

EST. **G** 1947

GUSTWILLER'S

— CLOTHING CO. —



Mary & Leonard Gustwiller, 1943

1947-1997 The first 50 years!



Tom, 1948 Youngest Salesman on the Floor

Seventy-Five years ago, Mary and Leonard Gustwiller started a men's clothing store in Ottawa at the present location of Town & Country Flower Shop.

It all started during the Depression of 1931-33 when Leonard's parents lost their farm in New Bavaria. The Gustwiller's moved to Defiance where Leonard worked at a local factory, then he went to work at BR Bakers Clothing Store in Toledo. It was a very prestigious store in its time. After a year, Leonard moved back to Defiance where he resumed working at the factory. He also sold suits from a suitcase of swatches as a sideline, sometimes selling the suit off his back. He joined the armed forces in 1941 during World War II. Leonard and Mary Hartman were married in 1943.

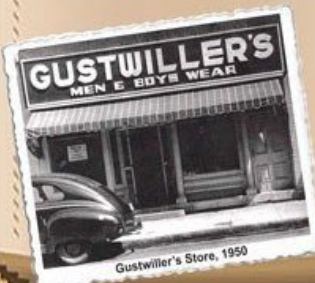
Leonard had a dream of owning a small haberdashery. They decided to open a store with \$1500 they had saved and a \$1500 loan from Mary's father. They

approached the Essley shirt company salesman with their dream. He told them to take their money and move to Florida because they didn't have any chance of succeeding. The next morning, more determined, they went back to the Essley salesman and persuaded him to sell them white shirts. They then went to a Toledo wholesaler and purchased underwear, ties, socks, and other miscellaneous items. Gustwiller's opened its doors for business in March 1947.

The store was small at first; only half of the shop was needed. Through hard work and diligence, sales grew. Eventually the location became too small. In 1951, a new building was rented which is now the far East side where our suits and dress shirts are displayed.

In 1971, Tom Gustwiller, Mary & Leonard's only child, left the teaching profession and took over as manager of the store so Leonard could semi-retire. Several years later, Tom bought the former Hawkey's building, which was adjacent to the present location.

Gustwiller's began to sell ladies clothing in 1979. Through the years, they expanded upstairs and now carry a full line of women's apparel. Tom & Bev's daughter Teresa became the third generation of Gustwiller's to come into the business. She is a 1993 BGSU graduate with a Business Degree.



Gustwiller's Store, 1950



Leonard, 1948

1998-2022 75 Years & Counting



Leonard & Tom, 1973

Since 1997, Gustwiller's has survived a major flood in 2007, changes with the internet and online buying, the pandemic, and now supply issues. Despite these challenges, we strive to provide excellent service including gift wrapping, alterations, pressing dress shirts, and tying a tie for customers to name a few.

Tom & Bev's son Brian joined the business in 1999 after graduating from BGSU with a business degree and took over our internet business. By 2002 online sales had grown enough that we needed more storage and the warehouse was built. During the early years of online sales, we were very busy until today's retail giants emerged. In the meantime, our tuxedo rental business and men's department have grown with Teresa's expertise and hard work.

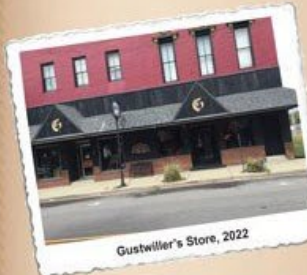
Brian's wife, Nicole Gustwiller, joined the team in 2014 taking over office duties when Bev retired. Even though Tom is almost as old as the store, he is still seen helping most days.

Nicole and Brian's two older children Alex and Erin are now following in their footsteps

as our fourth generation. We look forward to the future and appreciate the opportunity to serve our customers with "Friendly, Small Town Service" for many years to come.

We are so thankful for all the wonderful employees who have worked with us the past seventy-five years. We couldn't have done it without all of you. To all our loyal customers and the surrounding Ottawa area, a heartfelt thank you for your continued business. With \$3000 and a dream, Mary and Leonard started what is now one of the finest Men's and Ladies' clothing stores in Ohio.

Thank You!



Gustwiller's Store, 2022



Left to Right: Erin, Nicole, Alex, Brian, Teresa, Tom, and Bev