

# OSMO MANUFACTURING 1951 ARTICLE

THE TITUSVILLE (FLA.) HERALD

## Oscar Most Conducts Unique Industry



Sparsburg man, owner of Osmo Tanning & Mfg. Co., watches people who are in a vat through which sheepskins go during an exclusive tanning process. Mr. Most manufactures sheepskin products.

## Turns Out Wool Wash Mitts by Secret Process

Meet Mr. Most, the man who makes mitts.

Oscar Most, who came to this country in 1924, now has in Sparsburg one of the region's unique industries.

Not only does he make about 30,-

000 sheepskin auto wash mitts a year, but also large quantities of a lambskin wall and ceiling dusters, shoe polishers, wax applicators, dust mitts and bicycle seat covers.

He takes South African, South American or U. S. sheepskins, tans them in a secret "Triple Crome" process of his own, and turns out the various products in a little factory on the north side of Sparsburg, near the P. R. R. tracks in a building which was once a Supplee-Wills milk plant.

Nothing is wasted at the Osmo Tanning & Manufacturing Co. except the rinse water. The short wool fibers clipped from skins when the hair is being trimmed to a uniform length are sold as industrial fiber. The flesh removed from the skins before they are tanned is used for fertilizer.

### Tanning Is the Catch

There is nothing complicated about Osmo's products. A duster is a duster and a wash mitt is used to cover the hand when washing a car. There are no gadgets on them. But there is always a catch in any money-making proposition, and in this case it is the tanning process.

Mr. Most is friendly, cheerful, fond of jokes. He'll gladly show visitors through the Osmo plant. But as to questions on the tanning of sheepskins, Mr. Most is mum.

He has good reason to be. There are several ways to tan a skin, but the "Triple Crome" process does it so the wool stays tight in the hide. It does not fall out, even during the rough handling of a mitt on an auto wash rack.

The "Triple Crome" process enables Mr. Most to guarantee his products to the user. He is proud of the fact that very few are returned for adjustment—and these, he says, are simply worn out. Osmo products don't get prematurely bald. With them there is no falling hair, just wear.

wear.

### Buys in World Market

Mr. Most buys his sheepskins from packing houses all the way from Cape Town, South Africa, to Chicago. African and domestic skins come to him salted down. South American skins are unsalted, and arrive in airtight containers. He normally purchases about 500 raw skins a week.

The best skins for Osmo's use have an inch and a quarter to an inch and a half of wool on them. Lamb, the first coat of wool, is the best wool that one can buy.

The tanning process is carried on in the plant's basement. Mr. Most brought his exclusive process with him from Germany where he learned the tanning business. He also studied mechanical engineering in Germany and is thus able to build all the machines he uses in the tanning and processing of skins. Some of the machines are ingenious to an extreme.

During World War II Mr. Most ran a machine shop on the premises and had about 30 or 40 girls turning out aircraft parts. He sold that machinery after hostilities ceased and concentrated on sheepskin products.

### 100 Skins Tanned Daily

Osmo tans about 100 skins a day. After they are tanned they go to a drying room upstairs where they dry in circulating air for 24 to 48 hours. Next the skins are run

through a machine to soften them, are wet down and stretched on boards. Dry a second time, the skins stay flat.

The wool on the hides is combed out by machines and electrically clipped to the length required for the particular product being made. The leather on the back is buffed to a nice finish and then the skin goes to the cutting and sewing room to be made up into mitts, dusters or other products.

After the beating the skins take in the tanning, drying and stretching processes, one may wonder why the leather is so soft and pliable in the finished product. The answer is that Mr. Most oils the skins to replace the natural oils lost along the way.

Mr. Most traveled extensively

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## Turns Out

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from the time of his arrival in the U. S. until 1932, when he came to Spartansburg from Cleveland. He rented a building on the other side of town until he purchased the former milk plant in 1942.

### War Problems Felt

Like every other business, Osmo has its hands full of war problems. Skins that cost \$2.50 last June are now \$7.00. Both in the domestic market and abroad, where 95% of the raw stock comes from, the situation is tough.

With their prices frozen, it is difficult for U. S. tanners to purchase skins at fancy figures overseas and then process them at a profit. Tanners have been after the U. S. government to adopt an offshore buying program, thus getting around part of the handicap, but there is still no assurance that a Federal agency would be able to compete successfully in world markets with countries which do not have price controls.

Mr. Most's temperature rises when he talks of this situation. We in America are taxed heavily so that we can lend money overseas to help economic recovery, he says, but when we try to buy something from the same foreign countries we are helping, they gouge us.

The domestic situation is no more encouraging. The NPA has an allocation system set up, but it is extremely slow. The other day Mr. Most heard a large tanner tell his troubles. Not one raw hide had been received by his plant in the past five weeks. The tanner agreed that he could buy hides at ceiling prices—if he slipped \$3,000 under the table for every carload. So the man closed his plant until the situation straightens out.