SHOE RETAILING

By John Guernsey

INTRODUCTION

Shoes were first made in America in 1629, in Massachusetts. Thomas Beard, a shoemaker from London, brought over a supply of leather and a kit of tools in that year and became the first shoemaker of record in the colony. The Indians wore moccasins, and the early settlers adopted them, but after Beard set up his shoe shop some settlers began raising cattle and tanning the leather to replenish the slim stock originally imported. Thus began the shoe industry in America.

The scope of this report.—Shoes to-day are sold mainly through shoe stores, but many other kinds of stores also sell shoes. Of the $1,265,000,000 [1] of total sales of shoes at retail, 58 per cent were sold through retail shoe stores. This report analyzes the business of such shoe stores. It also describes briefly the characteristics of the principal kinds of stores which compete with shoe stores in the sale of shoes, and which do the remaining 42 per cent of the total shoe business.

Shoe stores also sell other commodities than shoes. Of the $806,829,000 of total sales of shoe stores reported by the census, 91 per cent represents the sale of shoes and other footwear and approximately 9 per cent, or about $73,000,000, represents the sale of other related commodities, and repairs. Section 2 of the report describes the nature of such related commodities and their relative sales importance.

Manufacturer distribution of shoes through retailers may be accomplished by direct sales contact with independent proprietors, by contact with wholesalers, by contact with chain-store buyers, and by the operation of retail stores directly by shoe manufacturers.

Section 3 of this report describes each of these types of outlet and indicates the number of such contacts open to shoe manufacturers. It shows further the geographic location (by the nine geographic divisions of the country and principal cities) of the independent proprietors, the wholesalers, and the headquarters of chains through which the distribution of shoes may be accomplished. Much of this section is also of direct interest to wholesalers and to advertisers, in planning how best to reach the greatest number of shoe retailers with the least expenditure of sales effort, advertising, and expense. The cost of selling *to* retailers is an important part of the total cost of distribution, and any reduction in expense resulting from the curtailment of unproductive effort, through a better understanding of the market, is real economy.

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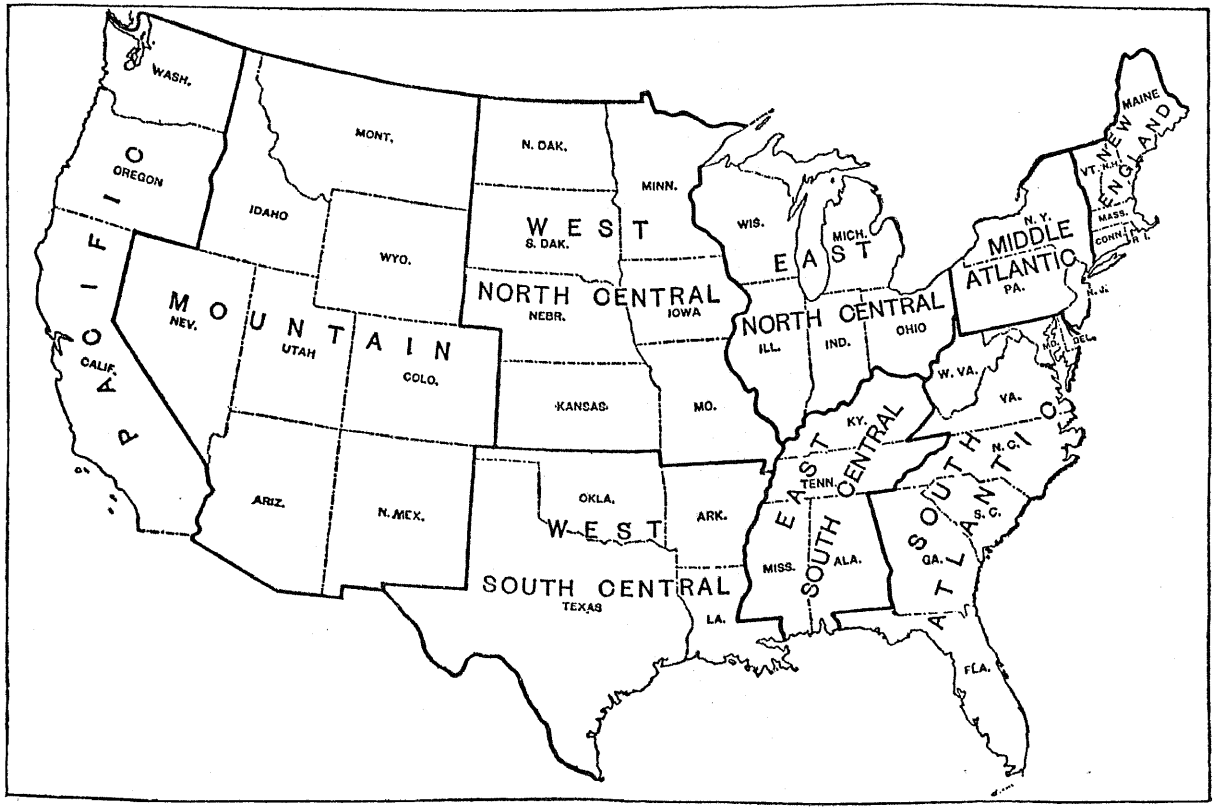
[1] All data used in this report, unless otherwise noted, are derived from the Distribution Census of 1930 and apply to the business of the year 1929, the last available year of normal business conditions.

MAP OF THE UNITED STATES SHOWING GEOGRAPHIC DIVISIONS