

Nearly a Century of Herndon History in One Popular Downtown Store

By Barbara Glakas

The Herndon Historical Society tells the history of the Nachman Building, which now houses Green Lizard Cycling on Lynn Street.

In about 1913, Robert Schneider—former Town Council member and long-time hardware store owner in downtown Herndon—and his wife, Lottie, sold a piece of land and a building on Lynn Street to Marcus and Celia Cohen.

This building, located at 718 Lynn Street, across the street from the train depot, had once housed the Claude G. Stephenson Real Estate Office. Mr. Stephenson served as president of the Herndon Masons in 1910. He also served as Herndon's Mayor from 1909 to 1911.

The same building had housed the Herndon Post office from 1909 until about 1938.

The Cohens were from Baltimore, Md. After they purchased the building they opened a clothing store that bore their name.

At the same time, in 1911, 16-year-old Julius Nachman emigrated from Russia with his family. They settled in Baltimore, where Julius worked in various general retail stores that carried clothing and dry goods. In 1919, through a family connection, Julius bought an interest in the Cohen's store. The store was subsequently renamed Cohen and Nachman.

In 1920, Julius married a second cousin named Anna, whom he had met in a Baltimore synagogue. She had been a department store employee in Winchester, Va.

In 1928, the Cohens sold their property and the remaining interest in the store to Julius and Anna. The name was again changed, to Nachman's. The Nachman family lived on the second floor of the building.

Julius' son, Philip "Melvin" Nachman, and his grandsons, Howard and Arthur Nachman, continued to run the family business.

The store merchandise changed over time as Herndon evolved from a rural to a suburban area. In the rural years the store carried overalls, rubber boots, house dresses, and sewing fabrics. Later, the store carried Dickies brand work pants and shirts as well as children's clothes. Later still, as the town continued to evolve, the store carried ready-to-wear career clothes.

The Nachmans were very active in the community. Melvin and his oldest son, Howard, both served on the Town Council—Melvin from 1954 to 1962, and Howard from 1976 to 1984.

Julius passed away in 1969. His wife, Anna, and his son, Melvin, both passed away in 1991.

Howard and Arthur closed the store in 1994. It had been in operation for 75 years. They both went on to work in commercial real estate.

Initially, they ran their real estate business out of the first floor of the former store. At that time a large sign on the front of the building read, The Lynn Street Exchange, to reflect the property management company that they owned.

During that period, the Nachmans rented out the second floor of the building to arts-related businesses, including a studio called A Place to Paint, run by artist Lassie Corbitt. Later, they moved their real estate business upstairs and rented out the first floor to various businesses.

The exterior of the building went through many changes over the years. The store originally had steps and horse hitches in front of the building. Around 1936 to 1938, Julius made a major change. The building was lifted, a basement was dug out for a furnace and other utilities, the steps were removed, and the building was lowered down to ground level so that customers could walk right in the front door.

In 1966, Melvin—wanting to modernize the building—enclosed the front of the upper porch with metal grating. Immediately below that, a horizontal strip of black ceramic tile was added that reflected the Nachman name.

In 1979, Melvin added a 2,200-square-foot cinderblock addition to the rear of the original 2,600-square-foot frame building. This provided more storage area for the business, as well as a space for a tuxedo section, an alterations section, and a receiving area. There was a fire wall between the old and new sections of the building.

In 1995, the fire wall was removed to make the interior of the building larger and more functional. The metal grating on the upper porch was also removed. At that time, a Harvest Trading Company store occupied the space. Later, the first floor was subdivided into a collection of smaller offices, which were occupied by various tenants.

In 1996, local artist Pat MacIntyre, with the help of some Herndon High School art students, painted a large mural on the exterior western wall of the Nachman building. The mural depicted a view of the Nachman store during the early 1900s, complete with silhouetted customers arriving in their horse-drawn wagons with the Nachmans greeting them at the door.

Later, in 2012, the Council for the Arts of Herndon sponsored a new mural, which was commissioned by the Nachmans. The mural, which was painted by three artists—Bobby Moore, Erick Ricks, and Dan Roncesvalles—depicted scenes from Herndon's history, including representations of the Nachman family.

Green Lizard Cycling, a busy bike shop with a coffee bar, now occupies the ground floor of the building. The previously cordoned-off office walls were removed, taking it back to a wide open floor plan with its original wood floors, reminiscent of the original Cohen and Nachman clothing store.