

The Family Store: A History Of Jewish Businesses In Downtown Asheville, 1880–1990

Lexington Avenue was known as Water Street until around 1896. The drovers who were traveling through the area on their way to market in distant cities with animals to sell would water their horses and livestock there. From around 1910 until 1978, lower Lexington was the site of the Asheville Farmer's Market. Growers would bring their goods

to town daily or weekly, often by horse and wagon, and sell from stalls along the street. After selling their goods at the market, farmers would do their shopping in downtown Asheville businesses along Bitmore and Patton Avenues and later Lexington. They would buy clothing, shoes and dry goods that they couldn't produce on their farms.

Lexington Ave.

Starting in 1913

Max Rosen sold produce and later poultry from a variety of addresses on Lexington.

Louis Resnikoff came to Asheville after assurances from his friend, Izzy Goldstein (Goldstein's Salvage Store), that it was a good place to be in business. He opened the Bargain Center, selling general merchandise, in 1952.

The most successful part of The Bargain Center was the shoe department, so that was moved into a separate space, given the name Tops for Shoes and expanded into a complete selection for men, women and children. The Resnikoffs also opened a store that sold uniforms adjacent to Tops.



Tops survived the exodus of retail stores from downtown because they offered what no one else did. They carried an exceptionally large selection of shoes in hard to fit sizes.

In 1932, the Surprise Sale Store, which sold clothing, was opened by Morris Diamond. Later, other discount price stores followed, offering affordable merchandise to the workers at the many small manufacturing facilities that existed above storefronts in downtown, such as the Vanderbilt Shirt Factory on Tingle Alley, which later moved to the corner of Lexington and Walnut. These stores also served people who came into town from the surrounding countryside, often on Saturdays.



LOUIS AND SYLVIA RESNIKOFF

Louis Resnikoff (left) with two unidentified people.

While Louis focused on buying merchandise at the best prices, his wife, Sylvia, focused on customer service. She always said, "If you pay attention to what your customer is telling you and respond, everything else will take care of itself."



SUSQUEHANNA FURNITURE CO.

Lexington became a retail shopping street in 1929 when Nat Friedman opened Susquehanna Furniture Company.



FOX RELIABLE FURNITURE

Morris Fox had worked locally in Artmore and Pearlman's Furniture Stores and decided to open his own store in 1956, Fox Reliable Furniture. He came to Asheville after World War II because he married Asheville native, Ruth Schandler Fox. Her father had several businesses in Asheville including the Social Smoke Shop on South Main, a cigar store he opened in 1914. Later he ran a grocery store on Oak Street next to the First Baptist Church. It moved to Broadway in the 1960s and became a deli, Schandler's Pickle Barrel.

A Sampling of Shops on Lexington

Business Name	Location	Business Name	Location
1913 Max Rosen	59	1956 Fox Reliable Furniture	40
1935 Surprise Sale, general merchandise (Morris Diamond)	56	1960 The Dollar Store (Kootcher)	27
1936 Susquehanna Salvage Co., used furniture (Friedman)	24	Ben's Bargain City (Feiner)	61
Asheville Jobbing Co., mill ends (Goldstein)	46	Bargain Center (Resnikoff)	69
1946 Goldstein's	56	1970 Uniform Center (Resnikoff)	23
1953 Ben's Family Store (Kootcher)	31	Artmore Warehouse Outlet (Cooley, Figue)	24
Goldstein's Salvage Store	52	Tops for Shoes	27



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