that denim has been available on this continent since the 1770s and striped denim since the 1780s.\textsuperscript{13}

Several patterns of stripes became popular in the early 1900s and were given special names that were used through the 1940s. Hickory stripe, referring to narrow regular stripes, appeared around 1906. As defined in Fairchild's Dictionary of Textiles, hickory striped fabrics are constructed similar to denim. Fancy versions, such as Liberty or Victory stripes, "have a pattern of white stripes of various widths on a solid blue ground." The Liberty stripe name was first evident around 1934, perhaps in an effort to spur feelings of nationalism in times of widespread poverty and economic disruption. The names Wabash stripe and Express stripe were used in 1914, but the Wabash stripe was not found in
other references, as the Express stripe was. The latter two names evoke thoughts of railroads such as the Wabash Cannonball and the many "express" lines that were developing in the early 1900s (see Figure 3).  

Figure 3. Hickory, Express, Liberty, and Wabash Stripes

The weight of the denim was commonly mentioned, as early as 1905. One general method observed was the use of a generic reference using light, medium, heavy, and extra heavy categories. Presenting the reader with the weight per linear yard (e.g., 9 oz.) was also fairly common. As late as the 1930s denims were woven twenty-eight inches wide, considerably narrower than current fabrics, meaning that the early fabrics were quite heavy. Toward the end of the 1920s the use of a technical, numerical descriptor (e.g., 2:20) became apparent, but was not explained in the literature. This might refer to the ply of the yarns in relation to the size of a single strand. The latter method looks impressive, but really provides no useful information to the average consumer.  

Drill was a common fabric, especially after 1930, at which time white boatsail drill was used mainly for garments sold to painters and
paper hangers. A writer in The Delineator, 1883, explains that "plaster and kindred accessories of the builders' trade are...fatal to all tints [of fabric] except white." Some patterned and colored drilling fabrics were used before the 1930s, but no mention of anything other than white was found later.16

Duck and other tightly woven, fairly heavy fabrics were also generally utilized for bib overalls before the 1920s. Checked linens, colored twills, covert cloth, and khaki cloth were mentioned in several examples. Two pair of overalls, housed in the collections of the American Museum of Natural History, dated around 1880, were made of checked fabrics that were considerably lighter than denim. These garments were supposedly made to be worn by cooks on fishing boats. Perhaps the warmth of the cooking fire would necessitate a lighter garment. Fabrics like gingham, chambray, corduroy, cheviot, cotton whipcord, cotton suiting, and gabardine, previously used only for stylish or fashionable clothing rather than work or play garments, were used after 1900, especially for women's and children's garments.

A variety of overalls in waterproof, or water resistant, fabrics could also be found in catalogs between the late 1840s and the 1940s. Many of these were made of yellow and black oil cloth. The earliest illustration of bib overalls that I found was one such example and was described as being of vulcanized and solarized fabrics, for use by provision packers, butchers, and fisherman. An article in Scientific American, 1898, stated that "while oiled clothing and the traditional sou'wester are most familiarly associated in the mind with ideas of sailors and of the sea, they are also, as a matter of fact, very largely and extensively worn upon the land by truckmen and car drivers, and many other outdoor workers and by sportsmen." This illustrates the diversity of wearers of waterproof overalls, which increases the same dimension for the garment in general.17

By compiling the most commonly found characteristics it is possible to describe a pair of generic bib overalls that might have been worn in the 1850s and the same type of garment for the 1940s (see Figure 4).
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Figure 4. Graph of Garment Characteristics
The mid-nineteenth century version would most likely have had a continuous bib without adornment. The bib could have been narrow or wide, with the top edge high or low, but the sides of the bib would probably have been angled, rather than curved. There would be two side openings with a single button at the top, for closure. Narrow straps, either buttoned or stitched to the back waistband would likely have buttoned to the bib front. The garment would have two front patch pockets and two back patch pockets. The legs would have been narrow and tapered, and the fabric was probably some shade of solid denim.

On the other hand, a typical pair of bib overalls in the 1940s would have a separate bib with at least one pocket, most likely a large pocket separated into several compartments. The bib itself would be high and wide, with angled sides. The garment would still have two side openings with either one or two buttons for closure. The straps would be medium to wide with one of three back styles—low-back, high-back, or vest-back. The front end of the straps would have a metal clasp which would attach to a button on the bib. There would be two front swing pockets, rather than patch pockets, with the addition of a coin or change pocket on the right-hand side. Two back patch pockets would still be found, but a rule pocket at the right and a hammer loop at the left would also be included. The legs would be wide and straight and the fabric would be either a plain or striped denim (see Figure 5).

The transition from the simple, rather plain garment of the 1800s, to the more complex garment of the mid-1900s occurred, for the most part, around 1900. Of course, all the changes did not occur simultaneously, but gradually each part of the garment took on a new shape or degree of complexity. A typical pair of bib overalls around 1900 might have contained some of the features of both the early and late styles described above.

In the late 1890s a distinct style of bib overalls for children began to emerge, often referred to as "Brownie" overalls. These differed
Figure 5. Typical early overalls (American Men's Wear, 1889: 89) and late overalls (Sears, Roebuck catalogue, 1923: 289)
from the style commonly worn by men in that the bib was continuous, 
plain, and sometimes low on the chest, with narrow straps, patch pockets 
at the front, and often made of fashionable fabrics, which are all 
clearly different from the most prevalent forms (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Brownie Overalls for Children (Haberdasher, April 1903: 150)

... Although I am not able to approach the subject of garment evolution 
from its inception, I have been able to follow the changes from 1856 
through 1945, with the sources of evidence collected. I believe that the 
1856 illustration, mentioned previously, is not the earliest form of bib 
overalls. I had hoped to uncover the original source of inspiration for 
bib overalls, but have not yet been able to do so.
Needs Being Met by Bib Overalls

Answering the research question about physical, psychological, and social needs being met by the use of bib overalls is difficult because the latter two are not easily separated. In this analysis I will treat the psychological and social aspects as one category.

Another factor influencing the answer to this question is the availability of descriptive materials, the majority of which are found in catalogues and patents. Patents, although not necessarily put into production, often mention common features and clearly state the purpose of the garment. Patentees would most likely have been stimulated to pursue a patent for bib overalls because of their dissatisfaction with the garments that were available to them. Therefore, patents are a good indicator of perceived needs related to bib overalls.

It is also possible that the descriptions were not written just to extol the positive virtues of bib overalls, but perhaps they were written to overcome a negative image or stigma associated with the garment. The findings presented here are based on the what was visible through the written documents, with the understanding that the underlying intent may have been different from the stated purpose.

Durability, comfort, convenience, and protection were the dominant physical needs mentioned in relation to bib overalls. Two 1850s catalogues, show waterproof or water-resistant overalls "made similar to the pantaloons" advertised on the same page, which were "intended for hard wear." Other sources also remark on general durability, but several patented improvements were meant to strengthen individual stress points, such as pockets, openings, and the top edge of the bib. Many of patents obtained during World War I, 1914-1918, claimed that durability was their primary concern.18

General comfort characteristics including roominess, freedom of movement, and ease of donning and removing the garment were considered by many patentees and advertisers. Others concentrated on specific problem areas, particularly the construction of shoulder straps and the back portion. Some of the ideas that are evident in advertisements or
surviving overalls included inserting an elastic portion in the shoulder straps, using a diamond-shaped overlap to join the straps at the middle of the back, and applying a mechanism to allow the strap length to be adjusted. Many patents mention the need of wearers to be able to move freely without binding and constricting which is a reasonable demand for work clothing.19

The placement and construction of pockets were the most prevalent methods of providing convenience to the wearers of bib overalls. Some patents proposed new construction methods for the back pockets, some for the front hip pockets, but the most frequently suggested change was for the pockets on the bib. As mentioned in the discussion of the changes in the adornment of the bib, the pockets on the bib became more complex through the period 1856 to 1945. The pockets were intended to accommodate many personal belongings of the wearer. Some bib pocket modifications provided for tools, a handkerchief, a watch, a pencil, papers, books, or "other conveniences or equipment."20

Another physical need being dealt with by bib overalls was protection, which falls into two categories--protection of garments and protection of the wearer. A patent obtained in 1874 mentions that the overalls were specifically for the purpose of protecting the worker's clothing while at work. This seemed to be a fundamental objective of bib overalls. The original intent was to wear them over trousers, a shirt, and vest or jacket, thus providing a buffer between the presumably better garments worn beneath, and the dirty or rough work to be done. The advantage of bibbed overalls over trouser or pantaloon overalls is that the bib afforded protection of the chest portion of the wearer's clothing, which was desirable in certain work situations.21

Some patents also preserved the safety of the wearer. Most often a modification of the overalls was necessary to make the garment safer for a specific environment, particularly factories. A patent obtained in 1905 is very explicit in its purpose of providing a garment "for protecting trousers and avoiding accidents by portions thereof [the bib overalls] being seized by gearing or the movable parts on machines which require the presence of an attendant." This was accomplished through a
method of attaching the shoulder strap to the bib of the overalls. Several other patents manipulated the lower leg portion to create a closer fitting hem, for similar reasons.  

A patent obtained in 1916, for a garment especially for women, points out that the fashionable dress of the day was inappropriate, and possibly dangerous, for women who were entering the work force. The author of the patent went so far as to say that the "conventional garb" was a "hindrance and handicap in regard to their comfort, safety, and efficiency." This problem was not limited to factories, however; the patentee saw it as a problem on the farm and in the garden also. Although the inventor went to great lengths to justify women wearing a bifurcated garment, he made it clear that the purpose was to protect the wearer and her garments while she was pursuing necessary work. Women, according to this patentee, should be allowed to discard their normal below-the-waist garments in exchange for the overalls, which was quite a progressive idea (see Figure 7).  

One obvious psychological and social issue was the visual image created by a pair of bib overalls. Sources throughout the period mention the stylish, neat, or pleasing appearance their garment allowed. From this type of promotion, it is evident that the way the overalls looked was of some importance in selling the garment. In the 1936-1937 Montgomery Ward catalogue, the statement was made that striped fabrics looked more dressy, and were "especially nice for dairymen, milkmen, trainmen, farmers, etc." This broad and incomplete list of potential wearers illustrates the desire for working men to look nice, even in their bib overalls.  

I am convinced by several references, that bib overalls were not considered acceptable for some situations, although the writers do not explain why. Patent 471,789, granted in 1892, provided a perfect example. The creator stated plainly that it was "desirable to remove [bib overalls] when the wearer is not at the work from which the garment is employed as protection." His invention therefore, resembled a vest and trousers, which could be worn under a jacket to conceal the true nature of the garment. In several other patents the bib was constructed
so that it could either be removed entirely or tucked into the trousers to hide it, presumably for the same reason as was given in the 1892 patent.25

The frequent use of descriptive terms such as "low cost," "inexpensive," "practical," "good quality," and "durable" in advertisements and patents suggested a desire for a product that met those standards. Bib overalls were perceived as a durable, yet economical garment that would aid in the preservation of an individual's

Figure 7. Overalls for Women (Patent 1,208,715).
other clothing. The frequency of statements relating to the low cost of bib overalls seems to increase around the 1920s when clothing costs were outrageously high, so high in fact that executives of major companies were boasting of wearing bib overalls "as business garb" in an effort to fight back.\textsuperscript{26}

Another quality that seemed to gain importance in the late 1920s, and was seen through the 1940s, was that a form of the garment for boys was touted as looking "like Dad's." It appears that there was an increased need to identify with a male figure. Perhaps this was a result of the many men who had been absent during the first World War returning to their place in the family and society, thus earning the respect of their sons.\textsuperscript{27}

A detailed study of the garments worn with bib overalls might provide some insight into other social implications related to bib overalls. A brief review of the sources revealed that most men wore long-sleeved, button-front shirts with turned collars, in a variety of fabrics. The color and fabric of the shirt were not used to distinguish occupation or level of skill, with the exception that certain colors might have been preferred by particular tradesmen (i.e., white for plasterers). Occasionally a bow tie or four-in-hand and a vest were worn under the bib of the overalls. In some instances the simple shirt version and the more formal version with tie and vest were present in the same photograph. Perhaps the gentleman garbed with tie and vest was a supervisor and the others were his subordinates. The tie and vest would then provide a distinction in the role of the individuals. Most men wore hats or caps, but some left their heads uncovered. Hat type apparently held no particular significance; in photographs of large groups of men there might be a different hat or cap on each man. Some men also wore work jackets with their bib overalls; often these were made to match the overalls, creating a complete outfit and a more coordinated appearance.

After the 1920s women and children were likely to wear tops that appeared to be more casual. Women might have worn a short-sleeve or sleeveless blouse or sweater. Children began to wear short-sleeve shirts and striped, collarless shirts, resembling T-shirts, with their bib
overalls. But young boys might also have worn a collared shirt with a four-in-hand tie for a more formal look.

The descriptive materials in advertisements for bib overalls did not appear to imply a particular image or to place value judgment on the wearers. Occupations were clearly defined, and will be discussed in detail in the section dealing with the wearers of bib overalls. Written descriptions for selling purposes focus on the qualities of the garment, rather than the qualities of the wearer.

Manufacture of Bib Overalls

From the evidence obtained, I do believe that overalls might have been commercially produced before they were home sewn. As stated earlier, however, I may not have discovered the first evidence of bib overalls, thus hindering the effort to answer my third research question.

I examined early American catalogs and merchant and manufacturers' sales lists in the Warshaw Collection of Business Americana, at the National Museum of American History, hoping to discover the earliest advertisements for bib overalls. Materials containing the words "overall" or "overalls" dated as early as the late 1840s, but the first illustrated evidence of bib overalls was in a retail or wholesale catalog, dated 1856. The listings of overalls, without the mention of the bib or apron, leaves the early forms and their method of production obscure.28

The first home sewing pattern I found was dated 1873, nearly two decades later than the advertisement for a commercially produced garment. The Butterick Pattern Company advertised a pattern in 1873 for "Gents' Overalls with Apron Front," as well as a version for boys, ages ten to fifteen years. Use of the same pattern and pattern number continued at least through 1882. The Butterick catalogues for 1885 and 1886 had patterns for overalls with apron front which were almost identical to the former renderings, with a change in the pattern number. The same pattern
and another, more complicated pattern were advertised in *The Delineator*, in 1894.\textsuperscript{29}

Full-scale paper patterns were not readily available until 1863, when the Buttericks introduced them. This does not eliminate the possibility that bib overalls were being made at home prior to the 1860s without the use of paper patterns; instead it suggests that a commercial pattern was probably not available before the introduction of the Buttericks' patterns. It is possible that individuals who saw commercially produced overalls reproduced similar garments for their own use, without the use of any pattern, hence the simplistic, ill-fitting garments of the mid to late 1800s.\textsuperscript{30}

The 1856 *Geo. N. Davis and Bros. Catalogue* and the 1858 *Union India Rubber Company Catalogue* illustrate waterproof or water resistant bib overalls, and the first patent I found is said to be for fishermen and would presumably be waterproof also. So, it could be that the waterproof type preceded the cloth form that became so popular. I do not presume to have an answer for this question, but will leave it open and suggest it as a topic for further research.\textsuperscript{31}

**Location and Spread of Manufacturers**

In *Location of Manufactures 1899-1929*, it is stated that "the localization of industries tend[ed] to be governed increasingly by purely economic considerations and less by the fortuitous considerations which accounted in many cases for localization in earlier years." A German economist, Alfred Weber, pointed out that when location changed, the cost of transportation, raw materials, fuel, and labor also changed. Competition tended to draw industries to the region in which the combination of transportation and labor costs were lowest.\textsuperscript{32}

Historically, the New England and the mid-Atlantic states have dominated industry in general. Only the eastern portion of the midwest has at times threatened that dominance. At the beginning of the twentieth century the bulk of industrial activity was located in the
northeast portion of the United States with "exactly three-fourths of the nation's manufacturing...localized within the region bounded by the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River on the north, the Mississippi River on the west, the Ohio River and Mason Dixon's line on the south, and the Atlantic Ocean on the east."33

The author of Location of Manufactures 1899-1929 noted that the movement from urban to rural or suburban areas was carried out "in order to take advantage of more convenient supplies of materials, better coverage of the market, or more satisfactory labor conditions." A move from a primary center of concentration to an adjoining area "usually indicates a desire chiefly for more manufacturing space, lower taxes, etc., in the less congested area." Although the findings of the study pointed out the tendency toward decentralization of industry, there was still a high concentration in large urban centers. The spreading out was mainly into adjoining centers of population and industry, rather than into small cities and towns. According to a government survey, by 1860 many small shops in the men's clothing industry had merged into large inside shops. This was made possible by the widespread acceptance of the sewing machine.34

The large and small manufacturers of bib overalls were mainly located in the eastern part of the United States in the 1800s, according to my data. After 1900, bib overall businesses emerged in mid-western states of Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, and Kansas. Bill Pollock, President of Key Industries, Inc., believes that the multitude of bib overall manufacturers' sales were typically very limited regionally in the early 1900s. It is difficult to trace the manufacturers closely, because most of my evidence is limited to sales flyers or other isolated items. The founding date of many companies is unknown and, to compound the problem, the dates related specifically to the manufacture of bib overalls is also a mystery.35

The founding dates of several bib overall producers are known, but this information does not reveal when bib overalls were actually being made by that company. Levi Strauss and Company was founded in 1850 and is described in The Business Founding Date Directory as a manufacturer of
overalls, western wear, and "Levi's". I do not believe that this particular company was ever very active in the bib overall market, because the curator of the Levi Strauss museum was only able to provide a few advertisements showing bib overalls, dated between 1905 and 1928. The history of this particular company, although written about for over forty years, is still unclear to me, because several articles seem to contradict each other and the information in The Business Founding Date Directory.36

Sweet-Orr and Company was founded in 1871, also making pantaloon overalls at first, and later producing bib overalls in addition. Sweet-Orr was responsible for the woman's version of the bib overalls, often referred to as "womanalls," patented in 1916.37

Lee Company, Inc. began in 1889 as a grocery wholesale business, ordering work clothing from the East. In 1911 Lee opened his own garment factory, added a second in 1915, and two more in 1916. By 1939 this firm was supposedly the largest manufacturer of work clothing in the United States. My materials do not reveal when Lee began making bib overalls, but there is evidence of intense advertising of the garment in the late 1930s and early 1940s. In the early 1940s Lee's bib overalls were widely promoted for railroad men. Bill Pollock contends that many grocery wholesale companies manufactured their own bib overalls, prior to the 1930s, citing H.D. Lee as an example. After the "shake down" of the 1930s these companies turned to either clothing or groceries, but could no longer succeed in both arenas.38

Another large concern, Carhartt, Inc. of Dearborn, Michigan, also began in 1889. A current company executive explained that they have been making bib overalls "at least since 1900." In the 1960s the company purchased several smaller firms, including Finck, which was established in 1901, and Crown Overall Manufacturing Company, established in 1913. Unfortunately, the current owners retained no background information on either acquisition.39

Well-known today for their bib overalls and children's clothing, Oshkosh B'Gosh was founded in 1889 as Jenkins and Clark. Their available advertising archives only include material that dates back to the 1910s,
which leaves much early information out of reach. Other current manufacturers have similar situations. Key Industries, founded in 1908 as Lakin-McKey Manufacturing Company, suffered a flood in 1986, losing most of their early history. Big Smith, which was established in 1916, lost their early materials during a five year period in which the owners "cleaned out" anything earlier than 1930.40

I believe there were many other companies manufacturing bib overalls between 1856 and 1945; so many, in fact, that it would be impossible to present even one piece of evidence for each company without writing another thesis (see Appendix J for list of additional companies and product names not mentioned above).

Advertising, as presently understood, did not become a customary part of the marketing plans for retailers and manufacturers until the late 1890s. A survey conducted in 1898 using "regular periodicals" revealed that only slightly more than seven percent of 2583 (193) advertisements were for wearing apparel. Jack Marr, the vice-president of administration for Williamson-Dickie Manufacturing Company, believes that "most small manufacturers did little advertising in magazines." The small companies would often generate what is referred to as a weight book, with a calendar. Small items like the weight book would not be preserved in public libraries, except for special collections like the Warshaw Collection of Business Americana at the National Museum of American History, and even such collections cannot possibly assemble examples from every company that existed. Therefore, much information from small companies is unavailable.41

Marketing of Bib Overalls

In marketing bib overalls, manufacturers were often responsible for the advertising campaigns into the 1940s. Some of the most prominent features stressed in early marketing efforts included physical attributes
of the garment, social and psychological considerations, the production process, to some degree, and price.

Early catalogs or advertisements for bib overalls provided brief descriptions of the garments and appeared to concentrate on the protection of the wearer's clothing. Two sources mentioned the shield provided for the wearer engaging in wet and messy jobs. The John M. Smyth catalog, 1906-07, explained that the overalls for children also saved laundry work, presumably by keeping the clothing underneath clean or by replacing "good" clothes altogether. 42

During the first decade of the 1900s construction characteristics of the overalls became a prominent part of the sales strategy. The various structural features, previously discussed in the section on garment construction, can be found in the text of ads throughout the 1900s. The unique fabric used, number of rows of stitching, the shape of shoulder straps, fullness and roominess of the garment, and special buttons or hardware were among the characteristics mentioned.

The claim of roominess and comfort, afforded by the construction of the overalls, seemed to gain momentum through the years. A 1908 Levi Strauss advertisement, containing the first mention of this trait, claimed that their garments were "cut full." In 1915, Crown touted their overalls as the "biggest, fullest, and roomiest." The crescendo continued until the extreme was reached in 1934, with Montgomery Ward beginning the caption for their "Pioneer" brand overalls with, "Are they big and oversized? Yes, sir!" Not only were they roomy, but these overalls were actually oversized. Although this trait was mentioned in later sources, it was not as strongly emphasized as in the 1934 Montgomery Ward catalog. 43

A concern with the durability of overalls began to increase around 1930, when ads mentioned wearability and durability more frequently. Ads commonly mentioned features such as double knees "to insure double wear," fabrics that would fade and shrink less, due to technological advances, and generally sturdy construction, as well as guarantees against a garment's ripping. 44
Another tactic employed in promoting bib overalls was to appeal to the consumers' sense of social acceptance and psychological well-being. The emphasis might have been on the practicality of bib overalls for children, a general sense of patriotism, or the appropriate appearance of the clothing at a particular point in time.

During the 1800s and early 1900s parents were giving more consideration to children's needs. Children were no longer regarded as miniature adults as they had been in earlier times. Their newfound needs included clothing that would allow a child to move about freely and comfortably. It seems logical, then, that advertisements would state that bib overalls were "just the kind of a garment for children to play in" and that "no parent should be without these most durable overalls," almost implying neglect if a child was not allowed to enjoy the benefits of bib overalls. In the 1930s ads emphasized the practicality of bib overalls as a play outfit for children.45

Who could ignore a claim that one million men were wearing OshKosh B'Gosh overalls in 1916 and that Montgomery Ward sold 1,685,000 pair in 1933? These claims made it seem as if wearing overalls was the proper thing to do, because so many others were supposedly wearing them. If the fact that millions of other men were wearing bib overalls did not convince you of the propriety of bib overalls, then surely seeing a cardboard rendition of Uncle Sam wearing a real pair of Oshkosh B'Gosh overalls, in a local retailer's window, would clinch the matter for you. Wearing bib overalls would be patriotic. A war veteran told readers in an Oshkosh B'Gosh ad in 1945 that their overalls were "the world's best civvies" and were worth waiting for, in the time of shortages following World War II.46

It is possible that another aspect of patriotism rests in the practicality of bib overalls for adults and children alike. The need to conserve raw materials during wartime meant that new items, including clothing, became scarce, thereby increasing the importance of preserving what one possessed. Bib overalls were frequently exalted for their ability to preserve clothing worn beneath, as mentioned earlier.
The adoption of socially acceptable clothing is one means of gaining the approval of others. Many advertisers today play upon this aspiration, as did advertisers prior to 1945, including bib overall promoters. The overalls might have been "smartly cut" or "smart looking," available in fashionable colors, or have had certain construction features that made them more appealing. All of these features emphasized the acceptability and functionality of bib overalls, playing on the consumers' social and psychological need for acceptance.47

In twentieth century advertising, the main concern with the production of bib overalls was the use of organized labor. As early as 1903 advertisers were proclaiming that their garments were union made. The first national clothing union, the United Garment Workers of America (UGWA), was organized in 1891. The national officers of the UGWA found potential opportunities for selling union labels to the overall and shirt trades, as well as other segments of the clothing industry, because the purchasers of overalls and work shirts were, most likely, workmen themselves. The union label on these garments was thought to enhance the sales appeal. The proceeds from the sale of the union label were used, in conjunction with membership dues, to fight against long hours and dangerous working conditions in the clothing industry. Perhaps the "union made" appeal was used in advertising because it fostered a sense of helping a fellow laborer in a fight for a better life.48

The theme of the value of bib overalls was expressed in a variety of ways throughout the period 1856-1945. One method was to simply state that the garment was an "extraordinary value" or a "big value," or that it was "the best...for the money." Oshkosh B'Gosh even went so far as to state the value in terms of cost per months of actual wear. Providing a guarantee, usually offering a new garment if the original failed the customer, was another technique to enhance the value of a product.49

One aspect seldom approached in the written text of advertisements was the occupation of the wearer. This subject is more often implied, through the illustrations used in the advertisement, than stated in the text, with the exception of mail order catalogues.
Retail and wholesale prices for bib overalls were plotted on separate graphs for analysis. Many of the highest prices charged were for a waterproof form of the garment and if no such item was offered that year the price range was smaller. The sources for examples of wholesale prices differ from those for the retail prices, so a direct comparison is not feasible, but a general comparison can be made. I will give this critique with caution because of the limited data gathered and my limited knowledge of historical economics. Another factor not considered is the effect of general price inflation (see Figures 8 and 9 respectively).

The introduction and increased availability of sewing machines could be a feasible explanation for the sharp drop in retail prices between the late 1850s and 1880. Comparable wholesale prices were not found. In factories the use of the new machines allowed productivity to soar and labor costs to plunge, which would also allow retail prices to decrease. Although I did not find an example of retail prices from the 1860s, I would hypothesize that they would have been high. With the introduction of paper money in 1861, to finance the Civil War, “prices almost immediately began a sharp rise,” according to one economic historian. Perhaps the activities of the war itself, which blocked land and water travel between the North and South, adversely affecting the

![Retail prices chart](image-url)

**Figure 8. Bib Overall Retail Prices**
Wholesale prices per pair

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1886</th>
<th>1892</th>
<th>1897</th>
<th>1903</th>
<th>1905</th>
<th>1908</th>
<th>1914</th>
<th>1915</th>
<th>1918</th>
<th>1934</th>
<th>1935</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price in dollars</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9. Bib Overall Wholesale Prices

supply of cotton goods, also helped keep the price of bib overalls relatively high. 50

Retail and wholesale prices seem to mirror each other in the late 1880s and early 1890s, both exhibiting a slight increase. This is in direct contrast with the general downward trend of consumer prices between the end of the Civil War in 1865 and 1896, observed by Robertson in History of the American Economy. 51

A period of relative stability in retail prices of bib overalls between 1895 and 1912 also seems to run counter to the general economic condition of the country during that time. A severe downturn in economic activity began in 1893, with recovery emerging in late 1896. Perhaps the reality of large-scale factory production helped to keep the prices of bib overalls relatively stable during that interval. 52

A drop in wholesale prices for bib overalls in the first few years of the 1900s might also have been possible because of reduced production costs, resulting from the improved mechanization of industry. A further drop in wholesale prices was also evident in 1903. In the years between 1905 and 1915 wholesale prices were sporadic. The high prices per pair ranged from $.60 to $1.08. The high wholesale price for bib overalls in 1908 reflects a rebound from another brief, but severe, recession in 1907, while the drop in prices in 1914 is symbolic of a general drop in
prices, found throughout the American economy at the beginning of the First World War.53

Between 1915 and 1927 retail prices rose, with the highest prices almost doubling in that time. The highest wholesale prices tripled between 1915 and 1918, jumping from $.75 a pair to $2.50. When the United States entered World War I in 1917 it was already obvious that the supply of fabrics was severely limited. Many heavy fabrics, like denim, were needed for use by the military, so obtaining such fabrics was difficult and expensive. Another contributing factor was that the manufacture of military uniforms consumed a large portion of production capacity in many factories. The supply of new civilian clothing was not keeping up with the demand, which created a shortage of clothing, resulting in higher prices for consumer goods.54

During the financial depression of the late 1920s and 1930s manufacturers, retailers, and individuals were in dire straits. Theoretically, clothing prices should have dropped, along with other consumer prices, but the available examples of retail prices for bib overalls did not exhibit such activity.

Both retail and wholesale prices remained relatively stable in the early 1930s. Perhaps this can be attributed to the functional aspects of bib overalls. The need for relatively cheap, durable clothing during a time of economic hardship would have increased the appeal of bib overalls since they would fill the need for such a practical garment with ease.55

Between 1939 and 1942 the highest retail price jumped from $1.27 to $3.49, respectively, reflecting the nation's rebound from a long depression and the effects of war shortages. The low prices changed less, shifting from $.29 in 1939 to $.47 in 1942. The low price was most frequently for a plain garment of cheap fabric, while the high price was for a garment with more details and of heavier fabric. One interesting point was the disparity between the high and low price for the individual years. Why would the prices vary by more than $3.00 in 1942 when there is not such deviation in any other example cited? Perhaps the manufacturers and retailers realized the existence of a demand for a wide range of prices in the consumer market. The high prices in the 1940s
were also certainly inflated by World War II and the effects it had on the supply of fabric. Would it not be logical to assume that the low end would also rise proportionally? Perhaps the increased number of possible features added to bib overalls, the larger spectrum of fabric qualities used, and the increased cost of production, due to rising labor costs, also contributed to the greater variation in prices.

By contrast, the cost of paper patterns for bib overalls remained remarkably consistent, between 1883 and 1942. The price did not rise above $.25 in the 59-year period. In fact, three of the five examples were $.25, a fourth was $.20, and the remaining pattern was $.10. The lowest price, for a 1909 McCall's pattern, is in direct contrast with the rising wholesale and retail prices of the same period (see Figure 10).

![Figure 10. Pattern Prices for Bib Overalls](image)

The visual effects of advertising changed considerably after the 1880s, resulting from improved technology in the printing business, but the underlying themes were fairly constant. The manufacturer or retailer would promote a product based on physical characteristics, implied intangible benefits to the consumer, the advantages the purchase would have for the people involved in production (in the 1990s, this is again a strong issue with the United Garment Workers Association), and the intrinsic value of the product itself, no matter what the price might be.
The sixty-eight patents used in this study were utility patents, which are "the customary type...issued to any novel, non-obvious, and useful machine, article of manufacture, composition of matter or process." A patent may include improvements on a previously known item, but it "must embody some new idea or principle not before known, and it must be a discovery as distinguished from mere mechanical skill or knowledge." Martin Pfaff stated in his patent application what other bib overall patentees must have also held to be true, that his improvement would "supply a want long felt, but never supplied, in the use of this kind of garment."56

Bib overalls were being sold in the United States at least by 1856, yet patents were not applied for until about sixteen years later. This eliminates patents as a source of information about the origins of the garment design, but they are a rich source of information about the wearers and the problems inherent in the design, which will be discussed more fully in other portions of this paper.

A discussion of manufacturing advances applied to the production of bib overalls is beyond the scope of this study. It would relate to changes in production facilities which would be an enormous subject to broach and will not be discussed in this paper.

Wearers of Bib Overalls

I have found evidence to support the perception that agricultural workers were the main users of bib overalls between 1856 and 1945, although many other categories of workers also wore bib overalls during that time. Patents, analyzed early in the progress of this study, provided the basis for this conclusion by their direct or indirect references to intended wearers, but other sources of evidence also proved helpful. This discussion will deal only with the occupations of male wearers.57
Fifteen patents, dating between 1872 and 1937, simply mentioned workmen, mechanics, or laborers. A mechanic, as defined in both the 1895 and 1914 editions of The Century Dictionary, was "a maker of machines or machinery; hence any skilled worker with tools; one who has learned a trade;...an artificer, artisan, or craftsman." This general title of skilled laborer was evident throughout the period.58

The Trade Monthly magazine, 1897, carried an advertisement for "Workman" bib overalls. In a 1930 mail order catalogue, Sears, Roebuck and Company mentioned working men as wearers of their "Heavyweight Champion of Overalls." And in the 1936-1937 Sears, Roebuck catalogue workingmen were the key wearers of the company's best pair of overalls.59

Three patents, dating from 1886 through 1930, mentioned carpenters, in addition to paper hangers, bricklayers, and artisans who needed to have tools in easy reach. A fourth patent, previously mentioned under the general heading of workmen, also noted that the wearers would use tools, nails, screws, etc., which might also refer to one of the more specific tradesmen. Although the assumption of having bib pockets to hold tools appears to have been common in patents, I did not find photographs of such artisans with tools of their trade in the bib pockets. It seems that the statement made in the February, 1883 issue of The Delineator, about the apron protecting "the clothes from contact with tools or work-bench" is more realistic. It is also apparent that small personal belongings were stored in the bib pockets. Advertisements and photographs showing carpenters, paper hangers, and painters were more common in the 1900s than in the 1800s.60

Prang's Aids for Object Teaching, a set of illustrated cards used in teaching children about trades and occupations, contained one card, dated 1874, with a group of carpenters, all wearing bib overalls. A photograph of artisans working on the interior of the Library of Congress building in 1894, also revealed several men wearing bib overalls. A 1934 price list from Oshkosh B'Gosh had a category for carpenters and a separate grouping for painters, plasterers, masons and paperhangers.61

Patents 1,144,369 and 2,269,380, dated 1915 and 1942 respectively, described railroad engineers as the intended wearers. The later patent
also included shopmen, and firemen (presumably railroad firemen). *The Trade Monthly*, 1897, described a special brand of overalls for railroad workers. There were other similar advertisements through the 1930s, although it did not appear that mail order catalogues included railroad workers specifically. The earliest railroad-related photograph, dated 1890, was of a group of "railroad boys" in Idaho. At least one man was wearing bib overalls. Of the various categories of workers determined, railroad workers were the second most prominent group of wearers of bib overalls in photographs and advertisements.\(^{62}\)

An 1872 bib overall patent was specifically designed for fishermen. British costume historian, Elizabeth Ewing, referred to American whale fishermen as providing some impetus for the production of ready-made clothing, in the late 1800s, because of their need for "particularly tough, warm garments to protect them while pursuing their trade." These two references to fishermen emphasize the special needs of this group of working men, which were being met by bib overalls. It appears that fishermen wore both waterproof or water-resistant overalls, and also denim or other cloth bib overalls. I did not find photographs or advertisements of men engaged in fishing-related occupations wearing bib overalls after 1915.\(^{63}\)

Factory workers, especially machine attendants, were the implied recipients of the benefits of patent 785,590 (1905) which was described earlier as being a protective garment. Advertisements and photographs reveal that factory workers were wearing bib overalls from the late 1890s through the 1940s. Oshkosh B'Gosh ran a series of advertisements, in the late 1920s, extolling the strength of their garments by telling of some worker who was saved from a horrifying fall by the strap of his overalls. One classic example is a story about a man whose overall straps caught on a piece of pipe on some piece of equipment, forty feet from the ground. He proceeds to exclaim that he would have fallen, had it not been for his overalls.\(^{64}\)

Only one patent, obtained in 1938, made reference to agricultural workers as users, and the comment was indirect. The patentee, Charles Wittmack, mentioned the need to keep chaff, straw, and dirt from getting
into the pockets. The late date of this patent does not imply, as I originally thought it might, that agricultural workers did not wear bib overalls prior to the 1930s. Winslow Homer's painting, *Haymaking*, dated 1864, provides evidence for the early use of bib overalls in agrarian occupations, as do the 1870s gardening and haymaking illustrations on Prang's Aids for Object Teaching. Many sources provide evidence that agricultural workers wore bib overalls during the entire time being studied. A wide variety of agricultural occupations were encompassed in the sources used. Not only was there evidence of typical midwestern agriculture of corn, soybeans, and wheat during the 1900s, but also workers cultivating or gathering maple sugar, potatoes, melons, tomatoes, celery, salt, watermelons, apples, pumpkins, peanuts, tobacco, and cotton. 65

Several patents simply defined the gender or age group of the intended wearers. The most striking of the gender-related patents, dated 1916, was specifically for women. The design of this garment was much different from the typical bib overalls seen up to that point. As early as the 1850s "Bloomers" were worn by women for bathing. In the 1890s women might have worn bloomers, but still only for bicycling and gym exercises. It was in 1910 that a similarly styled garment was presented to the female public as fashionable and later as a work garment, although the fashionable garment was not well received. Boys were wearing bib overalls as early as 1864, but young girls did not follow the practice until early in the 1900s. Older girls became targeted as wearers in mail order catalogues in the late 1930s. 66

Lumberjacks and miners were not mentioned in any advertisements or patents, but definitely wore bib overalls. Photographs of workers in both occupations demonstrate that their use of bib overalls was mainly in the twentieth century, perhaps because the earliest forms of bib overalls did not accommodate the movements of those laborers.

There is evidence of men in other vocations wearing bib overalls also. Some of the less common ones include miners of gold, lead, and coal; oil field workers; butchers; barrel makers; a building custodian; a whale boat builder; and garbage disposal workers. Some men were pictured
wearing their bib overalls off the job, too: several in town settings, one on a picnic, one showing off his award-winning fish, and two on a golf outing.

From the evidence I gathered it is apparent that working men were the primary wearers of bib overalls throughout the period of 1856 through 1945. Various occupational groups were found to wear bib overalls in their work, especially agricultural and railroad workers. Also included in the primary groups were skilled artisans, fishermen, and factory workers.

Undeniably, men were the main focus of most advertisements and the subjects of most photographs collected. I believe that the garment was originally designed for a man and was then adapted for boys. Apparently, boys were wearing bib overalls during the entire period, but the volume of evidence was not as great as that for men. Young girls adopted bib overalls, mainly for play wear in the 1900s, and older girls were introduced to bib overalls in the 1930s. It appears that a special style of bib overalls for children, often referred to as "Brownie overalls," was developed in the late 1890s. Women were being encouraged to wear bib overalls as early as 1915, but might not have truly accepted the garment until the 1930s.67

Notes

1 Louis Goodman, "Overalls" (Patent no. 546,373; July 21, 1896); Samuel Boone, "Overalls" (Patent no. 579,314; March 23, 1897).
2 Alfred Rosenburg, "Improvement in overalls" (Patent no. 156,381; 29 July 1874); Prang's Aids for Object Teaching-Trades and Occupations (Library of Congress no. LC-USZ62-673, 1874; LC-USZ62-676, 1874; LC-USZ62-4432, 1875); Leopold Guiterman, "Overalls" (Patent no. 328,025; 13 October 1885); Howard Lanier, "Overalls" (Patent no. 755,781; 29 March 1904).
3 Johan Johannesen, "Overalls" (Patent no. 1,854,262; 19 April 1932).
4 Edward Brunsen, Jr., "Reversible overalls" (Patent no. 386,422; 17 July 1888); Isaac Russakov, "Overalls or trousers" (Patent no. 631,408; 22 August 1899); Erick Fellroth, "Overalls" (Patent no. 1,785,580; 16 December 1930); Robert Smith, "Overalls" (Patent no. 678,049; 9 July 1901); Charles Fasoldt, "Overalls" (Patent no. 765,156; 12 July 1904).
5 Stephen Laskey, "Overalls" (Patent no. 214,406; 15 April 1879).
Charles Moulton, "Overalls" (Patent no. 187,767; 27 February 1877).

Harry Jackson, "Overalls" (Patent no. 1,888,086; 15 November 1932).


Phillip Paxton, "Overalls" (Patent no. 1,369,538, 22 February 1921); Patrick Sheen, "Overalls" (Patent no. 1,402,320, 3 January 1922).


Geó. N. Davis and Bro's, 1856, 14; "Oiled clothing," Scientific American 79 (10 September 1898).

Geó. N. Davis and Bro's, 14; The Union India Rubber Company Catalogue (New York: John W. Oliver, 1858): 9.

Güiterman, 1885; Oscar Kratz assignor to Hamilton Carhartt Manufacturing, "Overalls" (Patent no. 1,152,323; 3 August 1915); Adolph Bookman, "Overalls" (Patent no. 362,710; 10 May 1887).

Brigham, 1906; William Cummings assignor to Sweet, Orr and Company, "Overalls" (Patent no. 905,796; 1 December 1908); William Matthews, "Bib for overalls" (Patent no. 1,144,369; 29 June 1915).

Rosenburg, 1874.

Georg Bucking VIII, "Overalls" (Patent no. 785,590; 21 March 1905); Paxton, 1921; Sheen, 1922.
25 James Fitz, "Overalls" (Patent no. 471,789; 29 March 1892); Russakov, 1899; Merritt Logan, "Overalls-bib" (Patent no. 1,375,163; 19 April 1921).
27 Mirken, 361.
28 Gentlemen's and Boy's Clothing list, (Boston: George W. Simmons of Oak Hall Rotunda, 1848); Lewis and Hanford's Catalogue of Spring Stock at the United States Wholesale Clothing Warehouse, (New York, 1849); Catalogue of Ready-made Clothing, Furnishing Goods, Trunks, &c. to be found at Joel H. Dix's, (Burlington, VT: Joel H. Dix, 1852); Geo. N. Davis and Bro's, 14.
31 Geo. N. Davis and Bro's, 14; The Union India Rubber Company, 9; Eli Stacy and John Stacy, "Improvement in overalls" (Patent no. 125,994; 23 April 1872).
33 Ibid., 9, 44.
34 Ibid., 46, 47; Cobrin, 45.
39 Mark Valade, an executive at Carhartt, Inc. provided this information in a telephone interview on 21 May 1992.
with Jack Marr, Vice President of Administration, Williamson-Dickie

42 Geo. N. Davis and Bro's, 1856, 14; The Union India Rubber Company
1858, 9; John M. Smyth Company, 1067.

43 Levi Strauss, 1908, 3; Crown Overall Manufacturing Co. sales
flyer, 1915; Spring and Summer, 1934 (Kansas City, MO: Montgomery Ward
and Company, 1934), 115.

44 Sears, Roebuck and Co. catalogue (Chicago, 1930), 420; Golden
Jubilee Catalogue (Chicago: Sears, Roebuck and Company, 1936-37), 298,
323.

45 John M. Smyth, 1067; Schroeder, 1190.

46 Oshkosh B'Gosh ad, 1916; Montgomery Ward and Company, 1934, 115;
Oshkosh B'Gosh ad, 1931; Oshkosh B'Gosh ad, 1945.

47 Oshkosh B'Gosh ad, 1915; Butterick, Pattern no. 5258, 1924; Fall
and Winter, Montgomery Ward, 1936-37, 171; Spring and Summer, Montgomery
Ward, 1939, 159.

48 Cobrin, 99, 100; Payne, Winakor, and Farrell-Beck, 544.

49 Sears, Roebuck and Company, 1908, 1099; Oshkosh B'Gosh ad, 1915;
John M. Smyth, 1115; Oshkosh B'Gosh ad, 1929; Oshkosh B'Gosh ad, 1916.

50 Jane Farrell-Beck, "Use of patented sewing devices in a sample of
manufactured garments dated ca.1860-1900," Clothing and Textiles Research
Journal 10(Spring 1992): 3; Ross Robertson, History of the American

51 Ibid., 446.

52 Ibid., 349.

53 Payne, Winakor, and Farrell-Beck, 544; Robertson, 445.

54 Cobrin, 117.

55 Ibid., 166.

56 E. Stacy and J. Stacy, 1872; Henry Black, Black's Law Dictionary,
6th ed. (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1990), 1125; Martin
Pfaff, "Overalls" (Patent no. 452,528; 19 May 1891).

57 This conclusion is based solely on the data I was able to collect
during my research, which may be biased because I chose to use
agricultural materials as the starting point for my search. It is
possible that with further research my conclusion may be proven wrong,
but at this point in the research, I feel confident in making such a
statement, properly qualified.

58 E. Stacy and J. Stacy, 1872; Rosenburg, 1874; Guiterman, 1885;
Pfaff, 1891; Goodman, 1896; Leopold Guiterman, "Overalls" (Patent no.
717,392; 30 December 1902); Brigham, 1906; Leo Wise "Overalls" (Patent
no. 900,050; 19 September 1908); Hamilton Carhartt, Hamilton Carhartt,
Jr., and Oscar Kratz, "Overalls" (Patent no. 1,152,289; 31 August 1915);
Andrew Carlson, "Overalls" (Patent no. 1,293,700; 11 February 1919);
Charles Wood, "Overalls" (Patent no. 1,477,925; 18 December 1923); Alfred
Johnson, "Overalls" (Patent no. 1,662,512; 3 April 1928); Harold Martin,
"Overalls" (Patent no. 1,793,708; 24 February 1931); Jackson, 1932; Fred
Lucas, "Overalls" (Patent no. 2,084,208; 15 June 1937); William Whitney,
3678-3679.

59 The Trade Monthly, 99; Sears, Roebuck and Company, 1930, 470;
Sears, Roebuck and Company, 1936-1937, 323.
William Cohlman, "Trousers or overalls" (Patent no. 352,297; 9 November 1886); Tom Pell and Joseph Pell, "Overalls" (Patent no. 965,596; 26 July 1910); William Watkins, "Overalls with detachable pockets" (Patent no. 1,764,483; 17 June 1930); Goodman, 1896; The Delineator, February, 1883: 79.


Bucking, 1905; Oshkosh B'Gosh, advertisement, 1929.

Charles Wittmack, "Overall" (Patent no. 2,132,668, 11 October 1938); John Wilmerding, Winslow Homer (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 75; Prang's Aids for Object Teaching, 1874 and 1875.


CONCLUSION

Bib overalls have definitely experienced changes in their more than 130 years of existence. They evolved from a simple garment to one involving more complex design and construction features. Physical characteristics took on new forms some time around 1900. The plain bib with angled sides, made in one continuous unit with the leg portion, was subjected to changes. The bib was later constructed as a separate piece, actually two vertical sections attached at the front waistline, and was adorned with one or two pockets, or a large single pocket divided into several sections.

Narrow straps, which apparently caused many wearers physical pain or discomfort, were replaced by wider ones to prevent such problems. The method of attaching the straps at the back became more elaborate, also in an effort to create a more comfortable garment. The original mode of attachment, with two straps buttoned or stitched to the waistband, was later referred to as the "low-back" style and two additional configurations were called the "high-back" and "vest-back" styles. Buttons and buttonholes at the front end of the straps gave way to riveted metal buttons and patented metal clasps, which were more durable and gave the garments a stronger appearance aesthetically.

Below the waist on a pair of bib overalls the number and construction of pockets changed. Front pockets, which were originally applied patch pockets, developed into swing pockets, while the back pockets remained the same. The need for convenient storage of a workman's tools prompted the addition of a rule pocket and one or more hammer loops, each on their respective sides of the garment, right and left.

Narrow, tapered legs gave way to wide, straight legs; this seems to have followed changes in men's fashionable trousers. The use of fabrics for bib overalls remained quite consistent throughout the period. Denim was always present, often in a variety of colors, but later sources provide evidence that blue denim was "dressed up," with stripes.
Also available beginning in the late 1890s was a special version of
bib overalls for children, often referred to as "Brownie overalls."
These garments resembled the early form of men's overalls: they were
plain, with a continuous bib portion and narrow straps, and were promoted
as the perfect play outfit for both boys and girls.

In advertisements overalls are presented as being durable, able to
withstand long, hard wearing because of the fabrics and construction
techniques employed. It is possible that the advertisers were attempting
to overcome a social stigma related to bib overalls, but this hypothesis
cannot be proven with the current resources. This aspect was especially
important during war time, when clothing supplies for the general public
were limited and steadily more expensive, making it desirable for
garments on the market at the time to survive until some unknown future
date when supplies would be abundant again.

The comfort of the wearer of bib overalls was the impetus for some
structural changes like the width of the straps, the addition of elastic
in straps, and creative shaping of the back of the garment.

Overalls were made more useful by adding pockets and other
appendages. Bib pockets could hold personal belongings--like a watch,
pencil, or memo book--or small tools. Pockets below the waist, hammer
loops, and rule pockets could easily accommodate hammers, paint brushes,
and other tools of the workman's trade.

Bib overalls played two protective roles--protecting other clothing
and, later, protecting the individual wearing the bib overalls.
Originally worn over other clothing, a shirt and trousers, overalls took
the brunt of hard, dirty work and could easily be removed to allow the
person to look fresh and clean again. As factories became more common
and more highly mechanized, workers realized the potential dangers of
loose clothing near machinery, thus the evidence of attempts to protect
the wearer in such situations, mainly by drawing the garment closer to
the body.

A special version of bib overalls for women was patented and
promoted for some of the same reasons. Fashionable clothing of the 1910s
hindered women attempting to work efficiently, either in a factory, in the garden, or on the farm.

The appearance of, or visual image created by, a pair of bib overalls was of concern throughout the period. This functional, durable, convenient, comfortable, and protective garment also needed to be aesthetically pleasing. The use of special fabrics, as well as construction features, produced an acceptable effect. Bib overalls also provided a link between fathers and sons, especially after the 1920s, by allowing junior to look "just like Dad."

The earliest method of producing bib overalls remains a mystery for several reasons. First is the varied uses of the term "overall(s);" second is the scarcity of illustrations to clarify this problem; and third is the lack of commercial materials from the early 1800s containing visual or definitive evidence of bib overalls.

My earliest sources point toward commercial manufacturing of a waterproof or water-resistant form of overalls. Probably, overalls were commercially produced in the mid-1800s, because during that time the industrial revolution was gaining strength in the United States. Efficiency in production allowed for a greater diversity of items to be available at lower costs.¹

It is possible that the availability of patterns for bib overalls demonstrated the opinion of home sewers of the 1800s and early 1900s, that sewing garments rather than buying ready-mades could save money. The logic of this view could very well depend on the prices of goods at any given time. Another possibility is that commercially produced garments were not available in all regions during that time. An ad writer maintained that the possession of a garment as practical as bib overalls belonged in the wardrobe of any person involved in physical labor, as well as in that of any active child.

The manufacturers of bib overalls are difficult to track in the nineteenth century, and to some extent, in the twentieth century also. Much information about early companies has been disposed of after buy-outs and company mergers, or the dissolution of companies.
My resources suggest that, in general, bib overall companies followed geographic patterns typical of other industries. Most early businesses were located in the northeastern part of the United States and moved to take advantage of cheaper land and labor costs. This geographic shift was also feasible because of the increased availability of public transportation.

The founding dates of some manufacturers are available, but this is of limited use in this study because it does not provide dates directly related to the production of bib overalls. Most current businesses, known to have made bib overalls at some time, like Levi Strauss, Lee Apparel Company, Sweet-Orr and Company, Key Industries, and Oshkosh B'Gosh, do not have company records that would reveal such details. Unfortunately, the best resources for such information would be wholesale sales flyers, which are also difficult to find.

Through the early 1900s the selling feature emphasized most often in marketing materials was the protection bib overalls provided for the wearer's other clothes. Overalls would preserve one's "good" clothes and also cut down on laundry work. In the 1910s the appeal seemed to shift toward the construction of the overalls and the benefits derived by the wearer from those features. Comfort, roominess, and durability were some of the key advantages.

Other appeals referred to social acceptance and psychological well-being, which seem to flow into one another. Some advertisements played upon the "common sense" of the consumer by building up the practical nature of bib overalls, especially for children. Patriotism played a role in promotional schemes, most obviously after the start of World War I. This angle also brought in the theme of practicality. From there a sense of acceptance or "fitting in" became evident, with the use of certain "buzz" words for the various periods. If one wanted to be "smart looking" in 1915 wearing bib overalls would be appropriate. In addition, there were purportedly thousands, if not millions, of other people wearing bib overalls, too. A wearer would become part of an enormous crowd.
Another issue that is quite apparent in advertisements, but not discussed in text, is the use of the union label. The promotion of the union label points to the strength of unified labor and the masses which they represented.

It seems that bib overalls have always been promoted as a great value for the consumer, based on the durability, practicality, comfortable fit, protection, appearance, and other intangible assets. Retail and wholesale prices were relatively stable from the mid-1890s through the late 1930s. These prices did not necessarily follow general economic trends, as was evident around 1900 and again in the 1920s and 1930s when consumer prices rose and bib overall prices did not. Surprisingly, however, the cost of paper patterns remained fairly consistent through the period studied.

Many patents have been obtained for overalls and parts of overalls, each attempting to solve a set of problems perceived by the inventor. Patents are not a source of information about the original form of overalls, because several wholesale flyers are dated considerably earlier than the first overall-related patent. The patents do, however, provide insight into who wore bib overalls and the garment designs of the time the patent was applied for.

By looking at patents, photographs, advertisements, and mail order catalogs, I was able to determine many wearers of bib overalls throughout the period.

Skilled laborers, or "mechanics," were one group mentioned through the late 1930s. Carpenters, paper hangers, bricklayers, and other artisans who would use tools were also evident, but were more common in the 1900s than in the 1800s. It was probably about the 1890s that railroad workers began wearing bib overalls for their working attire. There is also evidence that fishermen were among bib overall wearers between the 1850s and the 1940s. Factory workers picked up on the idea about 1890. Other occupational groups seen wearing bib overalls at various times include lumberjacks, miners, oil field workers, butchers, barrel makers, custodians, garbage disposal workers, and boat builders, to mention a few.
The most prevalent group shown wearing bib overalls, according to my data, was agricultural workers. I was almost led astray because only one patent, out of sixty-eight, even made an indirect reference to agriculture. Many other sources show workers in a variety of agrarian pursuits dressed in bib overalls. Yet it was rare to find all of the males in a single photograph wearing overalls. Most often there was a variety of outfits, no matter what the setting might have been.

The large majority of sources illustrated or suggested that men were the primary wearers between 1856 and 1945. Boys, both young and old, were next to adopt the garment, followed by little girls around 1900. Bib overalls were being promoted for women as early as 1915, but may not have been readily accepted by them until about 1930. Older girls, perhaps in their early teens, apparently did not begin to wear bib overalls until the 1930s.

A short, unpublished paper, written by Beth Nelson in 1982 for the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum in Canyon, Texas, is based on a survey of Sears, Roebuck and Company and Montgomery Ward and Company catalogues dated between 1897 and 1951. Several of her findings concur with mine. The use of denim, duck, and drill is one point of agreement. She points out that carpenters and mechanics were early targets in the catalogues and that patch pockets were used on the front of the trouser portion, but her sources illustrate them through 1915, which is slightly later than some of my examples.

We also agreed that several styles were developed for the back of the overalls, that the straps became wider through time, and that a fuller cut garment is evident after 1900. Her samples reveal different names for the various back styles, but from the descriptions they are apparently the same construction.

In my research I did not compare the dates of the use of the terms "apron overall" and "bib overall," but according to Nelson's findings there was a shift around 1905. Another shift she noticed, which I tend to believe but have not confirmed, is that the use of elastic in the shoulder straps was greatly reduced with the introduction of the adjustable buckle. She claims that the use of elastic was discontinued,
which may be true for her sources, but that is not true for all overalls, as it is still being used in the 1990s.

In general, the brief study, conducted ten years ago by Beth Nelson, is affirmed and expanded upon through my study. Unfortunately, however, the 1982 paper does not contain footnotes, which would allow me to examine her sources. There are two claims made with which I would take issue. Based on the lack of overalls in a single 1947 catalogue, she asserts that "two piece work clothing were [sic] the preference of post-war workers." She also claims that "the earliest overalls legs were tubes with one seam." In checking her earliest reference, the reproduction of the 1897 Sears, Roebuck catalogue, I found no evidence of such construction practices. In fact, the question of using one seam in the leg portion of trousers has plagued me since reading other descriptions extolling garments as having two leg seams for better fit. To date, I have not found conclusive evidence of the use of a single leg seam on bib overalls.\(^{2}\)

I fully agree with the appeal taken from a Sears, Roebuck catalogue of the 1930s. The advertisement defined bib overall wearers as "hard working, honest toiling men and he-men battling for their bread." That seems to be an appropriate description of the men wearing bib overalls between 1856 and 1945.

Notes


SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are several issues related to the use of bib overalls between 1856 and 1945 which were not approached in this paper, but would be of value to look into. Gail Cariou, a Canadian costume historian, responded to an inquiry I made for a study on the use of a single leg seam in men's trousers, based on comments in advertisements for bib overalls stating that the overalls were made with two seamed legs like trousers. Ms. Cariou responded by posing several questions. Was there a change in the way overalls were worn which coincided with the mention of them being cut like trousers? For instance, instead of being worn over other trousers were they worn by themselves? Were customers demanding a more "fashionable" fit for their overalls?

These questions also bring up the issue of when bib overalls were no longer worn over other trousers. I have contemplated this and have come to the conclusion that the sources I have used for this study were not intended to reveal such information. Personal accounts or other first-person documents with a more intimate knowledge of the typical uses of bib overalls might be valuable in searching for this type of information. A large number of documents, covering a range of dates, might be necessary to establish an approximate date for the transition.

Tracing back to the inception of the design for bib overalls would provide an understanding of the basic, intended function, and its origin. Discovering whether a man or woman provided the source of inspiration would also add to the understanding of why the style developed. Was it influenced by men in occupations that required the use of aprons for protection? Was it the brainchild of a woman who wanted to provide her husband with a protective garment in order to spare herself the drudgery of laundering his clothes as often? American patents provided detailed information about the changes made to overalls after the garment was apparently well established in the United States. Perhaps British patents would contain earlier information that could illuminate the original logic of the design. This might also lead to answers for
questions such as: Did the waterproof version of bib overalls precede the cloth form?

Repositories such as the manuscript collection at the Winterthur Museum and the collections of the American Antiquarian Society contain early trade catalogs which might shed more light on who was distributing and manufacturing overalls in the United States, prior to 1856. Perhaps the earliest forms sold in this country were produced in another country, which might then lead to the discovery that the style did not originate in the United States. Finding additional resources, with definitive references to bib overalls, could prove difficult. One thought might be to review photographs of immigrants just arriving in the United States to determine if they were wearing bib overalls. This would indicate that the garment was being used in other countries. Sources outside of the United States would then be useful in confirming such a finding.

Carrying this research up to the 1990s would also be interesting, because bib overalls are currently a fashionable item to wear, especially for teenage boys. The purpose of the garment has gone full circle, from completely functional to trendy. There is a certain way to wear bib overalls in the 1990s, with one strap hanging over the back, and the front of the bib flapping on that side. Some people wear their overalls with the bib completely unbuttoned, dangling freely. Bib overalls have been fashionable in other eras as well, yet there is still a portion of the American population that holds on to the original intent of the garment as workwear.

Wrapped up in the traditional purposes of bib overalls is the idea that they theoretically reduced the amount of laundry. This implies that even though overalls were worn for dirty work, they were not laundered as frequently; hence, it was acceptable to wear a pair of soiled overalls. The general perception of cleanliness has changed through time, shifting from the view that infrequent personal washing was ideal to the acceptance of something bordering on an obsession with personal hygiene. How do dirty overalls fit in with this change in perception?

The insufficiency of information about children’s clothing is astonishing. Costume historians acknowledge that adult fashions have
frequently been derived from the garments of children, yet the research appears to flow the opposite direction. The discovery of "Brownie overalls" suggests the existence of an entire realm of distinct apparel for children, which most certainly varied through time because of changing attitudes toward children and ideals of childhood.¹

The development and growth of advertising is intriguing. Different printed sources evidently promoted distinct types of clothing. Godey's Lady's Book is well known for its colorful pages introducing the most fashionable and up-to-date styles. It would be helpful in the study of everyday and work clothing to identify advertising or promotional sources, other than catalogues, for those types of clothes. Perhaps basic items, like work clothing, were not marketed in the same way as fashionable garments.

Another direction for research would be to investigate manufacturing advances applied to a specific product like bib overalls. There were many patents obtained in relation to bib overalls, including those for mechanical functions to aid in the productions of the garments. Were those advancements then applied to the production of other goods? Are the changes seen in the late 1800s and early 1900s still evident in production today? What changes have been made in the past forty years to improve production and quality?

Notes

A new awareness of everyday clothes of common people is emerging in the field of historic costume, as shown by the interest of historians and clothing manufacturers. Bib overalls are presently a common garment among laborers, and have been for some time; yet, I found no extensive scholarly research about bib overalls. An abundance of recent articles emphasizes the popularity of bib overalls in the 1990s. The writers frequently mentioned that overalls had been around for a long time, but no one could say just how long.

The purpose of this research was to learn about the origins of bib overalls in order to provide costume historians and clothing manufacturers a base of understanding about everyday work clothing, its uses, its users, and the changes made to such a garment through time. This study brought together the histories of costume, inventions, advertising, and industry. The questions I wanted to answer were these: How were bib overalls first made? Were they home sewn or commercially produced? How did the design evolve? Who were the intended wearers? What was the garment's purpose? What changes in shape and style were evident? and What methods of advertising were used to promote bib overalls? Believing that the garment was intended to meet specific needs of the wearers, I wanted to learn what those needs were. The starting date of the study was 1856, which was the date of the earliest piece of evidence found. The ending date, 1945, was selected because it followed a significant decrease in patent activity and also allowed for the inclusion of World War II.

Multiple uses for the terms "overall" and "overalls" in sources revealed the need to form a thorough definition of the words. Old dictionaries and patents described three distinct garments called "overalls." One garment was what we often call "blue jeans" today, pants that covered from the waist down. The second use of the term was for a full body covering with sleeves, also known as "coveralls." And the third definition was applied to trousers with a bib attached to the front waist and shoulder straps, also known as "apron" or "bib overalls." In
this paper I have used the term "overalls" only in reference to the bibbed form.

Having written to sixty-seven museums to find the most useful repositories, I visited six. A patent search yielded sixty-eight usable patents dated from 1872 to 1938. I wrote to or phoned thirteen current manufacturers of bib overalls to learn about their archives and visited two firms.

Illustrations in many sources showed garment changes between 1856 and 1945. I do not believe, however, that the 1856 example is necessarily the earliest form of bib overalls. A typical pair of overalls from the 1850s would have been simpler than that of the mid-1900s. The early garment would have had an unadorned bib, made as an extension of the leg piece; a single-button closure at both sides; narrow straps buttoned or stitched to the back and buttoned to the bib; two patch pockets at front and back; and narrow tapered legs. The 1940s version would have had a two-piece, separate bib with at least one pocket; two-button closure at both sides; wider straps with a low-back, high-back, or vest-back style; metal clasp and button at the front end; two front swing pockets, a coin pocket, two back patch pockets, a rule pocket, a hammer loop; and wide straight legs. The changes took place, for the most part, around 1900.

Although blue denim has been the most common fabric for bib overalls, others were used. One newspaper article proposed that the development and popularity of bib overalls was due, in part, to the use of "newfangled denim." This statement lacks validity because denim had been in use on this continent since the 1770s and was not new to Americans of the mid-1800s.

Striped denims were found in the late 1890s through 1945 and denims of mixed colors were used in the early 1900s. White drill was often used for painters' and paper hangers' overalls throughout the period, while duck and other heavy fabrics were used prior to the 1920s. Other fabrics mentioned included checked linens, colored twills, covert cloth, khaki cloth, gingham, chambray, corduroy, cheviot, cotton whipcord, cotton
suiting, and gabardine. Overalls were also made in waterproof or water resistant fabrics between the 1850s and the 1940s.

Bib overalls met important physical needs: durability, comfort, convenience, and protection. Garment construction features were implemented to enhance each of the characteristics. Specific stress points like side openings were reinforced, straps were widened to avoid binding on the wearer's shoulder, pockets were added for convenience, and the leg portion was drawn in with straps or snaps to protect the wearer better. Users perceived bib overalls as a durable and economical garment that would aid in the preservation of their other clothing, a benefit especially dominant in advertising in the 1920s when clothing prices were unusually high. In the late 1890s a distinct style of overalls for children began to emerge; these were often referred to as "Brownie overalls" and maintained the simple construction of the early men's garments.

A concern about the visual image created by bib overalls was a psychological and social issue that was touched on in advertisements. Remarks about the stylish, neat, or pleasing appearance of overalls were common. Yet they were not acceptable for every situation, for unexplained reasons. Another attribute apparent from the late 1920s through the 1940s was an attempt to associate young boys with their fathers by claiming that their overalls were the same as Dad's.

Advertisements for bib overalls did not appear to imply a particular image or to place a value judgment on the wearers. The focus of the advertisements was on the qualities of the garment, rather than the qualities of the wearer.

I believe that bib overalls were commercially produced before they were home sewn, based on the evidence gathered. Wholesale catalogs survive from as early as 1856, while the first home sewing pattern appeared in 1873. It is possible that home-made versions were sewn without the aid of full-scale paper patterns, but were simple reproductions of manufactured garments. It is not possible to confirm this hypothesis at this time. It is possible that waterproof bib
overalls preceded the cloth form that became popular. This too is a subject for further research.

According to my data, bib overall manufacturers followed fairly typical lines of growth. The majority of firms were located in the eastern part of the United States in the 1800s and expanded into the mid-western states after 1900. Information on early bib overall companies is limited, making a study difficult. To compound the problem, existing companies often have little historical information about their business, the products made, and related dates. Even those companies with archives lack detailed, early company information. Using advertisements to trace companies is also of little value since many publications no longer exist; and some advertising was not in periodicals, but in the form of small handouts, like memo books.

Advertisements for overalls focused on the garments' physical attributes, social and psychological considerations, the production process, and price. In the 1800s the emphasis appeared to be the protection provided by overalls; then, in the first decade of the 1900s, construction details dominated. Comfort aspects gained importance through the years, apparently climaxing in the 1930s, after which time durability also appeared to be a strong selling point.

Social and psychological considerations were directed toward the consumers' sense of acceptance and well-being, emphasizing the practicality of overalls, invoking a sense of patriotism, or playing up the appropriate appearance of overalls. Social acceptance through the adoption of suitable garments was also considered in advertisements. Makers touted their bib overalls as being smartly cut and smart looking, which implies their appropriateness.

Production of overalls was only visible in ads through the emphasis on union-made products. The manufacturers were apparently proud to announce this fact and it was thought to be a plus in selling. Value was a constant theme in these advertisements. The advertiser might simply claim that their garment was an extraordinary value. To increase that value, some garments were guaranteed not to fail the customer.
Retail prices for bib overalls from eighteen sources, dated between 1856 and 1944, did not always reflect the general economic conditions of the country. On the whole, the retail prices were relatively stable from the mid-1890s through the late 1930s, with the highest price varying by only $.75 during the period. The highest prices occurred at each end of the time period studied, prior to 1860 and after 1940. Waterproof or water resistant overalls often cost most, as was the case in the 1850s when that was the only form found. In the later era of high prices, the availability of more complex overalls and the effects of World War II help to explain the higher prices.

Published wholesale prices were more sporadic. Generally speaking, they mirror the activities of retail prices. Perhaps the general price stability of bib overalls over an extended period of time can be attributed to their functional aspects. Overalls filled a need for relatively cheap, durable clothing, especially during economic hardships. Patterns for bib overalls were not advertised for more than $.25 between 1883 and 1924, which again attests to their persistence in the market.

Men were the primary wearers of bib overalls between 1856 and 1945, especially those in agrarian vocations. Other major occupational groups that wore bib overalls included railroad workers (engineers, firemen, and track workers), skilled artisans (carpenters, paper hangers, bricklayers, and plasterers), fishermen, and factory workers, as well as lumberjacks, miners, butchers, and other assorted workers. There are also examples of men involved in leisure activities wearing bib overalls.

Young boys were wearing overalls throughout the period, while young girls adopted them in the early 1900s. Women were encouraged to wear bib overalls as early as 1915, but might not have truly accepted them until the 1930s. Older girls were introduced to the style in the 1930s.

This research could easily be continued, both forward and backward in time. A study of the use of overalls from 1945 to the 1990s might illuminate changes in the function and perception of the garment, while a study beginning at 1856 and looking back might reveal more about the inspiration behind the design. It would also be of interest to social scientists to study the use of bib overalls in relation to the general
perception of cleanliness and personal hygiene to determine if there were distinctions in the level of cleanliness expected for work clothes and non-work clothes.

While conducting this research I also discovered a great need for information about men's and children's clothing. The focus in historic costume research, until recently, has been on women's fashionable dress, which is only a small portion of the history of costume. A study of the growth and development of advertising, as it relates to historic costume, would also be useful for researchers. The existence of bib overalls warrants a thorough investigation. I have begun to clear up some of the mystery surrounding the garment, but more remains to be discovered.
REFERENCES

Primary

Texts and Periodicals


Dictionaries


Company Catalogs and Sewing Patterns


Catalogue and Price List No. 17. Chicago: Montgomery Ward and Company, Fall and Winter, 1876.


Geo. N. Davis and Bro's Catalogue. Boston, 1856.


Sears, Roebuck and Co. catalogue. Chicago, 1930.


*The Union India Rubber Company Catalogue*. New York: John W. Oliver, 1858.

**Secondary**

**Texts and Periodicals**


Dictionaries


Personal Communications


Newspaper Articles

"Back-to-School." St. Louis Dispatch, 29 August 1991, sec. WF.

"Behind the Scene." Daily News Record, 23 March 1992, 12.

"Dressed to till." Des Moines Register, 7 September 1992, Today section.


Directories


APPENDIX A

LIST OF MUSEUMS CONTACTED AND RESPONSES

Key: o= does not contain any of the requested materials
n= no response
*= more than one type of artifact requested
p= only photographs

- The Arizona Costume Institute, Phoenix, AZ
- Baltimore Museum of Industry, Baltimore, MD
- Charles River Museum of Industry, Waltham, MA
- The Charleston Museum, Charleston, SC
- Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, IL
- Colorado State University, Denver, CO
- Conner Prairie, Noblesville, IN
- Crown Gardens and Archives, Dalton, GA
- Cumberland County Historical Society, Greenwich, NJ
- DeSoto Wildlife Refuge, Missouri Valley, IA
- Detroit Historical Museum, Detroit, MI
- Eliz. Sage Hist. Costume Collection, Bloomington, IN
- Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, NY
- Golden Spike National Historic Site, Brigham City, UT
- Grand Encampment Museum, Encampment, WY
- Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, Dearborn, MI
- The Hermitage, Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ
- Heritage Farmstead Museum, Plano, TX
- Historic Northampton, Springfield, MA
- Homestead National Monument, Beatrice, NE
- Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, Elverson, PA
- Iowa State Historical Society, Des Moines & Iowa City, IA
- Jensen Historical Society Farm, Salt Lake City, UT
- Kansas Museum of History, Topeka, KS
- Kelton House Museum and Garden, Columbus, OH
- Kent State University Museum, Kent, OH
- Lake County Museum, Wauconda, IL
- Levi Strauss & Co., San Francisco, CA
- Lightner Museum, St. Augustine, FL
- Linn County Historical Society, Brownsville, OR
- Living History Farms, Des Moines, IA
- Metropolitan State College, Denver, CO
- Milan Historical Museum, Milan, OH
- Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, MN
- Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MO
- Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT
- Museum of Alaska Transportation & Industry, Palmer, AK
- Museum of American Textile History, North Andover, MA
- Museum of the Bedford Hist. Society, Bedford, NY
- Museum of History and Industry, Seattle, WA
- Museum of the Rockies, Bozeman, MT
Museum of Vintage Fashion, Lafayette, CA
National Tobacco-Textile Museum, Danville, VA
New Bedford Whaling Museum, New Bedford, MA
Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, OK
The Old Guard Museum, Ft. Myers, VA
Old Iron County Courthouse Museum, Hurley, WI
Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, MA
Pacack Historical Society, Park Ridge, NJ
Salt Museum, Liverpool, NY
Siloam Springs Museum, Siloam Springs, AR
Slater Mill Historical Site, Pawtucket, RI
Smithtown Historical Society, Smithtown, NY
State Hist. Society of Wisconsin, Madison, WI
Stephenson County Historical Society, Freeport, IL
Texas Christian University, Ft. Worth, TX
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Austin, TX
Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX
University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ
University of North Texas, Denton, TX
U.S. Army Quartermaster Museum, Ft. Lee, VA
Valentine Museum, Richmond, VA
Waltham Historical Society, Waltham, MA
Watkins Woolen Mill State Hist. Site, Lawson, MO
Webb Museum of Vintage Fashion, Hampden, ME
Witte Museum, San Antonio, TX
APPENDIX B
LETTER TO MUSEUMS

June 15, 1992

Mr. Michael Smith
Iowa State Historical Museum
Capitol Complex
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am a graduate student at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa, working on my master's degree in Historic Costume. I am conducting a preliminary survey on the history of bib overalls in the United States from the mid-1800s to 1945. The mission of this inquiry is provide me with information which will be used to formulate a plan for more detailed research, to be conducted during July and August, 1992.

This research is being funded by Key Industries in Fort Scott, Kansas and is to be a comprehensive study of the origin and development of bib overalls as an example of the history of a manufactured garment, with an emphasis on the technological innovations that were applied to factory production. This emphasis relates to the research of Dr. Jane Farrell-Beck, my major professor, into patented sewing machines used to manufacture apparel during the 19th century.

The types of resources I foresee being of value to this project might include:
- extant bib overalls (home sewn or mass produced) and accompanying provenance
- trade or manufacturers catalogs which contain bib overalls
- documented photographs with someone wearing bib overalls either in an agricultural, factory or other situation

Having a museum background I can envision the impact of such a broad research question, but I would appreciate any information that you might be able to provide. In an attempt to facilitate communication I am enclosing a self-addressed postcard with a variety of possible responses, from which I would ask you to chose the most appropriate reply and return the card to me.

I greatly appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ann R. Hemken
BIB OVERALL RESEARCH REPLY

Name of institution: 
Name of contact person: 

___ Our collection holds ___ pair of extant bib overalls dating from ______________, with/without provenience.

___ Access to trade or manufacturer's catalogs, containing information related to bib overalls is available.

___ Documented photographs with individuals wearing bib overalls are in our collection and available for research purposes.

___ The holdings of our collection are not applicable to the study of bib overalls.

___ I am unable to help at this time, but feel that this institution's holdings would be of value to the study of bib overalls.

Please contact me again after ____________.

Textiles and Clothing
140 LeBaron Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011-1120

Ann Heimken
College of Family and Consumer Sciences
Department of Textiles & Clothing
140 LeBaron Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011-1120
APPENDIX D

GARMENT DATA COLLECTION FORM

BIB OVERALL WORKSHEET

DATE OF ARTIFACT:

MUSEUM or BUSINESS:

ACCESSION NUMBER:

DONOR:

PROVENANCE:

MAKER:

RELATED MATERIALS:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

CONDITION (signs of wear, smell, feel):

FABRIC: FIBER-

WEAVE-

CONSTRUCTION DETAILS:

TOPSTITCHING (type of stitch, # of rows, stitches per inch)-

COLOR OF THREAD-

FRONT BIB SHAPE-

FRONT BIB ADORNMENT-

METHOD OF ATTACHING BIB TO PANT-

FRONT WAISTBAND-
CLOSURE METHOD AT WAIST-

FRONT POCKETS BELOW WAIST-

LEG SHAPE-

HEM-

BACK ADORNMENT BELOW WAISTLINE-

WAISTBAND AT BACK-

SHAPE OF BACK ABOVE WAISTLINE-

TYPE OF SHOULDER STRAP-

TYPE OF CLOSURE FOR SHOULDER STRAP-

LABELS AND LOCATION:

MEASUREMENTS:  TOTAL LENGTH (WITH STRAPS ATTACHED)-
WAIST-
INSEAM-
BIB LENGTH (TO TOP OF WAISTLINE
STRAP WIDTH AT FRONT END-

PHOTO NUMBER:  ROLL-   FRAME-
APPENDIX E

LIST OF MUSEUM GARMENTS STUDIED

men's; blue and white checked cotton

1877–1883  Natl. Museum of Amer. History-acc. no. SI310128.23
adult; blue and white plaid

adult; brown and white striped

c.1900  Kansas Museum of History-acc. no. 1982.35.21
men's; blue denim

1908  Chicago Historical Society-acc. no. 1950.208
child's; blue and white checked with red trim

c.1915  Natl. Museum of Amer. History-acc. no. T.2657
adult; dark blue denim

1917  State Historical Soc. of Wis.-acc. no. 1960.114.82
adult; blue denim

c.1920  Missouri Historical Society-acc. no. 1986.84.19
boy's; blue denim

men's; blue and white heavy chambray

1924  Witte Museum-acc. no. 91–4(37)
boy's; blue denim

c.1927  Kansas Museum of History-acc. no. 1978.52.64
boy's; coarse tan with red trim

men's; blue and white striped denim

child's; blue denim

1944–1946  Missouri Historical Society-acc. no. 1989.27.116
women's; khaki, military

c.1945  Kansas Museum of History-acc. no. 1988.84.3
child's; blue denim
APPENDIX F

DATA COLLECTION FORM FOR PRINTED MATERIALS

DATA COLLECTION FORM--BIB OVERALLS

Today's date:

Location (institution) and accession number:

Type of material:

Date of material:

Company name and location:

Description of pertinent contents:
    Written text (verbatim)-
    Garment construction features-
    Occupation and gender of wearer in illustration-

Reference:[author. (date). title. city, state: publisher. pages)

Obtained copy? Y__ N__ (cost ______)

Credit in publication to be given to:
APPENDIX G

LIST OF PATENTS REVIEWED

Eli Stacy and John Stacy, "Improvement in overalls" (no. 125,994: April 23, 1872). Smooth front without buckles and expandable back to accommodate jacket.

Alfred Rosenberg, "Improvement in overalls" (no. 156,381: July 29, 1874). One size fits all garment.

Charles Moulton, "Overalls" (no. 187,767; 27 February 1877). Manufacturing changes in seams, opening, and straps.

Stephen Laskey, "Improvement in overalls" (no. 214,406; February 4, 1879). Stronger shoulder straps, side openings, and back pockets.

Bernhard Guttman, "Overalls" (no. 247,906; October 4, 1881). Converting trousers into bib overalls.

Leopold Guiterman, "Overalls" (no. 328,025; October 13, 1885). Elastic sections in straps.

William Cohlman, "Trousers or overalls" (no. 352,297; November 9, 1886). New construction for back pockets.

Adolph Bookman, "Overalls" (no. 362,710; May 10, 1887). Elastic waistband and reversible elastic shoulder straps.

Edward Brunsen, Jr. and Jesse Gladding, "Reversible overalls" (no. 386,422; July 17, 1888). Reversible front to back and inside to outside.

Martin Pfaff, "Overalls" (no. 452,528; May 19, 1891). Elastic hinge at back waistband end of shoulder straps.

James Fitz, "Overalls" (no. 471,789; March 29, 1892). Combination of vest and trouser overalls.

Louis Goodman, "Overalls" (no. 564,373; July 21, 1896). Bib can be dropped to apron with pockets.

Samuel Boone, assignor to David Traxler, "Overalls" (no. 579,314; March 23, 1897). Bib can be dropped to apron with pockets.

John Lewis, "Overalls" (no. 621,353; March 21, 1899). Method of laying the pattern and cutting to save fabric.

Isaac Russakov, "Overalls or trousers" (no. 631,408; August 22, 1899). Bib can be used to protect the chest or tucked into trousers.
Robert Smith, "Overalls" (no. 678,049; July 9, 1901). Waist is expandable with side buttoning eliminated.

Leopold Guiterman, "Overalls" (no. 717,392; December 30, 1902). Bib can be detached and used as an apron at waist.

Robert Breckenridge, assignor of 1/2 to Charles Dickinson, "Overalls" (no. 699,485; May 6, 1902). Closing side openings with drawstring.

Nathan Ravich, "Overalls or nether garments" (724,204; March 31, 1903). Method of cutting out pattern to conserve fabric.

Howard Lanier, "Overalls" (no. 755,781; March 29, 1904). Extra durable hem.

Willis McLaury, "Overalls" (no. 756,396; April 5, 1904). Buttoned up outer side of leg to facilitate removal and donning.

Charles Fasoldt, "Overalls" (no. 765,156; July 12, 1904). Center back opening to eliminate side openings.

Georg Bucking VIII, "Overalls" (no. 785,590; March 21, 1905). Unique method of attaching straps to bib.

Frederick Dodshon, "Overalls" (no. 791,676; June 6, 1905). Construction details to create lowest production price.

Fredrick Brigham, "Overalls" (no. 815,068; March 13, 1906). Series of pockets for tools.

Robert Breckenridge, "Overalls" (no. 829,944; September 4, 1906). Use of a belt to keep side openings closed.

Leo Wise, assignor to Wise Brothers, "Overalls" (no. 900,050; September 19, 1908). Front and back bib for complete coverage.

William Cummings, assignor to Sweet, Orr and Company, "Overalls" (no. 905,796; December 1, 1908). Handkerchief and watch pocket on bib.

Seth Melasky, "Overalls" (no. 914,296; March 2, 1909). Detachable bib.

Tom and Joseph Pell, "Overalls" (no. 965,596; July 26, 1910). Detachable bib that could also be used as an apron.

Tom and Joseph Pell, "Overalls" (no. 1,007,969; November 7, 1911). Drop seat with strap arrangement to hold up bib.

William Matthews, "Bib for overalls" (no. 1,144,369; June 29, 1915). Interior bib pocket.
Hamilton Carhartt, Hamilton Carhartt, Jr., and Oscar Kratz, "Overalls" (no. 1,152,289; August 31, 1915). Construction details to increase durability.

Oscar Kratz, assignor to Hamilton Carhartt Manufacturing, "Overalls" (no. 1,152,323; August 31, 1915). Diamond-shaped overlap of shoulder straps at back.

Peter DeVoist, "Overalls" (no. 1,191,288; July 18, 1916). Reversible garment, front to back.

Charles Bartrum, assignor to Sweet, Orr and Company, "Overalls for women" (no. 1,208,715; December 12, 1916). Special overalls for women.

Andrew Carlson, "Overalls" (no. 1,293,700; February 11, 1919). Extra, removable knee patches.

Cyril Wetmore, "Overall-suspenders fastener" (no. 1,298,842; April 1, 1919). Clasp for removable suspenders.

Phillip Paxton, "Overalls" (no. 1,369,538; February 22, 1921). Method of making the lower leg fit snugly.

Merritt Logan, "Overalls-bib" (no. 1,375,163; April 19, 1921). Bib can be tucked into trousers.

Patrick Sheen, "Overalls" (no. 1,402,320; January 3, 1922). Method of securing lower legs around the ankle.

Carl Allen, "Overalls" (no. 1,410,541; March 28, 1922). Simplified construction of straps.

Charles Kroll, assignor to The Kroll Company, "Overalls" (no. 1,411,666; April 4, 1922). Manner of making straps that will stay flat.

Robert Hodge, assignor to American Buckle Company, "Overalls suspender loop" (no. 1,440,831; January 2, 1923). Metal clasp at front end of strap.

Walter Mastin, "Bib overalls" (no. 1,463,748; July 31, 1923). Way to prevent straps from chafing the wearer.

Charles Wood, "Overalls" (no. 1,477,925; December 18, 1923). Back pocket construction and placement.

George Beichl, "Overall suspender strap and method of manufacturing same" (no. 1,538,611; May 19, 1925). Slide at front end of strap.

LaFayette Baker, "Overalls" (no. 1,550,331; August 18, 1925). Pocket construction for greater strength.
William Hueseman, "Combined slide and button loop for overalls" (no. 1,569,019; January 12, 1926). Fastening system.

Forrest Ferguson, assignor to Wynne Ferguson, "Overalls" (no. 1,589,951; June 22, 1926). Facing in side openings.

Frederic Mahan, "Overalls" (no. 1,590,843; June 29, 1926). Overlapping bib sections front and back.

Stanley Sweet, assignor to Sweet, Orr and Company, "Bib pocket" (no. 1,645,502; October 11, 1927). Triangular bib pocket.

Alfred Johnson, "Overalls" (no. 1,664,512; April 3, 1928). Extra interior bib pockets.

Charles Williamson, "Bib construction for overalls" (no. 1,683,511; September 4, 1928). Bib pocket construction.

Louis Rosenthal, "Overalls" (no. 1,690,313; November 6, 1928). Construction of side openings.

Ralph Lee, assignor to The E.V. Benjamin Company, Inc., "Overall garment" (no. 1,718,051; June 18, 1929). Side pocket construction.

William Watkins, "Overalls with detachable pockets" (no. 1,764,483; June 17, 1930). Use of detachable pockets that can be replaced when worn out.

Erick Fellroth, "Overalls" (no. 1,785,580; December 16, 1930). Use of drop seat and belt.

Morris Sneider, assignor to The Maryland Company, "Overall garment" (no. 1,789,784; January 20, 1931). Method of attaching suspenders at back so that seat can be dropped.

Harold Martin, assignor to Everlastik Inc., "Overalls" (no. 1,793,708; February 24, 1931). Elastic insert at center of back.

Johan Johannesen, "Overalls" (no. 1,854,262; April 19, 1923). Full covering top portion with zipper openings.

Harry Jackson, assignor to H.W. Carter and Sons, "Overalls" (no. 1,888,086; November 15, 1932). Side pocket with openings in garment opening.

Charles Mosgrove, "Overall loop" (no. 1,890,692; December 13, 1932). Metal clasp for front end of straps.

Charles Mosgrove "Overall loop" (no. 1,916,010; June 27, 1933). Metal clasp for front end of straps.
Cecil Garrett and Eugene Lockwood, assignors to High Point Overall Company, "Overall garment" (no. 2,016,897; October, 1935). Reinforced back construction.


Fred Lucas, "Overalls" (no. 2,084,208; June 15, 1937). Improved bib construction.

Charles Wittmack, assignor to Oshkosh B'Gosh, Inc., "Overall" (no. 2,132,668; October 11, 1938). Reinforced bib construction.

Austin Plimpton, assignor to Interstate Sales Corp., "Overalls" (no. 2,269,380; January 6, 1942). Snap or zipper closure at lower edge of leg.

British patents

Keene, Charles Keene. "Improvements in boots, shoes, gaiters, overalls..." (British patent no. 10,692; May 1845).

Welch, Joseph and John Margetson. "Improvement in the manufacture of traveling cases, wrappers, and certain articles of dress..." (British patent no. 17; January 1853).
**APPENDIX H**

**LIST OF MANUFACTURERS CONTACTED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Name</th>
<th>Contact Person</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>City, State, Zip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berco Inc.</td>
<td>Ron Nussbaum</td>
<td>104 E. Main St., Berne, IN 60607</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Bell Inc.</td>
<td>Robert Gregory</td>
<td>335 Church St., Greensboro, NC 27401</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Inc.</td>
<td>Gene Case</td>
<td>Industrial Park Dr., Olive Hill, KY 41164</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lee Apparel Co., Inc.</td>
<td>Fred Rowan</td>
<td>9001 W. 67th St., Merriam, KS 66202</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawnee Garment Mfg. Co.</td>
<td>Jim Antosh</td>
<td>P.O. Box 216, Shawnee, OK 74802</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tareyton Corporation</td>
<td>Alan Cone</td>
<td>P.O. Box 29346, Greensboro, NC 27429</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamson-Dickie Mfg. Co.</td>
<td>Steven Lefler</td>
<td>P.O. Box 1779, Ft. Worth, TX 76101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Smith Inc./Gemini Marketing</td>
<td>Peter Lebowitz</td>
<td>526 Howard St., Carthage, MO 64836</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carhartt, Inc.</td>
<td>Mark Valade</td>
<td>One Parklane Blvd, P.O. Box 600, Dearborn, MI 48126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The L.C. King Mfg. Co., Inc.</td>
<td>Jack King</td>
<td>P.O. Box 367, Bristol, TN 37621</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OshKosh B'Gosh, Inc.</td>
<td>C.F. Hyde</td>
<td>112 Otter Ave., P.O. Box 300, Oshkosh, WI 54901</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet-Orr &amp; Co., Inc.</td>
<td>Arnold Ginsburg</td>
<td>1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal Overall Co.</td>
<td>Sanford Eckerling</td>
<td>1060 W. Vanburen St., Chicago, IL 60607</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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APPENDIX I

FORM LETTER SENT TO MANUFACTURERS

April 15, 1992

Mr. Fred Rowan
The Lee Apparel Company, Inc.
9001 W. 67th Street
Merriam, KS 66202

Dear Mr. Rowan;

Would The Lee Apparel Company like to be able to let the world know its part in the beginnings of the 130-plus-year history of bib overalls? This could happen if your company archives hold documents about company history, patterns, prototypes, or advertising materials giving clues to the origin, development, and wearers of bib overalls, through 1945.

I am a graduate student at Iowa State University, in Ames, working on my master's degree in Textiles and Clothing. The history of bib overalls, from 1825 through 1945, is the topic of my thesis. Bib overalls, part of the working-class wardrobe, have been overlooked by costume historians for years. The archives of The Lee Apparel Company could contribute to groundbreaking research of this garment.

In return for your cooperation, I will send a summary report of the findings to your company. The information could be put to use in advertising campaigns, annual reports or any manner your company chooses, so long as my department and I are given credit as being the source of information.

Would your company's archival documents and historic artifacts be available for research sometime between June 15 and August 14, 1992? Since I must plan a travel agenda, please reply with the enclosed postcard before May 8, 1992. If I have not heard from you by May 8, I will call you the following week (May 11 through 15) to gather the information requested.

Sincerely,

Ann R. Hemken
APPENDIX J

REPLY POSTCARD SENT WITH MANUFACTURERS' LETTERS

BIB OVERALL MANUFACTURER'S REPLY
Name of company:
Name of contact person:
Title:
Address:
Phone number:

Yes, our company archives hold the following, which are earlier than 1945:

___ Existing bib overalls.
___ Advertising materials or trade catalogs related to bib overalls.
___ Patterns and/or prototypes of bib overalls.
___ Documents related to bib overalls and company history.
___ Our archives are available for study between June 15 and August 14, 1992. Most convenient dates would be _____________.
___ No, our archives do not contain materials that would be useful in this study.

Textiles and Clothing
140 LeBaron Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011-1120

Ann Hemken
College of Family and Consumer Sciences
Department of Textiles & Clothing
140 LeBaron Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011-1120
APPENDIX K

LIST OF ADDITIONAL COMPANIES AND PRODUCT NAMES

Bread Winner Overall—Burlington, VT
Brotherhood Overalls—Dover, NJ
Carter's
Conductor Brand
Cones Boss
Crown Overall Co.
W.M. Finck & Co.—Detroit, MI
Fitz
Headlight Overalls—Larned Carter & Co., Cincinnati, OH
Kiddyalls
Liberty Manufacturing
Payday
Reliance Manufacturing Co.
Tennessee Overalls
Union Overall Mfg. Co.—Albuquerque, NM