

Adam H. Bartel Company

Founded: 1877

Location: 243 Main Street, Richmond (1877–80); 210 Fort Wayne Avenue (1880–85); 214–216 Fort Wayne Avenue (1885–91); 911 (originally 909–911 and later 911–921) North E Street (1911–)

Factory: 214–216 Fort Wayne Avenue, Richmond; South Eighth and B Street (ended production in 1967)

Adam H. Bartel was born in Germany in 1850 and came to America with his parents four years later. The family settled in Richmond. Bartel quit school at the age of fourteen and lived on his uncle's farm north of the city. Shortly afterward he returned to Richmond and began working in the retail and wholesale dry goods business, joining Emswiler & Crocker in 1865 and George H. Knollenberg in 1872. In February 1877 Bartel formed a partnership with another German immigrant, Christopher F. Schaefer. The two men purchased the wholesale and retail stock of A. E. Crocker & Company.

Bartel & Schaefer, located at 243 Main Street, sold fancy goods and notions—assorted small articles of trade such as tinware, combs, or ribbons. The partnership ended when Schaefer withdrew in 1880. Bartel discontinued the retail business and established Adam H. Bartel & Company in the wholesale district at 210 Fort Wayne Avenue. His motto became “Service based on integrity and fair dealing.” Bartel took in John M. Coate, a native of Miami County, Ohio, and John R. Hawkotte, a native of Cincinnati, as partners, and the firm sold fancy goods, ornaments, toys, and notions that Bartel obtained directly from importers and eastern manufacturers. Coate had joined Adam H. Bartel & Company as a salesman in 1880; he later became vice president and remained active in the company for sixty years. Serving eastern Indiana and western Ohio, Adam H. Bartel & Company prospered, quadrupling its sales by 1884. The firm

moved to a new location at 214–216 Fort Wayne Avenue in 1885 and began to manufacture workingmen's overalls. In 1891 the company moved to 909–911 North E Street, and the old Fort Wayne Avenue building was used to manufacture work clothing.

Adam H. Bartel & Company incorporated in 1890, with several employees allowed to purchase stock. Bartel's sons, Bernhard and Frederick, began working for the company in 1900. In 1902 Adam H. Bartel & Company opened a factory in Cambridge City to manufacture Perfection clothing, including overalls, shirts, suits, pants, and duck coats. The factory originally employed thirty-five workers but by 1912 employed from sixty to seventy-five laborers. Eight traveling salesmen sold the company's clothes directly to jobbers and retailers. The main Richmond factory moved to a new plant at South Eighth and B Streets in 1920.

The Adam H. Bartel Company expanded slowly. Its annual sales topped \$1 million only after sixty years in business. By the late 1930s the firm employed around 150 people (although its payroll had been 200 workers earlier in the century). Adam Bartel remained active in the wholesale company until ten weeks before his death in May 1942 at the age of ninety-one. He was succeeded by his son Fred, who served as president from 1942 until 1962. In 1967 the company ceased manufacturing work clothing in order to concentrate on its wholesale division and constructed a warehouse in 1971 at 1230 Rich Road to house its floor covering division. By the 1990s Adam H. Bartel Company was selling goods not only in the Midwest but also in Great Plains states such as Nebraska and South Dakota, and in southern states such as Virginia and North Carolina.