



Our Beginning

West Michigan Uniform began as West Michigan Laundry in 1963 when Gordon Van Tuinen moved from Grand Rapids to purchase the business. At that time, West Michigan Laundry served as a laundry and dry cleaner by processing peoples' personal clothes. The process began to expand into uniform and linen rental with Holland Transmission, R.E. Barber Ford, Lakeshore Motel, and Point West being some of our first commercial customers. During these years uniforms were all cotton which necessitated pressing every garment. Perma press garments were introduced in the early 1970's which helped extend the garment life and lowered the processing costs. Total sales in 1972 were \$301,000 and in 1978 sales went over \$ 1 million. The building remained much the same, with most improvements being made inside the building to upgrade the equipment. The original washroom equipment was made of wood and driven by large belts. Water was pumped from the ground and stored in a large water tank located by the conference building. The West Michigan Laundry cornerstone is still part of the original building and is located above our office entrance.



Expansion

As both linen and uniform customers grew, the need for additional space required the purchasing of the Model Laundry facility on 8th St. and the transferring of the uniform division there in 1974. This separation continued until 1980 when the Standard Station on the corner of 17th and Ottawa was purchased and a 10,000 square foot addition was added to the original building. The 8th St. facility was sold and the two divisions were combined which allowed us to increase efficiency, cut overhead, and install a large dry cleaning machine to process our expanding uniform business.

As five older homes on 16th St. became available, they were purchased for possible expansion. In 1984 the old Ter Haar – Venhuizen Body Shop building was purchased and renovated. The stockroom was then moved into this building which was separated from the main building by an alley. The largest and most significant expansion took place in 1989, with the joining of the two buildings and the addition of 30,000 square feet. This addition gave us significant room to grow and allowed us to realign our work flow as it is today with the dirty product being unloaded at 16th St. and the clean being loaded at 17th Street. This expansion also saw the discontinuing of our bed linens to motels and nursing homes. In 1996 the Holland Sign Company on Ottawa Ave. was purchased and a 4,000 square foot addition was added for our new work shirt department. In 1997 we continued to narrow our focus as a company by discontinuing our linen service to restaurants. In May of 1998 we finished an addition to our building by enclosing our parking lot on 16th Street and having this area to repair, maintain, and rebuild trucks and equipment. This addition allowed us to expand our stockroom as well.



Innovation

A major internal expansion took place in 2000. This \$1.1 million investment updated the washers, dryers, wastewater system, and hot and cold water supply with state of the art technology. This allowed us to increase our quality, increase our productivity, and comply with local and state environmental regulations. In 2001 embroidery equipment was purchased in response to our customers needing high quality direct embroidered and logo products. Two additional machines were added in 2002 to meet the increasing demand. Currently this is our fastest growing product line. While this history of West Michigan Uniform has looked mainly at the physical growth of the company, our company is much more than buildings and equipment. In many ways the physical growth is a mere reflection of the dedicated employees and customers that have caused this growth.



Here and Now

West Michigan Uniform has a strong team of dedicated employees. We have a very diverse group of individuals that works together as a team to provide service excellence. Through their commitment and collective effort, annual sales continue to grow each year. However, quality, not growth, is our primary goal. We seek to partner with customers who want high quality. We believe that our focus must be on operational and service excellence first; growth will result from that. We believe that the use of technology will allow us to provide unmatched service, and that is why in 2008 we bar-coded every garment that we rent. This allows us to track each one specifically and make sure it is returned to the correct customer. This combination of great employees and technology will result in excellent service for years to come.

The family owned and operated business has now been successfully passed to the 3rd generation, and in 2013, West Michigan Uniform will celebrate its 50th year of providing service to its customers.

