

JOSKE'S OF TEXAS

THESIS

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by

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the summer of 2003 while completing an internship at the Alamo, I was introduced to a collection that forever changed my academic career, The Joe Elicson Photo Collection. The collection contained images that captured the mood of San Antonio socially, culturally, and economically from the 1950s to 1970s. I cannot describe my jubilation as I began processing the collection. I was seeing images of events, places, and people I had read and heard about the majority of my life. The most fascinating of all the images were the Joske's pictures. These photographs spoke to me and made me curious of the store's history and relationship to the city.

As I completed my bachelor's degree and went on to earn my master's degree I was reminded that earning a title is not just about gaining experience and knowledge in your field, it is also about contributing to your field through research. Staff members and prior professors at Texas Lutheran University encouraged me to continue exploring the collection through research.

A few years have passed since the beginning of this project and a number of people have contributed to its development. I am greatly indebted to the staff at the Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library, especially Martha Utterback and Elaine Davis, for giving me the opportunity to work with the Elicson Collection. Throughout the development of this paper, Martha has been a great source of strength and has given me much encouragement not only in completing this paper but in my career as well.

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ABSTRACT

In 1873 Julius Joske opened J. Joske Dry Goods, a store in downtown San Antonio. For over 100 years, the store flourished as it evolved into a mainstream department store. The store's growth coincided with the growth of the city. The store expanded its lines of merchandise and its physical size in response to the needs of the community.

From the beginning, the Joske family developed their own way of doing business. The Joske family methods resulted in attention from national department store chains. The attention eventually resulted in the store being purchased by a corporation in the 1920s. The change in ownership did not end the business model begun by the Joske family, but rather built upon it and expanded it.

The store survived many years of varying economic stability in San Antonio and Texas, eventually expanding beyond the Alamo City. However, after some tough economic times in the 1980s, Allied Stores made the decision to sell Joske's to the Campeau Corporation. Soon after this sale, Joske's was sold to the Dillard's Corporation, signaling the end of Joske's. All remaining Joske's locations were either closed or made into Dillard's stores, bringing to a close the era of locally owned major retailing in downtown San Antonio.

INTRODUCTION

Retail stores have been part of American society since early colonial times. Before the Civil War, stores were often small, family-owned, and carried goods specific to the needs of the community or region in which they were located. By the beginning of the twentieth century many stores were part of organized corporations and had grown into large retail sellers of general merchandise. Improvements to transportation, communication, and the manufacturing process resulted in cheaper manufactured goods that could be made more readily available to consumers. Retail stores evolved, beginning about the time of the American Civil War, to serve the needs of the growing body of consumers who, because they lived in increasingly urbanized communities and worked for wages, relied on purchasing goods to meet their everyday needs.

The emergence of the department store in the 1860s transformed American business and culture. Such institutions brought producers, retailers, and consumers under one roof, allowing for handling of a wide selection of merchandise in a single location and a wide array of new employment opportunities in the retail industry. Above all, the department store represented social and economic changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These changes reflected the department store's impact on American society.

Defining and characterizing "department store" poses some challenges for scholars. In the early twentieth century, the United States Census Bureau defined a

department store as “a firm which sells a full line of household goods and furnishings as well as clothing and dry goods.”¹ Today, scholars in all fields accept this definition. Hrant Pasdermadjian, in *The Department Store: Its Origins, Evolution and Economics*, suggests that department stores evolved from dry good stores. An examination of the literature on department stores reveals five main characteristics, including: a centralized location in an urban setting, a departmentalized establishment, a large selection of merchandise, a variety of services, and advertising as a large part of the store’s presence.²

Pinpointing the first department store marks another challenge to scholars.

Scholarly writings focus on the following department stores as progenitors of the modern department store: Lord and Taylor in New York (1826), Jordan Marsh in Boston (1841), A. T. Stewart in New York (1846), Bon Marché in Paris (1852), and R. H. Macy and Company in New York (1858). Paul Nystrom in *The Economics of Retailing* suggests that the department store evolved from the dry goods store and that it is, therefore, impossible to accurately identify the first department store. He credits the Bon Marché as being a pioneering store, but not the first. Frank Mayfield in *The Department Store Story* supports Nystrom’s argument and goes on to suggest that different department stores can claim their own “firsts,” such as the first store to use a fixed price system or the first store

¹ Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores 1890-1940* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 12-13.

² Robert Hendrickson, *The Grand Emporiums* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 43; Gunther Barth, *City People* (New York: Oxford University, 1980), 113; Paul Nystrom *The Economics of Retailing* (New York: Roland Press Company, 1919), 246; John Ferry, *A History of the Department Store* (New York, MacMillan Company, 1960), 10-12 ; Ralph Hower, *History of the Macy’s of New York 1858-1919* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943), 68-69; Hrant Pasdermadjian, *The Department Store, Its Origins, Evolution, and Economics*. (London: Newman Books, 1954), 3-5; Sarah Smith Malino, “Faces Across the Counter: A Social History of Female Department Store Employees, 1870-1920” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1988), 1.

to use a delivery system. Pasdermadjian does not consider stores such as Lord and Taylor department stores because they only carried apparel items; instead crediting Bon Marché as the first, because it carried a wide selection of merchandise. More recently, Susan Benson Porter in the introduction to her work *Counter Cultures. Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in the American Department Store 1890-1940* suggests that all of the stores listed above would be considered founding department stores, because they helped retailing move into a new era.³

Tracing the history of department stores, scholars such as J. Russell Doubman and John Reinert Whitaker, authors of *Organization and Operation of Department Stores*, along with Robert Hendrickson, author of *The Grand Emporiums*, and Frank Mayfield argue that the perfection of various trade methods led to creation of the department store. On the other hand, Gunther Barth, author of *City People: the Rise of the Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, argues, along with Nystrom, that department stores came about due to the success of general and dry good stores.

Histories of department stores began to differentiate when scholars started focusing on the external (advertising, credit, mail order) and internal (salespeople, fashion shows, restaurants) forces that make stores unique institutions. Various scholars suggest certain factors played an important role in the development and success of department stores. Daniel Boorstin, in *The Americans: The Democratic Experience*, and Hendrickson both advocate that improvements in mass transportation and advertising due to the growth of newspapers helped enable department store growth. Additionally,

³ Nystrom, 246-249; Frank Mayfield, *The Department Store Story* (New York: Fairchild Publications, 1949), 27-33; Pasdermadjian, 3-9 Porter, 13.

Hendrickson and Barth agree an increase in population caused by an influx of people into the city was another important factor in department store development.⁴

Urbanization and industrialization called not only for a reformulation of merchandizing, but also for a transformation of the physical environment of retailing. Between the late 1850s and mid 1860s, owners of successful enterprises erected new, more durable and ornate multi-story department stores in downtown areas. Examining the architectural elements and their impact on society, architect Lawrence J. Israel in *Store Planning and Design* concluded that classical elements of architectural design allowed people to see department stores as “monuments celebrating America’s imperial and entrepreneurial expansions.”⁵ One factor allowing for larger, more elaborate stores was the development of cast iron as a cheap, yet durable construction material. Often used to create elaborate store fronts, cast iron evoked a sense of wonder with unique placement at the entrance. Barth, who examined the use of cast iron material in relation to A.T. Stewart’s department store in New York, concluded that the use of the material not only gave stores an elaborate look, it also added an American touch.⁶

Just as external features of the department store carried much detail in design, the interior of the store did as well. Store owners had floors and stairs crafted from the finest stone (marble for stores that could afford it) and railing and door frames from fine metals. In his work, *The Retail Store*, William Green points out that materials selected in both the internal and external designs of a store conveyed to customers what kind of

⁴ Hendrickson, 30-32; Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The Democratic Experience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 101; Barth, 115.

⁵ Lawrence J. Israel, *Store Planning and Design* (New York: John Wiley and Son, 1994), 16.

⁶ Barth, 124-125.

items they might find in a store. A store with an elaborate gold tone entrance and detailed interior design conveyed that the store carried luxury items.

Two important department store design elements include the display window and the storefront. In addition to contributing to its elaborate design, Green suggests storefronts do three things for department stores. First, through their design and structure, storefronts symbolize the store's merchandising philosophy. Next, due to elaborate design and size, they attract shoppers into the store. Finally, the storefront provides a physical transition from the outside to the store's interior.

Display windows attracted people into the store, but did so in combination with the elements of design and aesthetic principles. Merchandise from all departments were enhanced by color backgrounds and lights that created theme windows, allowing people to view merchandise while encouraging them to enter the store out of curiosity. Israel points out that these windows were the original "displayer" of the department store.⁷ William Leach in his essay, "Strategists of Display and the Production of Desire," suggests that the idea for display windows grew from the commercial and entertainment industries' desire for display and decoration. In *Window and Store Display: A Handbook for Advertisers*, A. T. Fischer argues that display windows do more than just get people into the store. For the consumer, display windows answer the question, "Where can I get it?" For the salesman, the use of the display window "makes it easier to engage a prospect's attention, and cuts down selling time."⁸

⁷ Israel, 206.

⁸ A. T. Fischer, *Window and Store Display: A Handbook for Advertisers* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1921), 22.

Good display alone does not sell merchandise. A good sales force combined with solid store management allows department stores to be successful in the handling and selling of merchandise. Unlike the past, when skills were passed down from generation to generation, today, more formal methods of “learning the business” have become the norm. Aside from programs at universities and colleges across the country, manuals and how-to guides, written by some of the top department store executives, provide managers insight into running department stores. These manuals provide information on maintaining the store’s records, describing the store’s structure and organization, and conveying the proper way to deal with customers. Meant for the business executive, Arthur Lazarus’ *Department Store Organization* provides information on the organizational structure of the department store, such as responsibilities of certain managers. Lazarus’ book is especially good for the department store executive dealing with the financial side of the store. In his work, he discusses various accounting techniques for handling the in-out flow of merchandise and money.

Good management is only part of maintaining a successful department store, a good sales force is another. Training the sales force on how to conduct themselves around customers, how to handle complaints, and how to deal with merchandise is important to the success of the store. To aid managers in the task, William Corbion’s *The Principles of Salesmanship: a Textbook Guide*, provides sales personnel with techniques on customer service and selling.

The sales force in a department store was a new kind of employment. Within the sales force, women and men worked side by side. To present to customers a professional

impression, sales personnel dressed in chic attire. Through the selling of merchandise, they came face-to-face with customers from different classes, races, and ethnic groups.

Popular magazines along with college bulletins often promoted department stores as good working environments. Sociologists often questioned what made the department store's environment different and better than other places of employment. Several scholars went undercover to explore working conditions of the institutions first hand. In 1898, scholar Annie Marion McLean, went undercover during the Christmas season in two stores in Chicago, which she chose to keep anonymous. McLean discussed her findings in a journal article entitled "Two Weeks in the Department Stores." Among other things, she found that pay was barely sufficient to afford a bed and boarding house and that bargains did not contain "bargains."⁹

Because department stores employed large numbers of women and catered to female customers, they serve as a good vehicle for studying gender at the turn of the century. One of the first works to focus on the role of women in the sales force was Frances Donovan's *The Saleslady*. Donovan's work focuses directly on the saleslady's experience in department stores. After Donovan's work, there came a drought in studies related to women's employment at department stores. Not until the late 1980s did new literature related to women's roles in the department store appear. Susan Benson Porter's work discusses the struggle women experienced as workers in department stores, followed a year later by Elaine S. Abelson, *When Ladies Go A-Thieving: Middle-Class*

⁹ Annie Marion MacLean, "Two Weeks in Department Stores," *American Journal of Sociology*, 6 (May 1899): 721-741.

Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store, which looks at the relationship of middle class women, in the late nineteenth century to the consumer culture.¹⁰

While business scholars and professionals wrote about the creation of department stores, established department stores began crafting their own histories. Large department stores produced pamphlets or short monographs telling the store's history. Factors behind the creation of such literature included nationalist pride and the celebrations of store milestones. Wanamaker's Department Store in Philadelphia published brochures that provided customers with a guide to the store and left them with a souvenir of their visit. In celebration of the establishment's fiftieth anniversary, the store published *The Golden Book of the Wanamaker Stores: Jubilee Year 1861-1911*.

Through the preservation of store archives, department stores aided scholars in the crafting of case studies and individual store histories. Like the store-produced pamphlets, scholars wrote an individual store's history to commemorate an important milestone. In contrast to the aforementioned works, histories of individual stores also resulted from the inquiry of scholars. Ralph Hower's *History of Macy's of New York, 1858-1919: Chapters in the Evolution of the Department Store* used internal store documents along with standard research materials to present a store history that not only examines the business and retail trade of the store but also the personal side. Hower suggests that "the story of Macy's is to a large extent, the story of the American department store."¹¹

¹⁰ Frances R. Donovan, *The Saleslady* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929); Porter: *Counter Cultures*; Elaine S. Abelson, *When Ladies Go A-Thieving: Middle-Class Shoplifter in the Victorian Department Store* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹¹ Hower, 4.

Individual store histories show the unique ways department stores developed. Joske's of Texas, a dry goods store that opened in 1873 in San Antonio, Texas, fits into the traditional story of department stores while enjoying a unique story that includes a number of "firsts." From its founding by Julius Joske, a German-Jewish immigrant, Joske's grew with the city to become the largest department store not only in South Texas, but also in the Southwestern United States. As Joske's brought modern retailing concepts to Texas, its development helped mark the transformation of San Antonio from frontier town to major American city.

Unlike other national departmental stores, Joske's and other small department stores have been largely omitted from the scholarly literature on department stores. In *The Great Emporiums*, Hendrickson provides a brief history of Joske's, but this work leaves out many important details. Benson, in *Counter Cultures*, also briefly mentions Joske's when she discusses how department stores spread into cities during the 1890s. To date, the *San Antonio Light's* special pull-out section telling the Joske's story for the store's 1973 centennial anniversary is the only detailed history of the enterprise.¹²

Due to the limited availability of sources, information on Joske's is not readily available in scholarly or historical works. In researching information on the day-to-day happenings at Joske's, newspapers serve as the best primary source. In particular, the Joske family used the *San Antonio Light* to communicate information to the public. Alexander Joske, Julius' son and president of the store from 1903 to 1925, wrote his own column in the Sunday paper in which he would publish letters to the citizens of San Antonio. The *San Antonio Express-News*, a competing paper, along with two local

¹² Lois Wood Burkhalter, "The Enjoyable Joske Story, 1873 – 1973 Centennial Celebration," Special Section, *San Antonio Light*, 15 April 1973.

Jewish newspapers, also ran stories about Joske's. Additionally, the San Antonio newspapers also ran daily ads that provide insight into the store's merchandising. Due to the level of business at Joske's, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times* often ran stories about the operation of the store.

No personal or business papers left by the Joske family in relation to the store have been found. However, various archival collections do contain material about Joske's department store. The most important of these collections is the Holland McCombs Papers at the University of Tennessee at Martin. The McCombs Papers contain important information and interviews pertaining to the management of the department store in the late 1940s and 1950s. Numerous photographic collections also contain images of the store's interior and exterior, which are important in studying the store's history. Through the use of these traditional and non-traditional sources it is possible to reconstruct the history of one of the Southwest's most important business enterprises in the context of the community that it served.

The Joske's story sheds light not only on the development of the store itself, but also on the evolution of retail culture in the Southwest and the history of San Antonio. As a family enterprise for the formative portion of its history, the store's story opens windows onto a number of themes. The first part of the thesis offers a chronological overview of the Joske family and the rise of the store to economic and social prominence in San Antonio. The second part looks at how the store operated as a business and concludes with an examination of the store's legacy and its continued influence in the city today.

CHAPTER I

FROM FAMILY ROOOTS

In the mid-nineteenth century, the department store entered American society, marking the beginning of a revolution in retailing. Department stores' implementation of innovations, including the mass handling of merchandise and the employment of new building materials and methods caused them to affect every facet of the economy and society. Department stores brought all classes of people together, both employees and customers, encouraging the development of a more egalitarian society.¹

The first department stores developed in Europe during the first decade of the nineteenth century. In England, at least one London establishment fulfilled the function of a department store without being called such. The first retail business referred to as a department store was Bon Marché of Paris. In the United States, department stores first developed on the eastern seaboard where trade links with Europe helped introduce the idea. Lord and Taylor, the first North American department store, opened for business in

¹ Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures, Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores 1890 – 1940* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 13; John Ferry, *A History of the Department Store* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), 35; William Leach, "Transformation in a Culture of Consumption: Women and Department Stores, 1890 – 1925," *Journal of American History* 71 (September 1984): 319-342; Robert D. Tamilia, "The Wonderful World of Department Stores in Historical Perspective: A Comprehensive International Bibliography Partially Annotated" (Paper, University of Quebec at Montreal, 2002), 3-4.

New York in 1826, inspiring competitors and creating the first shopping and fashion district in the city.²

From the Northeast, stores spread westward toward the area of the Great Lakes. The completion of transportation canals from the Atlantic coast to the Great Lakes allowed merchandise to be easily shipped to inland cities such as Detroit and Chicago. Merchants and employees of department stores in the Northeast migrated toward these cities in search of new opportunities.³

One of the merchants to move from the Northeast to the Midwest was Marshall Field. Born in a large upper-class Massachusetts family, Field worked in various dry goods stores⁴ and department stores to earn extra money. By his early twenties Field had developed a great “ability and capacity for merchandising.”⁵ Encouraged by newspaper stories of the opening of the Midwest to trade and fortunes to be made in Chicago, Field at the age of twenty-two headed west. In Chicago he worked as a salesman at various wholesale dry goods stores. Once he learned the business, he began working towards becoming a partner. After the Civil War, Field had the opportunity to buy the shares of other partners at Field & Leither and in 1881 he organized Marshall Field and Company, the first department store to open in the Midwest.⁶

Expansion farther west to California and southwest to Texas was difficult in the 1840s and early 1850s. A market did not exist in the western part of the continent for department store merchandizing in the decades before the Civil War. The West

² H. Pasdermadjian, *The Department Store Its Origins, Evolution and Economics* (London: Newman Books, 1954), 3 – 10; Ferry, 50 – 63, 35 – 39.

³ Ferry, *A History*, 101 – 103.

⁴ Dry Goods Store: a store which sells such items as fabric, clothing, and notions.

⁵ Ferry, *A History*, 124.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 124 – 137.

remained largely a frontier region as urban settlements were still little more than mining camps and trading posts. The Gold Rush, which began in 1848, sparked the interest of various merchants and storekeepers to head west to establish stores in mining towns. Moving merchandise to western markets proved difficult over rough or non-existent trails and in the face of hostile Indians. Nevertheless, stores went up in gold and silver boomtowns providing merchandise in demand from prospectors, miners, and related consumers. Once the boom times passed, many stores could not make enough profits to stay open.⁷

The Civil War brought a temporary halt to the westward expansion of department stores. The breach, in 1859 to 1860, between the North and South, “seriously depressed the New York dry goods trade and brought about a financial crisis in May, 1861.”⁸ The survival of stores like Macy’s and Lord and Taylor would have been questionable, if they had not been successful in earlier years. Most stores established prior to 1855 were able to sustain themselves throughout the war, even as men in sales and service positions left to take up arms, because young women often filled positions left vacant by men.⁹

Department store expansion renewed after the Civil War. A number of department store employees who gained valuable experience before the war formed the spearhead of the westward movement. By 1869 the transcontinental railroad stretched from coast to coast, providing the means through which retail merchandise from European and northeastern manufacturers could be economically transported to new markets. The

⁷ Ibid., 101.

⁸ Ralph M. Hower, *History of Macy’s of New York, 1858 – 1919: Chapters in the Evolution of the Department Store* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943), 48.

⁹ Ibid., 42 – 48.

development of transportation and merchandising infrastructures thus contributed to the rapid development of western urban centers.

In Texas, department stores can be traced back to 1857 when Isaac Sanger¹⁰ opened a wholesale and retail dry goods store, Sanger Brothers, in McKinney, a town in northeast Texas. Following the Civil War, the firm expanded by opening stores at stops along the Houston and Texas Central Railroad. The stores were located in the northeastern part of the state (from Sherman to Dallas). These dry goods stores did not reach department store status until 1875. Central and South Texas also experienced a growth in the number of dry goods stores starting in the mid 1850s. German immigrants were responsible for establishing many of them.¹¹

San Antonio, the largest city in South Texas, was experiencing significant growth at this time, making it an attractive location for retail merchants. One of the many establishments to develop in San Antonio was J. Joske's Dry Goods Store. J. Joske's developed and grew along with the town, eventually becoming the largest department store in the state of Texas. Looking at the first sixty-plus years of Joske's shows not only the store's development from a dry goods store to a department store but also demonstrates the impact that the store's development had on the evolution of San Antonio and the southwestern United States in general.

¹⁰ The establishment of Sanger Brothers was not Isaac's first experience with running and owning a dry goods store. Before immigrating to the United States Isaac had an apprenticeship with a German mercantile house and once in the United State he worked in an uncle's clothing store in New Haven, Connecticut, and as a bookkeeper for a men's clothing factory in New York. The knowledge he gained from these jobs proved invaluable when he started his own store. Isaac was the sole founder of the store, but his brothers Philip and Alexander, along relatives Lehman, Jacob, David, and Sam all had a hand in its establishment.

¹¹ Leon Joseph Rosenberg, *Sangers', Pioneer Texas Merchants* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1978), 1 – 14.

Julius Joske, a German Jew, came to San Antonio in 1869 at the age of forty-four¹² seeking a place where he could live and raise his family without fear of religious or ethnic persecution. With him Joske brought great mercantile skills, learned from running his own store in his native country and from his wife Henrietta Wolfson's family, who were prominent Prussian merchants. Julius settled in San Antonio because Leon and Sol Wolfson, Henrietta's brothers, had ties to the area. The Wolfson brothers had been in the United States since before the Civil War. During the war, Sol served in the Union Army while Leon ran a store in Mexico. After the war the brothers reunited and opened a store in Gonzales, Texas. Once they got word that Julius was planning a trip to Texas, the brothers moved to San Antonio and opened a dry goods store, Wolfson's, on the Main Plaza at the corner of Acequia Street (now Main Street). When Joske arrived in spring 1869 he, too, opened a store on the plaza, which at the time was the business center of San Antonio.¹³

¹² According to the ship records Julius Joske left from the port of Hamburg and arrived at New Orleans on 31 March 1869. Since he arrived in New Orleans at the end of March, he probably did not make it to San Antonio until the end of April or beginning of May.

¹³ Ira A. Glazier and P. William Filby, *German to America List of Passengers Arriving to U.S. Ports* (Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1991), 253 – 54; *Historical and Descriptive Review of the Industries of San Antonio, 1885* (San Antonio: Land Thompson, 1885), 84 – 86; *San Antonio Light*, 15 July 1923; France Kallison, "100 Years of Jewery in San Antonio" (Master's thesis, Trinity University, San Antonio, 1977), 29.

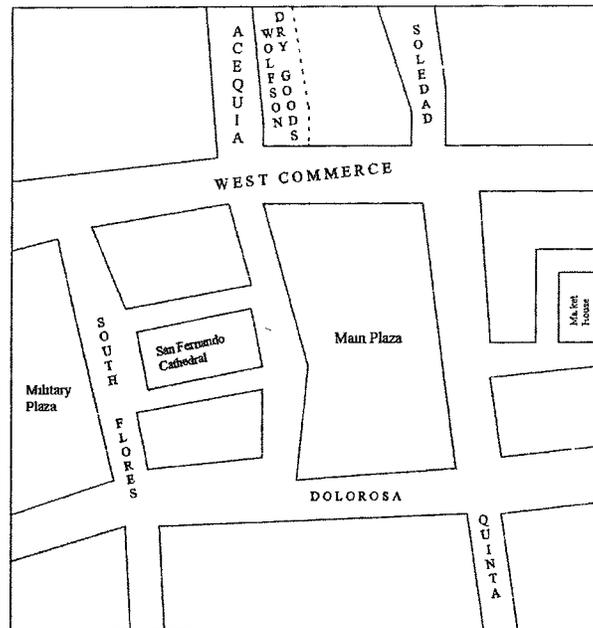


Illustration 1.1 – Main Plaza 1860s

Source: William Corner, *San Antonio de Bexar* (San Antonio: Bainbridge and Corner, 1890); France Kallison, “100 Years of Jewery in San Antonio” (Master’s thesis, Trinity University, San Antonio, 1977); Lois Wood Burkhalter, “The Enjoyable Joske Story, 1873 – 1973: Centennial Celebration,” Special Section, 3, *San Antonio Light*, 15 April 1973.

By 1873 J. Joske Dry Goods was a locally popular store. The success of the store, allowed Joske to see that San Antonio was indeed a place where he could bring his family. At the beginning of the year he liquidated his store and returned to Germany for his family. In May, Julius, his wife, three sons (Alexander, Albert, and Siegfried) and two daughters arrived in New York. Alexander and Albert were sent on to San Antonio, where upon arrival, the boys went to work in their uncle’s store. By the time of the boys’ arrival, Wolfson’s had grown to become the largest dry goods store, in town. By working

at the store the boys not only earned money but gained experience in the retail market of the southwestern United States.¹



Illustration 1.2 – The Joske Family

Julius Joske arrived back in San Antonio in early 1874 and quickly reopened his store. Instead of using the same location as before, he opened the store, northeast of downtown, off Austin Street at a location known as “Henry Bitter’s Place,” in the same vicinity as the military supply depot and the government corral. The store’s close proximity to the military establishment encouraged Joske to target merchandise toward government employees and teamsters; in return they became loyal customers.²

¹ “Alexander Joske Pioneer Merchant, Patriotic Merchant, Civic Publicist” *The Pioneer Magazine of Texas*, October 1928, 8 – 10; *Light*, 17 June 1923 and 15 June 1923.

² Lois Wood Burkhalter, “The Enjoyable Joske Story, 1873 – 1973: Centennial Celebration,” Special Section, 3, *San Antonio Light*, 15 April 1973; *San Antonio Express*, 7 October 1923.

The store was a true family enterprise. Stocking shelves, keeping the store in an orderly manner, and helping to sell merchandise was the responsibility of Alexander, Albert, and Siegfried. Julius largely handled the management of the store and the ordering of merchandise, which either came to the store by covered wagon or, beginning in 1877, by train. Julius also arranged for himself and one of the boys to take a covered wagon of merchandise for sale on the outskirts of town.³

By the end of the first year in business, J. Joske's had grown into a successful store. The building that the store started out in did not allow much room for expansion and at the beginning of 1875 Joske's moved to a location at Alamo Street on Alamo Plaza. Other than being larger the new building had no distinguishable architectural characteristics. Accompanying the move was a name change: from J. Joske Dry Goods to Joske and Sons Dry Goods.

When Joske's moved to Alamo Plaza in 1875, the plaza was undeveloped. In the area where Joske relocated, four other businesses existed: the Menger Hotel, Dreiss Drug Store, Beisenback Hardware Company, and a liquor store that was operated out of the drug store. Lumberyard and shoe stores were also in the vicinity.⁴

³ *Express*, 7 October 1923; Cecilia Steinfiedlt, *San Antonio Was: Seen Through a Magic Lantern: Views from the Slide Collection of Albert Stevens* (San Antonio: San Antonio Museum Association, 1978), 177.

⁴ *Express*, 7 October 1923.

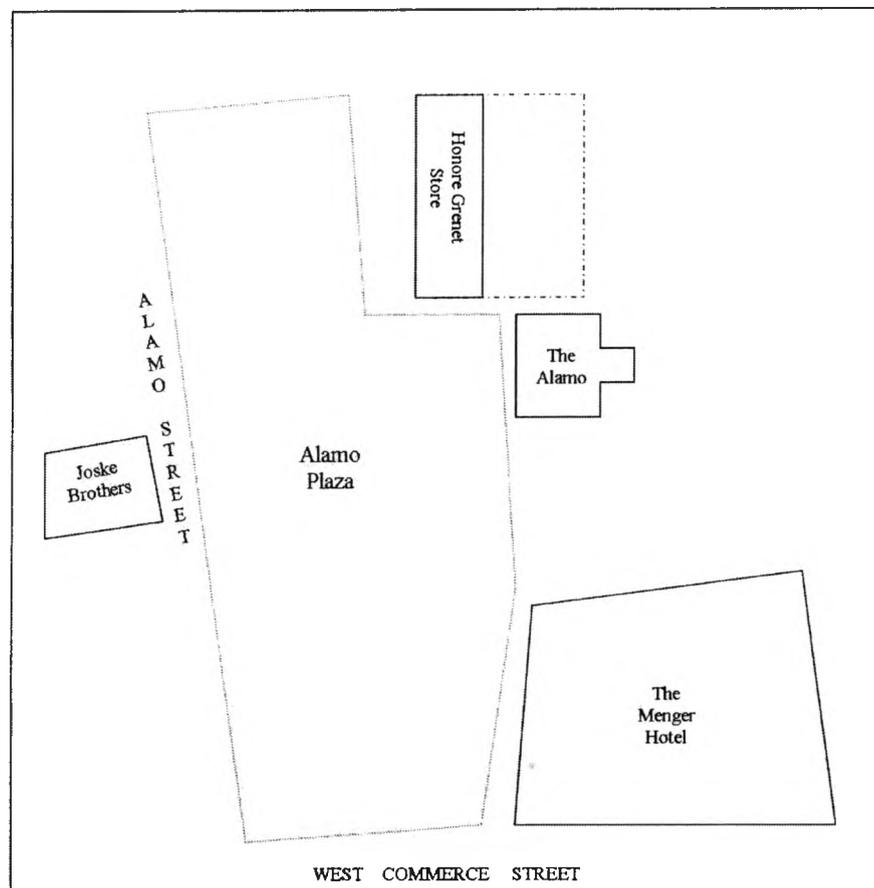


Illustration 1.3 – Alamo Plaza 1875

Source: Sanborn Insurance Maps, “San Antonio [Bexar Co], Texas” July 1885, sheets 2, 4, and 10; Morrison and Fourmy, comp. *Morrison and Fourmy’s General Directory of the City of San Antonio for 1877-78* (Galveston: Morrison and Fourmy, 1878); Morrison and Fourmy, comp. *Morrison and Fourmy’s General Directory of the City of San Antonio for 1879-80* (Galveston: Morrison and Fourmy, 1880); France Kallison, “100 Years of Jewery in San Antonio” (Master’s thesis, Trinity University, San Antonio, 1977); Bernice Strong, “Alamo Plaza, 1875 – 1890: Era of Change” (Unpublished Paper, Daughters of the Republic of Texas, 1984); Lois Wood Burkhalter, “The Enjoyable Joske Story, 1873 – 1973: Centennial Celebration,” Special Section, 3-4, *San Antonio Light*, 15 April 1973.



Illustration 1.4 - Alamo Street looking southwest towards Commerce Street

Left to right: Dullnig Building (with tower), Joske Bros. Store, and Alamo Drug Store in the Dreiss Building. *Source: Raba Collection, San Antonio Express-News.*

Three main events in the years 1877-1878 stand out as bringing increasing numbers of people to the plaza area and thus increasing clientele for the store. First, in 1877, a new post office opened. Because rural free delivery did not begin until 1883, people from all over the city and the immediate countryside came downtown to get their mail. Second, on February 19, 1877, the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railroad came rolling into San Antonio, providing the town with a connection to cities and towns in central and East Texas and with the Gulf of Mexico. Railroad expansion continued through the 1880s, connecting San Antonio westward and southward, and increasing the city's importance as a commercial center. For Joske's, the railroad meant better access to merchandise along with a wider clientele base. Third, on Jun 22, 1878,

the city received a streetcar line. The mule-drawn streetcars ran between Alamo Plaza and San Pedro Springs. These cars allowed more people, especially women and children, to reach previously inaccessible parts of town.⁵

Growth in central San Antonio in the late 1870s and 1880s affected Joske's in two ways: first, by increasing competition; and, second, by the expansion of clientele. Four major dry goods competitors established themselves in Alamo Plaza, with various others opening stores in other parts of the city. Honore Grenet was the merchant who had the greatest impact on Joske's. Grenet's store was housed among the buildings at the Alamo and besides running a store he also operated a museum in memory of the Alamo defenders. Nevertheless, the Joske family and Grenet developed a close relationship; not only did they have retailing in common, they were also neighbors. Through conversations and visits to the store, the Joske boys along with their father learned a great deal from Grenet, such as advertising techniques and display windows.⁶

Changes in Alamo Plaza were largely responsible for Joske's increase in the clientele in the late 1870s to 1880s. Joske's location near the train depot and the popular Menger Hotel helped draw people into the store. Increase in clientele is best seen in the additions of various departments and the increase of specialty merchandise,⁷ especially

⁵ Boyce House, *City of Flaming Adventure: The Chronicle of San Antonio* (San Antonio: Naylor Company, 1949), 163 – 168; Robert H. Thonhoff, *San Antonio Stage Lines 1847 – 1881* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1971), 34.

⁶ Retail expansion also took place beyond Alamo Plaza. In 1877 the dry goods store A.A. Wolf, later known as Wolf and Marx Company was established along West Commerce Street. By the 1880s Wolf and Marx Company had become Joske's major competitor. Steinfiedt, 28 – 30, *Light*, 17 June 1923.

⁷ Specialty Merchandise: product not common to a certain market that has to be brought in from elsewhere for sale.

notions⁸ and fine fabrics for women's clothing. One distinctive change that came to Joske's during this time was the introduction of the bargain bin. The bargain bin was in a separate section of the store and contained merchandise that sold for five or ten cents; it often contained clearance or sale items. Aside from being a tool to quickly sell merchandise, it was also used to target people of limited resources. By the beginning of the 1880s Joske's had clearly begun to make the transition from dry goods store to department store. Physically, to keep up with an increase in clientele, the store expanded west towards Losoya Street.

⁸ Notions: items used in needlepoint work and sewing, such as lace and thread.

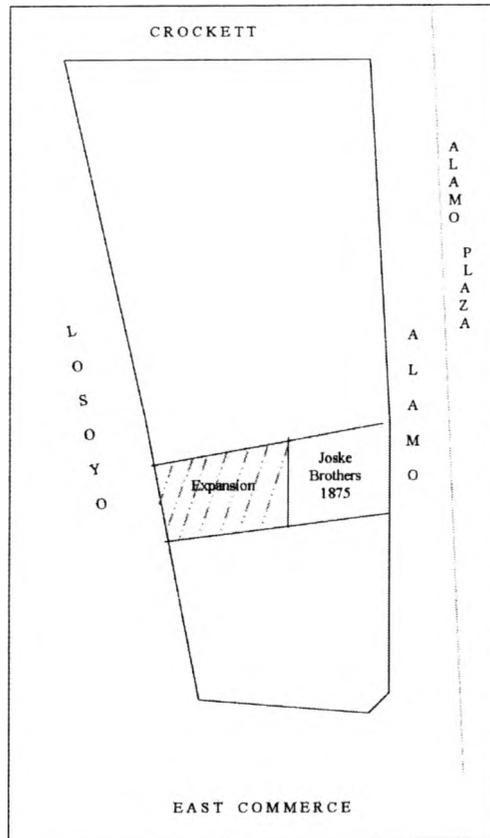


Illustration 1.5 – Expansion of Joske Brothers 1880s

Sources: Sanborn Insurance Maps, “San Antonio [Bexar Co], Texas” July 1885, sheets 2, 4, and 10; “San Antonio [Bexar Co], Texas” October 1888, sheets 2, 3, 4, and 10; Morrison and Fourmy, comp. *Morrison and Fourmy’s General Directory of the City of San Antonio 1879 – 1880* (Galveston: Morrison and Fourmy, 1880); Morrison and Fourmy, comp. *Morrison and Fourmy’s General Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1885 – 1886* (Galveston: Morrison and Fourmy, 1886); Morrison and Fourmy, comp. *Morrison and Fourmy’s General Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1887 – 1888* (Galveston: Morrison and Fourmy, 1888); Bernice Strong, “Alamo Plaza, 1875 – 1890 Era of Change” (Unpublished Paper, Daughters of the Republic of Texas, 1984); Lois Wood Burkhalter, “The Enjoyable Joske Story, 1873 – 1973: Centennial Celebration,” Special Section, 4, *San Antonio Light*, 15 April.

The 1880s brought several changes to Joske’s. In the early part of the decade, Julius Joske retired from running the store and returned to Germany with his wife. Alexander and Albert retained control of the store with Alexander serving as president and Julius retaining a certain percentage of ownership. To stay competitive with other

stores in San Antonio and to continue meeting the needs of its clientele, Joske's hired a resident buyer⁹ in New York City. This allowed Joske's to be able to provide their customers both higher quality merchandise and fashions and bargains.

The challenges of the 1880s included finding ways of keeping customers coming into the store and providing them with the most reasonable prices. Pricing in Texas and most of the Southwest was done with the nickel as the lowest accepted currency.¹⁰ The Joske family felt that not using the penny was an injustice to customers, as its use cheated them out of change. On 16 December 1888, Joske Brothers announced in the *San Antonio Light* that they had "decided to do away with the five cent nickel [sic] as the lowest standard of value in their store."¹¹ To get the penny brought back into circulation Joske's special ordered them through the United States Mint and received a supply from the San Antonio National Bank. Circulating the penny made Joske's the first and only store in the southwest to sell items for one cent. Having the penny allowed Joske's to freely advertise it had the cheapest prices on a variety of merchandise. Throughout most of 1887 Joske's ads reminded its customers of the store's acceptance of the penny. Other dry goods stores and businesses were unable to catch up with Joske's until 1890.¹²

The 1880s proved prosperous for Joske Brothers. With growth in all areas of the store, it was once again outgrowing its current location. In January 1887 Joske Brothers began advertising a large clearance sale to get rid of merchandise so they could move into

⁹ Resident buyer: a representative of the company in another location who identifies potential trends, then reviews, samples, and inspects the goods before they are sent to the company.

¹⁰The penny was taken out of circulation in the Southwest during the Civil War due to the dangers of transporting copper, a valuable war material.

¹¹ *Light*, 16 December 1886.

¹² *Ibid.*, 6 August 1887 – 4 October 1887; *WOAI Business Weekly*, 1 February 1993; *Express*, 9 September 1917.

a new store. The new facility, which would be referred to as the “big store,” was located at the corner of East Commerce and Alamo streets, a prime spot in San Antonio, diagonal from the San Antonio Opera House and west of St. Joseph’s Catholic Church. Local architects James Wahrenberger and Albert Felix Beckman were hired to design a store consisting of two floors and a basement, each 150 by 240 feet. The “big store” would include architectural design elements in materials including top quality granite, limestone, and brick, many of which came from local rock quarries.¹³ When they moved into the new store in September 1888, the first floor and basement were used for selling merchandise with the second floor reserved for offices and storage.

¹³ Andrew Morrison, ed, *Historic San Antonio* (San Antonio: The Metropolitan Publishing Company, 1887), 89; Mary Carolyn Holler Juston, “An English Architect in Texas: Alfred Giles: 1853 – 1920” (Master’s thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 1970), 183 – 184.

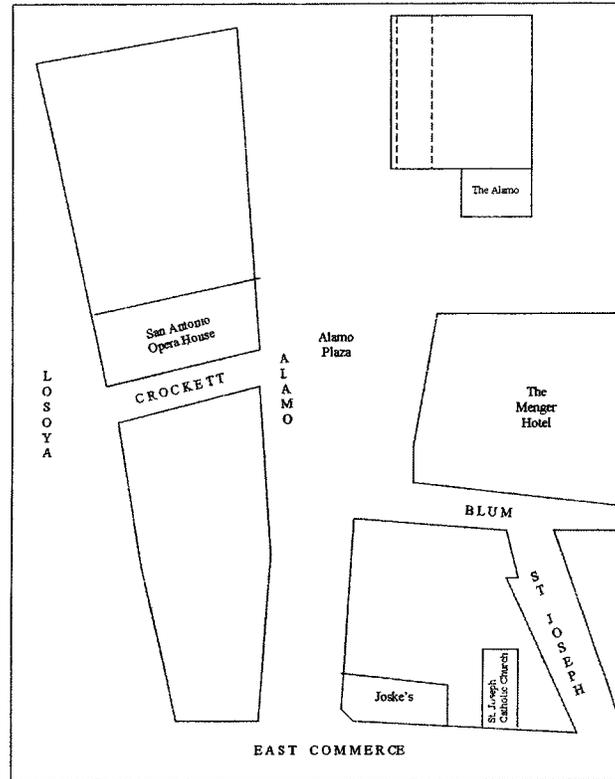


Illustration 1.6 – Alamo Plaza 1888

Sources: Sanborn Insurance Map, “San Antonio [Bexar Co], Texas” October 1888, sheets 3, 4, and 10; Morrison and Fourmy, comp. *Morrison and Fourmy’s General Directory of the City of San Antonio for 1887-88* (Galveston: Morrison and Fourmy, 1888); Morrison and Fourmy, comp. *Morrison and Fourmy’s General Directory of the City of San Antonio for 1889-90* (Galveston: Morrison and Fourmy, 1890); Bernice Strong, “Alamo Plaza, 1875 – 1890 Era of Change” (Unpublished Paper, Daughters of the Republic of Texas, 1984), 21.

Joske’s growth in the late nineteenth century coincided with the continuing development of San Antonio. To encourage industrial growth, in 1881 the city council “passed an ordinance giving a ten year exemption from municipal taxes to all industries established in San Antonio during a three year period.”¹⁴ In June 1881 Southwestern Bell Telephone Company began providing local phone service in the downtown area, and by

¹⁴ House, *City of Flaming Adventure*, 196.

1884 Joske's had a vital link to customers and merchandise suppliers when long distance service began.¹⁵ In 1883, Lucchese Boot and Shoe Company opened in San Antonio and provided Joske's with stiff competition in those lines of merchandise, which Lucchese sold or made from top quality materials.¹⁶

Entering the last decade of the nineteenth century, Joske's was at the center of San Antonio's rapid development. Expanding the width of the store proved the best way to deal with the necessity of expanding the number of departments and the stock of merchandise brought on by the city's growth. Alexander and Albert selected the local architectural firm of Alfred Giles and Guindon to carry out the expansion. The store went from 150 by 240 feet to 174 by 240 feet. A 300-foot store front was added and a striped effect was created in brick and stone. A framed arch was added to the Commerce Street side of the store and a turret¹⁷ and parasol shaped roof¹⁸ were added to the entrance. Architectural elements added to the store carried a strong English influence, an idea which Giles picked up from a trip to England in 1885.¹⁹

¹⁵ Ibid.; Marianne Odom and Gaylon Finklea Young, *The Businesses That Built San Antonio* (San Antonio: Living Legacies, 1985), 54 – 55.

¹⁶ Odom, *The Businesses That Built*, 58 – 61.

¹⁷ Turret: a small rounded tower that projects from a corner of a building

¹⁸ Parasol shaped roof: an umbrella shaped.

¹⁹ *Express*, 8 September 1889; Juston, *Alfred Giles*, 100 – 101, 184 – 186.

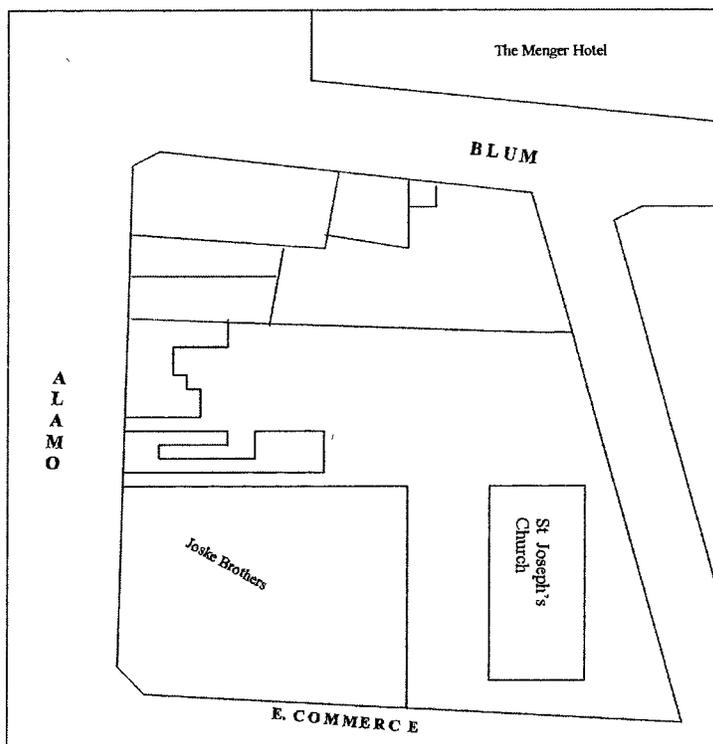


Illustration 1.7 – Alamo-Commerce Corner 1900

Sources: Sanborn Insurance Map, “San Antonio [Bexar Co], Texas” July 1904, vol. 2, Sheet 106 and 1904a.

Joske’s expansion and remodeling coincided with a series of public improvements that came to the downtown area beginning in 1890. For instance, electric-powered streetcars replaced mule-drawn ones, making it easier for people to get from residential neighborhoods to the business district. The city installed gas street lamps at various

places where people gathered, such as Alamo Plaza. This allowed people to stay out later in the evenings, encouraging stores like Joske's to extend their hours.²⁰

At the turn of the century, San Antonio was still the largest city in Texas and Joske's was not only the largest department store in the state but the largest store southwest of the Mississippi River. The store served a varied and increasingly affluent clientele. Tourism increased in San Antonio due in part to the popularity of Hot Well Springs²¹ and the increased military presence. To meet the growth in tourism, a building boom in hotels and businesses took place in and around the downtown area.²²

It was during this boom time that Joske's management changed in 1903 when Alexander bought out his father and brother. Albert continued to help his brother in the store until his complete retirement in 1910. His retirement prompted Alexander to change the name of the store to Joske Brothers Company. The change in name represented the growth and success of the store.²³ Alexander proved to be an energetic and aggressive owner. He undertook a major new expansion project in 1909, when the store added two additional floors and expanded thirty feet towards St. Joseph's Catholic Church. Also included in the expansion were elevators. The expansion allowed Joske's

²⁰ Pearson Newcomb, *The Alamo City* (San Antonio: Pearson Newcomb, 1926), 112; *San Antonio Remembered Downtown*, DVD (KLRN – TV: Alamo Public Telecommunications Council, 1996).

²¹ The Hot Well Springs was a health resort of San Antonio that attracted thousands to San Antonio. The springs were natural and combined with the salubrious climate people felt that they would be healed by visiting them and soaking in them.

²² Lewis F. Fisher, *Saving San Antonio, The Precarious Preservation of a Heritage* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1996), 52.

²³ Burkhalter, "The Enjoyable Joske Story," 5.

to occupy all the property on the Alamo Street side of the block, with the exception of the Plaza Theater.²⁴

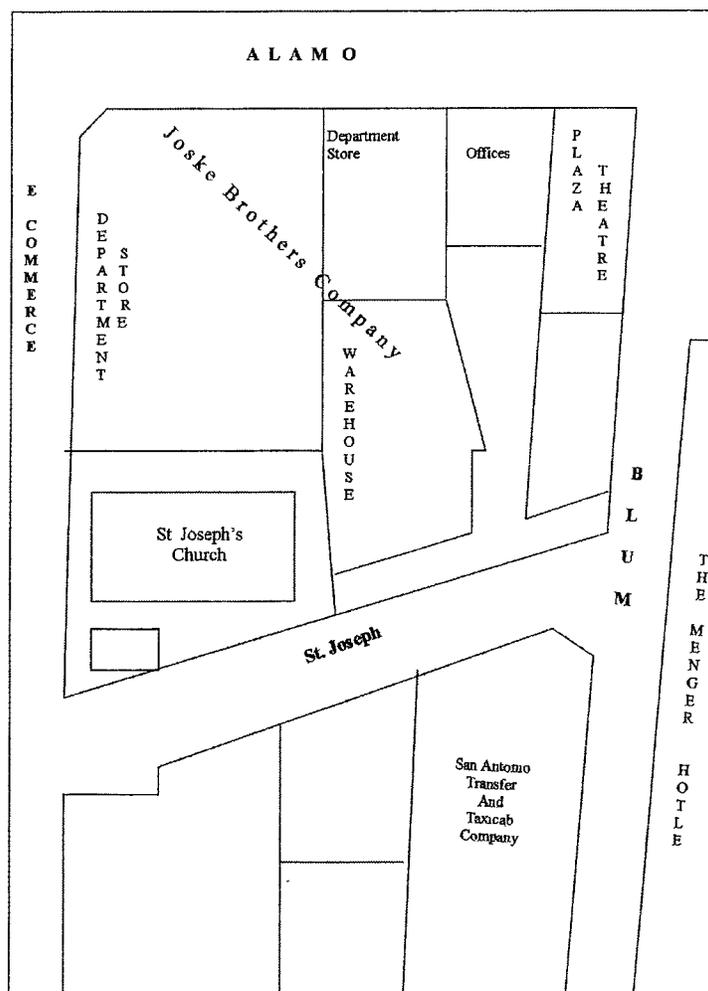


Illustration 1.8 – Alamo-Commerce Corner 1910

Sources: Sanborn Insurance Maps, “San Antonio [Bexar Co], Texas” 1912 vol. 2, sheets 117 and 177a; Jules Applers, *Jules A. Appler’s General Directory and Blue Book of San Antonio, 1910* (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler, 1910).

²⁴ Ibid.

During the 1910s and 1920s, growth in San Antonio and at Joske's went hand in hand. The military played a large role in the city's growth. The Mexican Revolution brought revolutionaries, counterrevolutionaries, and refugees to the city and the United States Army was put on alert in case their presence got out of hand. In 1916, land for Kelly Field, later renamed Kelly Air Force Base, was selected and on 5 April 1917 flight activities began. In December, Brooks Field was established to provide World War I airmen a training facility. In all, during World War I over 70,000 soldiers were stationed in San Antonio for training.²⁵

The military's presence in San Antonio helped to encourage the growth of businesses. Established stores expanded while new stores opened. During this era, employees in Joske's saw the opportunity to take the skills they learned from working at the store and start their own companies. W. C. (William) Frost was one such employee who left Joske's and started his own store. In 1917, he contacted his brother J. M. (Joe) about opening a store in San Antonio. Joe was living in Tennessee at the time and was operating a liquor store. Due to Prohibition and fear that he would lose his store, he took William up on his offer. Later that year, the brothers opened Frost Brothers at 221 East Houston Street. Unlike Joske's, Frost Brothers was an upscale ladies' ready-to-wear store²⁶ but the two were still seen as competitors by Joske's management.²⁷

Frost Brothers was one of many stores in the 1920s that gave Joske's a run for its money. Three major national chain stores opened in San Antonio during this time: J. C.

²⁵ Odom, *The Businesses*, 24 – 25.

²⁶ Ready-to-Wear Store: A store where the clothing is already made and little or no alternations are needed.

²⁷ Texas Jewish Historical Society Records, University of Texas at Austin, Box 3A168, Folder 5; Odom, *The Businesses*, 70 – 71.

Penney in 1921 and Sears Roebuck Company and Montgomery Wards in 1929. Wolf and Marx Company, was now a thriving department store and was located across from Joske's on Alamo Street. The location of the department stores in downtown San Antonio created a shopping and fashion district along Houston Street much like the one Lord and Taylor had created in New York City. Five-and-dime stores²⁸ were also included in the Alamo City's shopping and fashion district. Two major stores of this kind that came to San Antonio in 1929 were Winn's and F. C. Woolworth Company. The five and dime stores proved great competition for the bargain bin at Joske's, while the national chain stores competed with Joske's in other departments.²⁹

Since many of the new stores starting up in San Antonio sold women's fashions, Joske's opened a dress shop on the second floor where women could select fabric and have dresses custom made by a French dressmaker. Custom dresses were mainly targeted to upper-class women, especially those who shopped at Frost Brothers. To get the attention of middle and working-class women the women's clothing line was expanded along with the notions department.³⁰

The increased competition of the 1920s moved Joske's to undertake more aggressive efforts to develop its staff. Management sent employees to the East Coast to

²⁸ Five-and-Dime Stores: A retail establishment selling inexpensive items, many at ten cents or less.

²⁹ Mary E. Livingston, *San Antonio in the 1920s and 1930s* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 101 – 117; Jules Appler, *Jules A. Appler Directory and General Directory and Householder Directory of Greater San Antonio 1924 – 1925* (San Antonio: Jules A. Appler, 1925); John F. Worley, *John F. Worley Directory Co. 's San Antonio City Directory, 1927 – 1928* (San Antonio: John F. Worley Directory Company, 1928); John F. Worley, *John F. Worley Directory Co. 's San Antonio City Directory, 1929 – 1930* (San Antonio: John F. Worley Directory Company, 1930); John F. Worley, *John F. Worley Directory Co. 's San Antonio City Directory, 1931 – 1932* (San Antonio: John F. Worley Directory Company, 1932).

³⁰ Burkhalter, "The Enjoyable Joske Story," 5.

work in a national chain at which they could gain knowledge about store operations and organization. Alexander also made sure that Joske's still had the feel of a family run store by being on the floor himself to make sure people's experience at Joske's was a pleasant one. He was not afraid to step into the role of a salesman to make sure people found what they were looking for.³¹

Another way Joske's competed was by becoming involved in the community through event sponsorship. To highlight the upcoming fashion season, Joske's would host fashion shows either at hotels or in theaters. The fashion shows were targeted mainly to upper-class women and teenage girls. However, they also helped to put San Antonio in the fashion spotlight because fashion designers from New York were invited to attend.³²

In 1923, Joske's reached a milestone. The store had its golden anniversary, becoming the first department store or dry goods store in the history of San Antonio to be open for fifty consecutive years. The store had much to celebrate, not only had the store survived its developmental years, but Joske's had also established itself as a very successful department store in the southwestern United States. The store had the largest selection of merchandise in Texas and the largest floor space of any retail store in the Southwest. "In relation to its volume of business to the population of its trade territory, it was one of the largest stores in the country."³³

The second half of the 1920s would bring great sorrow and change to the store. In the summer of 1925 Alexander Joske became ill. He appeared to be going through a nervous breakdown. Friends and family, including his son-in-law Dr. Fredrick G.

³¹ Ibid.; *San Antonio Remembered Downtown*, DVD (KLRN – TV: Alamo Public Telecommunications Council, 1996).

³² Burkhalter, "The Enjoyable Joske Story," 5.

³³ Ibid., *Light*, 7 October 1923.

Oppenheimer, a practicing pediatrician in San Antonio, encouraged him to get away for a while, but he would not listen and continued to work long hours managing the store. On Wednesday evening, 8 July 1925, a servant found Alexander dead in the upstairs of his residence from a self-inflicted gun shot to the side.³⁴

The announcement of Alexander's death shocked the city and marked the end of an era for Joske's department store. He was known not only as a merchant but as a community builder. In mourning, Mayor John W. Tobin ordered flags to be flown at half-mast. Joske Brothers Company closed for two days. Throughout the Southwest he was remembered as a pioneer merchant who helped transform dry goods stores into modern department stores.³⁵ With no direct heirs having a strong involvement in day-to-day operations of the store, and the national retail scene moving in the direction of chains and threatening the existence of family owned department stores, Joske's was on the road to becoming a corporate owned department store.

³⁴ *Light*, 9 July 1925; *Express*, 9 July 1925.

³⁵ *Light*, 9 July 1925; *Express*, 9 July 1925, 10 July 1925, and 11 July 1925.

CHAPTER II

DOING BUSINESS THE JOSKE'S WAY

“You can get it at Joske’s” was a well known saying around San Antonio. As a standard from its early days of operation, Joske’s stocked a large selection of high quality merchandise in a wide range of prices followed up with quality customer service. People went to Joske’s and left satisfied. For Joske’s there was no magic selling formula, simply planning and hard work. Julius Joske knew that the service people received along with their reaction to the store’s layout, décor, aesthetic elements, and merchandise meant the difference between success and failure.

Julius and Alexander Joske, introduced an innovative business style that the store’s corporate leaders built upon in later years to continue Joske’s family-run store approach but within the large department store setting. During its hundred-plus years in operation, quality service, along with three principal fundamentals: merchandise, manpower, and morale resulted in Joske’s being a successful and progressive department store.¹ In the 1920s Joske’s transitioned from a family owned to a corporate department store via the purchase by Hahn department stores. The business practices developed by

¹ Memo to Miss Isabel Benney for W.B. Harris From Holland McCombs, 5 November 1949, page 2 Holland McCombs Papers, file 19, University of Tennessee at Martin; Welcome to Joske’s (employee handbook), page 3, Holland McCombs Paper, file 23, University of Tennessee at Martin.

Julius and Alexander were expanded upon, and the store retained its former name and feel. In the 1940s, the feel of a family owned department store remained despite the store's corporate ownership.

Having the right item at the right price meant everything to Joske's. If the store did not have the specific item a customer requested, the store would get it. Julius Joske made it an early company policy to "cater to all classes and to have available at all times the largest assortment of merchandise."² Julius' determination to have the brands people wanted was instilled in his son Alexander. Their determination resulted in the store's prestige of having an above average selection of national brands.

Joske's selection of merchandise, not only in terms of brand but in price, contributed to the store's popularity. Frost Brothers, a competing department store in town, focused on the high-end customers while Joske's focused on all customers. At Joske's, a low income family could shop in the bargain basement while the high-end shopper worked with a personal shopper, a store employee who helped shoppers, or tailor.

Joske's arranged its merchandise specifically to not intimidate the customers. It kept the customer in mind when arranging each department. For instance, the infant department was very spacious. There was room between the displays and rest areas for expectant mothers. Salespeople explained the difference between items to customers. In

² Welcome to Joske's (employee handbook), page 3, Holland McCombs Papers, file 23, University of Tennessee at Martin.

the 1940s, Joske's equipped this department with Ultraviolet Germicidal Radiators to keep the department clean and reduce the spread of infectious diseases.³

The best service was then backed by the best quality of merchandise. Joske's knew that not all customers could afford products they need. This was especially true with farmers and ranchers in the area. Ranchers and farmers in the area often found some of the best saddles at Joske's in the Corral Shop. Saddles were hand crafted and made from the highest qualities of leather. However, few ranchers and farmers could afford to pay for the saddles in full so Joske's had a payment program that allowed the saddle to be paid for over a period of time. The Joske family started the payment program as a way to help locals afford purchases, and over time the practice evolved from charge slips to the charge plate to the Joske's credit card.⁴

Joske's took great pride in the marketing of its merchandise. Innovative methods drew people into the store. Regardless of the method used, advertising generally presented a complete cross-section of the merchandise, not just items targeted to one income group.⁵ From the beginning, Joske's always relied heavily on newspaper advertisement. In the latter 1800s, Joske's advertisements ran up to a month at a time in the newspaper. If possible, Joske's always tried to secure ad space on the front page of the newspaper or on popular pages. While most stores just listed items and their price, Joske's took a personal approach with the ads. For example, in 1886 the ad to promote

³ Welcome to Joske's (employee handbook), page 3, Holland McCombs Papers, file 23, University of Tennessee at Martin.

⁴ *San Antonio Remembered Downtown*, DVD (KLRN – TV: Alamo Public Telecommunications Council, 1996).; Joske's of Texas Famous Brand Farm and Ranch Needs (catalog), Holland McCombs Papers, file 23, University of Tennessee at Martin.

⁵ Memo to Miss Isabel Benney for W.B. Harris from Holland McCombs, November 5, 1949, page 34 Holland McCombs Papers, file 19, University of Tennessee at Martin.

the annual clearance sale read: “We take occasion to mention to our friends and customers in the city and country.”⁶ Joske’s ad was more like an invitation to customers with both the selection and sales prices offered.

Personalization in advertising stemmed from the role management played in writing the ads. Unlike similar department stores of the era, Alexander Joske chose to write his own ads, rather than using an advertising firm. The greater flexibility afforded to Joske’s by creating its own ads allowed the message relayed to the customers to be more heartfelt than other department stores, and this practice continued as a company tradition throughout the history of the store. Often Joske’s ads were not used for advertising but to relate messages to the community. Some ads reminded people of an important date. For example, when Former President Lyndon B. Johnson suffered a heart attack, Joske’s ran an ad wishing the president well. Following Johnson’s death, Joske’s ran ads expressing grief at loss of the former president.⁷

In the 1940s, Joske’s turned to radio advertising to help increase store traffic. This new advertising medium widened the store’s market, increased the store’s reputation with consumers and civic groups, and supplemented its print advertising. To assist with its radio advertising campaign, Joske’s agreed to participate in a study that “demonstrated the power of radio advertising, and emphasized the importance of mutual confidence and

⁶ *San Antonio Light*, 4 January 1886.

⁷ Louis Burkhalter, “The Enjoyable Joske Story, 1873 – 1973 Centennial Celebration,” Special Section, 11, *San Antonio Light*, 15 April 1973. ; *San Antonio Light*, 23 January 1973.

cooperation between broadcasters and retailers in attaining maximum value from radio.”⁸

Lasting from 1 January 1945 to 1 January 1946, it was the first of kind, nationally.

Joske’s radio advertising was not simply fifteen to thirty second slots advertising the store and its merchandise but rather programs that were targeted towards specific consumer groups and focused on specific merchandise. Monday through Saturday, “The Good Morning” ran from 7:45 to 8:00 am and was targeted towards working men and women and housewives. Hosted by Peggy Wilson, a personal shopper, the show promoted such items as inexpensive career wear and casual wear along with men’s clothing. Farmers and ranchers in all parts of South Texas enjoyed “The Old Ranch Hand” show, which ran Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings. The show promoted the advantages of shopping at Joske’s for ranch, western, and outdoor items.⁹

Joske’s saw the radio shows as an outlet for community based advertising. By teaming up with local and national community organizations such as the American Red Cross, Joske’s hosted various community events that in return promoted merchandise in the store. For several years Joske’s held “baby week” during the first week of May. During baby week, Joske’s teamed up with the Children’s Bureau to hold a baby fair that coincided with sales in the infant department. At the fair, Joske’s provided parents with books on the general care for the children, safety inspectors checked carriages to make sure they were assembled correctly, and the store held a baby contest.¹⁰ Events such as

⁸ Joske’s of Texas, *Radio for Retailers: A report of the radio advertising study conducted in San Antonio by Joske’s of Texas in Cooperation with the National Association of Broadcasters* (San Antonio, 1946), iii.

⁹ Joske’s of Texas, *Radio for Retailers: A report of the radio advertising study conducted in San Antonio by Joske’s of Texas in Cooperation with the National Association of Broadcasters* (San Antonio, 1946), introduction and 29-30. 32-33.

¹⁰ *Light*, 6 May 1923.

baby week attracted people to the store who might not regularly shop at the department store. Whatever products were recommended at the fair, Joske's made sure they had it in stock. People often left the fairs, such as baby week with more than information: they also left with merchandise.

One of the most popular ways Joske's promoted its clothing was through fashion shows. The store set up a runway in the middle of various clothing departments and fashion shows were staged. San Antonians were fascinated by the shows, because they were something different. Teens especially loved the back-to-school fashion shows. Joske's made sure to stock the clothing displayed in the show. In addition to the in-store fashion shows, Joske's staged upscale fashion shows featuring top designers such as Dior, at the Menger Hotel. True to its principles, Joske's did its best to target all classes.¹¹

The Teena Texas Program, started by Joske's in the 1940s, was another community based program that promoted fashion merchandise. Focusing on teenage girls, the Teena Texas program was a pageant-like program that targeted high school girls. Each year around fifty girls competed for the title. The winner participated in various store programs, which included modeling the latest fashions. Teena Texas provided Joske's with a local face for teen fashion and was a huge peer-to-peer marketing tool.¹²

¹¹ Memo to Miss Isabel Benney for W.B. Harris From Holland McCombs, November 5, 1949, page 30, Holland McCombs Papers, file 19, University of Tennessee at Martin.

¹² *San Antonio Remembered Downtown*, DVD. ; Burkhalter, "The Enjoyable Joske Story," 8.

Regardless of the selection Joske's offered or the unique marketing tools employed, service was an important factor in what was sold. Joske's not only competed with merchandise but with service. Highest quality service was generated by man-power. Man-power came from having employees who worked as a team and took pride in selling and presenting the store's merchandise. Having started as a father-sons operation, by the early 1890s the store had close to one hundred employees. Early employee groups were culturally diverse (i.e. German, Czech, Hispanics, Jews, etc.), honest and loyal. Employees followed a meticulous system ensuring all tasks would be carried out properly.¹³

By the early 1900s, Joske's structure resembled that of other department stores. Top level management included the store president, the executive vice-president, general manager, director and store superintendent. Under them were the heads of the departments. The vice-president in charge of sales promotions handled not only the advertising but also in-store promotions and special events. The merchandising vice-president managed the buyers and people in the stock and warehouse operations. The controller and treasurer handled the financial side, which included floor sales transactions. All three departments worked with the top level management to oversee the sales force.

As the largest group of employees, management believed the store's success depended on the quality of its sales force. Not everyone was fit to be a salesman or woman. In order to become a salesperson, Joske's required applicants to be physically and mentally fit, and driven to sell. Those selected to become a salesperson attended

¹³ Morrison and Fourmy, comp. *Morrison and Fourmy's General Directory of the City of San Antonio for 1879-80*; Burkhalter, "The Enjoyable Joske Story," 5.

training courses taught by the store management.¹⁴ The training program at Joske's was considered one of the best in the United States. Aside from training salespeople, the program also trained youths from colleges and other programs and prepared them to run and manage other department stores. The costs associated with searching for and training qualified salespeople were a considerable factor in Joske's decision to implement several programs to reduce turnover in its sales force.¹⁵

Once on the sales floor, Joske's required members of the sales force to be well groomed and dressed. Salespeople had six important responsibilities. First, they were a host to customers. Second, they were a student, because they needed to increase their knowledge of merchandise. This was often accomplished through weekly meetings with buyers. Third, since many departments had cash registers, sales staff were also cashiers. Fourth, because wrappers were only available on select floors, salespersons were responsible for wrapping their own packages. Fifth, salespeople also had the duty of taking care of stock. This often entailed the uncovering and covering of merchandise in the morning and evening, dusting the counters and shelves, and straightening the stock so that it was neat and orderly. Sixth, sales personnel were also responsible for making sure they kept their transactions in an orderly manor. Many other departments used these records after the sales were complete.

The main responsibility of the salesperson, however, was to sell. This included being an expert of merchandise, and helping customers decide on what they wanted.

¹⁴ Memo to Miss Isabel Benney for W.B. Harris From Holland McCombs, November 5, 1949, page 3, Holland McCombs Papers, file 19, University of Tennessee at Martin.

¹⁵ Memo to Miss Isabel Benney for W.B. Harris From Holland McCombs, November 5, 1949, page 38, Holland McCombs Papers, file 19, University of Tennessee at Martin.

Salespeople had to learn how to increase their sales by suggesting extra items. They had to learn how to build a clientele; this often included calling customers on the phone to let them know merchandise was in or a select item or line of items were on sale.¹⁶

Highly important at Joske's was the customer and salespersons relationship. It was an unspoken agreement that salespersons wait on their regular customers. Customers enjoyed the relationship with the salesperson. It was normal for a customer call in an order to their regular salesperson and gather items or a customer to send their children to the store with a list to give to a specific sales person.¹⁷

In the 1940s, most employees, especially salespeople worked on a commission and bonus or quota system. New salespeople, typically started out earning twenty-five dollars a week, while salespeople with experience and established clientele earned up and over one-hundred dollars a week.¹⁸

Having a good sales force meant having high morale among employees. Keeping the employees' morale high was done through several perquisites within the employment program. High morale started with keeping employees comfortable while at work. While little is known about early employee benefits, it is probable that Joske's provide employees with standard benefits at minimum. During the 1940s a lounge where they could simply relax or eat lunch was available to them on the fourth floor. Other benefits included sick time and leaves of absence. Full time employees also received one week of paid vacation. The physical well being of employees was not forgotten. A store nurse

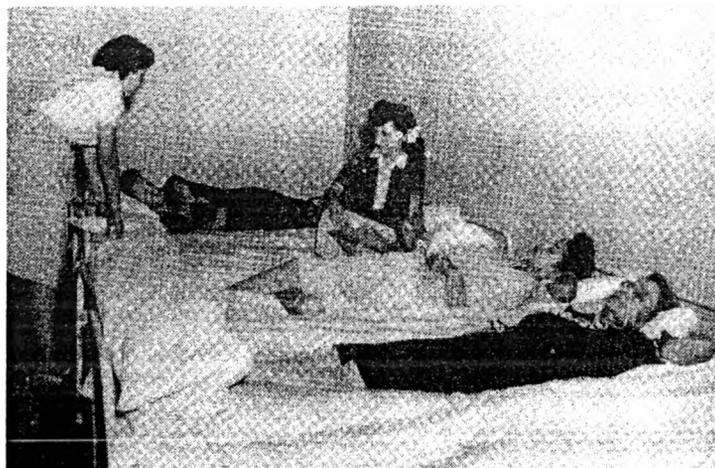
¹⁶ Welcome to Joske's (employee handbook), page 14, Holland McCombs Paper, file 23, University of Tennessee at Martin.

¹⁷ *San Antonio Remembered Downtown*, DVD.

¹⁸ Memo to Miss Isabel Benney for W.B. Harris From Holland McCombs, November 5, 1949, pages 9-28, Holland McCombs Papers, file 19, University of Tennessee at Martin.

was on site regularly to treat infection from colds and small accidents. After three months, employees were eligible for hospitalization insurance and after three years of continuous service were eligible for life insurance. Joske's provided employees with a wealth of benefits. Management knew if it took care of its employees and their families, the employees would in turn be happy and loyal.¹⁹

¹⁹ Welcome to Joske's (employee handbook), page 21, Holland McCombs Papers, file 23, University of Tennessee at Martin.



Illustrations: 2.1 and 2.2

2.1, TOP: The Silence Room where employees could rest on their lunch hour. ; 2.3, BOTTOM: The store nurse. Source: Welcome to Joske's (employee handbook), Holland McComb Papers, University of Tennessee at Martin.

Another perquisite that Joske's employees enjoyed were discount privileges on store merchandise. Aside from the normal discount, employees were given discounts on clothing items they could wear to work. This was one way management could ensure employees were dressed in the latest fashions and provide a good image to customers.

Upper management felt that it was important to let salespeople know how important they were and that they were appreciated. Programs rewarded salespeople for service to the store and provided for bonding between co-workers. The Quarter Century Club was the best known club not only among store employees but with people around the city.²⁰

Members of the Quarter Century Club all had twenty-five years or more of experience. Members of the club provided support to their coworkers, especially when they were sick or if they encountered a family emergency. In addition, members of the club were rewarded with one week of additional vacation in the winter. Another way Joske's recognized employees for their accomplishments and hard work was through "The Jabberwocky," Joske's store paper. The paper was published every two months "by and for its employees."²¹ Management felt that there was nothing better for employees than to write and praise the accomplishments of their co-workers. To bring about and promote fellowship, various recreational leagues and clubs were organized by employees. The most popular of these was the bowling club. All store based clubs and organizations were open to all employees regardless of employment type or position. It was not uncommon for upper management to participate in activities with salespeople or stockmen. Overall, the clubs and organizations, which lasted until the merger in 1987, had a very unifying affect on the employees.²²

²⁰ Memo to Miss Isabel Benney for W.B. Harris From Holland McCombs, November 5, 1949, page 31, Holland McCombs Papers, file 19, University of Tennessee at Martin. ; *San Antonio Remembered Downtown*, DVD.

²¹ Welcome to Joske's (employee handbook), page 21, Holland McCombs Paper, file 23, University of Tennessee at Martin.

²² Welcome to Joske's (employee handbook), page 20-23, Holland McCombs Papers, file 23, University of Tennessee at Martin.

Unlike many businesses in the south before the Civil Rights movement, Joske's did understand and tried to implement pro-diversity policies. This was partially due to its general proximity to Mexico, which made diversity a sound business decision. An example of diversity policy at Joske's can be shown with the case of Eduardo Martinez, who was one of Joske's Hispanic salesmen. Martinez had a background rich in Mexican culture, which allowed him to be a contact for various shoppers from Mexico. Joske's was known as a fine department store even in Mexico. Martinez was able to converse with both past and potential customers on his many trips to Mexico. These contacts were valuable to the store in terms of increased sales when they would order high end products from Martinez.²³

One important factor in Joske's business success was that the store never lost the feeling that it was family owned. While business and selling methods changed, the original standards of providing the customer the best service and merchandise possible never did. Through changes in ownership, salespeople still knew their customers by name and customers could continue to find the merchandise they needed and wanted. One area of service where this was evident was through the bridal registry and consulting service provided to customers. Consultants working in the bridal department often did more to help the bride than what was expected. From picking out registry items to finding the perfect dress bridal consultants helped brides with all elements of their

²³ Memo to Miss Isabel Benney for W.B. Harris From Holland McCombs, November 5, 1949, page 28, Holland McCombs Papers, file 19, University of Tennessee at Martin.

wedding. Consultants would even find florists and plan rehearsal dinners and if needed they would show up on the bride's wedding day to help the bride put on her dress.²⁴

Abiding by Joske's founding business standards of quality merchandise and service led Joske's to great success. That success allowed Joske's to follow a progressive business model and become a leading department store in the Southwestern United States. In time, that success led the store to become an attractive target for large chains seeking expansion into the region.

²⁴ *San Antonio Remembered Downtown*, DVD.

CHAPTER III

THE COROPORATE YEARS

Department stores entered their golden age in the 1920s. Visiting department stores to view their elaborate architectural design and wandering aimlessly among the extraordinary selection of merchandise became a favorite American pastime. Sales of inexpensive fashions, such as ready-to-wear clothing, increased as sales of tailored and custom - made clothes decreased. Investment firms began taking notice of the profits earned by department stores. Such firms acquired small and family owned stores. While mergers between larger department stores led to chain department stores spreading across the country.

Joske's flourished during the 1920s, Alexander Joske's sudden death in 1925 left the stores susceptible to corporate acquisition.¹ From 1930 to 1987 Joske's went through numerous ownership changes but still retained its family-owned store appeal. Studying milestones during this time shows not only Joske's innovative approach to success but also how being part of a larger department store chain could be troublesome.

Changes to Joske's immediately after the purchase were minimal, both in management and in the typical customer's shopping experience. The onset of the Great

¹ Thomas M. Macioce, ed., *Allied Store Corporation: 50 Years of Retail Growth* (New York: Newcomen Society in North America, 1979), 7 - 9.

Depression along with the changes in ownership helped boost Joske's image locally and nationally. Hahn Corporation owned several stores in the northeast and New England areas that were strongly affected by the Great Depression. Joske's along with Titcher's in Dallas were still able to turn a profit for the chain. Thus, they played a large part in keeping stores like Jordan Marsh in Boston open. The depression provided Joske's an opportunity to prove South Texas had a strong department store market. Joske's activities during the Great Depression helped prevent consolidation of the store with another chain.

It took about six years for the effects of the depression to trickle down to San Antonio, yet people were not immune to the hardships caused by the stock market crash in other parts of the country. Local churches and civic organizations collected food and money for people affected by the depression in San Antonio. Joske's became involved in the community by providing a small amount of money for food for the needy. Overall, Joske's was able to sustain itself during the depression era because it was left in good financial condition when purchased by Hahn.²

In 1932 changes at Hahn occurred. Hahn Department Stores became known as Allied Stores. The board of directors elected as president B. Earl Puckett who had a clear vision of how to boost sales and profits. One of the first changes made by Puckett was to replace store presidents; he wanted store leaders with management skills, professional training, and experience with department stores.

² Mary Livingston, *San Antonio in the 1920s and 1930s* (Charleston: Arcadia, 2000), 133 – 140.

Puckett felt that Joske's could benefit from James Calvert's³ experience and knowledge about department store operations. Hence, Calvert relocated to San Antonio where he became president and general manager.⁴ From his appointment to 1936 he made \$230,000.00 worth of additions and improvements to the store. Calvert's first improvement was new display windows. He then went through the store department by department to see where improvements could be made to better serve the public and increase sales. Calvert capped his improvements to the store with the opening of the air-conditioning plant in 1936.⁵

³ Calvert was originally from England and came to Boston in 1920, at the age of twenty- two, to study department store methods. In the late 1920s he became a merchandise manager for Jordan Marsh, the oldest and largest department store in New England.

⁴ Louis Burkhalter, "The Enjoyable Joske Story, 1873 – 1973 Centennial Celebration," Special Section, 6, *San Antonio Light*, 15 April 1973; *San Antonio Light*, 10 May 1981 and 12 May 1981.

⁵ Ibid; *Light*, March 1933 – June 1936; *San Antonio Express*, March 1933 – June 1936.

Table 3.1 Departmental Improvement for Joske's Department Store 1933 – 1936⁶
James H. Calvert, president

Month/Year (completed)	Department/Area of Improvement	Details
March 1933	Display Windows	A new display front was designed
June 1933	Furniture, Draperies, Lamps and Rugs Departments	All were enlarged to allow for a larger merchandise selection.
July 1933	Beauty Shop	The old beauty shop was torn down and new one was built. The new one was air conditioned and built with the woman in mind.
September 1933	Ready to Wear Department	Completely remodeled.
December 1933	Millinery Department (women's hats)	Expanded and remodeled
February 1934	Cotton Frocks Department	Rearranged and more space added
August 1934	Spanish Fountain	Became an air conditioned luncheon and tea room
February 1935	Frigidaire Department	Enlarged and improved
February 1935	Crockery Department	Realigned
March 1935	Shoe Department (street level)	Enlarged and Redesigned
June 1935	Street Level	The floor was completely redone.
August 1935	Shoe Department (Basement)	Remodeled to meet the demand of the clientele.
November 1935	Neckwear and Handkerchief Department	Expanded and arranged for quicker service
January 1936	Silks and Cotton Pieces Goods Department	Remodeled
January 1936	Linen Department	Enlarged more display and shelf space added
February 1936	The Men's Store	Made into a separate store for the "club like" atmosphere
February 1936	Street Floor Balcony	The sporting goods and luggage departments were here for quick access.
February 1936	Optical Department	Given a private entrance.
May 1936	Diamond Salon	Rebuilt
June 1936	Fur Shop	Enlarged and beautified
June 1936	Air Conditioning	Added to the entire store

⁶ *Light*, March 1933 – June 1936; *Express*, March 1933 – June 1936.

Becoming a completely air-conditioned store in June 1936 marked not only a major milestone for Joske's, but it was important for the city of San Antonio as well. Getting air conditioning to Joske's was a joint effort of the city and the department store. In the midst of the Great Depression in 1936, San Antonio Public Service Company was on a mission to introduce air conditioning to major businesses in San Antonio, which is notorious for its sultry weather. Joske's became the first major business to install air conditioning in San Antonio, despite the tough economic times the rest of the country was experiencing..

Fitting Joske's with air conditioning proved to be no easy task, given the building's poor ventilation system. A complete air conditioning plant had to be built and ducts added throughout the building. Carrier Air Conditioning Service, the first air conditioning company, was chosen by Joske's to oversee the installation of air conditioning in the store.⁷

In June 1936 the switch to air conditioning at Joske's was turned on in a community event. Aside from the general public, Joske's sent special invitations to leaders of various civic organizations, local and state government leaders, and businesses in San Antonio. On the day of the elaborate ceremony, civic, political, and business leaders were brought together for the celebration.

Air conditioning in Joske's was important not only for the store's image but also for the services that the store could provide. According to Mr. Calvert, "air conditioning promotes efficiency and this means better service to customers." In terms of department

⁷ *San Antonio Evening News*, 16 June 1936; E. E. Ashley, JR., "Mechanical Equipment of the Department Store," *The Architectural Forum* 50 (June 1929): 921 – 934; William S. Gaylor, "Heating and Ventilating The Department Store," *The Architectural Forum* 50 (June 1929): 949 – 954.

stores with air conditioning, Calvert stated that Joske's "had the distinction of having the largest store in the Southwest with complete air conditioning." Most of the stores in Texas and the Southwest had air conditioned shopping floors or select air conditioned departments, but at Joske's even the fitting and stock rooms were air conditioned.⁸

After the four-year span of store and department improvements and additions and the introduction of new techniques, Mr. Calvert was finally seeing results; sales were up. The changes from 1932 through 1936 left the store physically bursting at the seams. At the end of 1936, Calvert began looking for expansion options.

The most sensible plan to him was the purchase of the Plaza Theater, the only building left on the Alamo Street side of the block that had not already been purchased by Joske Brothers. In October 1937 Joske's purchased the theater. Now, Joske's owned the entire block facing Alamo Street and half of the block facing Blum Street. Calvert saw the purchase as a positive move not only for the store but also for the people it served; Joske's could now expand and provide more departments and services. When the purchase was announced, Calvert stated, "We are already the largest store in Texas and with this newly purchased property added, our position becomes more dominant among the largest stores of the United States."⁹

At the end of 1937 Mr. Calvert faced many decisions, the biggest of which was in what direction he should lead the store. He had two options, he could either expand the store following the general trends of national chain stores or he could expand the store following trends for large family owned stores. The decision was his alone, but he had to keep in mind the market and customer base.

⁸ *Evening News*, 16 June 1936.

⁹ *Express*, 1 October 1937.

Coinciding with the city's beautification project, in 1939 Calvert launched another expansion of the store. The project incorporated 100,000 square feet into the store and allowed Joske's to occupy the entire Alamo-Blum-Commerce Street block. Joske's interior and exterior gained defining architectural elements. The most notable elements included a new art deco store front and a display window modeling the design of Mission San Jose's Rose Window. The addition of escalators benefited both employees and customers.¹⁰



Illustrations: 3.1 and 3.2

3.1 LEFT: Rose Window at Joske's Department. Photo: Amy Canon Alves. ; 3.2 RIGHT: The Rose Window at Mission San Jose. This window was used as an inspiration for design at Joske's. PHOTO: *San Antonio Express-News*.

¹⁰ Burkhalter, "The Enjoyable Joske Story," 6.

Physical expansion of Joske's slowed in 1940 as international tensions rose, but the store made progress during the war. Though the 1939 expansion project was the shortest in company history, it provided the store with many lasting trademarks. During the early 1940s Calvert and other store officials reformulated store policies and business practices. Many department stores across the nation adopted the idea of exclusiveness, the carrying of specific lines or brands of merchandise. Often, exclusiveness suggested a department store target a specific social class. Joske's followed the opposite idea, stressing inclusiveness, and "began to take on the traits of its customers by stressing Texana – its bigness, its cowboy hats, boots, and spurs. It reached out to embrace an even larger area of potential customers from 'the Panhandle to the Rio Grande, from the Big Bend to the Gulf of Mexico.'"¹¹

With the ideas of future store expansion, and the policy of inclusiveness and the Texana marketing plan in place, Joske's pressed on-ward. In the mid-1940s, Joske's introduced an array of new departments and services. To fulfill the leisure need of customers, Joske's introduced a luggage and sportsman's shop. In addition, Joske's opened several departments to service the rural communities. The most distinctive of these departments, the corral shop, made custom saddles. The frontier shop gained notable attention for a large selection of western wear attire. In addition to opening new departments, Joske's added new items to already existing departments. The most popular of these items were the home freezers added to the home electronics department.¹² Joske's policies of inclusiveness caused the store to become overcrowded. By 1946,

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 6-7.

Joske's had opened several appliance stores in neighborhoods across San Antonio and added 100,000 square feet of warehouse space.¹³

An expanding consumer base during and immediately after the Second World War led Joske's to invest heavily in advertising. Joske's greatly relied on advertising to get sale and product information out to its customers, despite the fact that competition for advertising space had made print ads expensive. Therefore, Calvert began to look for other advertising media. Radio became Calvert's best alternative. Using Joske's and South Texas as a test area, Calvert teamed up with executives from Allied, the parent company, and with members of various retail organizations and local and national broadcast executives to conduct a study on the effectiveness of radio advertising for department stores. Beginning in 1944, an intense Joske's advertising program took to the airwaves.

Between 1944 and 1945 Joske's broadcasted various department specific programs. For example, "Teen Top Tunes" was aired on Saturdays at 10:00 am. Aimed at "teen-agers in and near San Antonio," the objectives of "Teen Top Tunes" were:

To sell teen-age merchandise by advertising items this age group is most interested in. To increase traffic for the teen-age departments regularly featured. To build prestige for "Joske's 'Teena [sic] Texas Shop' and Boy's Department, and strengthen Joske's position with teenage-age designers and magazines by correlating merchandise from the 'Teen Texas Shop' with the famous fashions names and magazines that appeal to girls of this age. To create goodwill by associating Joske's with teenage activities, hobbies and interests.¹⁴

Joske's sponsored other programs similar to "Teen Top Tunes" on various topics corresponding to departments throughout the store. Overall, advertising on radio was

¹³ Ibid., 7.

¹⁴ Joske's of Texas, *Radio for Retailers: A report of the radio advertising study conducted in San Antonio by Joske's of Texas in Cooperation with the National Association of Broadcasters* (San Antonio, 1946), 26.

very successful for the department store. A report by Ernst & Ernst showed the program contributed to increased profits in various departments.¹⁵ The advertising study pioneered by Joske's, along with expansion planning, prepared the store for the coming decade.

In the early 1950s Joske's found itself to be the most popular department store in South Texas. Customer ratings were high along with sales and profits. In 1953 the department store found itself ready to expand again. This time, however, with the growth of other businesses in Joske's immediate area, there was little room for expansion. To occupy the block between Commerce and Blum Streets, St. Joseph's Church would have to relocate. Joske's had already built around the church and surrounded it, yet St. Joseph's made clear that its intention was to stay. Therefore, Joske's determined the best way to expand was to build upwards. Additional land was purchased adjacent to the store and church. By the end of 1953, Joske's totaled 551,000 square feet and was the largest department store west of the Mississippi River. Joske's began to incorporate the slogan "the biggest store in the biggest state" into their advertising program. The slogan reminded people that Joske's had the largest selection of merchandise in the largest state.¹⁶

After the 1953 expansion, Joske's officials realized that downtown resources for expansion had been exhausted and future expansions would have to occur outside of downtown. In May 1956 store president J.H. Calvert announced plans to open branch stores in growing suburban areas.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid., chapters 2, 3.

¹⁶ Burkhalter, "The Enjoyable Joske Story," 7.

¹⁷ *Express-News*, 10 May 1956.

The first of the three stores opened in 1957 at the Las Palmas Shopping Center. Located in the southwest side of San Antonio, the new store was less formal than the downtown location. The area in which the store was opened was near Kelly, Brooks, and Lackland Air Force bases and also located near several prominent Hispanic neighborhoods. The store's location allowed Joske's to focus on serving the needs of a specific social group. Unlike the downtown location, which carried everything, the Las Palmas branch mainly focused on clothing and home items.

While the 1960s was a time for continuing expansion, neither Joske's nor San Antonio was immune to events of the Civil Rights movement. San Antonio took a progressive approach to the Civil Rights movement; the city was one of the first to integrate lunch counters in 1960 and in 1965 passed an ordinance to integrate all public places. Joske's, like most department stores at the time, limited the accessibility of facilities for African American customers. Joske's had special entrances for African American customers. In the store's dining facilities African Americans received limited service. It is unclear if African Americans had separate check-out areas or if they were restricted from certain departments.¹⁸

In 1960, when the city requested that lunch counters be integrated, Joske's requested a "thirty-day grace period to consult with its parent company about racial policy. After the period elapsed, the store announced that its basement café, which it considered analogous to a lunch counter, would be integrated but that its two more exclusive restaurants would remain closed to blacks."¹⁹ J.H. Morse, executive vice

¹⁸ Robert A. Goldberg, "Racial Change on the Southern Periphery: The Case of San Antonio, Texas, 1960-1965," *Journal of Southern History* 49 (August 1983): 358.

¹⁹ Ibid.

president, asked for the patience of the African American community. He said that the store would desegregate when a “change in community custom and practice in all public restaurants throughout the city” made the change possible. The NAACP did not accept Morse’s offer and began sit-ins. On the first day of the protest, African Americans were refused service and the restaurant closed. In the following days and weeks Joske’s placed guards at its entrances and would not allow African Americans in the store. After several weeks of protest, a slapping incident occurred between a black protester and a white customer. The slapping incident resulted in store management closing all eating facilities. Joske’s finally agreed to integrate its eating facilities in mid-summer 1960.²⁰

Expansion into the northern part of San Antonio did not occur until 1963, when Joske’s parent company, Allied, purchased rival department store Wolf and Marx. Wolf and Marx had a prime location in North Star Mall, a newly developed upscale shopping center. The consolidation of Wolf and Marx with Joske’s did not go smoothly. Joske’s and Wolf and Marx did not become fully consolidated until 1968. To solidify their consolidation, Joske’s broke ground on a new four floor-level, 215,000 square-foot store. Joske’s at North Star Mall was operational by the 1968 Christmas shopping season.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s Texas experienced an economic boom that contributed to a sharp rise in population. Seeing an opportunity to cash in on the boom, in 1971, Joske’s expanded beyond San Antonio, opening a store in Austin and three stores in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex.²¹

²⁰ Goldberg, 356-360; *Express*, 24, 25, 29-30 April 1960 and 12 and 4 May 1960 ; *San Antonio News*, 4 May 1960.

²¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Characteristics of the Population, Numbers of Inhabitants, Texas, 1980*. Prepared by U.S. Department of Commerce (March 1982).

Table 3.2 Population Growth 1970-1980

	1970	1980	Change
<i>State of Texas</i>	11,196,730	14,229,191	3,032,461
<i>City of San Antonio</i>	654,153	785,880	131,737

Source. U.S. Census Bureau, *Characteristics of the Population, Number of Inhabitants, Texas 1980.*

Joske's was not without competition, however. Northern up-scale department stores such as Bloomingdales, R. H. Macy's and Company, and Saks Fifth Avenue, and special stores such as Tiffany's, opened stores in Texas. Other department stores such as Dillard's and Mervyn's also opened new stores. Also, during this time, discount stores such as Wal-Mart and K-Mart made plans to open stores. Retail competition became fierce.²²

All Joske's stores had to find ways to stay competitive with the up-scale stores. Because most of the up-scale stores were in the Dallas and Houston area, Joske's did not have to worry about fierce local sales competition in San Antonio, but it did have to be concerned about keeping its statewide customer base. Joske's customers came from all around the state and this was especially true with the Alamo Plaza store. To keep people coming to the Alamo Plaza location, Joske's began hosting various special events, such as special breakfasts and fashion events. Joske's at Alamo Plaza also expanded the up-scale services provided at that store. In the winter of 1972, Joske's "opened a new custom tailor shop in its Alamo Plaza store that utilizes modern technological advances

²² *Dallas Morning News*, 19 December 1986.

like computers and laser beams to help custom design suits which are finished with the traditional hand crafting."²³

While Joske's was not able to compete with stores like Bloomingdales on a fashion level, it was able to maintain a strong customer base in San Antonio and South Texas. To keep up with the growing population of South Texas, Joske's continued to expand. In 1974, management announced plans for a fourth store in San Antonio at Windsor Park Mall. The Windsor Park Mall location put Joske's at a prime location on Interstate 35. When the Windsor Park Mall store opened, it showcased the latest in department store décor. With the addition of this new location, Joske's was operating over a million square feet of retail space in San Antonio.

By the end of the 1970s, Joske's future looked bright. Net earnings were nineteen percent higher than in the previous year and Joske's became the place where San Antonio shopped. In 1980, corporate officials announced the addition of two more stores – one in San Antonio at the newly constructed Ingram Park Mall and the other in Corpus Christ.

Scheduled to open in the summer of 1981, the Joske's at Ingram Park Mall was to face a new competitor.. Foley's, a department store chain from Houston, was planning to open its first store in San Antonio at Ingram Park Mall. Joske's and Foley's were very similar in sales methods and the merchandise they carried. To prepare to compete with Foley's, Joske's unveiled a new department store concept with the Ingram Park Mall store. The Joske's at Ingram was designed using the "core concept" that grouped related departments together for the convenience of the customer.

²³ *Express-News*, 16 Feb 1972.

When Joske's at Ingram opened in July 1981, there was much celebration. The official store opening included a champagne reception and 175 artifacts from the San Antonio Museum of Art on display around the store. "Robert Mettler, senior vice president for sales promotion and marketing, pointed out the elegant atmosphere of the store reflects the updated merchandise and the attitude of the modern customer."²⁴ "He also noted some of the more avant-garde displays...Just plain fun. They're such attention-getters that make the store seem more exciting."²⁵

Through the early 1980s Joske's experienced continued success. In 1985, internal changes began to occur within Allied corporation. Allied began to be seen as vulnerable. In 1987, Campeau took over Allied via a hostile takeover.

Dillard's, a family owned department store based in Little Rock, Arkansas, was one of Joske's biggest competitors during the mid to late 1980's. Most Joske's locations were in direct competition with Dillard's, with the one major exception being Houston, Texas. On 1 June 1987, Dillard's purchased 27 Joske's stores and 3 Cain-Sloan stores for \$255 million. The reputation of Joske's would help put Dillard's in a new market, Houston, Texas and help to expand Dillard's dominance to the Southeast market.²⁶

The takeover of Joske's by Dillard's meant the end of the Joske's name for all store locations. As in all previous acquisitions by Dillard's, all Joske's stores were renamed. Charles Franzke, chair of the Dillard's San Antonio division, explained the

²⁴ *Express-News*, 16 July 1981.

²⁵ *Express-News*, 16 July 1981.

²⁶ Leon Joseph Rosenberg, *Dillard's: The First Fifty Years* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), 98-103.

decision to rename the stores, “The guy who founded the company wants his name on the stores. He’s proud of them and his name. Our biggest asset is the Dillard family.”²⁷

²⁷ *Express-News*, 17 May 1987.

CONCLUSION

Today, mention of the “Joske’s” in San Antonio, brings fond memories of mother-daughter shopping trips in downtown San Antonio and visits to the store’s Christmas display. People in San Antonio viewed Joske’s as a landmark. Shopping at Joske’s was an experience like no other. Not only did Joske’s carry unique merchandise, it also had a full service restaurant, café, coffee bar, and a gourmet food section. When Dillard’s took control of Joske’s in 1987, people in San Antonio expressed remorse. An outcry resulted at the removal of the letters spelling out the Joske’s name from the former downtown store location.

Beginning from the dream of a German Jewish immigrant, Julius Joske, Joske’s grew from a small adobe shop to a lavish department store located on prime San Antonio real estate. Operating as a family owned store for over fifty-five years, the Joske family laid the groundwork that corporate leaders would build upon.

Joske’s not only brought new trends in fashions and home furnishing to the city but kept in touch with the needs and culture of the city. An innovative approach to marketing put the store on the map. Outstanding customer service and exceptional merchandise selection geared towards all members of the community helped Joske’s secure a large client base. The policy of inclusiveness helped to differentiate Joske’s

from other department stores in the area, as its wide selection of merchandise catered to all social classes in the city.

Joske's took pride in having many firsts among department stores in the Southwestern part of the United States. It was the first store to be fully air conditioned, the first to have escalators and elevators, the first to install pneumatic tubes, and cash registers. It was also the first store to have a French Room for dining and a fountain. In addition, it was the first department store in the area to have its own delivery system. Locally, Joske's was the first major department store in downtown San Antonio.

The Texas persona of bigness also applied to Joske's in many ways. From the 1940s until 1959 when Alaska became the largest state, Joske's held the title of the biggest store in the biggest state. The original downtown location surrounded St. Joseph's Catholic Church and had a twenty-two acre parking lot. At Christmas, a giant inflatable Santa sat on top of the roof. Before downtown grew in size, the store was known for having the largest illuminated signs in San Antonio and probably in South Texas. Joske's was known for having the largest selection of merchandise in the area. For a while Joske's literally had the largest piece of merchandise--a fully assembled airplane.

As a local business, Joske's helped San Antonio's economic growth by providing employment opportunities and generating revenue. While studying the business practices of Joske's in the 1940s, Holland McCombs noted, "In most cities, the big things are plants of some industries. In San Antonio it's Joske's and the Army."¹

¹ Memo to Miss Isabel Benney for W.B. Harris From Holland McCombs, 5 November 1949, page 41, Holland McCombs Papers, file 19, University of Tennessee at Martin.

McCombs was right, Joske's impact as a business in San Antonio and South Texas was far reaching. From its full page ads, which brought substantial revenue to the local newspaper and with the money invested in the local radio air time, Joske's reach and impact was great. Profits made at Joske's were invested within the community. When Trinity University needed money to expand its campus, Joske's President Jim Calvert donated \$100,000.²

Much like the story of a typical department store, Joske's grew from humble beginnings. However, unlike the vast majority of such stores, Joske's went on to serve the people of San Antonio and the surrounding area for 114 years. During this period, Joske's built a reputation for having the merchandise people wanted, at a good price and accompanied with good service. The experiences and memories of the customers keep the legacy of the Joske's alive. The 1987 buyout of Joske's by Dillard's truly represents the end of an era in the retailing history of San Antonio.

² Ibid., page 40.

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