

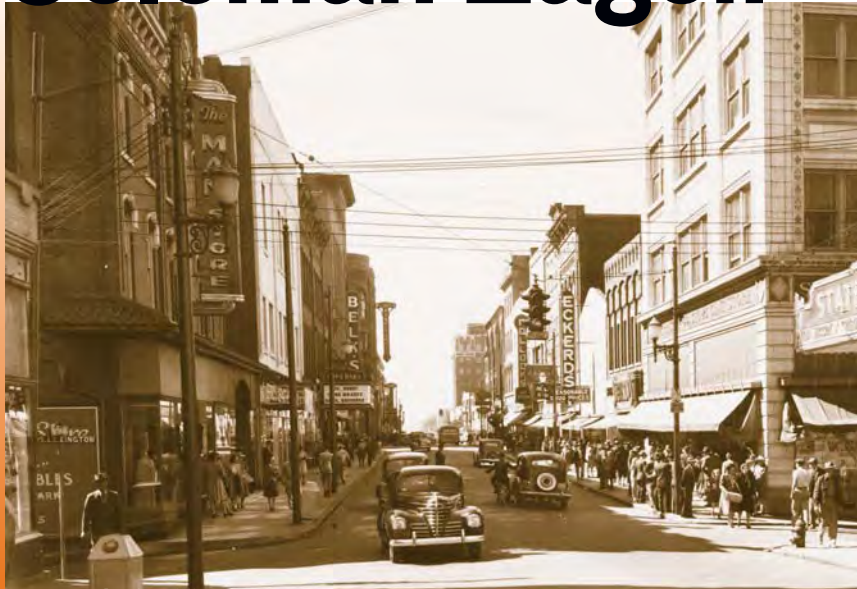
The Family Store: A History Of Jewish Businesses In Downtown Asheville, 1880–1990

Every town has its legendary businesses and The Man Store was certainly one of those. Most people who lived in or anywhere near Asheville from 1922 until the store left downtown in the early 1970s were familiar with it. Coleman Zageir (1894-1975) opened The Man Store

in 1922 and operated it for more than forty years at the same location, 22 Patton Avenue. The Man Store was sold to Hart, Schaffner & Marx in 1963. It eventually moved to the Asheville Mall, underwent a name change and closed.

Coleman Zageir

He was a modest man, stating, “If you are a member of the community, that’s a responsibility you should recognize and assume.” Yet he disliked publicity and only gave three interviews to the media in his lifetime. His service was recognized by the University of North Carolina at Asheville when one of its new classroom buildings was named Coleman Zageir Social Sciences Building in 1974.



Patton Avenue, 1941



LATE 1960S

The Man Store, corner of Lexington and Patton Avenue.

Other family members also had stores in downtown. His older brother, Robert, owned a men’s clothing store at 8 South Main (now Biltmore Avenue) from 1900-1929 and their relative, Maer Zageir, was proprietor of clothing stores at different downtown locations from 1904 until the early 1930s. Mrs. Lena Zageir is listed in the Asheville City Directory as owner of a clothing store at 44 Biltmore Avenue in 1915.



1930s

Interior of The Man Store. Coleman Zageir on right next to tie rack.

Zageir was, like many of Asheville’s Jewish merchants, active in the local civic community. He served on the board of directors of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, the Asheville Merchants Association and the United Way.



“The stories about him are many. For years he gave members of the graduating class of Asheville High School (he was a member of the Class of 1912) maroon and black ties [the school colors]. Then there were the [anonymous] scholarships he awarded needy seniors giving them a chance at college... Then there were the depression years when, with banks failing, monthly statements from the store were never mailed.”

— Asheville Times, “UNC-A Building To Be Named for Civic Leader Coleman Zageir” May, 1974



An Unsung Hero...

“Coleman always chewed a cigar. He never lit it – he chewed it all the time. Kind of an odd thing... He just had a way of making people feel special.

And my daddy didn’t have any money... He owned a funeral home in Bryson City. So we’d go over [to Asheville] and he would refinance a vehicle at Wachovia [Bank]... and then he would go down and pay Coleman Zageir for what he bought the year before, and then he would buy whole new outfits for the coming year...

He was always one year behind with Coleman. But [Coleman] didn’t care, because he knew daddy was good for it and was always going to show up around Christmas time. Kind of a neat thing.”

— Reg Moody
Owner, Moody’s Funeral Home, Sylva, NC

“I loved that man. I got my first suit there when I was twelve. He threw in a shirt and a tie for free. He had me for life.”

— Chan Gordon
Owner, The Captain’s Bookshelf, Asheville

“I had graduated from high school and was accepted at Asheville-Biltmore College [now UNC-A] and I did not own a suit. I wanted one for college. So I went to The Man Store to buy one. I had on a beautiful tan summer suit and the tailor was marking the pants length while I stood in front of the three-way mirror. And Mr. Zageir walked by. And he stopped and he looked at me in that suit. He said something to the salesman, who answered him back.

“And he came over and said to me, ‘One shoulder is higher than the other. We need to cut the padding down.’ And he took that chalk from the tailor and he

marked up the shoulder with it. He was walking all around me marking up that suit. His hands were just flying with that chalk. It was a twenty-six dollar suit. He had hundred dollar suits in his store. But he was treating me like I was one of his best customers. And when I got that suit, it looked wonderful on. I had it for years.

“And I know why he did it—he wanted me to buy all my suits there. The salesman told him it was my first suit and he wanted it to fit me like a custom-tailored suit. He treated me like a millionaire and I know a lot of other men had the exact same experience. I always bought my suits at The Man Store.”

— Joe Bly
U.S. Post Office, retired.
Host, Shindig on the Green, retired, Asheville



“One of Asheville’s now prominent doctors came out of the service following World War II hoping to set up practice. It would be a costly venture for this young physician who had little more than the uniform he came home with... The young doctor dropped in and told Coleman his problem. He didn’t have a practice, but was determined to establish one. Mr. Zageir quietly smiled and proceeded to outfit the young doctor. No bill was ever mailed. A simple oral statement as the doctor left: ‘When you can.’ Four years later the debt was paid. There were many others who received similar help in launching their careers.”

— Arthur Whiteside, Editorial Director, WLOS-TV
Delivered as tribute upon death of Coleman Zageir
Daily editorial for Dec. 4, 1975