

## A Look Inside

### Timeline: Milestones in Dempsey History

**1918:** Pennsylvania is hard-hit by the horrifying worldwide flu epidemic. Dempsey brothers Thomas, James, and Patrick Joseph (Uncle PJ to the company founders Pat and Dick) operate a laundry for the nuns at the House of the Good Shepherd in Scranton. They take in work from commercial customers to be processed by women staying at the institution. Among the customers are hospitals; the brothers often have to walk amid the bodies of flu victims in the crowded corridors to pick up the "soils."



**1920:** The Good Shepherd Hospital closes its on-premises laundry. Using the name Mother's Laundry, Uncle PJ assumes the commercial customers of the Good Shepherd. He also buys one of its customers, Model Coat and Apron, from local businessman George Landy. The brothers haul the soiled laundry to Hessler's Laundry in Wilkes-Barre for processing.

**1922:** Uncle PJ buys the old "Keystone Hall" at 341 Blakely Street in Dunmore to build his own plant.

**1923:** Mother's Laundry and Model Coat and Apron move into the new, modern laundry plant on Blakely Street.

**1927:** Following the advice of his brother PJ, James founds a rental laundry, Dempsey Overall and Towel, in an abandoned chicken coop located in his mother's backyard on the 600 block of Quincy Avenue in the Dundell section of Dunmore.

**1929-1932:** During the Great Depression, Mother's Laundry grows and adds to its work force.



**1931:** James moves his overall and towel business to a building in the rear of Mother's Laundry and uses the services of Mother's Laundry to wash and finish his goods.



**1933:** Uncle PJ passes away, leaving half of his businesses to his widow and a quarter to each of his brothers, Thomas and James. James and his wife Mae name their second son, born the next morning, after him: Patrick Joseph Dempsey.

**1935:** Richard "Dick" Dempsey is born.

**1941-1945:** During America's involvement in World War II, Dempsey Overall and Towel gets around the shortage of textiles by transforming parachutes and other remnants, such as flour sacks and sugar bags, into rental products.

**1951:** Thomas Dempsey sells his quarter interest in the business to James and goes on to found Fashionable Laundry in Dunmore.

**1958:** James sells his business interests in Mother's and Model to Uncle PJ's widow, and gives Dempsey Overall and Towel's one route to sons Pat and Dick. He guarantees a loan for them to build a modern laundry facility at 1310 Clay Avenue, Dunmore.

**CLOCKWISE FROM CENTER LEFT:** James Dempsey (left) oversees delivery of a new washer for Mother's Laundry; James Dempsey; Dempsey Overall and Towel at rear of Mother's Laundry, 1958; Mother's Laundry letterhead



## Soap in the Veins: 50 Years at Dempsey Uniform & Linen Supply

Timelines! They're indispensable to a good company history. In books they can appear at the start, the end, or on chapter-opener spreads; with or without illustrations; with elaborations or "just the facts, ma'am."

Dempsey Uniform's book opens with this timeline. Because the chapters that follow are thematic rather than chronological, we needed to corral all the milestones up front.

The creation of the four-page timeline proved complicated. We double-checked facts and resolved conflicting dates. (Fortunately, cofounder Patrick Dempsey has razor-sharp recall.) Images had to appear in precisely the right places. Even caption placement was tricky.

The Dempsey family especially loves the company timeline, because, as Kristin Dempsey says, "Finally we have all the dates and facts in one place."

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