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**Flexibility, an Emple watchword,
also spells sweater sales success**



View of the 60,000 square feet Emple Knitting Mills plant on the outskirts of Brewer, Maine.

Flexibility, an Emple watchword, also spells sweater sales success

By Benn Ollman

BREWER, Maine—Emple Knitting Mills has devoted nearly all of the years since its founding in 1927 to serving the men's and boys' wholesale sweater trade. And its management has no plans for changing directions now or in the foreseeable future, according to company president Karl Nass and Samuel Rolsky, its treasurer.

"We have stuck with the wholesalers all this time. Some have been our customers since the early '30s. At present more than 50 wholesalers in all parts of the country look to us for their sweater and knit shirt merchandise," says Mr. Nass.

Flexibility, the key word here through these years, describes the Emple operation even more accurately now than it did back in the company's early days. Providing the wholesaler's sweater and knit shirt needs calls for working intimately with them as they strive to stay abreast of the gyrating fashion world from season to season. It also means being able to offer styling guidance to wholesalers to keep them competitive.

And on the manufacturing level, it means planning ahead to set up long production runs of styles and numbers by combining orders from different customers to hold down costs.

"We research and initiate new styles and designs for those of our customers who want this service," Mr. Nass noted. "And we also knit garments for wholesalers who would rather utilize their own design capability. We do it both ways in order to accommodate the customers."

Most of Emple's wholesaler accounts come to the Brewer plant to confer and work directly with staffers in planning their lines. "One big advantage they find in coming here," says Mr. Nass, "is that they are able to check out the items as soon as they are completed. They have no long, time consuming waits to start production once the first samples are okayed."

Emple's old-timers recall when production was dominated by the output of heavy wool shaker sweaters, cardigans and pullovers; when they encountered only a hand-

ful of color and style changes each season. They remember when Emple was a heavy producer of hockey caps prior to branching into award and then dress sweaters.

Recapping the activity of last year, Mr. Nass reports that wool alpaca sweaters and Wintuks mounted as the 'jacket look' gained favor. Heavy zippers on jacquards were also important and are expected to show increasing strength. Collar shirts and plackets and sleeveless crew neck shirts made a strong comeback, accounting for a heavy portion of the year's knit output. Geometrics, patterns and jacquard work moved up, as did the demand for ski sweaters.

And an increasing clamor for high fashion colors was noted. High fashion colors such as raspberry, lilac and melon took on new importance.

One major change is being instituted at Emple this year: a spring line has been added.

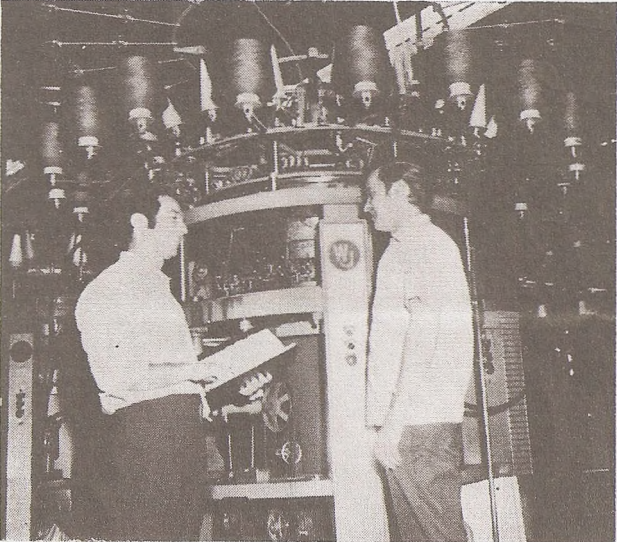
"This will be our first year with a special line of spring goods," Mr. Nass notes. "It reflects a noticeable change



Board chairman Mrs. Mollie C. Emple checks some new items with vice-president of sales Jerry Williams.



In the Emple sample room. Karl Ness, left, company president and treasurer Samuel Rolsky examine some new garments.



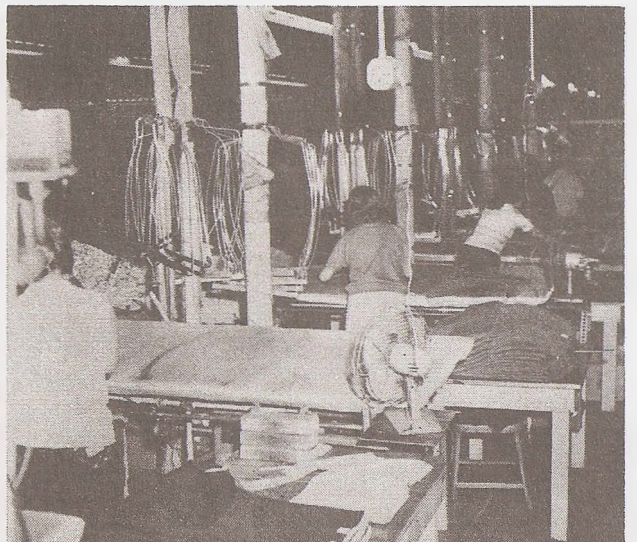
David Adelman, left, talks over production matters with knitting foreman. Wildman Jacquard machine shown here is used for production of tubular knit fabric for golf sweaters.



Knitter mechanics setting up the Bentley full-fashioning machines in the Emple plant.



All knitted fabrics produced here are washed to take out initial shrinkage, eliminate oil content and improve the hand of the end product.



The Emple finishing department is a busy place.

Skilled operators at work in the cutting room using band knives to cut sleeves.

Each garment is individually inspected before shipping. Here Mrs. Beatrice Robinson, a supervisor, and production vice-president David Adelman examine a garment.

In the packing department. Some of the garments are shipped in boxes and others in bulk, according to customer requirements.



in the pattern of retail and wholesale buying. Merchants have been tending to buy much closer to their actual requirements and fashions move so swiftly that we found it necessary to bring out a spring line."

The present Emple plant was completed and occupied 11 years ago. A single level, 60,000 square foot building, it was designed to bring raw materials in one door and the finished products out the other in a U-shaped work flow.

The firm had its beginnings in 1927 in neighboring Bangor. The original four-story building had proven too small to handle its owners' plans for expansion and introduction of modern production methods and equipment. Situated on a large lot on the edge of town, Emple now has plenty of land available for any future growth it may enjoy.

According to production vice president David Adelman, all knit fabrics produced here are washed before being converted into garments. "Washing takes out the initial shrinkage," he says. "It also eliminates the oil content that is found in some yarn blends delivered here and it bulks out better, giving us a fluffier hand on our finished garments."

The roster of 200 employes works on a one-shift basis, except for its knitting department which operates two and one-half shifts daily. Each department, says Mr. Adelman, has a production goal of 1200 dozen garments per week.

