

The Trademarking of Textiles

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There seems to be widespread belief that the trademark is a product of twentieth century industrialism—a concomitant of the era of packaged goods—a development which has made possible the elimination of the old fashioned barrel in favor of beautiful trademarked boxes.

But as a matter of fact archæology and governmental statute testify that the trademark dates back thousands of years; that it is the expression of man's earliest impulse of pride in his handiwork, and a desire to identify that work as his own.

For example, Roman pottery from Byzantine times has been unearthed which reveals that even in those days it was the practice for the artisan to put his mark on his goods. Before people generally knew how to read and write, these marks took the form of distinctive shapes or symbols which could be identified even by the most ignorant. The crests of nobility, in themselves nothing more than trademarks, were often a source of inspiration for craftsmen's marks.

It would seem, however, that England was the first country to recognize in the idea of the trademark a means for protecting not merely the maker of the goods, but also for protecting the purchaser. As far back as 1266, a law was enacted in the English Parliament that "every baker shall have a mark (signum) of his own for each sort of bread." In this way the public would know what kind of loaf it was purchasing. Therefore, the trademarked product has long been diametrically opposed to the rule of "caveat emptor." "Let the buyer beware" is superseded by the thoroughly modern doctrine of "We guarantee" when a manufacturer places his trademark on his goods.

Advertising an Incentive to Trademarking

This much is true, however, that whereas the origin of the trademark can be traced back thousands of years, there is no question that it has enjoyed its greatest development during the last seventy-five or hundred years, and

especially during the last twenty-five years. No better indication of this is necessary than the fact that not until 1870 did the Federal Government find it necessary to set up a Registration Bureau to protect the owners of a trademark against counterfeit and fraud.

One element in the growth of the trademark has been the development of advertising as an important factor in modern business. Unless it is possible for the consumer to identify the product he has seen advertised, at the point of purchase, substitution may dissipate entirely the value of the advertising to the manufacturer.

It has been said that the textile industry has been one of the slowest to adopt the principle of trademarking generally. Even assuming this to be true, it is not difficult to understand why. It is a simple matter, let us say, to put a pound of coffee into a can, place a trademark on that can and build up a consumer demand for that brand. It is another matter to find an effective means of trademarking bolts of cloth, some of which is sold over the counter by the yard, and some of which is made up into unidentifiable articles of wearing apparel by another manufacturer. Furthermore, as we shall see a little later on in this article, until the dawn of this century there was really no practical and economical means for applying trademarks to textiles.

With the development of practical methods of applying trademarks, in recent years trademarking has made considerable headway in the textile industry. Hosiery manufacturers and jobbers, it is true, lead the field in this respect, but this is natural when it is considered that the limitations of trademarking described above would not apply with such force to hosiery. At the same time, manufacturers of hosiery have not been the only ones to adopt the practice of trademarking. Silk and rayon manufacturers, woolen manufacturers one after the other have come into the fold, and are using trademarks on their goods in various ways. And since the dawn of a new era for the cotton goods industry, manufac-

turers of such goods too have seen the light, and it is safe to say that hardly a day passes without another cotton goods mill taking the initiative and deciding to trademark its fabrics.

Thus one manufacturer put a new cloth on the market and advertised it widely, yet it did not seem to make the headway expected of it. Experimental shopping in retail stores for this

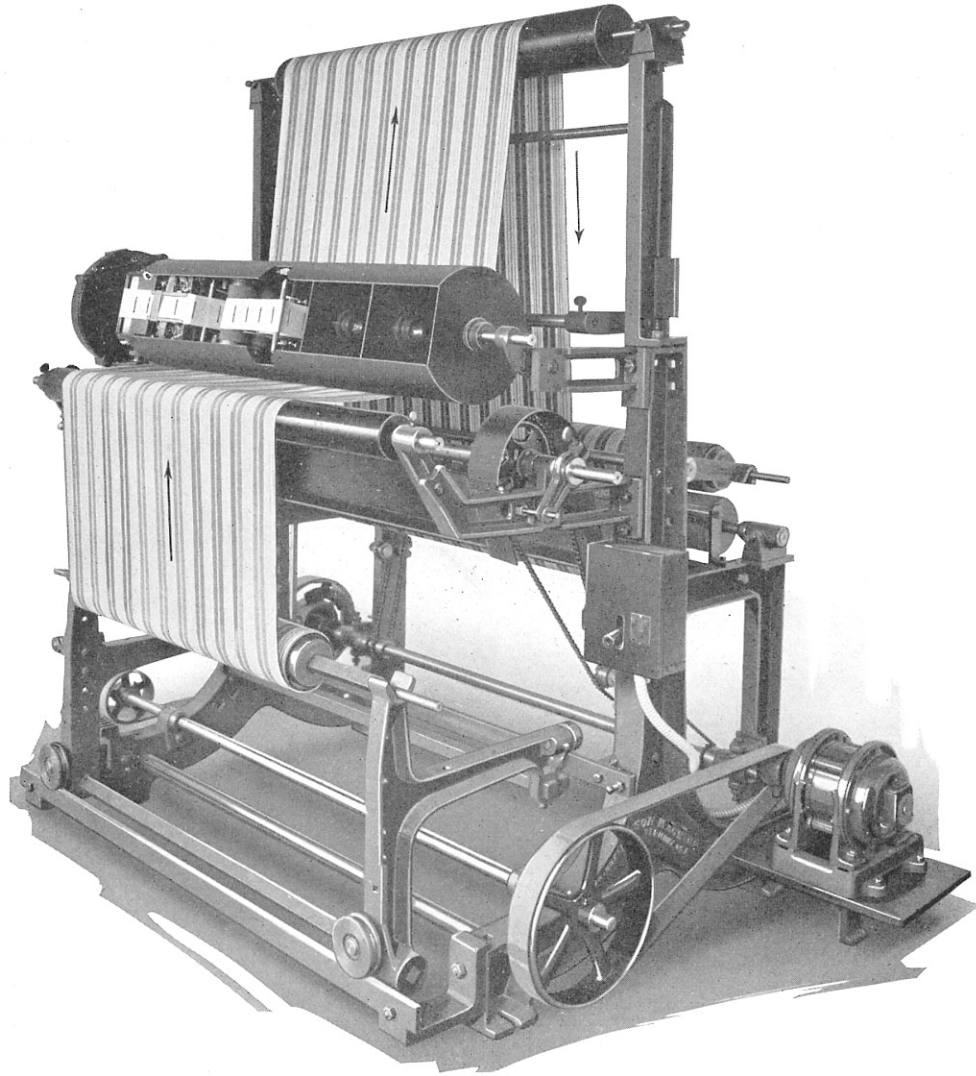


Illustration 1

The Transferotor—this machine takes the goods from the roll or batch in front, trademarks them on the selvage and rolls them up again in the rear. The most generally used machine among makers and finishers of silks, rayons and cotton goods. Can also be provided with measuring attachment when desired.

Why Textile Manufacturers Trade-mark

There are many reasons for this change in sentiment—many reasons why manufacturers are now finding it profitable to trademark their goods.

cloth by name, revealed the fact that in at least 50% of the purchases, the cloth of competitors had been substituted. By placing his trademark at intervals along the selvage of his cloth, this manufacturer made such substitution impossible in the future.

For over 15 years more than half the production of a large hosiery mill had been sold to a certain jobber. Suddenly this jobber transferred his account to another manufacturer. The mill owner, stranded with a huge production for which there was no outlet, determined that not another pair of stockings would leave his plant without his trademark.

After using a trademark on some of his goods for a period of several years, one manufacturer decided to find out for himself whether it was worth the trouble. The results of his investigation astonished even himself, as he discovered that goods which did not bear his mark neither enjoyed the ready sale nor brought as high a price as inferior goods branded with his trademark.

Not the least important reason for this change in the attitude of the textile industry toward the principle of trademarking has been the fact that it has been only during the last 25 years that any real progress has been made in providing the manufacturer with a suitable, economical means of applying the trademark to his goods.

Better Methods of Trademarking Developed

For example, the early attempts to mark hosiery were by means of wooden blocks, similar to those used in calico printing, but the designs were necessarily very crude. The rubber stamps and brass dies were developed then. These were an improvement over the wooden blocks but neither of them permits the employment of intricate designs because the inks used in these methods are inefficient. A quick drying ink will avoid blur or offset but its solvent evaporates so quickly that it gums the pad and clogs the die. To avoid these objections the ink must contain an ingredient to prevent rapid deterioration, but this is equally objectionable because the mark on the hosiery will be slow to dry; hence it will easily offset or blur unless the goods are spread out on a table, obviously an inefficient procedure. Furthermore, with this process it is practicable to use only pigments.

Another method of marking, developed in Germany, is the decalcomania or wet transfer, similar to the little picture decalcomanias fa-

miliar to children. The "hosiery decal" as it is popularly known, is supposed to have a certain brilliancy but its disadvantages are many.

It is difficult to apply. In application it must be moistened with water which frequently spots the hose. It is slow and frequently leaves an unsightly ring of sizing or glue around the mark on the hosiery. As a result this method today is practically obsolete in this country.

The development of a method similar to the decalcomania in principle has proved to be the solution of the trademarking problem of the entire textile industry. This, too, is a transfer method, but it is applied, not with water, like the decal, but with heat. This system is known as the dry transfer method.

The dry transfer method of trademarking overcomes every disadvantage of ink stamping, hosiery decals and other methods. Unlike the wet decalcomania which is applied in three operations, the dry transfer is applied in only one operation. It is simplicity itself. The operator simply picks up the transfer from the box or draws it from the reel and presses it on the hosiery with a hot iron.

The application of dry transfers is so simple that in comparison with decals the operator can apply them by hand from 3 to 10 times faster—from 960 to 1,200 per hour. A number of machines have been invented for the application of transfers to hosiery, but to date the hand application method is used in most mills. There is a machine on the market which facilitates this operation and permits a speed greater than hand work. There are many other advantages of the dry transfer. It cannot possibly be re-transferred by unscrupulous dealers, to an inferior product. Furthermore, it holds so firmly to the fabric that the roughest sort of handling will neither mar nor obliterate it.

The Development of the Dry Transfer

During the last 25 years the dry transfer method of marking has been developed to a point where it answers every requirement of marking in the textile industry. Machines have been invented which make the cost negligible, inasmuch as the mark is applied as part of another operation. Inks have been evolved

that take care of the most unusual situations and problems in connection with trademarking.

For example, for the hosiery manufacturer who wants to apply his trademark so that it can't come off no matter how often the hosiery is washed, there is a permanent transfer which

guard the ownership, yardage or other form of identification of cotton, silk or woolen goods.

In many cases, goods are sponged or shrunk before the cloth is made into garments. For this purpose there is a "sponged-goods" trans-

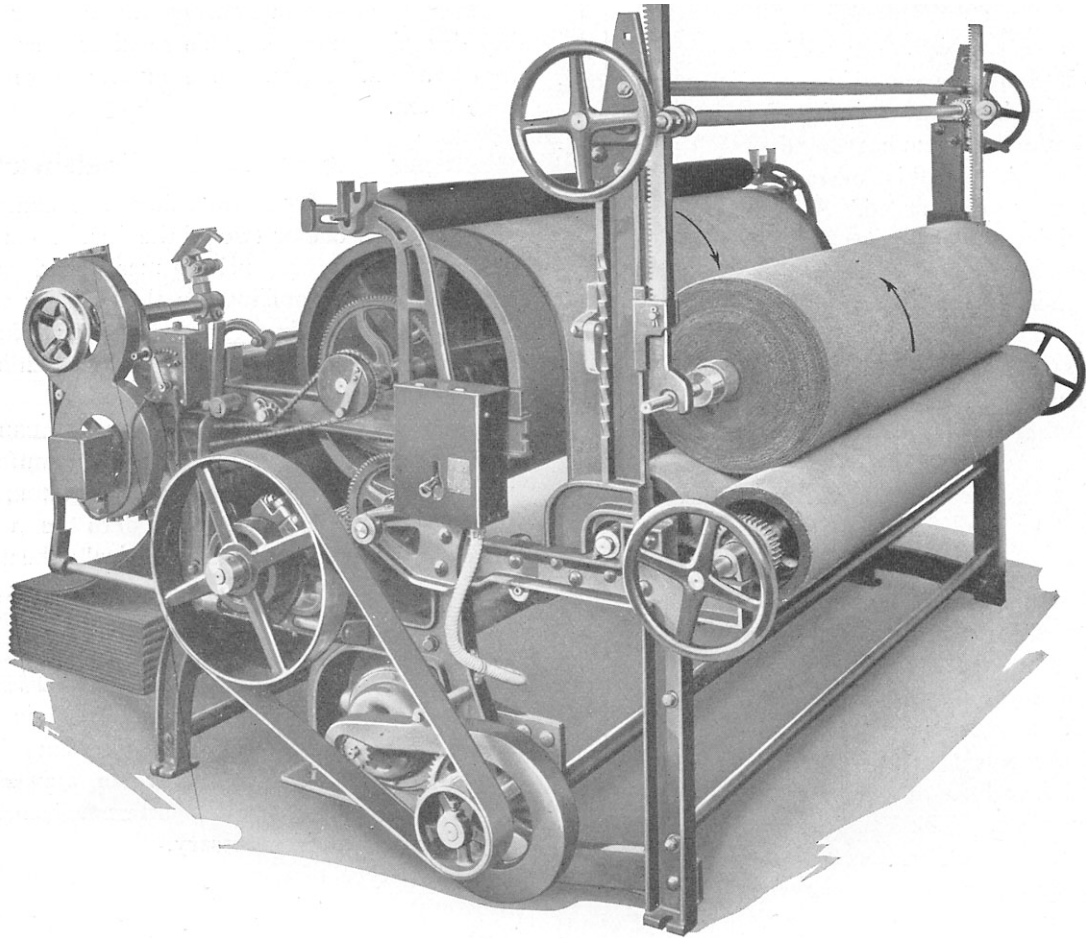


Illustration 2.

AWC Measurer—with Transferotor and Special Rolling Attachment—a machine for applying trademarks by the dry transfer method to the longest and heaviest rolls. This combination is particularly suited to the needs of the manufacturer of plush or velvet.

under test has remained legible after dozens of washings. If he wants a mark that can be removed there is a so-called "fugitive" type of transfer which can come off readily by rubbing, washing or the use of a special solvent.

The textile manufacturer who wants to mark goods in the gray so that that mark will remain clear, and legible even after the goods have been dyed, can do so with a white dye-resist transfer. This makes it possible to safe-

fer which withstands the process of sponging or London shrinking without offsetting or driving through the cloth.

There are no longer any limitations of color, since dry transfers can be obtained in any color desired. Those in most general use are: gold, silver, black, light blue, dark blue, purple, yellow, orange, red, green, brown. If a two-color trademark is desired, one transfer manufacturer even makes a permanent two-

color transfer for any kind of fabric.

Practically any fabric, from the finest Georgette crepe down through the silks, cottons and wools and even such materials as mackinaw cloths, can be successfully marked with dry transfers. Silks, rayon, woolen and cotton fabrics, whether knitted, woven or felted, are trademarked in one of three ways:

1. *Marks upon the end of the piece:* Some manufacturers put only one mark on the outside end. The majority, however, put the transfer upon the board end as well as the outside end. By this means the yardage of the goods is safeguarded. Any person who makes a claim for shortage, must be able to show the two transfers which would indicate that neither end of the goods has been cut. When only one piece end mark is used the manufacturer seeks to identify the goods only until they reach the hands of the first cutter, whether he be the manufacturer of garments or the retailer. Naturally after the first length of goods has been cut off this mark disappears. Further identification is therefore lost.

2. *Marks upon the back:* While this method is done sometimes by hand, it is done usually by machine. Under this system the transfers are affixed at intervals of from one to five yards. In some cases where it is particularly necessary to safeguard the character of the goods, manufacturers place two, three and four lines of transfers down the length of the piece. The individual transfers in the same line are ordinarily one yard apart, but as they are usually staggered it means that every half, third or quarter of a yard of goods is identified by a transfer. When so marked it is practically impossible to cut a pattern of any size from the goods without having at least a part of one of the marks appear thereon.

3. *Marks along the selvage:* This is, perhaps, the most generally used method of marking textile cloth. The transfers are applied by machine at intervals of from one to five yards. The application may be made either in the mill or in the works of the dyers and finishers. In the latter case the dyers purchase the transfers from the transfer manufacturer or are supplied with them by the mill.

The application of marks to the selvage is

made by machine, with an accuracy that is truly remarkable. It is possible to follow perfectly a selvage one-quarter of an inch wide even on irregular goods like silk Jersey cloth.

In the case of silks which come in the aune fold, it is very simple to mark them at frequent intervals by hand work, by opening the piece on a table and affixing the transfer to the edge of each aune. This requires very little room and is practicable in any store or stock room.

Machines for Applying Trademarks

The process of trademarking is combined generally with one or two of the final essential packaging operations such as measuring, rolling, winding or doubling, so that it does not increase the handling expense. Illustrations No. 1 and No. 2 show two types of machines used for dry transfer trademarking.

For this purpose one of the largest manufacturers of cloth handling devices manufactures an attachment which transfers automatically the design from the paper onto the moving cloth by means of an electrically heated iron. The speed at which the cloth may travel while being trademarked varies from 50 to 100 yards per minute, according to conditions. The mark may be placed in practically any position on the goods although in most cases it is on or near the selvage. The usual spacing between the marks measuring in the warpwise direction is one yard, but different spacing may be arranged if necessary.

For this type of mechanical application dry transfers are obtainable in a roll containing from 15,000 to 50,000 transfers, depending on the design and size. As one entire roll is accommodated by the attachment, there is little necessity for changing or renewing rolls.

For application to hosiery, trademarking with dry transfers is speeded up also by the use of a machine which is operated by an easy foot treadle thus leaving both hands free to handle the hosiery and the transfers. A speed of 150 dozen pairs of hosiery per hour can be maintained by an experienced operator on this machine.

Hints on Selecting a Trademark

It is desirable in selecting a trademark to

so plan it that it will be easy to apply to the product.

Of course, the success of any trademark begins with its very design. In creating a trademark, care should be taken:

- that it should be easy to apply.
- that it should be easy to remember.
- that it should be distinctive.
- that it should be registrable.

The requirements of the United States Patent Office involve many specific rules as to what may or what may not be registered, and in addition many intangible regulations which govern their decisions. It is, therefore, de-

sirable for a manufacturer to consult an authority for assistance in devising, registering and applying his mark.

The Kaumagraph Company has built up a service, not only in connection with the furnishing of dry transfers, but one that includes the suggestion of names, the making of designs, and negotiations with the Patent Office as to the acceptability and registration of a manufacturer's mark, which has been of great value to the trade generally.

When it is pointed out that over 400 new trademarks are put through per month by this company, the tremendous growth in trademarking textiles should be apparent.