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http://www.coatsandclark.com/our_company/history.htm
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THE HISTORY OF COATS & CLARK

Coats & Clark is part of the largest textile/thread manufacturing company in the world with products sold in over 150 countries. It has operated for over 180 years with its start in Paisley, Scotland - where weavers had begun reproducing the rare Kashmir shawls of India. There the Clark family had a thriving loom equipment business and sold silk threads for the warp on the looms.

In 1806, Napoleon blockaded Great Britain and silk was no longer available. Patrick Clark¹ created a method of twisting cotton yarns together to produce a thread which was so strong and smooth that it could be substituted for the silk. It was discovered soon after that this cotton thread was sufficiently strong to replace the linen and silk threads used for hand sewing as well. The Clarks opened the first factory for making cotton sewing thread in 1812.²

[“In 1817, John Clark junior, the grandson of William Clark (fn: brother of James and Patrick), started the firm of John Clark, Junior & Co. at the Mile End Mill, in Glasgow.”³⁴]

A few years later [1819] another cotton thread mill was opened by James Coats. His sons, James & Peter, continued producing thread under the name of J. & P. Coats.⁵

By the 1840's, both companies had family members in America acting as selling agents. In 1864, George and William Clark, grandsons of James Clark, opened a cotton thread mill in Newark, New Jersey. Five years later, the Coats family began manufacturing thread in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

¹ Margery Waite Bigelow's Gr-Gr-Gr-Uncle

² This was opened by Patrick's brother James, and James's sons James and John, at Sneddon, according to "Six Cord Thread: The Story of Coats and Clarks Paisley Threadmills," p. 123, obtained from the Paisley, Scotland library.

³ "Six Cord Thread: The Story of Coats and Clarks Paisley Threadmills," p. 16, obtained from the Paisley, Scotland library.

⁴ In her 1877 autobiography Jane Ivison states that her grandmother Anne Lockhead's (m. to John Clark) grandsons still continue the business, known as Clark Mile End, having removed to this suburb of Glasgow. It's not clear whether Jane Ivison had her grandfather, John Clark, confused with her Gr-Uncle William Clark's grandson John who started the Mile End business, or if her grandmother's grandsons had joined the business.

⁵ "In 1819 the two brothers [James and John, sons of James] formed the firm of J. & J. Clark taking over their father's thread mills at Seedhill." "Six Cord Thread: The Story of Coats and Clarks Paisley Threadmills," p. 16, obtained from the Paisley, Scotland library.

Before Elias Howe's invention of the sewing machine in 1846, thread was usually made of three cords and was used for hand sewing. The thread had a glazed finish and was too wiry and uneven for machine use. Twenty years later, George Clark developed a six-cord, soft finished thread. This thread, the first ever suitable for machine use, revolutionized the sewing industry, and therefore he called it "Our New Thread." This became known as O.N.T., originating the still famous trademark for the Clark Thread Company product.

In 1896, the Coats' and the Clark's interests were consolidated however they retained separate identities. The Spool Cotton Company became the sole selling agent for both companies.

The progress and growth of the business in America was also due to supplementary articles such as crochet, darning, knitting and embroidery cottons and product improvements. O.N.T. was the first genuinely fast black thread and the first American brand of sewing, crochet and embroidery cotton to be offered in a large range of beautiful colors actually fast to boiling.

In 1952 J. & P. Coats and the Clark Thread Co. merged to become Coats & Clark Inc.

Coats & Clark has always been known as a company that maintains ongoing research in product development. As new fibers, fabrics, and finishes are developed, Coats & Clark tests the compatibility of existing products and, if necessary, creates new ones. One of Coats & Clark's major thread developments was the creation of a cotton-covered polyester core thread in the 1960's. The cotton/polyester construction provides the best characteristics of both fibers making it compatible with new fibers and fabrics which had entered the market. Coats Dual Duty Plus® is today the number one selling all purpose thread in the home sewing market.

Prior to 1935, Coats & Clark companies in the United States sold a wide range of cotton threads and handicraft products but no wool yarns. An agreement was reached with Patons & Baldwins a British manufacturer of knitting yarns to make yarn in the United States which would be marketed through the Spool Cotton Company. Red Heart® Yarn was first sold in September 1936.

Under the Red Heart® trademark, the hand knitting wool yarns grew steadily in popularity, attaining a high reputation for quality. Distribution of the yarn was aided by the introduction of pattern books which provided consumers with fashionable project instructions. Two major innovations were the introduction of our first 100% acrylic yarn in 1959 and the release of super saver 'no-dye-lot' yarn in 1987. Today numerous hand knitting and craft yarns are being sold under the Red Heart® brand. Known for their quality and performance, Red Heart® yarns are the number one brand in the United States.

Over the years the product range has expanded to additionally include specialty Threads, Zippers, Tapes & Trims, Needlework Accessories, specialty Hand Knitting and Craft Yarns, Crochet Threads and Embroidery Floss. Today major brands include Dual Duty Plus®, Red Heart®, TLC®, Anchor®, J & P Coats®, South Maid®, Susan Bates®, and Aunt Lydia®.

Coats & Clark's ability to adapt to the times, and its dedication to quality has secured for it the position as a leader in the home sewing and needlecraft industry.