



WOSU



Many Happy Returns to LAZARUS



IT'S BEEN SUCH A COLUMBUS FIXTURE that people assumed it would be here forever. Alas, after 153 years, the downtown Lazarus department store closed in August of 2004.

Many Happy Returns to Lazarus, an hour-long documentary on WOSU.TV, celebrates the end of the venerable store and examines what it has meant to the generations of Ohioans who have shopped and worked there.

“Lazarus wasn’t just a store to shop at downtown,” says Ming Sickles Fisher, a long-time customer. “It was *the* store we shopped at.”

Many Happy Returns to Lazarus tells how Simon Lazarus came to Columbus from Prussia and opened a store on High Street in 1851 and shows how the Lazarus building, in the heart of the city, would find a place in the hearts of generations of Central Ohioans. More than a department store, Lazarus became the place of milestones: first haircut, summer job, first bus ride alone, prom dress, interview suit. It’s even the place where countless men and women met—usually as workers in the store, though occasionally as customers—and became husband and wife.

The documentary, and this accompanying Web site, stands as a video scrapbook of the downtown store and features interviews with dozens of customers and former employees, many of them sharing photos and mementos. “I don’t think there’s one person who doesn’t have a happy memory. It was just the best place to be,” says shopper Jayne Bell. “It was just a classy place. I can remember only happy memories since I was a child.”



FAMILY TREE

Simon (Founder; died in 1877)

Amelia (1846-1899)

Fred (Partner and manager from 1874; died 1917)

Ralph (Partner and manager from 1874; died 1903)

Simon (President from 1917 until death in 1947)

Fred Jr. (Vice President to 1944; President, Federated Department Stores from 1944; died 1973)

Robert Sr. (Vice President to 1947; President 1947 to 1959 and then Chairman)

Charles Y. (Executive Vice President to 1959 and then President)

Ralph Lazarus (Executive Vice President to 1952 and then Vice President Federated Department Stores)



Simon Lazarus



Fred and Ralph Lazarus

A family-operated business

In 1850, a rabbinical scholar by the name of Simon Lazarus arrived in Columbus, and in 1851 he opened the Lazarus store. Simon Lazarus "was short...and quiet...but, my, how very cordial he was... a real business man, always far ahead of the times... and always so awfully good to poor folks." Assisted by his wife Amelia and sons Fred and Ralph, Simon and his store gradually began to prosper. Opened with a modest capital of less than \$3000, the store measured less than 20 x 50 feet, boasted a staff of one clerk, and bordered boot and shoe dealer F. Fassig to the left, Harvey Coit, clothing merchant to the right, and George Elliott, photographer, upstairs.



Simon Lazarus and Fred Lazarus Jr.

Fred and Ralph, the two boys, worked in the store before and after school, and the family lived near their place of business, on the site of one of the present-day Lazarus garages. Fred was often sent down to the Scioto River with a bucket to get water for mopping the store floors before school in the morning—sometimes he would have to enlist his brother's help in knocking holes in the ice before they could fill their buckets.

Next generation of Lazarus

When Simon Lazarus died in 1877, Columbus lost not only the founder of what would be its signature store but also its first ordained rabbi. Simon Lazarus reputedly "caused many a heart and soul to soar aloft on the wings of devotion to their God." Amelia Lazarus shared the store's ownership with her sons during the 22 years of her widowhood, until her death in 1899. At that time, the store's name was changed to F.&R. Lazarus.

While Fred and Ralph did all the buying, advertising, bookkeeping, and some of the selling in the early days of their store ownership, they added personnel gradually and by 1881 the store employed 22 clerks. In 1933, J. W. Knox, a long-time employee of F.&R. Lazarus, recalled that "Mr. Ralph Lazarus wrote the ads when I first went into the store in 1890. I remember hearing the fellow from the Ohio State Journal say, 'Well, Mr. Lazarus, got your ad ready?' and Mr. Lazarus would say, 'No...but I'll have it in three minutes!' and then he'd just sit down and write it out, with pencil, on a piece of wrapping paper, like as not!"

By 1888, Ralph Lazarus was putting his advertising skills to good use, promoting the seven electric lights and all the modern improvements of the F.&R. Lazarus store. The store continued as a family tradition, and Ralph and Fred were joined by Simon and Fred Lazarus, Jr. after school and on weekends.

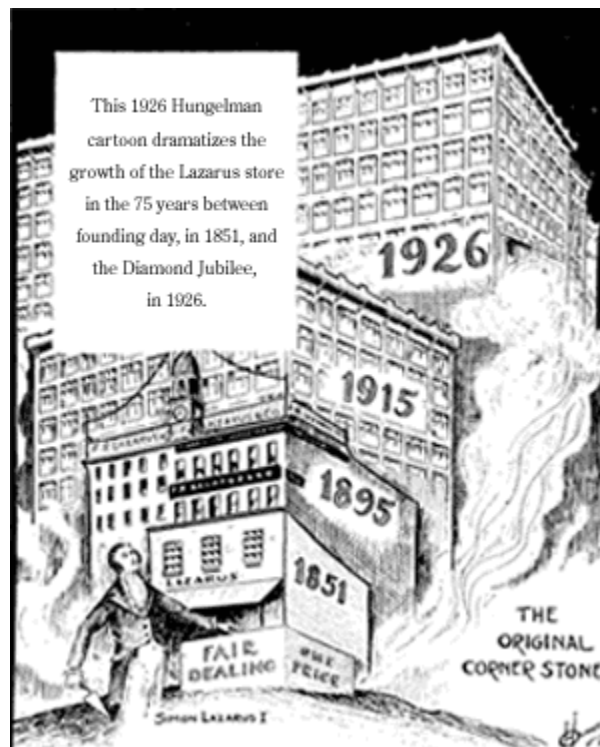


Robert Lazarus, Charles Lazarus, and Robert Lazarus Jr.

LAZARUS TIMELINE

As Jeffrey Sheban of *The Columbus Dispatch* recently commented, "In 1851, when Simon Lazarus opened a men's tailor shop on the dirt road that was High Street, Columbus really was a cow town." Columbus was a frontier town then, boasting 17,882 residents, and High Street was the main thoroughfare, named "High" because the street is on the watershed between the Scioto River to the west and Alum Creek to the east.

Columbus was an exciting place in the early nineteenth century: *The Ohio State Journal* of 1827 reported "some 18 citizens of Hamilton Township, Franklin County, engaged in an all day squirrel hunt. Before nightfall they had killed 1458 squirrels." Apart from the squirrel hunts, the frontier town had much to offer its citizens. Columbus became the county seat in 1824, and in 1834, it was incorporated as a city. The Franklin County Courthouse, completed in 1840, was considered one of the most elegant edifices of its kind. The Ohio Canal produced a commercial revolution in central Ohio after it opened in 1831. When the National Road, the great original pathway of civilization on this continent, came to Columbus in 1833, it brought the isolated Ohio town into profitable and practical contact with the west and the far west. The great Whig Convention of 1840, which nominated "Tippecanoe and Tyler too" for President and Vice President, was held in Columbus.



War of 1812 & the Civil War

Both the War of 1812 and the Civil War took their tolls on Columbus. The Ohio Penitentiary housed Southern prisoners of war, and the infamous Morgan's Raiders came to Columbus and stole clothing from the Lazarus store. In a move that "took some guts, though it may not have been very smart," according to Robert Lazarus, Fred and Ralph gathered up a couple of guns from the store and went to Camp Chase where Morgan's Raiders were staying. The short version of the story: they got the goods back!

The Civil War demand for uniforms expanded the men's clothing industry and led to the development of sizing standards. When Johnny came marching home at the end of the Civil War, one of the first things he wanted was to get out of his uniform. Each soldier went to Lazarus where he would be ushered into the basement to exchange his uniform for store clothes (leaving his uniform behind). One such customer entered the store with \$400 in his uniform pocket. He received his new "duds" and left the store. A month later he returned, insisting that he had either lost his \$400 or left it in his old clothes. "Mr. Lazarus remembered the man. He took him down into the old clothes room and the man found everything except the trousers he had worn. Mr. Lazarus remembered then that when the man had changed clothes he threw his uniform trousers into the air, glad to be free of them. Looking up they saw the trousers caught on a nail in the ceiling. A hasty examination revealed \$400 in the pocket."

1890s: Spanish American War

The Lazarus whistle brought the first news of the declaration of the Spanish-American War to Columbus citizens. A day-to-day diary of the war's progress was maintained in Lazarus' windows. By 1898, the store had grown to accommodate 150 "associates," all men, and all of them marched in a parade to welcome home Spanish-American War veterans.



1909: The "New" F.&R. Lazarus store

In 1902 young Simon Lazarus entered store management; sadly, Ralph Lazarus died in 1903. In 1907, during a major depression, Simon and Fred Jr., persuaded the senior Fred Lazarus to gamble on the future of apparel retailing by setting plans to build a new six-story store across the street from the old one. The new Lazarus would offer "everything ready-to-wear" for ladies and children, men and boys. With Fred Sr.'s approval, they bought the site of the old United States Hotel. Fred Lazarus Jr. later commented that "we made a loan to build the store, \$350,000, and pledged all the family's real estate. It was a big risk for the family."

The new F.&R. Lazarus store opened on Monday, August 17, 1909, on the northwest corner of High and Town Streets. After the old store closed on Saturday night, August 15, stock was moved across Town Street on a ramp. As was the custom for a Saturday night, it was 11 p.m. before the store was cleared of customers. "At 12 o'clock," reported the local newspapers, "the city closed off Town Street, and a platform was laid down from curb to curb six feet wide. This was covered with a canopy in case of rain, and everything was put in trucks and moved across to the new building." The store's fixtures and the new departments' merchandise were already installed, so only the merchandise from the old store had to be placed. On Monday morning the bigger and better Lazarus store opened its doors to the public and supported the proud boast that "We have never been closed one minute for construction or repairs!"

The Lazarus family published this ad in the *Columbus News* on August 16, 1909:

A live chick will break its shell—a dead one never. We have "broken our shell" and have earned the reputation of a "live" concern. We welcome you, one and all, residents of Columbus and the surrounding countryside, to our new home, the largest ready-to-wear concern in the middle west.

Our new home is your new home, and such we hope to greet you tomorrow morning. Come and see the Escalator (moving stairway), the Niagara Soda Fountain, the large Aviary filled with singing canaries on the mezzanine, and all of the other attractions.



Sales nearly doubled the first year in the new store. According to Charles Lazarus, however, "When the first escalator was installed, it evidently scared the daylights out of people. They had to take it out a year later." One Lazarus patron was so taken with the escalator, though, that he wrote a poem in its honor:

*What's the crowd a pushin' and a shovin' over there?
Land! It's folks a ridin' up the escalator stair!
Ma's brought all the family in to take a little ride,
Cause they're simply goin' dippy
Bout that Escalator Glide!*

1913: The Columbus Flood

On March 25, 1913, a disastrous flood hit Columbus. Three to 22 feet of water covered land stretching from the Scioto River to the Hilltop. Ninety-three people lost their lives, four bridges were torn out, and nearly \$6,000,000 worth of property was destroyed. Simon Lazarus headed the Relief Committee. The F.&R. Lazarus store cited the heroism of its associates in the Lazarus Enthusiast: "Our West Side associates proved heroes in this ordeal—we're proud of them. Heroes, too, were those associates who braved dangerous currents and fatal obstructions in the rescue work. Messrs. Wiskcohil, Streich, Sifrit, Sachs, and Tharpe used every available canoe in the store to save some of our marooned West Siders. They were first to penetrate some of the most dangerous places in the flooded district."

World War I

In 1917, when the United States entered World War I, Mondays became known as "Fuel-less Mondays," and the Lazarus store remained closed on that first business day through 1918 to conserve energy. A sign in electric lights across the front of the store urged Columbus citizens to "Back Those Bayonets with Thrift Stamps."

World War II

While the 1930s had been a dark era for most of the country, 1939 was even darker when World War II began. Lazarus supported the war effort in Columbus just as it had for World War I. The store dedicated its High and Town Street corner window as the Columbus Victory Corner on May 23, 1942. Clubs and civic groups were invited to participate in Victory Corner bond selling programs in competition for Certificates of Merit (awarded by the Treasury Department Defense Savings Staff of Ohio), and they responded so enthusiastically that Victory Corner Schedules were set up three to four months in advance.

In 1942, the store began opening at 12:00 noon on Mondays for the convenience of Columbus' many defense workers. By midsummer, 1942, almost 100 Lazarus associates were in the armed services and word had come that one associate, Lieutenant Robert J. Meder, had participated in the bombing of Tokyo.

Grave shortages of consumer goods, the rationing of shoes and restaurant foods, price controls, and the loss of young men and women to the armed forces were among the retail complications during the war. Buyers of those years remember the frantic search for merchandise to sell, and the instant customer response when it was advertised. One Lazarus associate, a high school student in the receiving room, says she was popular at North High School because she knew when the Spaulding loafers came in. A food executive said sadly in 1944, "Can you imagine Lazarus dining room serving cake made with a mix?" Nylon stockings, or any-fiber stockings, were in such short supply that the rare new shipment always caused a riot.

The Post-War years



After the war ended in August of 1945, life gradually improved. In 1945 a revolving credit service called the Budget Charge Account was introduced, and in 1947, extensive credit promotion by traveling public relations representatives

began in the out-of-town trading areas. In 1947, people outside of Franklin County held 13,000 charge accounts; by 1950 the number had quadrupled.

Also in 1947, Lazarus opened its first parking garage, winning the Ohio Architects' award that year. In 1948 Lazarus added the first modern escalators in central Ohio (an escalator had been installed in 1909, but it was removed in 1914 because few people used it and, according to Fred Lazarus, Sr., "it was a creaky old thing and people were afraid of it."). The Lazarus Annex was added in 1946 which permitted expansion in many departments. Late in the 40s, the television boom began, and television sets went flying out of Lazarus.

In the summer of 1948, the first Red Apple Pins for courtesy were awarded to associates who were nominated for the honor by letters from customers. The associate who received five courtesy commendations wore a bronze apple. Silver pins denoted ten commendations, and gold pins denoted twenty.

Those crazy 50s

The Chintz Room and the Buckeye Room replaced the fifth floor Main Dining Room in the early 1950s. The Copper Kettle opened on the Annex lower level, and The Highlander Grill replaced the Soda Grill in the West Basement.

Another wonderful Lazarus innovation was the Self-Improvement Clinics for teens and pre-teens which began in 1950. Lazarus used one radio spot to announce the projected series of classes, and the response was so great and the waiting lists so long that the course was not advertised again until 1958.



The "U-Ask-It" Phones were also installed in 1950, allowing customers to obtain instant information. After picking up a phone to ask a question, a customer was directed from wherever he or she was to wherever he or she wanted to go!

In 1951, Lazarus celebrated its Centennial Year, and everyone worked for six months to improve the merchandise, service and personnel planning. Key events included two series of window displays with 20 historical dioramas made especially for Lazarus, which "froze" highlights in Ohio history—Jenny Lind singing in the Columbus Opera House, for example, or the Wright Brothers working on their first plane. As a Centennial Gift to the community, \$100,000 was earmarked for the purchase of the building which housed Community Service Agencies. The store held a 100th Anniversary Sale, and Ed Sullivan made a personal guest appearance at a men's style show. Finally, the Look to Lazarus television show, which began broadcasting in 1950 (and ended in 1952), really "hit its stride" during the Centennial Year with hundreds of VIP visitors to the store.

Lazarus invented the Secret Gift Shop, introduced in 1957 and copied by stores across the country. There young children could shop alone—no adults were allowed except for the staff members designated to work the area—and have their Christmas gifts for family and friends put into suitcase boxes that they could open and close as often as they liked!

The psychedelic 60s and 70s

The late 1950s and all of the 1960s were the years of the "youthquake" when war babies became teenagers. Then, as now, teen fashions were trend setters, forecasting skirt lengths, silhouettes, colors, and mixed patterns that affected the styles preferred by adults. Customer demand for fashion variety to match differing approaches to wardrobe and home decoration resulted in a "boutique shop" trend, which had room to grow since Lazarus expanded its downtown store by 300,000 square feet. Carnaby Street was a teen-man fashion trend, and Mary Quant was the designer of choice for young girls.

The 1960s also saw the opening of branch stores: Westland opened in 1962, Northland in 1964, Eastland in 1967, and the Richland store, located in Ontario, Ohio, opened in 1969.



The 1970s were a sad time for Lazarus: Robert Lazarus Sr., active in management from before World War I to the early 1970s, died on February 4, 1973. Robert commented once that "a department store is a living mirror of our civilization in which we see the constantly changing needs and wishes of our people. The department store is as big and diverse as civilization. Yet it is microscopic in its detail. It is as purposeful as any business run for a profit. Yet it is as changeable as a woman's whim. It has to be all these things if it is to survive and prosper."

While the Lazarus family grieved over the loss of Robert, the stores continued to do well. In 1970, Kingsdale in Upper Arlington opened; in 1971, the Home Store East and the Lima Mall store opened; the Castleton store in Indiana opened in 1973; in 1974, Lafayette Square, another Indiana store, debuted; and finally, three new stores opened in the fall of 1978: Washington Square (Indianapolis) and the two Budget Capri stores in Columbus and Westerville. In addition, Charlie's, a fast-service restaurant, joined the downtown store and several of the branches.

By the 1960s, however, it was becoming apparent that consumer preferences were changing. New roads and highways made it easier for customers to get to stores in shopping centers. Shopping became more informal. While generations of women had once donned dresses and white gloves for a trip to the downtown Lazarus, it became more convenient for them to remain in their everyday clothes and visit their suburb's shopping center where they could park for free close to the door. Around the nation downtown department stores were closing.

The beginning of the end

While the downtown Lazarus store remained open until 2004, the operation was scaled back during its final years. A significant portion of the building was empty, and the number of in-store restaurants fell from nine to one. The store's elaborate holiday season window displays were eliminated, the Christmas parade was ended, and, in its final years, even Santa's throne was empty. For Columbus residents with happy memories of the store's glory years, though, having the Lazarus store open downtown, regardless of its limited offerings, remained an important connection to the vibrant and vital enterprise that had played a major role in the formation of the city.

RETAIL FIRSTS

The 1890s saw the installation of the glorious marble Niagara Soda Fountain, at a cost of \$1,600. The Lazarus family maintained that the fountain would give customers an extra incentive to come to the store—and it was an instant success! Another customer attraction was the check-cashing service, added when Fred Lazarus, Sr. noted that a nearby bank closed at 3 p.m., even though there was a long line of Civil War veterans waiting to get their pension checks cashed.

A Renaissance clock tower, outlined in electric lights, was added in 1895. Lazarus had its own electric light plant across Town Street, connected by tunnel to the store. A steam weather whistle tooted the forecast three times a day, and Lazarus customers received "whistle code" cards. A store employee was designated to calm the horses outside when it blew.



Post-war demand for men's clothing was so great that there were at least 200 men's wear shops on High Street in the late 1860s. This high demand gave Simon Lazarus an idea ahead of its time. According to Charles Lazarus, "Simon went to New York and came back with 200 ready-made suits; 10 or 20 years later, there were 10 tailors up and down High Street!"

The Lazarus store had two things going for it in the 1860s: the beginnings of an adjustment policy ("It fits or you don't pay") and a one-price policy. At that time most retailers didn't mark the price on their goods; customers and merchants dickered over prices. Simon Lazarus was one of the first to clearly mark prices. Once more, Lazarus was an innovator in terms of retail policies!

Lazarus moved ahead in the 1910s with merchandising innovations in the advance of ready-to-wear clothing. Separates (shirtwaists—dating back to the 1890s Gibson Girl styles—and skirts) and one-size-fits-all styles, such as the flounced wrapper and the dolman cloak, became popular. Produced on sewing assembly lines at low cost compared to custom dressmaker clothes, the clothing line won a huge mass following for Lazarus.

The store that had been twice as big as needed when it opened in 1909 became cramped by 1921. In 1909 only the first three floors were used for selling merchandise. By 1919, Lazarus expanded sales to five floors and the basement of the new store. In 1921, an extension was built and new High Street windows were installed, along with new entrances. The *Lazarus Enthusiast* boasted that "Rome wasn't built in a day but that has nothing to do with our windows which were! The feat was, to our knowledge, the first of its kind...The glass [was] put in, lights installed...carpets laid, painted and trimmed all in time for Columbus folks down town Sunday evening. Some job! Some speed!" Several months later, "Elevator capacity doubled! The largest passenger elevators in Columbus, three new ones added to the original bank of four," boasted the *Enthusiast*.

The 1926 expansion, the Town-Front building, more than doubled the size of the store. A complete home furnishings and appliance store was added. The Pavilion Tea Room joined the Main Dining Room on the 5th floor, and the Colonial Room replaced the Balcony Tea Room. 1926 also saw the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee Year, which began with a New Year's Eve Street Dance, parade, and radio broadcast. All performers were Lazarus associates. In February that year, thousands of Columbus residents lined the streets for a mammoth parade depicting the progress of Columbus and Lazarus in 75 years.



America had little to celebrate, however, in the late 20s. With the stock market crash of 1929, the country was struggling to keep on its feet. Thanks to loyal shoppers and associates, Lazarus enjoyed a banner year in 1929 with sales of \$12,875,000. In return, Lazarus instituted a personnel policy devoted to retaining the store's veteran personnel despite drastic drops in sales over the course of the 30s. The only items that continued to sell well during this time were electric refrigerators, washers and radios which went into mass production, ladies sportswear, and the dollar housedress: "a whale of a buy for a dollar." In 1933, Lazarus began promoting charge accounts. Air conditioning was added to the selling floors in 1934, making Lazarus one of the first big stores in America to promise shoppers a "cool" experience. In 1935, Lazarus developed the "Few-Pennies-a-Day Plan (FPD)" with "NO Down Payments." Some retail critics called the plan a move toward retail bankruptcy, but Lazarus' view was "We already have a deferred pay plan with a 20% down payment. If we are willing to trust customers for 80% of the purchase, why not trust them with 100%?"



Lazarus Associates

The teen years of the twentieth century also saw the advancement of associate benefits. In 1912 the Lazarus Savings Association, a forerunner to the credit union, was established. In 1913, the *Lazarus Enthusiast*, the company's monthly paper, was inaugurated. In 1914, the first Twenty Year Club meeting was held, consisting of 13 members, all men, with service records ranging from 22 to over 50 years. In 1915, the store boasted 350 associates, and Margaret Henninger commented on an associate benefit at that time: "If an associate went 60 days without an error, she was entitled to a half-holiday. That meant no error on cash register or sales book, and no tardy marks."

The Lazarus family took the health and well-being of their associates seriously. Since the turn of the century, bowling had become a favorite sport, and the first bowling club met weekly in 1902. Interest in the team, which featured Fred Jr. and Simon Lazarus, was so widespread that the store's advertising mentioned the bowling team's ratings. Years later, in 1935, the store's big bowling league became the nucleus of the Lazarus Athletic Association, which offered table and lawn tennis, bowling, gun, glee, and reading clubs, and occasionally baseball—all for the enjoyment of Lazarus associates.

In 1936, Lazarus came to the aid of their associates with financial gifts—each received \$25 to \$70, depending on their number of years of service. In November 1941 the store management distributed Good Business Bonus checks worth two weeks' pay for all associates employed since before June 1, 1941.

The Red Apple Pin

In the summer of 1948, the first Red Apple Pins for courtesy were awarded to associates who were nominated for the honor by letters from customers. The associate who received five courtesy commendations wore a bronze apple. The silver pins denoted ten commendations. Gold pins represented twenty commendations.



The Bargain Basement

Also in 1917, Lazarus became one of America's first stores to open a Bargain Basement stocked with manufacturers' closeouts. The Bargain Basement became a perennial favorite of Columbus shoppers who looked forward to "stock sales." In the years just after World War I, many stores went out of business, and Lazarus sometimes purchased closeout stocks, in their entirety, for quick sale in the Bargain Basement. The stock sales could include anything and everything, and prices were always low, "going at 25¢ to 50¢ on the dollar." Customers would "tumble down the steps from the street doors by the hundreds when they opened," said Sadie Hess, a long-time employee of Lazarus. Eventually, the Basement Store served as a complete store-within-a-store, with its own buying staff, merchandising and advertising offices.

Thanksgiving shuffle

In 1939, the last Thursday in November fell on November 30. This meant there were only 24 shopping days between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Fred Lazarus, Jr. proposed that the consumer economy could be helped, in most years, if Thanksgiving occurred on the fourth Thursday in November instead of the last Thursday. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt learned of the suggestion, he was enthusiastic about such a change.

He announced the news too quickly for Fred Jr. to inform his brother Simon, however. Simon Lazarus was upset because the new date created a problem for his favorite spectator event, the Ohio State University Thanksgiving football game. "What damn fool got the President to do that?" he demanded. "You're looking at him," said Fred, Jr. In 1941 the new date was legalized in most states.

LASTING LEGACY

Yes, everyone celebrated the holidays at Lazarus and a visit to one of the store's restaurants is an experience shared by practically everyone in Columbus. The Lazarus store molded this community in many other ways, too.

Simon Lazarus changed the nature of retail sales in Columbus shortly after he opened the store in 1851 when he instituted a set price for his merchandise. Until then, each customer bargained for each item. Because of Simon Lazarus, the model for running a business in Columbus was transformed.



YOUR ASSOCIATION
HERE IS A CAREER



Millions of people shopped at the downtown store in its 153 year history, and thousands upon thousands worked there. Many enjoyed long careers with this retail giant, benefiting from the collegial management style and the progressive employee benefits pioneered by Lazarus. Many others, however, had a short relationship with the store, as seasonal workers at Christmas or during summer vacations from school. Nonetheless, many recall their brief time with the Lazarus organization as a seminal experience.

Many of the people who worked at Lazarus remember it is as an important element of their vocational education. They say working at the store with a management team that allowed them a role in decision making was worth more than any business or marketing degree.

Several generations of retailers in Columbus opened their own stores after working at

Lazarus. In a sense, their commitment to customer service is part of the legacy of the downtown Lazarus store.

HOLIDAY MAGIC



Someone once said that “Christmas, children, is not a date; it is a state of mind.”

No where was this more true than in Columbus, Ohio, at the Lazarus Department Store. The annual unveiling of the store front windows on High Street brought delighted children and their equally enchanted parents. Those store windows became part of a Christmas tradition: “Let’s go down and see the Christmas windows!” Visiting Santa at Lazarus was equally a tradition. Perhaps it will be at Christmas that the citizens of Columbus will most grieve the loss of this store.

“Oh, man, Christmas at Lazarus was a true celebration,” says Rick Linville, who has been coming to the store since he was a child. “It was the most exciting time of the year for us.”

The Lazarus toy department sales staff, which usually consisted of seven or eight associates, grew to 140 after Thanksgiving. The Talking Tree greeted children as they made their way to see the Jolly Old Man. “If there were Santas anywhere else, they were pretend,” insists Jean Harkless, a long-time customer. “This was the real one.”



DOWNTOWN LAZARUS

The last grand dame bows out



AKRON | O'Neil's
Open: 1928 to 1988
Current use: city, business offices



CINCINNATI | Shillito's, Lazarus
Open: 1878 to 1997
Current use: lofts



CLEVELAND | May Co., Kaufmann's
Open: 1914 to 1993
Current use: offices

By **Barnet D. Wolf**
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

When Lazarus-Macy's switches off the lights late today for the last time at its huge Downtown store, it will mark the end of an era in which big, central-city department stores ruled the retail roost across Ohio.

Most of the large buildings — some more than a century old — still stand, but they're now offices or condominiums. Some sit vacant, stark reminders of a time when central business districts were the hub of a community's commerce.

Cleveland had several "legacy" downtown stores, including May, Higbee's and Halle's. Cincinnati's retail landscape included Shillito's, McAlpin's and Pogue's. Dayton had Rike's and Youngstown was dominated by Strouss.

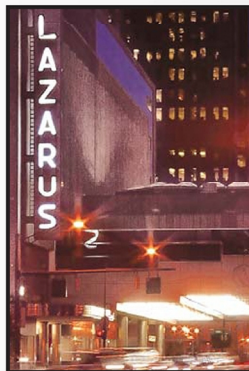
All, and more, are gone, victims of changing shopping patterns.

"As consumers and residential populations moved out of the city centers to the suburbs and then beyond the outerbelts, the big downtown department stores became irrelevant," retail-industry expert Lois Huff said.

Department-store owners just "followed the people and the money," she said, building smaller stores closer to where people lived.

Meanwhile, consumer lifestyles and needs also changed. As more women worked rather than staying home, starting particularly in the 1960s, their time became more important.

"People wanted the benefit of going to a mall location, where you can do a lot of



DOWNTOWN | Lazarus
Open: 1909 to 2004
Future use: offices

► Coming Sunday: A look at what's in store for Lazarus-Macy's

See **GRAND** Page C2



TOLEDO | Lasalle's
Open: 1917 to 1984
Current use: apartments, offices

Trading spaces

Major Ohio downtown department-store buildings, which opened during or before 1932 and closed in or after 1968, and their current use.

AKRON

► Polsky's

Opened: 1930

Store closed: 1978

Current use: University of Akron offices and classes.

► O'Neil's

Opened: 1928

Store closed: 1988

Current use: city, business offices and restaurant

CLEVELAND

► Halle's

Opened: 1910

Store closed: 1982

Current use: offices

► May Co. (later Kaufmann's)

Opened: 1914

Store closed: 1993

Current use: offices

► Higbee's (later Dillard's)

Opened: 1931

Store closed: 2002

Current use: vacant

► Sterling-Lindner Davis

Opened: 1910

Store closed: 1968

Current use: offices, retail

CINCINNATI

► McAlpin's

Opened: 1877

Store closed: 1996



FILE PHOTO

The old Lazarus store on 7th and Race streets in Cincinnati closed in 1997. The building, which opened in 1878 as Shillito's, was converted into lofts.

Current use: vacant

► Mabley & Carew (later Elder-Beerman)

Opened: 1907

Store closed: 1986

Building demolished.

► Shillito's (later Lazarus)

Building opened: 1878 (numerous later additions)

Store closed: 1997

Current use: lofts

► Poguc's (later L.S. Ayres)

Building opened: 1932

Store closed: 1988

Current use: Tower Place Mall

COLUMBUS

► Lazarus

Building opened: 1909

Store closed: 2004

Future use: offices

► The Union

Building opened: 1904

Store closed: 1968 (the business moved to S. High St. and, as Halle's, closed in 1982)

Current use: offices

DAYTON

► Rike's (later Lazarus)

Building opened: 1912

Store closed: 1992

Building demolished in 1999. Now the site of a performing arts center.

TOLEDO

► Lasalle's (later Macy's)

Building opened: 1917

Store closed: 1984

Current use: apartments, offices

► Lion Store

Building opened: 1890

Store closed: 1980

Building demolished in 1987. Now the site of offices.

► Lamson's

Building opened: 1928

Store closed: 1974

Current use: offices

► Tiedtke's

Building opened: 1910

Store closed: 1973 (At least one Annex Building at this time)

Building destroyed by fire in 1975

YOUNGSTOWN

► Strauss

Building opened: 1926

Store closed: 1986

Current use: mostly vacant.

Source: Dispatch library staff

GRAND

FROM PAGE C1

different shopping in one place," said Huff, senior vice president of Retail Forward, a Columbus-based retail consulting and market-research firm.

Getting to the suburban malls was usually easier, and the parking was free. Meanwhile, low-cost merchandisers such as Kohl's, Target and Wal-Mart took buyers from the older department stores.

"The department stores are still perceived as targeting higher-end consumers," said Shelby McIntyre, professor of marketing at Santa Clara University's Retail Management Institute.

What happened in central Ohio played out years ago across much of the country. The Lazarus-Macy's store lasted longer than most, in part because it was tied to Columbus City Center, the Downtown mall that opened in 1989.

While a couple of Ohio's major cities still have downtown department stores — Kauf-

mann's at City Center and Lazarus-Macy's and Saks Fifth Avenue in Cincinnati — those are newer, smaller units, not the giant stores that offered everything.

Many observers say the department-store concept began with Bon Marche in Paris, which was launched in 1838 but evolved into a department store in 1852.

The first U.S. department store was created by Mormons in Salt Lake City. The Zion's Co-operative Mercantile Institution built a three-story brick build-

ing in 1876 where merchants joined together for a community store.

About the same time, several American entrepreneurial retailers were launching retail businesses.

These included Rowland Macy and Lyman and Joseph Bloomingdale in New York, Marshall Field in Chicago, David May in Denver and John Wanamaker in Philadelphia. Another was Simon Lazarus in Columbus.

It took another few decades for the huge downtown Ameri-

can department stores to rise — Hudson's in Detroit in 1893, Macy's in New York in 1902, Wanamaker's in Philadelphia 1903 and Marshall Field's in Chicago in 1907.

The Downtown Lazarus-Macy's store opened in 1909.

Now, only a small number of the big, old downtown department stores remain, such as Marshall Field's and Carson Pirie Scott in Chicago, Bloomingdale's and Macy's in New York, Famous-Barr in St. Louis and Kaufmann's in Pittsburgh. bwolf@dispatch.com

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TV REVIEW

Lazarus worthy of loving farewell

By Tim Feran THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Was it just good merchandising or something more? In the new documentary *Many Happy Returns to Lazarus*, WOSU-TV (Channel 34) overwhelmingly suggests the latter. Through interviews with dozens of customers and former employees, many of whom responded to a request to share memories and photographs, the one-hour program underscores how the founders of the Downtown department store reached beyond the retail business to the community fabric.

The Columbus landmark will close for good Saturday, leaving in its wake more than 95 years' worth of stories — of people who met their mates, saw their first rock group or had their first haircuts at the store.

The production includes the obligatory history, detailing how a rabbinical scholar from Prussia started the business in 1851 from a small room on High Street and demonstrating how a steady stream of shrewd, often-innovative maneuvers helped the venture grow.

Small things mattered: Realizing in the middle of the 19th century that High Street was lined with hundreds of tailoring shops, Simon Lazarus traveled to upstate New York for readymade suits that he could sell much more quickly and inexpensively to eager customers.

Big ideas mattered, too: Fred Lazarus foresaw higher sales if Thanksgiving were made always the fourth instead of the last Thursday in November — and, thanks to his friendship with President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his influence with other retailers, the national holiday was moved.

In between, the documentary studies Lazarus lore such as the revolutionary returns policy (at least one shopper demanded — and obtained — a refund for a shirt bought at a JCPenney store), the bands and fashion shows, the menagerie of animals, the nine in-house restaurants — and, of course, the seemingly overnight transformation of the building into a Christmas wonderland.

Only a few minutes are devoted to the broader changes in society that have precipitated the closing of many downtown department stores nationwide.

The Ohio State University station wisely chose to focus on the loving testimony from customers and employees — or, rather, associates — and dig up a fuller exploration for sibling WOSU (820 AM).

On radio, hosted by executive producer Brent Davis and reporter Mike Thompson, *Lazarus Memories* will air today, *Many Happy Returns to Lazarus* on Tuesday and *The Disappearing Downtown Department Store* on Wednesday during local portions of Morning Edition and All Things Considered.

In addition, *Open Line With Fred Andrie* will spotlight Lazarus at 10 a.m. today.

Yet the TV version of *Many Happy Returns* should stick in the minds and hearts of many central Ohioans.

It makes a fond and fitting farewell to the great old store.

END OF AN ERA | DOWNTOWN LAZARUS CLOSES ITS DOORS

For many, it was The heart of the city

By Jeffrey Sheban THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

In 1851, when Simon Lazarus opened a men's tailor shop on the dirt road that was High Street, Columbus really was a cow town. Livestock vastly outnumbered the frontier city's 18,000 residents, many of whom were immigrants from Ireland, or, in the case of Lazarus, from Germany. Church steeples dominated the skyline, towering above the houses and two- or three-story commercial buildings. Sidewalks were planks and horses were the mass transportation of the day. The first train had steamed into town less than a year earlier. The air was thick year-round with smoke from coal and wood fires, which created plenty of work for the bucket brigade that passed for a volunteer fire department.

"If you stood at the corner of State and High, you would notice the smell of animals and probably start coughing from all the soot," said central Ohio historian Ed Lentz.

The first Lazarus store fit the times. It was a modest, single-room shop one block south of today's Downtown Lazarus store, which dates from 1909 and is closing for good on Saturday. With the help of a clerk, Simon Lazarus and his wife, Amelia, ran the business.

But the store had at least two things going for it — it was on the growing city's main commercial drag and was a short walk from the public square, where the walls of Ohio's new state Capitol were rising.

Lazarus had hitched his wagon to a city on the move, and they were poised to grow together. The original 20-by-40-foot store would become one of the leading retail operations in the country, changing the way central Ohioans and Americans shopped.

Early years

Men's finer clothes were custom-made in the 1850s. Lazarus had competition, but the store's policy of not charging unless customers were satisfied helped. No-haggle pricing — something of a novelty — was a hit too.

In the 1860s, the business grew, thanks to ready-made clothing through the invention of the sewing machine. Mass manufacture of Civil War uniforms evolved into massproduced men's clothing after the war. The store got bigger as more finished goods were kept on hand.

The Civil War also produced the store's most infamous shoplifters — the Confederates known as Morgan's Raiders, who needed new duds and no doubt appreciated the ready-made clothing trend.

Simon Lazarus, who served as the first rabbi of Columbus' Temple Israel, died in 1877. His sons Fred and Ralph took over the business, which became F & R Lazarus.

A growing success

The boys brought energy and ideas to the business. They embraced marketing and appeared in newspaper ads as cartoon characters with large heads, in the style of Smith

Bros. cough drops. Long before car salesman Fred Ricart, they billed themselves as “the square-dealing clothiers.”

By the 1890s, their store had expanded to take in most of a city block. An impressive clock tower was added. The brothers even built their own electricity-generating plant behind the store.

Horses hitched in front of the store were sometimes spooked by the plant’s steam whistles, which sounded weather forecasts twice a day. Two long blasts meant rain or snow; two short ones predicted rising temperatures.

By 1907, Columbus had grown into a bustling city of 181,000. During a major depression, Fred’s children Simon and Fred Jr., persuaded him to build a new 6-story store one block north, where Lazarus sits today on the corner of Town and High. Similar ornate, multistory “department stores” were being built across the country.

When the new Lazarus opened in 1909, it carried full lines of women’s and children’s clothing, controversial at the time for fear that men would be put off. So the gents got their own entrance and private elevator.

“It’s a whole different town by 1909,” Lentz said. “It’s a town 10 times larger than in 1851. You’re dealing with a much different world.”

The new store was a hit and became a destination in its own right thanks to its vast selection, moving staircase, singing canaries and marble soda fountain.

“We welcome you, one and all, residents of Columbus, and the surrounding countryside to our new home, the largest and greatest ready-to-wear concern in the middle west,” a newspaper ad proclaimed.

Worthington resident Helen Westinghouse, 95, whose parents both worked for Lazarus, said her dad helped move merchandise on a ramp over Town Street from the old store into the new one.

“I still remember (Mom) telling the story of how all the employees ran to the front window when the first car came down High Street,” Westinghouse said.

Glory years

Lazarus was in the vanguard of retailing in the heyday of department stores, from the 1920s to the 1960s.

In 1928, the family bought a controlling interest in Shillito’s department store in Cincinnati, and the next year joined forces with other major department stores — Abraham & Straus of Brooklyn and Filene’s of Boston — to create Federated Department Stores. New York’s Bloomingdale’s joined Federated in 1930. The alliance allowed them to operate independently but pool earnings and spread risks to help battle through the coming Depression.

Innovations attributed to Lazarus include fixed prices (1860s), backing for relief efforts that would become the United Way (1870s), electric lights (1888), check cashing (1890s), crude escalators (1909), one of the country’s first bargain basements, forerunners of closeout stores (1917), air conditioning (1934), clothing arranged by size, not color (1934) and revolving credit (1945).

Fred Lazarus Jr. is even credited with convincing President Roosevelt to change the Thanksgiving holiday from the last Thursday of November to the fourth Thursday, thereby extending the Christmas shopping season.

The Downtown Lazarus store of today is the product of several expansions and face lifts through the 1960s, when the suburban stores that would prove to be its undoing

started being built.

Robert Lazarus Jr., great-grandson of the founder and the last family member to serve in an executive position with Lazarus, said nothing exists today to rival the Downtown store in its prime.

“The department store at that point was really something special,” the 77-year-old said.

Lazarus had the best bookstore in the city and a circulating library. There were social clubs for children, customer lounges and as many as 12 restaurants, including the elegant Chintz Room, where women wore hats and white gloves at lunch.

“Lazarus taught us how to raise children, how to cook and decorate our homes,” said Sherry Buk, executive director of the Columbus Historical Society. “They exposed us to styles. We booked travel tickets in the Downtown store and got our first exposure to gourmet foods. This was the cornerstone of Columbus society.”

The store’s Christmas decorations set the standard, and people traveled for miles to visit with Santa and the Talking Tree, and take in the elaborate window displays on High Street.

“It’s no wonder people think about this store the way they do,” said Roy Clark, general manager of the Downtown store. “This was a place to eat, to shop, to celebrate events and holidays. They did it in such a big way, it was just remarkable.”

Mary Boesch Kachurak, 58, said Lazarus gave her mother a place to go to escape the monotony of running a household.

“In the 1950s and early ’60s, most families had only one car and that car went to work with Dad,” the Reynoldsburg resident said. “The housewives knew that they were only a bus ride away from that wonderful store that was always changing and never boring.”

A legacy

Over the years, the Lazarus family would help Columbus establish its first community chest, raise money for the construction of Ohio Stadium and sponsor countless parades and celebrations that helped residents forge a common bond.

But family influence started to wane when Federated transferred the Lazarus division headquarters to Cincinnati in 1986. The move involved several hundred Downtown workers, and equally important, took the division out of family hands. Some people think the stores were never the same.

“It just went downhill from there,” said Sandy Andromeda, founder of the Columbus Historical Society.

Columbus lost something, too.

“When the Lazarus division moved to Cincinnati, Columbus lost the same thing it lost when Bank One moved to Chicago,” Robert Lazarus said. “No matter what anybody says, when you don’t have top management living in a community, you lose their involvement and their attention.”

Meanwhile, the Downtown store continued to lose shoppers to the suburbs, where Lazarus had established outposts to compete with Sears and J.C. Penny.

The Downtown store got a new lease on life when City Center Mall opened across the street in 1989.

“It definitely extended the life of this store,” Clark said. “If it hadn’t been for City Center, I imagine the store would have closed some time in the 1990s.”

But it wasn’t enough, as City Center fell victim to newer shopping centers including

Easton Town Center, the Mall at Tuttle Crossing and Polaris Fashion Place. Federated said last year that the Downtown Lazarus store would close and since May has been liquidating stock.

The city was given the Lazarus store and paid Federated \$5.7 million for more than 4 adjoining acres that had been parking lots and a garage. The city is spending several million more to renovate the store's Town and Front street facades to include shops and restaurants.

The building is slated to become a science center for Ohio State University and Battelle, and house offices for the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency.

No matter what it becomes, its days as the social center of Columbus are gone. But memories persist.

Bobbie Reeves, 65, is the longest-serving Downtown store employee, with 42 years of service. The store was her window on the world.

"I was here for every major tragedy, when JFK and Martin Luther King were shot, when the space shuttle exploded and for 9/11," she said.

As for the closing: "You don't have to like it; you just take it."

jsheban@dispatch.com



FILE PHOTOS This building, constructed in 1895, was home to Lazarus for less than 15 years. It was replaced in 1909.



Visiting Santa, 1982



A shopping trip Downtown in 1950, when this photo was taken, meant dressing up. This pre-Easter crowd filled the S. High Street sidewalks in front of Lazarus. Neighborhood strip shopping centers hadn't become part of the landscape in central Ohio.



FILE PHOTO



The city has changed since Lazarus settled in at Town and High streets in the early part of the past century.

“When the Lazarus division moved to Cincinnati, Columbus lost the same thing it lost when Bank One moved to Chicago. No matter what anybody says, when you don’t have top management living in a community, you lose their involvement and their attention.”



ROBERT LAZARUS JR.

great-grandson of Lazarus founder

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Final closeout: Lazarus shuts its doors for good

By Jeffrey Sheban THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Three sentences ended 153 years of Columbus shopping history yesterday.

"Good evening, Lazarus shoppers," sales manager Janet Faime said, cradling the store intercom between her neck and shoulder.

"It is now 5 p.m., and this Downtown location is closed. Thanks for your support."

With that, she began locking entrances to the venerable Lazarus-Macy's, a six-story emporium built in 1909 to replace the original store from 1851.

Then, to no one in particular, Faime added: "I started to say something monumental, but you know what? I want it to end now."

Yesterday was emotional for employees and customers alike. People wandered the cavernous store snapping pictures and reminiscing. There wasn't much to buy after 11 weeks of liquidation, but that didn't seem to matter.

"It's a landmark that I hate to see go," said Alma Daniels, 74, sitting in a wheelchair while her sister and daughter shopped on another floor. "I think it will be something that will be missed by everybody."

Customers were lined up outside for the 10 a.m. opening. Some were searching for bargains; others were paying last respects.

Linda Jones, of Upper Arlington, was looking for mannequins, fixtures and rugs to decorate an antique shop she's opening in Sunbury.

Lori Cox, who works for Muirfield Village Golf Club and the Memorial Tournament, bought wooden display cases she'll use for trophies and awards.

Clyde and Toni Berry, of the Northeast Side, were among the first inside. Toni Berry's grandmother was an elevator operator, her father worked there part time during college, and she worked at the Downtown store in the 1970s.

"It was one of those quality things in my life," she said. "Lazarus was one of the impressive things to be connected with in any way."

Clyde Berry said they couldn't stay away.

"I had to be able to say I walked through here. Our kids think we're corny, but it's OK. I'll be corny today."

Only 50 employees remained to the end. A similar number transferred to other stores in the year since Federated Department Stores, the parent of Lazarus-Macy's, said the store would close. Twenty-nine workers with a combined 880 years of service retired yesterday.

"I think the store has done everything to make this closing as bearable for us as possible," said employee Eileen Williamson, of Grove City.

Bobbie Reeves, of the West Side, who at 42 years is the longest-serving Downtown employee, is headed to Kingsdale. Yesterday, she enjoyed her senior status by camping out behind an empty display case and chatting with customers.

"I'm playing the Wal-Mart greeter," she said.

With the store closed, the question turns to what to do with the 933,000-square-foot building, which already counts the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's 575 workers, a deli and a shoe store as tenants.

The city, which bought the building and parking decks from Federated, is negotiating with Battelle and Ohio State University about using part of it for a research center and hightech business incubator.

OSU and other schools might be interested in space for art instruction and galleries.

"I think it's an important building to save for our community," Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman said. "I think the building's sound, but there's a lot of work to be done to it."

One thing it will never be is the commercial and social center for Columbus, a role Downtown played until suburban malls started skimming customers in the 1960s.

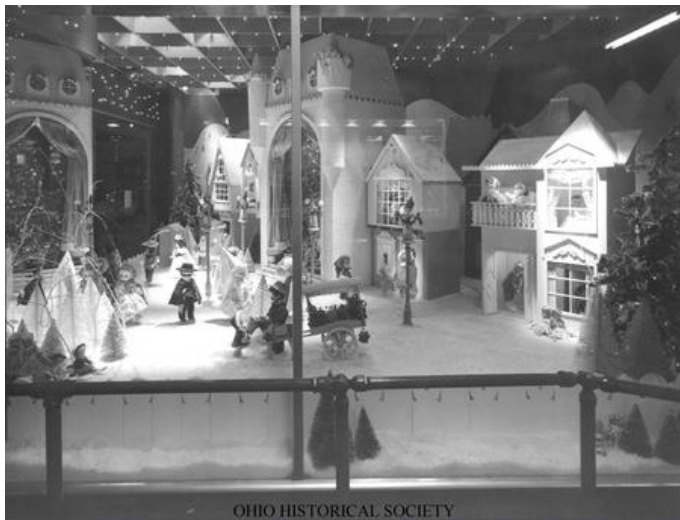
"It was great in its time, but times have changed," said Robert Lazarus, 77, great-grandson of the founder.

jsheban@dispatch.com



CHRIS RUSSELL | DISPATCH

Lazarus Christmas Windows



Lazarus Pictures of the Past



A History

- ▶ 1851: German immigrant Simon Lazarus opens a one-room men's clothing store at S. High and Town streets.
- ▶ 1870s: Fred Lazarus Sr. and Ralph Lazarus join their father, Simon, in the business. After Simon Lazarus dies in 1877, his sons expand the store.
- ▶ 1909: Lazarus moves across the street to a six-story, 115,000-square-foot store, its current site. The store adds women's and children's clothing. The store includes an escalator and chirping canaries.
- ▶ 1912: Lazarus passes \$1 million in annual sales.
- ▶ 1920: A building is added on High Street to make room for merchandise such as cameras and yard goods.
- ▶ 1928: Lazarus buys Shillito's in Cincinnati.
- ▶ 1929: Lazarus joins with Filene's of Boston and Abraham & Strauss of Brooklyn to form Federated Department Stores.
- ▶ 1934: Lazarus becomes the first store to establish a credit union.
- ▶ 1941: To lengthen the holiday shopping season, Fred Lazarus Jr., grandson of Simon Lazarus, launches a campaign to move Thanksgiving to the fourth Thursday in November. The idea is supported by President Roosevelt.
- ▶ 1946: Lazarus opens a housewares and appliance store at the former site of Columbus Auditorium.
- ▶ 1947: Its first Downtown parking garage opens.
- ▶ 1962: Lazarus opens its first branch store in what now is Westland Mall.
- ▶ 1964: Lazarus opens at Northland Mall.
- ▶ 1966: Lazarus opens at Eastland Mall.
- ▶ 1971: Lazarus opens at Kingsdale Shopping Center.
- ▶ 1986: Lazarus merges with Shillito-Rikes and moves its headquarters to Cincinnati. Columbus loses 900 jobs.
- ▶ 1988: Campeau Corp. mounts a hostile takeover of Federated. A month later, 1,200 Lazarus jobs are cut, including 150 Downtown.
- ▶ 1989: Columbus City Center opens next to Lazarus. Downtown store sales rise 40 percent.
- ▶ 1990: Campeau declares bankruptcy. Ownership reverts to Federated when bankruptcy ends in 1992.
- ▶ 1995: Federated merges Lazarus with Rich's and Goldsmith's and moves its headquarters to Atlanta.
- ▶ 1997: Lazarus signs a deal to renovate parts of the Downtown store for Ohio Environmental Protection Agency offices. The same year, Lazarus opens at the Mall at Tuttle Crossing.
- ▶ 2001: Lazarus opens at Polaris Fashion Place and Easton Town Center, the latter a prototype for future stores.
- ▶ August 2003: **Macy's** is added to the Lazarus name.
- ▶ October 2003: Lazarus-Macy's announces plans to close the Downtown store.
- ▶ Saturday: Scheduled closing date for the Downtown store.

Sources: *Dispatch* research; *Columbus: America's Crossroads*, by Betty Garrett with Edward R. Lentz

Lazarus Buildings

Lazarus 1895 Building
(then Replaced)



Lazarus Early 1900's



Lazarus Early 2000's

