Solomon Lipinsky is first listed in the Asheville census in 1880, twenty-four years old and living with his wife and brother-in-law in a boarding house on Woodfin Street. Early on, he worked as a clerk at S. Whitlock & Company on South Main near Eagle Street. By 1887 he owned his own store at 46 South Main Street (now Biltmore Avenue). In 1890, he and his half-sister had a store together, Lipinsky & Ellick, at 30 South Main. They called it Bon Marché.

Bon Marché

Bon Marché was an Asheville landmark for 90 years.

Its success followed the growth of Asheville. In 1889 Asheville was a small mountain town with dirt streets, home to 10,000 people. By 1925 the population had nearly tripled. The streets were paved and lined with stores. Bon Marché, one of the state's largest department stores at that time, was considered by many to be one of its finest. Family owned and operated, three generations of Lipinskys ran Bon Marché.

Thomas Wolfe wrote to Louis Lipinsky in preparation for the 50th anniversary of Bon Marché in 1939:

March 3, 1938

Dear Louis:

...I am certainly interested in your project, because although I did not know your father except by sight, I have known all you boys all my life, and Bon Marché is such a landmark in Asheville life that if I ever heard anything had happened to it I think I should feel almost as if Beaucatcher Mountain had been violently removed from the local landscape by some force of nature. I know that as long as I can remember, at any rate, it has always stood with the women folk at home for the best in merchandise and fashion.

...it may interest and amuse you to know that when I first saw Paris, as a kid of twenty-four, I could not quite get used to the fact that they had a Bon Marche, as well; I kept wondering what the hell they were doing with our name.

...Sincerely yours, Tom Wolfe

SOLOMON LIPINSKY

Solomon Lipinsky (1856–1925) was a retail visionary who brought to Asheville the new ideas used in big city department stores, the modern way to shop in the Gilded Age of the late 1800s.

A leader in Asheville's early civic life, Lipinsky was a charter member of Temple Beth Ha-Tephila, a leader of the Royal Arcanum and many other fraternal orders and a highly regarded citizen.

LOUIS AND CLARA LIPINSKY

Louis Lipinsky, Sr., Solomon's youngest son, (1888–1966) married Clara Nathan of Charlotte, NC, in 1919. He worked in Bon Marché for 28 years, managing the Charlotte store and then the Asheville store. His father's legacy of civic participation continued in the younger Lipinsky who worked tirelessly to build a better campus for Asheville-Biltmore College. He led an effort to persuade the University of North Carolina to make Asheville-Biltmore a part of the UNC system, which it did in 1969.

Lipinsky Auditorium at UNC-A is named in his honor.

Go West With Success

The merchants had a saying, "Go west with success." That is exactly what Bon Marché did after a series of locations on South Main Street, now Biltmore Avenue.

In 1911, it moved to Patton Avenue. From there it moved further west to Haywood Street where it remained, in two different locations, for 55 years.

BEFORE 1911

ONE OF BON MARCHE'S EARLY SOUTH MAIN STREET LOCATIONS

The beginnings of Bon Marché's reign as western North Carolina's longest-lived premier shopping emporium came with the store's move to the old Berkeley Hotel building on Patton Avenue, **the current site of the Kress Building.** The new store featured elaborate displays in its windows, clearly marked prices on each item, merchandise separated by department and Asheville's first public elevator, a novelty and attraction for many.

1911–1923

NORTHWEST CORNER OF PATTON AND LEXINGTON AVENUES

Bon Marché moved to a much larger building constructed by E.W. Grove in 1923 for his friend Solomon Lipinsky. It was built to Lipinsky's specifications using the best fireproof construction materials of the time. Ivey's department store moved into this building in 1937 and it **now houses the Haywood Park Hotel.**

1923–1936

CORNER OF HAYWOOD STREET AND BATTERY PARK AVENUE

This is the store most people remember as Bon Marché. It was at this location for 42 years. During that time, the store sponsored daily radio broadcasts, brought in famous designers and make-up artists and was an official sales agent for Girl Scout and Boy Scout uniforms. The business was sold to the Automatic Service Company of Atlanta in 1969. This location closed July, 1979, when malls and strip shopping centers became popular and downtown began a period of decline. **This building is currently occupied by Earth Guild.**

1937–1979

33 HAYWOOD STREET

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