

Louisville's Retail History: A Look Back on Bacons

By J. Michael Higgs



Kentucky's Historic Past, reflected that Bacon carried items in a pack and laid them out for sale where he could find a space. "Honest goods, honest trading principles, and honest profits made business grow," according to Lafferty.

And, they did in fact grow modestly. Bacon opened his first retail store in Louisville in 1845 with his sons, Edwin and Jeremiah, Jr. Located near Market and Hancock, the store boasted reasonable space for sales at the time. Bacon's business sense led to robust growth over time. By 1876, operations grew to include 63 departments in a six-story emporium. The flagship store in Louisville was located at 4th and Market Street, in a bustling city corridor with many other adjacent shops, like McCrory's, Levy Brothers, and Stewart's. By 1903, as the family make-up was altered by the passage of time, the store was eventually sold to H.B. Clafin & Company, who owned Stewart Dry Goods. The chain continued to grow and additional stores were opened in Louisville, and eventually in cities like Owensboro. As Louisville grew and the economy changed, the store was eventually displaced by the development of the Galleria, but made a return in 1982 to anchor the space yet again.

With competition increasing in the early 1990's from large retailers, Bacon's eventually began to lose their competitive edge. The once popular "Midnight Madness" sales that made the store popular simply lost their luster. By the late 90's, operations were acquired by Dillard's. The Bacon's name was retired and entered into the bygone shopper memories in Louisville.

Jeremiah Bacon is interred in Section A Lot 128 in Cave Hill Cemetery.

Many of us can easily recall navigating through the busy streets this time of year to one of most beloved stores, Bacon's.

Long before big box chains dominated the shopping scene, when the town square and going downtown was in fashion, there were many locally-operated stores that captured our attention.

Jeremiah Bacon, born in 1811, developed a trusted name and store that began very meagerly. Maude Lafferty, in her publication, *Pageant of*



Photo of Jeremiah Bacon, Findagrave. 2021.