

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Christmas in Pottstown 50 years ago

Christmas enhances our feelings of nostalgia, and for me, never more than now, 50 years after I first set foot in Pottstown.

What I miss most about the Pottstown of yore is its thriving downtown stores.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

Prior to the opening of the Norco (now Coventry) Mall in 1967, Pottstown was the retail hub of the tri-county area.

High Street was still chock-a-block with stores in 1971, most locally owned, and the downtown bustled with activity.

There were banks, clothing stores, shoe stores, furniture stores, jewelry stores, a stationery store, three 5&10 stores, two junior department stores, a movie theater, and Town Toy, one of the finest toy stores in the state.

Most special at Christmas was Zipf's Candy and Gifts, founded in

1905, which made its own chocolates. We loved their red and green sprinkled non-pareils and sugar wafer mints half-dipped in chocolate.

I remember buying a "Dr. Zhivago" - style coat for my wife at Ellis Mills, a women's clothing store founded in 1872 and still operated by the Mills family. (The store closed in 1984, and the building is now used for beer brewing and axe throwing.)

The most prominent building on High Street, the 3-story Bahr Arcade, was already closed and vacant (and soon to be torn down for a municipal parking lot), but its most important business, the Pottstown Farmer's Market, had moved across Charlotte Street to a new one-story building.

The market was jam-packed with customers buying flowers and meats and vegetables direct from the farm.

My favorite destination at the market was Shofer's Bakery, where I bought its own special cinnamon twists and potato cakes. Delicious.

Downtown Pottstown stores in 1971



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| 1 – Kepner and Romich Furniture Store | 19 – J. C. Penney |
| 2 – Weitzenkorn's Clothing Store | 20 – Farmer's Market |
| 3 – Boyer Federal Savings & Loan | 21 – Shuler House Hotel |
| 4 – Continental Bank | 22 – Industrial Valley Bank |
| 5 – Wolf's China and Glass | 23 – Zipf's Candy and Gifts |
| 6 – S. Miller and Sons Men's Clothing | 24 – Levitz Furniture Store |
| 7 – Milton's Children's Wear | 25 – Weiss/Bressler's Clothing |
| 8 – Ellis Mills Women's Wear | 26 – Towne Theater |
| 9 – Bechtel's Sports Shop | 27 – Van Buskirk's Hardware |
| 10 – Boyer's Shoe Store | 28 – Bell Telephone (formerly Sears) |
| 11 – Endicott & Johnson Shoes | 29 – Betty Lee Women's Clothing |
| 12 – Quality Drug Store | 30 – New York Store (department store) |
| 13 – J.J. Newberry 5&10 | 31 – Royal Shoe Store |
| 14 – F.W. Woolworth 5&10 | 32 – Very Best Weiner Shop |
| 15 – H. F. Smith Stationery | 33 – Armed Services Recruiting Office |
| 16 – Block Furniture | 34 – Bahr Arcade |
| 17 – The Gallery | 35 – Don Sands Paint Store |
| 18 – Moyer's Jewelry Store | 36 – Roth Dry Cleaners |