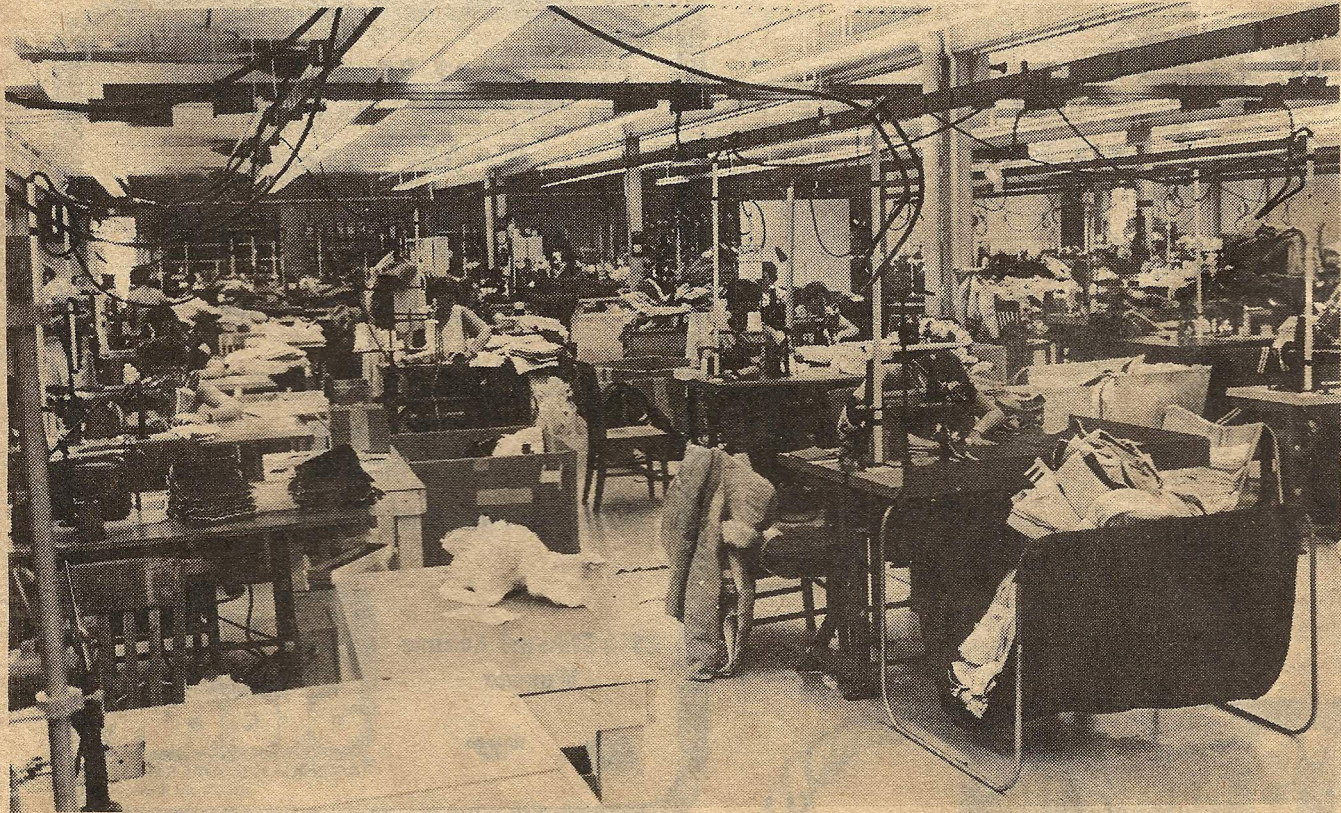




Sewing coats

Employees at the Merrill plant of Fox Point Sportswear Inc. sew fashion coats together. About 52 persons are employed in the sewing department at the Merrill plant. Motorcycle and snowmobile apparel is

also produced at the plant here. There are plans to expand the sewing department at the Merrill facility.

—Herald photo by Don Oakland

Fox Point Sportswear

Plant may be expanded

By DON OAKLAND
Herald Staff

Fox Point Sportswear Inc. is contemplating expansion of its production facilities in Merrill.

"Depending on the economy, we foresee expanding our sewing operation here," said Mike Anderson, company president.

The number of employees in the sewing department here could increase from the present 52 persons to about 100 without the need for expanding the plant, Anderson said.

Further planning associated with the expansion will probably take place in January or February of 1981, he said.

In the meantime, employment levels at the Merrill plant are expected to remain stable.

"We expect the employment level to continue throughout this year or be expanded," Anderson said.

Fox Point Sportswear produces three lines of products:

—A line of women's coats under the Fox Point Sportswear label.

—A line of snowmobile clothing under the Midwest Outerwear label.

—A line of clothing for motorcyclists under the Wheels of Man label and a Harley Davidson label.

Of the three lines, the women's coats are doing the best. The snowmobile clothing market is the weakest, according to Anderson.

"The ladies coats introduced two and a half years ago have been growing rapidly and have overcome the volume deficit in snowmobile apparel," Anderson said.

The motorcycle clothing line has been doing "fairly well," Anderson said. "The price of gasoline tends to help the motorcycle business," he noted.

About 80 percent of the coats produced under the Fox Point Sportswear lines are sold to specialty shops. The remaining volume is sold to major department stores, Anderson explained.

The coats are designed by Bette Gifford, a freelance designer in New York.

Material for the coats is cut at Fox Point's plant at Port Washington and sewn at the Merrill plant, he explained.

Why is the company looking to Merrill for future expansion?

"The productivity of this plant dating back to its Hansen Glove days has been excellent," Anderson said.

Also, the plant here is on a 5-acre site which would allow for any physical expansion of the facility.

The expansion of this light industry will directly benefit the Merrill area economy because most of its workers are women who are providing a second income to families, Anderson explained.

This second income is usually a family's discretionary income, money spent on things other than food and housing, he said.

Fox Point Sportswear Inc. is a subsidiary of the Parker Pen Co. However, Anderson and his vice president of finance, John Bocke, have negotiated an agreement in which they will purchase the company from Parker Pen over a 10-year period.

The 25,000-square-foot plant in Merrill is owned by the company. The 60,000-square-foot plant in Port Washington, which also houses the company's warehousing, is leased.

The main offices of the company are being moved from Port Washington to Merrill, Anderson said.

Both plants have successful factory outlet stores. Anderson indicated the store at Merrill might be moved within the plant and expanded this fall.