



FROM TIP
TO TOE

THE ESSENTIAL
MEN'S WARDROBE

gestalten

FILSON



In the summer of 1896 gold was found at the confluence of the Yukon and Klondike rivers in the northwest of Canada, close to the Alaskan border. Due to the remoteness of the area, it took months for the news to finally reach the towns in the Pacific Northwest. One of these towns was Seattle.

More than a century before it became known for the nineties grunge explosion and the Seahawks, the city was a working-class town with a strong lumber industry and vicious labor conflicts. This changed rapidly after the discovery of gold and the mass migration to the region that started what's now known as the Klondike Gold Rush. Seattle became the main supply point for tens of thousands of people trekking northwards to seek their fortune. That very few of





them actually returned with gold did not seem to stop anyone.

One of the men who took an arguably more sensible approach to the gold fever was C.C. Filson, a former railroad conductor who had settled in Seattle in the late nineteenth century. He started what was officially called C.C. Filson's Pioneer Alaska Clothing and Blanket Manufacturers in 1897, right on time to provide the fortune seekers with the goods they needed to weather the cold, rugged climate they would be facing. Besides being able to keep someone warm, it speaks for itself that the construction and quality of these goods needed to be durable if not almost indestructible: temperatures in the Yukon can drop to -30 degrees Celsius in winter, combined with snow and an almost unbearable icy wind. Providing the prospectors with goods that could protect them properly was not a matter of comfort or style, but a matter of life and death in these conditions.

Using his own mill, he produced blankets and clothing from Mackinaw wool, as well as boots and sleeping bags. Often Filson would provide custom-made items, based on his customers' needs and requests. This custom is also reflected in the lifetime guarantee policy the company upholds until this day.

After only a few years the Gold Rush stopped in its tracks, but Filson was still able to capitalize on its good name and service. The state of Washington depended heavily on the logging and timber industry, which was also in need of clothing that had to live up to a high standard of



toughness and durability. In this era one of the staples of the brand was created—the Filson Cruiser. The 100 percent wool jacket was made to provide warmth, protection from the ever-present rain in the area, and plenty of storage room. To this day the Cruiser remains a best seller and one of their signature items.

From these early days onward, the small local company grew to national fame, providing outdoorsmen with everything they could possibly need all across the USA and Canada. By the 1960s, the Filson family had built up the brand to a household name in the Western hemisphere.

A change in the company came in 1981, when Stan Kohls acquired the company. Formerly a maker of skiwear, Kohls expanded the product line but was adamant to keep the quality and authenticity Filson was known for. For example, Velcro had been around since the late fifties, but he refused to incorporate it in the company's products. Anyone who grew up in the eighties (and experienced Velcro's omnipresence at the time firsthand) can probably attest to the fact that this was a fairly radical choice to make.

Besides being a brand that was primarily focused on functionality, Filson moved in and out of fashion over the last few decades. The rugged, quintessential American aesthetic was adapted by anyone from the late sixties Laurel Canyon country rock/folk scene to the aforementioned Seattle grunge explosion in the nineties, to the more recent revival of heritage and workwear fueled by bloggers and urban outdoorsmen worldwide.

Filson embraced this latest renaissance completely. Besides expanding their product line even more to include things like watches and leisurewear, a defining example of this is the amount of collaborations the brand released in the past few years. A collection with Levi's was released in 2010, combining two classic giants of American clothing into an almost defining point in the heritage revival. More followed soon after: a collection of shoes with Vans, camera bags with photography cooperative Magnum and even bicycles and watches made by Detroit-based manufacturer Shinola.

Even after more than 12 decades, Filson as a company proves to be as resilient and long lasting as their products.





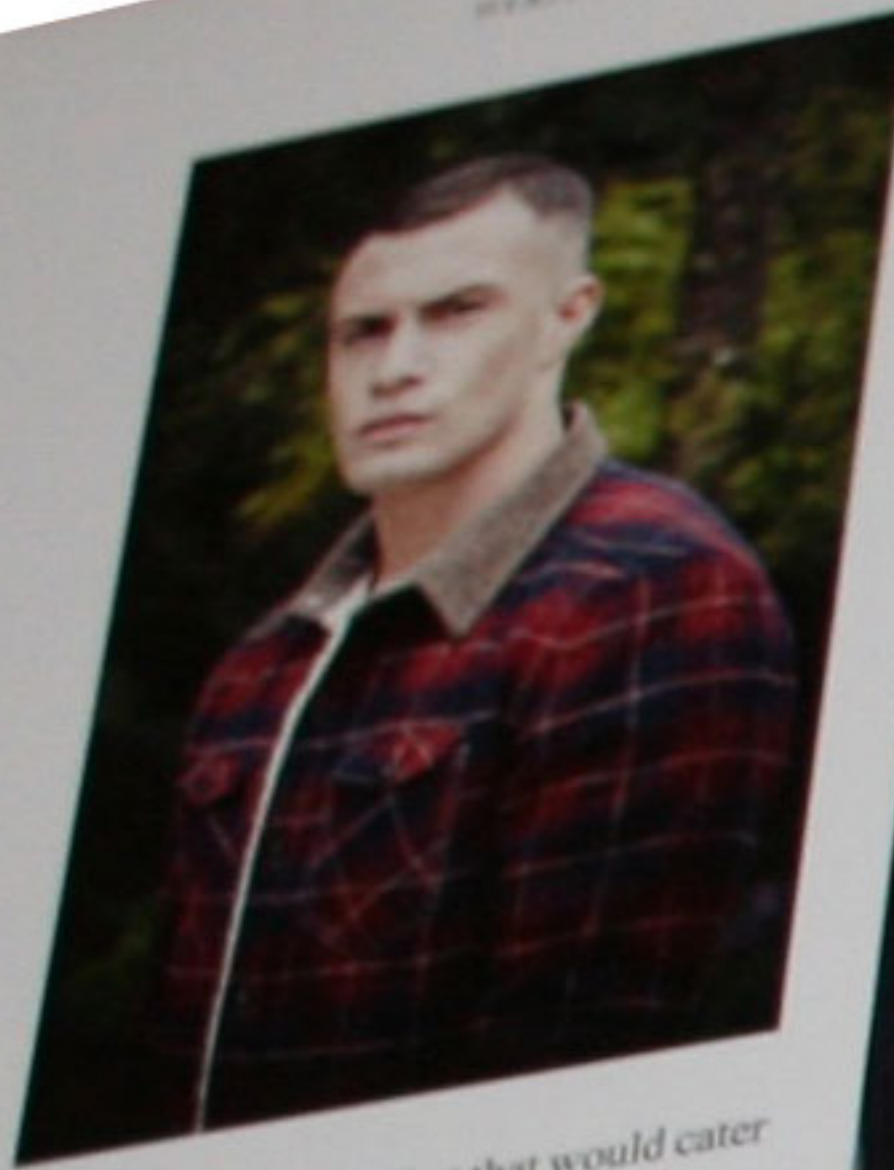
SCHOTT NYC

Ever wondered who was responsible for putting a zipper on your jacket to close it? Or who was responsible for the practical design of that motorcycle jacket you own? That would be Irving Schott, who started his own company manufacturing jackets in 1913 on New York's Lower East Side.

Irving and his brother Jack were the sons of Russian immigrants who came to the United States looking to build a future in the late nineteenth century. The brothers started out making raincoats, which they would sell door to door around the city. Convinced his name would sound "too Jewish" for his customers, he initially decided to name his jackets after his favorite brand of cigars—the Perfecto.

After being introduced by a family friend to Harley Davidson Motorcycles, which were just becoming more widely available after the First World War, Irving





started to develop a jacket that would cater to the growing group of bike enthusiasts.

Riding a motorcycle obviously needs more protection than any other type of vehicle and prior to Schott no wool jacket was able to provide adequate protection against the wind while riding at high speeds. The leather jackets that were available did not provide enough comfort and flexibility for the bike's riding position.

Schott made some revolutionary adjustments—first of all the zipper. While the modern zipper first came on the market in 1913, it was mostly just confined to military use because of high costs. When its use became more widespread, the prices went down and Schott realized he could use the new technology on consumer jackets. The use of the zipper and the diagonal placement on the jacket solved the main problem for motorcycle riders—the piercing wind.

Because the design of the jacket was purely functional, it looked fairly out of place at the time and it took a good two decades before the jacket really cemented its place in the modern pop cultural lexicon. That was the moment Marlon Brando's 1953 film *The Wild One* came out. Brando plays Johnny, the leader of the Black Rebels Motorcycle Club terrorizing a small California town. Wearing his snug black Perfecto jacket he is the ultimate version of rebel cool, inspiring generations of actors, rock stars, and artists. Interestingly enough, sales actually went down during this period due to schools around the US



introducing a ban on the jacket because of the hoodlum image it projected.

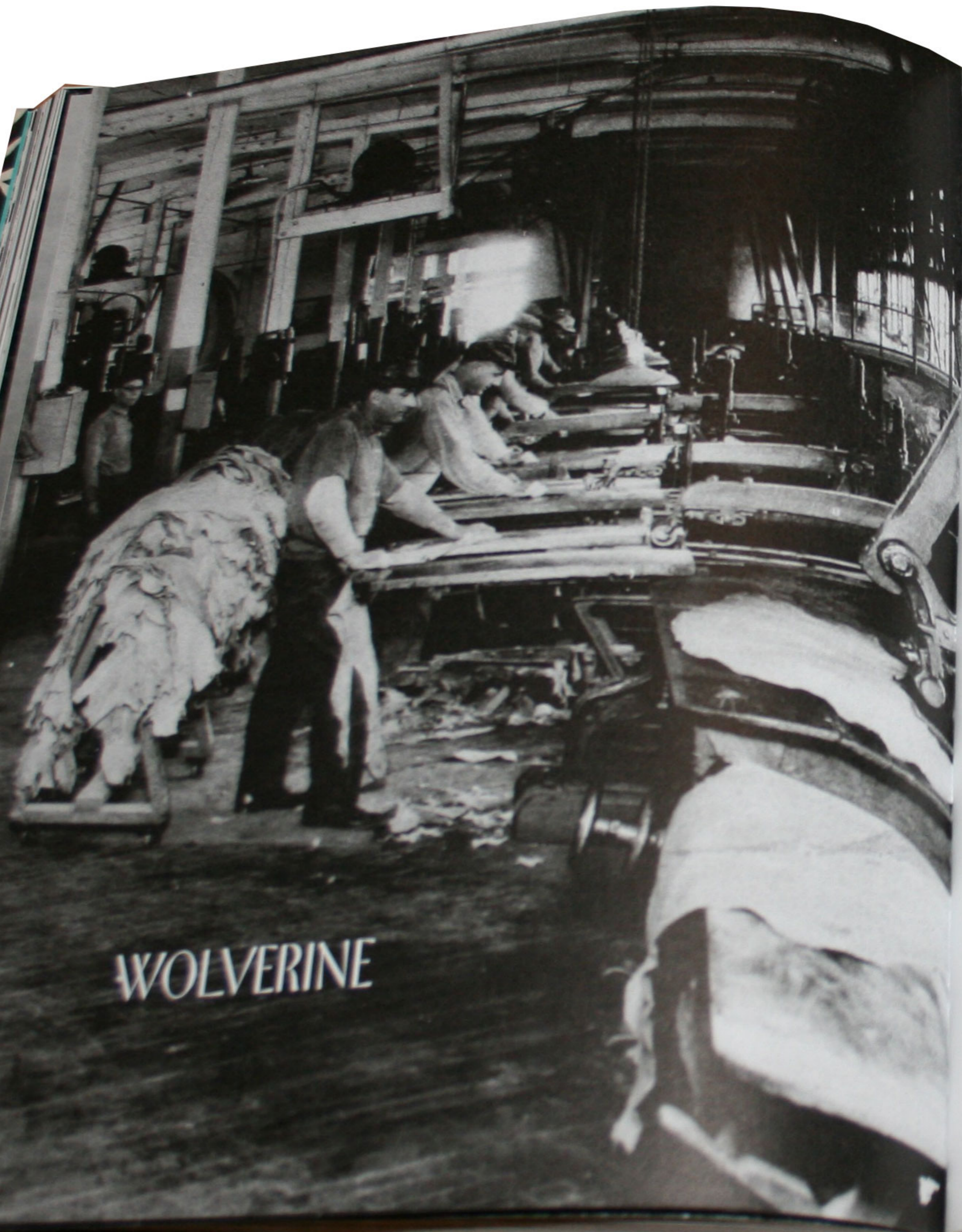
A similar sudden explosion of popularity came a few years later when Peter Fonda wore a Café Racer style Schott jacket in counter-culture classic *Easy Rider*. The snug leather jacket with the stand-up collar that Fonda's character wore throughout the road movie became one of the company's most popular styles. The light-brown suede jacket with the western-style fringes that co-star Dennis Hopper wears throughout the film is also made by Schott.

Besides the classic Perfecto Motorcycle jacket, Schott became well known in a completely different field too—the military. When the US got involved in the Second World War after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the company was asked to develop a "bomber" jacket for the Air Force fighting in the battlegrounds

of Europe and the Pacific. Made from sheepskin leather with wool lining, the jacket was perfect for colder climates. A somewhat more lightweight fighter jacket was designed for pilots flying in warmer climates, most notably worn by the Tuskegee Airmen. For the servicemen on deck Schott produced the classic melton wool pea coats, still a staple in menswear to this day. Founder Irving's son Mel Schott even served in Iwo Jima, receiving a Purple Heart for his service. When he returned after the war, he joined his father in the business.

In the seventies, the Perfecto was adopted again by a whole new generation. Bruce Springsteen wears the jacket on the cover of his classic *Born To Run* album, as do the Ramones on their 1976 debut album. The rebellious spirit of the jacket lives on as does the company, which is still going strong to this day.

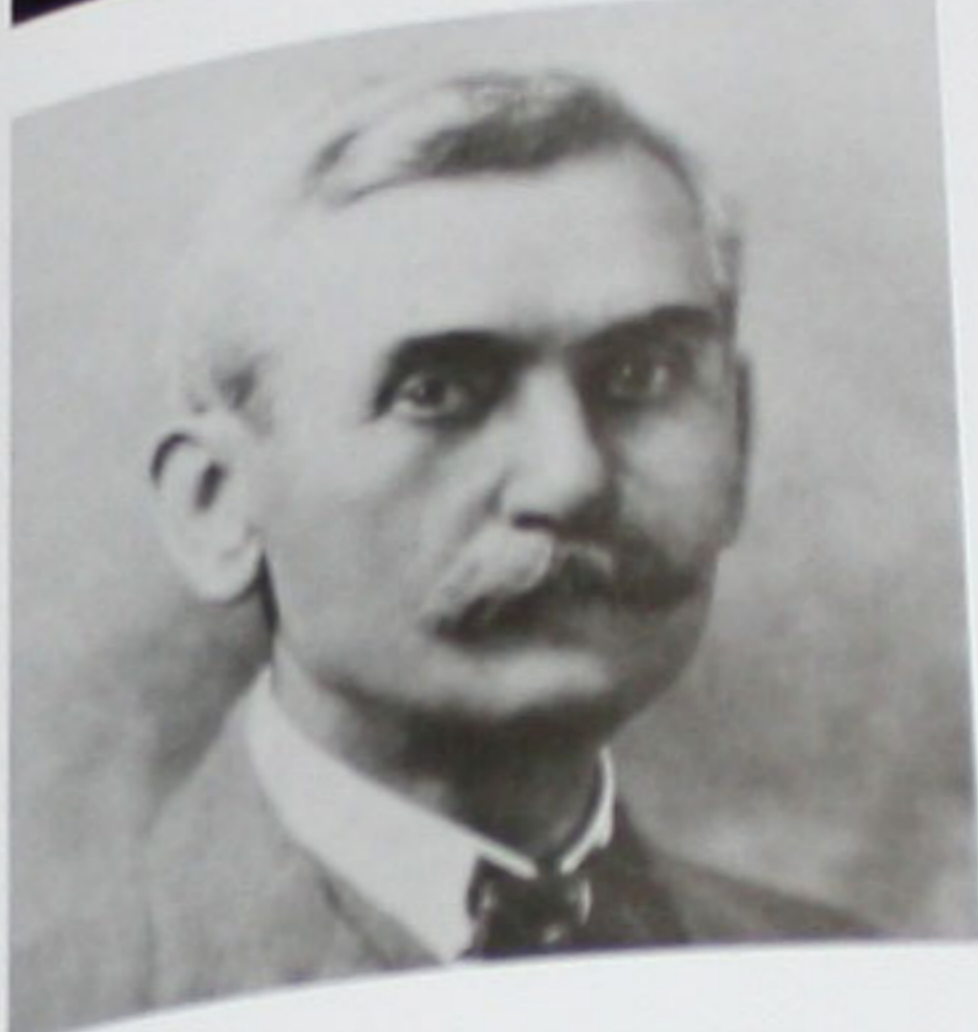




WOLVERINE



HERITAGE



Even though the Wolverine company was officially founded in 1883, its history can be traced back as far as Prussia in the early nineteenth century. After fighting in the Napoleonic Wars, Valentin Krause returned to his home country and started a tannery. His son Henry was brought into the family business and learned the trade from his father before following the lead of many others at the time and making the trek westward to America.

Henry settled in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Inspired by the gristmill of the town's founder John Allen and many other mills started by fellow immigrants in the surrounding area, Henry used the lessons he learned in his father's company to start his own successful leather tannery.

Keeping the family tradition alive, Henry's son G.A. also grew up immersed in his father's company. Watching the award-winning tannery grow and expand

to a shoe store and boot factory, G.A. eventually partnered with his uncle Fred Hirth to start the Hirth-Krause Company in 1883. Initially offering wholesale leather goods and supplies, the start of this company turned out to be the official beginning of Wolverine.

Eighteen years later G.A. Krause set his sights on the small Michigan town of Rockford, establishing a power company to provide the town with electricity throughout the day. Following this achievement, G.A. and his sons opened a shoe factory on the banks of the Rogue River, producing 300 pairs of work shoes daily and eventually selling them under the "Wolverine" brand name.

When production grew, it made sense for the company to be able to produce their own leather and in 1908 the Wolverine Tanning Company was established. Years of research went into perfecting the process of tanning Shell Cordovan horsehide—a tough but long-wearing leather. Because of this, the company was able to produce such a high-quality product that survival was guaranteed, even with the Great Depression coming up. Wolverine managed to keep the factories running all the way through the thirties.

In the following two decades, Wolverine moved away from horsehide leather for two reasons. First of all, it signed a contract with the US military to develop pigskin gloves, creating their own patented line of machines to optimize the skinning process.

Secondly, with the tractor and car becoming more common in daily life, there were simply a lot fewer horses around. These reasons forced the company to be creative and find new ways to use the softer pigskin leather, and to need to broaden its horizons led to another success story when the company created a soft, casual shoe made of a newly developed suede leather—the Hush Puppies brand was born.

Introduced when post-war suburbia was growing in the US, it turned out to be the perfect shoe for a new generation. During the sixties and seventies, one-in-ten American males owned a pair of Hush Puppies, according to brand lore. The crepe sole on the shoes even apparently saved Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards from electrocution when his guitar and an ungrounded microphone made contact. Like many stories about the man from that era, this might well be just an urban legend.

Even after a hundred years of business, Wolverine never rested on its laurels toward the end of the twentieth century. Besides still producing its signature work boots and Hush Puppies, the company expanded by acquiring the license to produce industrial footwear for Caterpillar. In addition, they acquired a wide range of smaller shoe producers, including some American classics such as Sebago, Sperry Top-Sider, Keds, and Saucony. They also hold the license to produce footwear under the Harley Davidson brand name.