

# Cutlery

## SHEARS AND SCISSORS MAKERS

### ROCHUS HEINISCH

Rochus Heinisch and Jacob Wiss were perhaps the two most important manufacturers of tailor shears in the world during the 19th century. Rochus Heinisch was born in Bohemia, Austria, on February 14, 1801. He learned the trade of manufacturing surgical instruments in both Austria and France. In the early 1820s he sailed for the United States. Soon after arriving he conceived the idea of manufacturing shears of malleable iron faced with steel. He was the first patentee of tailor shears and the first cutler to weld steel to iron. He began to manufacture his improved shears in Elizabeth, N.J. in 1829, but after a few years moved to Newark where he established his cutlery business. In the 1835 Newark directory he is listed as a manufacturer of surgical instruments and other cutlery at Quarry Street near Washington Street. Through the years his chief work was the manufacture of his patent tailors' shears which proved of immense value to those in that line of business. The shears previously used were of English manufacture, and the handles were so ill shaped that the tailors referred to them as "instruments of torture." It was said by those in the business that his shears enabled one man to do the work of four.

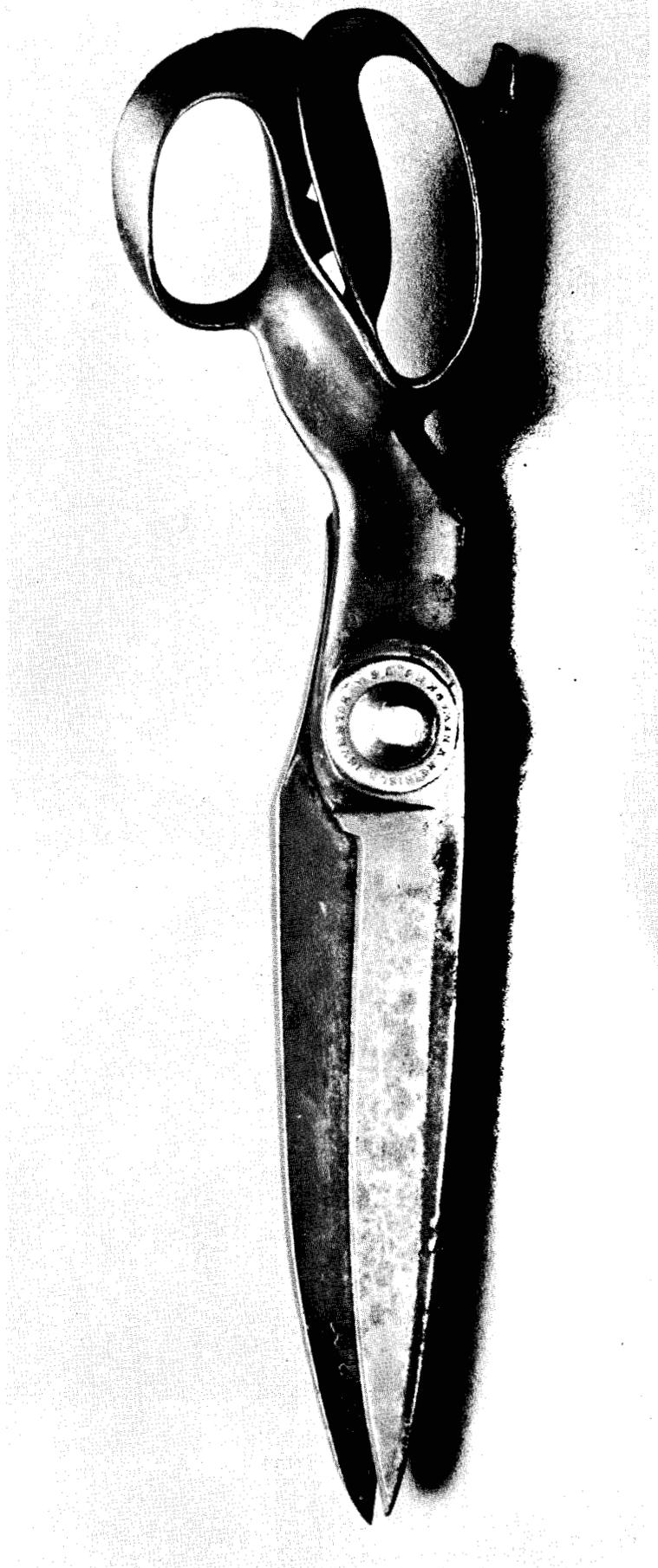


R. HEINISCH,  
Manufacturer of Patent Tailors' Shears,  
156 h. 146 Bank street.





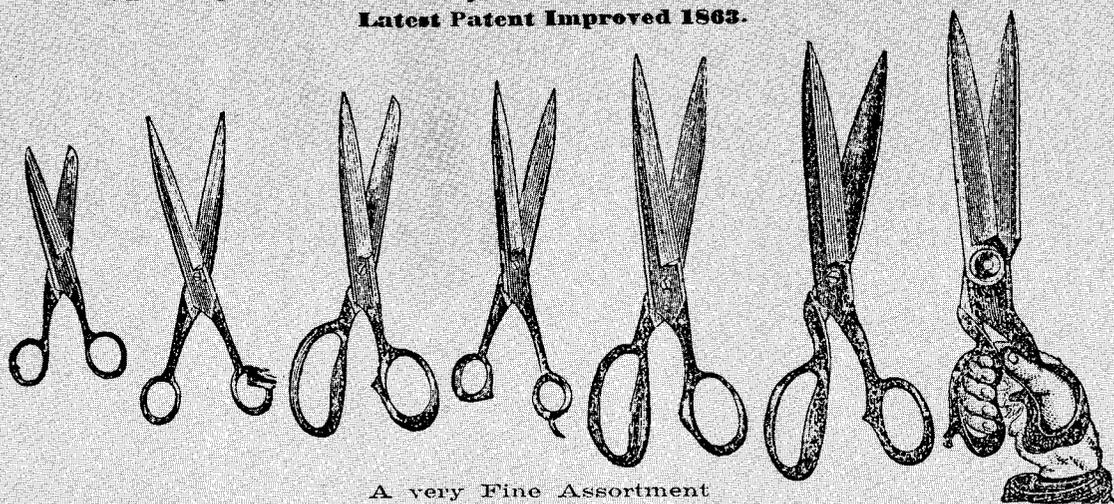
94. Enlargements of the brass-cap sections of two pairs of R. Heinsch shears. The earlier shears are marked in the space above the cap R. HEINISCH / INVENTOR / LATEST PATENT / 1859. The brass cap on the later shears is marked R. HEINISCH INVENTOR / NEWARK, N. J., U. S. A. Collections of Elliot Matlin and John Dempsey.



95. Tailor shears patented by Rochus Heinsch. Collection of John Dempsey.

**AMERICAN SHEARS, SCISSORS and TRIMMERS,**  
**Latest Patent Improved 1863.**

**WARRANTED THE BEST IN THE WORLD.**  
 Seventeen Gold and Silver Medals awarded, 1st prizes in both London Exhibitions.



MANUFACTURER OF HIS CELEBRATED

**ROCHUS HEINISCH**

A very Fine Assortment

Tailors' Shears, Trimmers', Ladies' Scissors, Pocket Scissors, Points, Barbers' Scissors,  
 Bankers' Scissors, Paper Hangers, Button Hole Cutters', Shoe Cutters', Table Cutlery,  
 Pocket Knives, Razors, Straps, &c., Wholesale and Retail.

**MANUFACTORY, 146 MARKET STREET, Newark, N. J.**

**Office, 301 Broadway, New York.**

Jobbing and Repairing done in all its Branches.

1869 advertisement listing the various cutlery manufactured by Rochus Heinisch.



**R. HEINISCH,**  
MANUFACTURER OF HIS  
**Patent Shears,**  
(LATEST PATENT, 1863)  
**Manufactory, 114 Market st., Newark, N. J.**  
and 87 Nassau st. (2d floor) New York.

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Best Quality Trimmers, Paper Hangers, Tailors' and Ladies' Scissors,  
 Tailors' Points, &c., &c., constantly on hand.  
**JOBGING AND REPAIRING DONE AT SHORT NOTICE.**



96. 1893 photograph of the factory of R. Heinish's Sons Co. located at the corner of Bruce Street and Thirteenth Avenue, Newark. Lettering on the building below the flag reads ESTABLISHED 1825.

### JACOB WISS

Jacob Wiss, who was born in Soleure, Switzerland, on December 1, 1817, learned the trade of surgical-instrument maker in that town. After completing his apprenticeship he worked as a journeyman in other parts of Europe. In August of 1847 he sailed for New York. From there he traveled to Newark where he was employed for a short time by Rochus Heinish and then went into business for himself. An 1848 directory lists him as a cutler and gunsmith at 7 Bank Street. This, however, was the only year he was so listed. His great, great grandson, Norman Wiss, told me that he was sure that Jacob was never a gunsmith. He believes that a friend of Jacob, just recently arrived from Europe and staying a short time in Newark, actually did the gunsmithing.

Prior to his death which occurred in August, 1874, Rochus Heinish associated his sons, Rochus, Jr., Henry C., Albert A., and Edmund E., with him in business under the title of R. Heinish's Sons.

When Jacob Wiss first went into business for himself, the power to run his lathes and other machinery was supplied by a treadmill propelled by a large St. Bernard dog, but in 1853 when he moved to larger quarters at 26 Bank Street he used steam power. Owing to the popularity of his cutlery he was forced in 1869 and again in 1872 to enlarge his factory space. Upon the death of Jacob Wiss on June 25, 1880, his sons, Frederick C.J. Wiss and Louis T. Wiss, took over ownership of his company. Their business continued to grow, and in 1887 they erected a large factory at 33 Littleton Avenue, Newark.

Though Rochus Heinisch and Jacob Wiss manufactured other cutlery such as scissors, knives, razors, and the like, their primary products were tailor shears. Heinisch was particularly proud of the patents he held on his shears and lost no opportunity to inform the world of their existence. He stamped their dates into his shears and included them in his ads. The earliest of these patent dates that I have seen is 1859, but no doubt there were earlier ones. His last patent was taken out in 1863. Though I have been told that Jacob Wiss also held patents on his shears, I have never seen a pair so marked nor any mention of them in his ads.

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**JACOB WISS,  
CUTLER,**  
And Manufacturer of Shears, Scissors, Razors, Kulves, &c., &c.,  
No. 13 BANK STREET.  
Grinding, Repairing, &c., done at the shortest notice.

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It might be expected that Jacob Wiss and Rochus Heinisch being major competitors would have held some animosity towards one another. By all indications, however, this was not the case. Norman Wiss believes that actually they and their families were on good terms. Newark, in the years just after mid-century, was a small, strongly Germanic factory city where all of the manufacturers not only knew each other, but for the most part were friends. Wiss and Heinisch having similar backgrounds and both being successful businessmen probably enjoyed each other's company and wished each other well.

In 1914, some sixty-seven years after Jacob Wiss landed in Newark and was employed by Rochus Heinisch, J. Wiss & Sons Co. bought out R. Heinisch's Sons Co., and the two great cutlery firms became one. Though no longer in positions of ownership, members of the Heinisch family continued working in the business. As late as the 1930s Rush E. Heinisch was manager and Edmund A. Heinisch was a clerk at J. Wiss & Sons Co.

The Wiss firm was sold in 1973 after one hundred and twenty-five years in business. To my knowledge no member of either the Wiss or Heinisch family is involved in the business today.




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*Established 1848.*

**J. WISS,**  
MANUFACTURER OF  
**Shears, Scissors,**  
PRUNING SHEARS, ETC.  
Also, dealer in every description of  
**CUTLERY,**  
26 Bank St., Newark, N. J.  
Special attention given to GRINDING and REPAIRING.

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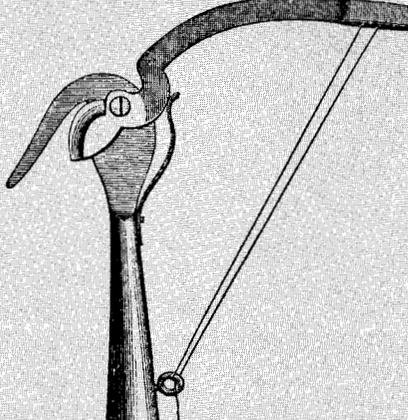
**J. WISS,**  
 Manufacturer of and Dealer in  
**FANCY CUTLERY,**

  
**26 BANK STREET.**  
**POLE PRUNING SHEARS.**

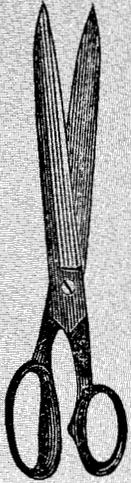
**BARBERS' SHEARS.**



**BARBERS' SCISSORS, PRUNING SHEARS, AND KNIVES OF Every Variety**



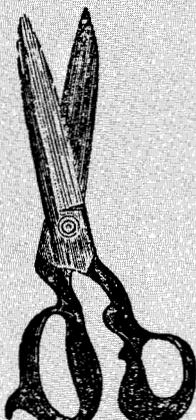
**BANKERS' SHEARS.**



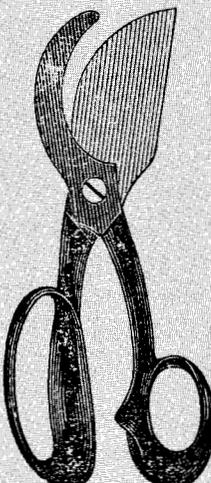
**KNIVES, SHEARS, GARDEN-SHEARS, SCISSORS, &c.**

**OF HIS OWN MANUFACTURE.**  
**ALL KINDS OF CUTLERY, constantly on hand and Warranted.**  
**PRUNING SHEARS.**

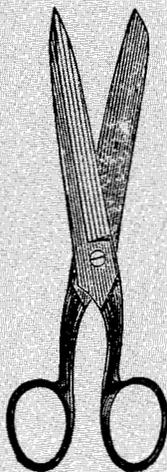
**TAILORS' SHEARS.**



**GRINDING, REPAIRING, &c., DONE.**



**ESTABLISHED 1848.**



**LADIES' SCISSORS.**

1873 advertisement listing cutlery manufactured by Jacob Wiss, and giving the date of the establishment of his business in 1848.