

**Arthur H. Lee**

A company whose origins and history reflect the romance of creativity and the successes of dedicated leadership management, Lee Jofa begins its second century as it began its first—with a commitment to beautiful fabrics, and to a fine balance between past and future.

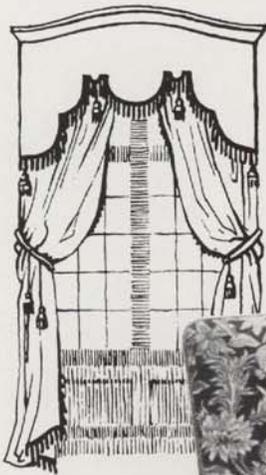
Tradition and innovation have been the warp and weft of the firm from its start, as shown in the character and career of its founder.

**1845** Elias Howe, 26-year-old Boston watchmaker, invents first sewing machine, which stitches five times faster than deft hand-sewing.

**1850** American Andrew Jackson Downing publishes influential and eclectic *Architecture of Country Houses*.

**1853** Commodore Matthew C. Perry of the U.S. Navy reopens Japan to Western trade.

**1851** Crystal Palace opens at London's Great Exhibition.



## The Beginnings

Arthur H. Lee was born in 1853 into the third generation of a Lancashire, England, textile family. His grandfather had been master of a 200-loom cottage industry of yarn weavers; his father was a founder of Tootal, Broadhurst Lee, a group of factories producing light textiles. Arthur Lee was cut from the same cloth: at age 18, after leaving Owens College, Manchester, he began working his way up in the family firm.

Lee was already manager of several spinning mills when he married into a family whose own roots in the textile field stretched back to Queen Anne's era. His new brother-in-law and close friend, George F. Armitage, was a gifted architect and interior designer. When Armitage bemoaned the dearth of distinctive English fabrics with which to furnish the homes he was planning, it struck a responsive chord in Lee. Long interested in weaving, he had admired the individuality of fine imported products, and grown dissatisfied with the undistinguished, mass-produced textiles flooding England in the wake of the Industrial Revolution.

Fired with a new goal—to produce fabrics that would please designers such as his discriminating brother-in-law—Lee left his father's firm to begin his own. In 1888, in a small mill in Bolton, Lancashire, he started production with his father's financial support, four tapestry looms and fabric designs by the talented Armitage. He soon moved the company to a Warrington weaving shed, where he began developing his signature textiles.

## Early Developments

An associate of those early days commented, "I had never met anyone before of such all-around ability as Mr. Lee. He was of a striking appearance, as straight as an arrow and of remarkable energy and alertness."

For the fabrics he envisioned, Lee needed a wider palette of fast colors, which he obtained first by seeking out skilled embroidery-thread dye houses and eventually through establishing his own dye works. His mechanical knowledge served him well, as he experimented with new weaving techniques and the potential of the

**1857** *Victoria and Albert Museum*  
(still known as the *Museum of Ornamental Art*)  
moves to present site in South Kensington section of London.

**1856** *Sir William Perkin develops*  
first synthetic aniline dye in mauve  
—a harbinger of vivid Victorian prints.

**1861** *William Morris, advocate of*  
British "Arts and Crafts" movement,  
starts up a firm to produce home furnishings.

**1865** *U.S. Civil War,*  
begun in 1861, draws to a close.

Jacquard loom, which was at that time limited to only five colors of yarn. To add a greater range of tones to his woven tapestries, Lee conceived of printing additional colors on top of the woven pattern. Adding colored threads to the weft would have increased bulk, cost and production difficulties, but Lee's method enhanced the fabric's appearance and gave a new design flexibility at a reasonable cost. These overprinted weaves—a Lee exclusive—were a staple of the company for many decades.

In 1890, Lee opened a London sales office, and by the turn of the century, his three sons, Thorold, Humphrey and Christopher, had joined the firm. These young men, the fourth generation in textiles through their father and the eighth through the maternal line, naturally showed a flair for the business. In 1903, the Lees opened a New York office in Union Square, bringing their products to a flourishing new market.



First U.S. Office, overlooking Union Square in New York City.

## English Crafts and an American Horizon

In the early years of this century, Arthur H. Lee & Company played a major role in the revival of English needlework crafts by bringing back the professional production of handcolored tapestries and handcrafted needlepoint and crewel embroidery. The art of tapestry had essentially died after the Victorian era, while crewel embroidery and needlepoint had been relegated merely to household arts for many years. Converting the business to a limited company, Lee in 1908 built a completely new factory in Birkenhead, England, which

### Montague House

*Dense wildflower bouquets in the Dutch manner, handscreened on chintz . . . the original handblocked version required 76 blocks.*

**DISCONTINUED**



### Chinese Lantern

*A classic linen print, used often as wallcovering, with lush flowers and foliage against an Oriental scenic background.*



### Peony

*Finely-detailed Oriental blossoms handscreened on chintz, adapted from a design dating to 1750 and an early 19th century handblock.*

**DISCONTINUED**



### Carnation Flamestitch

*A classic from Lee's famed Birkenhead tapestry collection, recreated in characteristic deep colorations.*

**DISCONTINUED**



1871

Arthur Lee starts work at spinning mill owned by Tootal Broadhurst Lee, his father's firm.

1874 First exhibit of Impressionist paintings is held in Paris.

1876 Philadelphia's lavish Centennial Exposition inaugurates America's "Gilded Age."

1879 Thomas Edison develops the first commercially practical electric light, soon to brighten interiors around the world.



Union Square, view from Lee office.

Weaving tapestry on the Jacquard loom.



Hand-blocking color onto woven tapestries.

was to become a unique and world-renowned source of these exceptional products for over six decades. The new location was also headquarters for Lee's exclusive hand-blocked, machine-made tapestries, braids, ruches and fringes.

In 1921, the three sons having returned from service in World War I, the Lee family established the flourishing New York operation as the headquarters of a separate company, Arthur H. Lee & Sons Inc. This new corporate entity would distribute the products of the Birkenhead mills and other fine fabric sources to customers in the United States. While Humphrey directed the new American operation, Thorold and Christopher ran the



Christopher A. Lee (right) with map of European sales network.

factory and sales from Birkenhead. Through the 1920s, the sons initiated progressive ideas, including fledgling "Scientific Management" concepts—applied motion study, production planning and inventory management. The far-seeing company had been early in instituting Workers Welfare, pension plans and profit sharing for executives. In 1932, Arthur Lee died, having lived to see his grandsons beginning to take their places in the firm.

### Carrying on the Traditions

By the late 1930s, the company had established showrooms in Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles and Philadelphia, in addition to its Madison Avenue, New York headquarters, which had moved uptown as the business expanded. This network provided, as stated in a 1938 catalog, "Traditional English Fabrics for

883 Lee takes on supervision of two additional mills.

1888 A.H. Lee leaves to found his own firm at a small mill in Bolton, Lancashire.

1890 First sales office opens in London.

1885 Louis Comfort Tiffany begins Tiffany Glass Works.

1888 First publication of *The Upholsterer*, a trade journal later renamed *The Interior Decorator*, which evolved into *Interiors Magazine*.

1893 Chicago World Columbian Exposition draws 27 million visitors to admire its classical white buildings.

1896 First issue of *House Beautiful*, oldest known U.S. shelter magazine.

American Homes," including hand-blocked and machine-printed chintzes and linens, machine-made tapestries, hand embroideries and needlepoints.



Factory at war— bomb shelter provisions.

During World War II, Thorold maintained the Birkenhead production center with only a nucleus of skilled staff as the complex looms were gutted and converted to produce basic cloths for military use. Thus the postwar years brought a struggle to return to normal, retrain workers and build up again to prewar quality and variety. But when the brothers heard of a Swiss customer taking major advertisements to announce that "Lee's fabrics were back," they knew their firm's reputation had survived the fallow years.

## A New Generation

In the postwar years, that reputation took on new dimensions. In 1949, Humphrey, the first of Arthur H. Lee's sons to die, was succeeded by his son, Derek A. Lee, who had apprenticed in every area of the business. Derek's colorful past and commanding personality were to make him something of an industry legend. He served during the war in the British Royal Navy (a commission which, having a British father and American mother, he obtained after prevailing on Prime Minister Winston Churchill for special clearance), and was then loaned to the United States Intelligence Service, for which he completed 32 secret missions in the Far East. A black belt in judo, he was an instructor for two police forces and, in one of his many philanthropic



### Hollyhock

A best-seller since 1924, this luxuriant handblocked chintz is adapted from a 19th-century copper roller print.

DISCONTINUED



### Mille Fleur

Translated from the original handblock, this bold linen hunting print was adapted from a 15th century wood paneling design.

DISCONTINUED



### Walton

Handscreened linen translation of a Jacobean tapestry woven at Birkenhead, the original design drawn from embroidery.

DISCONTINUED



### Lattice Tapestry

First handmade needlepoint, then a Birkenhead handblocked tapestry, now translated by today's looms, this timeless design spans centuries.

1903

Opening of New York office initiates transatlantic export business for the company.

1905

Lee firm spearheads national revival of English needlework crafts.

1908

Firm becomes Arthur H. & Company; builds factory in Birkenhead, England to produce tapestry, needlepoint and crewel embroidery.

1897 *Ogden Codman and Edith Wharton* publish *The Decoration of Houses*.

1897 *Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee*.

1903 *Josef Hoffman and Koloman Moser* found the *Wiener Werkstatte* collaboration of Viennese designers, artists and craftsmen.



1913 European avant-garde painters create a sensation at New York's Armory Show.

1913 Interior designer Elsie De Wolfe writes *The House in Good Taste*.

1914 World War I begins, and wool prices soon double.

1920 *Architectural Digest* magazine founded.

1922 Trend-setting designer Syrie Maugham opens shop in London.

## Our Founding Fabrics



Arthur H. Lee established his young company on a foundation of time-honored fabrics. While exploring the boundaries of textile engineering, he also initiated a revival of England's hand-crafted classics—tapestry, needlepoint, and crewel work. (The fine art of embroidery—the broad term for decorative stitchery—had flourished in England since the time of Henry VIII, but had been shunted aside in the post-Victorian rush to mechanization.) These then became the signature textiles on which the company's reputation was based and which, with the later addition of hand-blocked chintzes and printed linens, brought it international renown.

*Tapestries* . . . are cloths in which the design is woven as part of the fabric. Patterns are formed by varying horizontal weft threads to create a specific design. The weft lengths pass in and out of the vertical warp threads, covering the finished piece.

*Needlepoints* . . . are embroideries in wool, silk or cotton thread on an open-mesh canvas, whose surface is covered entirely in stitchery. The size of stitches is governed by the size of the mesh. Stitches may run parallel or diagonally, passing from one opening to the next over one or several threads.

*Crewels* . . . are embroideries "painted with a needle" in colored wools and a variety of stitches, which stand out in bold relief against a background of closely-woven cloth. They are worked on a frame, with the length and direction of stitches varying according to the freehand-drawn design.

*Chintzes* . . . are cotton fabrics, most familiar in their glazed form, whose printed designs derive from treasured fabrics first imported to England from the Far East. Generally seen in floral and bird motifs, they were originally hand painted and then produced by hand-blocking, in which colors are applied individually by a series of carefully-matched wood blocks.

With the passing of handwork, and its skilled practitioners, from the marketplace, some of Lee's most popular handmade designs were translated for other forms of production. Yet, even today, the Lee Jofa collections boast a fine selection of hand-stitched Indian crewels, handwoven silk velvets and damasks, and an exceptional and varied collection of hand-blocked chintzes and linens.

1925 Sumptuous "art deco" rooms gain worldwide attention at Paris's Exposition Internationale des Artes Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes.

1929 Stock market crash marks the end of a freewheeling era.

1932 Harry Anderson founds *Decorators Digest*—forerunner of *Interior Design Magazine*—Arthur H. Lee and Johnson & Faulkner are among the first advertisers.



1953 Exhibit of British Coronation fabrics tours the U.S., hosted by Humphrey Lee, brother of Derek.



activities, for underprivileged youngsters as well.

Derek A. Lee brought that same vitality to the family-owned company, initiating a period of great prestige and expansion. He capitalized on the firm's specialty of custom-made English

crewels, tapestries and needlepoints, and broadened the collection's cosmopolitan slant with silks from Italy, Danish wools, Belgian linens as well as English chintzes, handblocks and exceptional silk damasks—all categories for which the company is still known—and such rare specialties as the handwoven velvet used in England's royal coronation robes.

A 1959 British newspaper clipping remarks on Arthur H. Lee & Sons' postwar vitality, noting "specimens of the firm's craftsmanship found in palaces, chanceries, embassies, stately homes, board rooms, ocean liners and hotels" in 17 countries. The Birkenhead plant's 220 employees could claim such achievements as a 20-foot by 8-foot hand-stitched mural for the Sheik of Kuwait, throne seats for a 1959 royal visit to Ghana and a London bank's exquisite panels of embroidered tapestry, whose 15½ million stitches were a four-month project for 54 women.



Hand-stitching crewel embroidery.

But even more important than these singular projects were the growing numbers of steady customers around the world—over half of the factory's output was exported. Since the 1930s the company's distribution from Birkenhead had stretched East to Australia, West to San

1941

Factory is converted to wartime production of military cloth.

36 Abdication of King Edward VIII.

1940 New York's Museum of Modern Art's "Organic Design In Home Furnishings" competition won by Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen.

1944 Founding of New York's Fashion Institute of Technology.

1945 World War II ends, beginning a postwar building boom.

San Francisco, North to Norway and South to Argentina and South Africa. The New York



Luxury train travel—Lee fabrics in a South African railway car in the 1930's.

headquarters accommodated a burgeoning interior design market, in progressively larger spaces leading to its present showroom in Manhattan's D&D Building.

## A Change of Name— The End of an Era

In 1965, Arthur H. Lee & Sons acquired JOFA, Inc., one of the oldest U.S. fabric firms. Started in New York in 1823 by Englishman George Johnson as a rope-making concern, it had soon branched into producing horsehair upholstery and, under the partnership Johnson & Faulkner (later shortened to JOFA), began to import and sell fine decorative fabrics. Jofa's large and varied collection enhanced and expanded the Lee offerings, and included many famous designs which remain in the line today. Under the name, Arthur H. Lee & Jofa, Inc., the new alliance represented almost two-and-a-half-centuries of textile expertise.

By the late 1960s, skilled textile workers were increasingly scarce and the cost of craftwork was growing prohibitive. Management equipped the Birkenhead plant with high-speed looms and developed fabrics to move into more commercial fields. But these alone could not overcome a general trend: Birkenhead, with its concentration on costly hand-labor, was no longer viable in an increasingly large and sophisticated marketplace. Lee Jofa acknowledged this with the closing of the Birkenhead plant in 1970. For more than 60

### Floral Bouquet & Border

Roses and carnation clusters handscreened on chintz, from a narrow-width Lee Collection handblock . . . the border, a 1978 addition.

**DISCONTINUED**



### Rice Grain Damask

Originally woven at Lee's Birkenhead factory, a fine wool damask with classic motif drawn from Oriental porcelain.

**DISCONTINUED**



### Nympheus

A 15th century painted Ming Dynasty screen inspired this linen print of cranes and hummingbirds in a lily-pad waterscape.



### Flamestitch Tapestry

Familiar motifs in tone-on-tone coloring, adapted from a densely-woven handblocked version produced at Birkenhead.

**DISCONTINUED**



1949

Derek A. Lee becomes President, on death of his father Humphrey.

1953 Queen Elizabeth II's coronation.

1961 First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy initiates major restoration of White House.



Peter Apel, VP Special Services —almost 74 years with the company.



Toasting the last embroidery stitch before the closing of the Birkenhead plant.

years, it had been famous for a series of superlative and highly specialized products, whose like can only be seen today in museums and historic documents. But it was time for the company to move in new directions, expanding its network across the United States and strengthening its position as a distributor of fine decorative fabrics from sources around the world.

Seeking new ways to offer distinctive fabrics that would meet the needs of its customers, Lee Jofa's management turned in 1973 to a new documentary source: the Museum of American China Trade (now part of the Peabody Museum of Salem, Massachusetts). In an ongoing agreement, Lee Jofa still offers exclusive reproductions of the institution's historic textiles.

## New Ownership, New Expansion

In 1978, Lee Jofa was acquired by the Roschen Corporation, another family business backed by several generations in the textile industry. Derek A. Lee retired shortly afterwards, and Arthur H. Lee's great-grandson, Derek Lee, Jr., continued as Marketing Vice President. President William E. Roschen took on the task of continuing to update the company and positioning it competitively in the marketplace, without sacrificing its traditional principles and prestige.

The in-house design studio was expanded to initiate and oversee product development, and to establish a consistent color palette. This resident talent, often working with outside designers and resources, creates, refines and gives continuity to the Lee Jofa collections. Taking an aggressive stance on expansion and diversification, Roschen has moved the



1965

Arthur H. Lee acquires JOFA, Inc.—company renamed Lee Jofa, Inc.

1970

Birkenhead factory is closed.

**1968** *Cooper Hewitt Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, founded 1897, becomes part of Smithsonian Institution.*

company into several important new areas. Wallcoverings, added previously to complement the fabrics, were expanded to become an independent category on their own. In 1981, the company launched the COM Collection of performance-engineered fabrics, offering both design interest and a sophisticated color palette to meet the needs of the growing contract market. In 1982, it introduced upholstered furniture manufactured in the company's own West Coast factory. And in 1985, from England's oldest and largest specialty producer, Lee Jofa reintroduced decorative trimmings, absent from the line since the late 1960s.

Derek A. Lee died in 1985 and, a year later, his son Derek left the firm to pursue other interests, marking the end of the family's tenure with the firm which it had begun.

Under its new management, Lee Jofa has become a company with broadened horizons and a more varied product line. The firm's wide-ranging traditional fabrics have been supplemented with strong, highly individual collections, several of which have won industry design awards. The Textile Museum, in Washington, D.C., is another source—last year, Lee Jofa launched its first collection produced under an exclusive licensing agreement, adapting rare archival textiles with modern printing and weaving techniques.

To further diversify the Lee Jofa collections, the company in 1986 acquired Groundworks, Inc., a 15-year-old concern known for its innovative contemporary fabrics and wallcoverings. As a separate division, Groundworks retains its strong identity and its distinctive offerings brings new breadth and variety to Lee Jofa's product range.

Having outgrown its Manhattan storage and office facilities, the company headquarters moved in 1984 to its own building in nearby Carlstadt, New Jersey, accommodating a modern warehouse and space for computerized inventory, billing and shipping operations.

## Into the Second Century

Today, we at Lee Jofa can point to our long history to illustrate both a strong sense of identity and an ability to adapt. As times and markets have changed, so has Lee Jofa. We have used our rich past as a valuable resource

### Basket & Parrot

*Flowers, foliage and feathered friends on screen-printed chintz, from an original 39-handblock design.*

**DISCONTINUED**



### Oak Leaf

*An unusual tapestry, with precise, small-scale pattern on solid ground, originally made by Lee at Birkenhead.*

**DISCONTINUED**



### Staffordshire

*The Indian Tree of Life inspired this classic English handblocked linen, designed in 1910 by a student of William Morris.*

**DISCONTINUED**



### Gainsborough

*Elegant silk damask, first woven in 1931, with traditional Renaissance motifs adapted from a 17th century Italian woven panel.*



1977 First wallcovering collection.

1981 Introduction of COM contract fabric collection.

1986 Lee Jofa purchase Groundworks, Inc.

1978 Roschen Corporation purchases Lee Jofa, Inc.

1982 National introduction of Lee Jofa Furniture, upholstery division.

1988

1975 American Society of Interior Designers is formed by merger of American Institute of Decorators (founded 1931) and National Society of Interior Designers (founded 1957).



and as a springboard into new product categories—all to better serve our customers, who are now reached through 18 showrooms and representatives in major cities and design



centers across the United States, as well as in London, Hong Kong, Toronto and Australia.

The same standards of quality, design and workmanship inherent in Arthur H. Lee's original handloomed products still permeate everything we produce and sell today. We have maintained our reputation for fine traditional fabrics—revived, recolored for today's interiors or skillfully translated for modern printing techniques to make them available for a wider range of installations.

Our collections still include a healthy selection of handcrafted fabrics, a legacy of Arthur H. Lee. When our founder first developed his products to answer the call of a particular designer, he saw no conflict between artistry and service, between classic fabrics and fresh ideas. We're pleased to say that this thread of thought has carried through from his day to ours.

Management staff at corporate headquarters in Carlstadt: (l. to r.)

- William E. Roschen, President
- Christopher Adlington, VP Design & Product Development
- Carolee Bentley, Director of Operations
- Mark Weidner, National Sales Director
- Jack Farfel, VP Finance.

