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It was a one-stop shopping facility for area residents looking to buy clothes for the teenagers in their family or quality work clothes for themselves. It was also a place one would not have missed when shopping around for household furnishing.

Described at one time as an 'anchor' store at its downtown location since it began operation in 1931, a local branch of a company called Lipson's Stores Ltd. used to cater to the fashion and household furnishing needs of local shoppers for many decades before closing in January, 1992.

Lipson's Stores Ltd. originally came to Belleville as general outfitters and continued to expand its facilities and line of products for many decades. The store was a source of attractive lines of household furnishings, clothes for men, women and children. In April, 1964, an additional 11,000 sq. ft. of store space was added to the original 4,000 sq. ft. A second floor complete with woodpanelling, tiled ceiling and modern tiled floor enhanced by fluorescent lighting system was added as retail space.

Fran Schrieder of Belleville was about 20 years old when she was first hired to work as a full-time bookkeeper at Lipson's downtown location in the early '50s. At the time, she says, the store did not have the basement where the company would later house the furniture department in later years.

Initially, her weekly earning was \$32.50, which, she adds, was quite adequate for a young girl still living in her family home.

"I was actually able to go on a trip with the money that I earned there. At the time I

was living with my parents and my mom did not charge me much for rent. I made up for it by helping around the house, of course. So I guess what I earned there was not too bad," she says with a chuckle.

Schrieder has only pleasant memories of the Lipsons, owners of the once large chain of departmental stores.

"They were a close-knit family and Mr. Lipson was both a good man and a fine boss," says Schrieder.

Although it has been more than 50 years

since she had worked there, Schrieder still remembers a burglary that took place at the store.

"One morning, I came to work and saw policemen at the store. There had been a break-in the night before. Mr. (John) Grindrod, the manager, was looking very excited and as soon as he saw me he asked me where I'd put the money from the sales of the day before. I hadn't put it in the iron box, a safe deposit box, like I was supposed to. Before I left work the other day, I had

put it in a box under a mirror where children get on to try clothes on near the stairs. I went and looked there and there it was, just like I had left it — all of the \$1,000 in total," she laughs. As far as she knows, nothing else was taken from the store. The offenders were supposed to have only been interested in stealing the money.

Mr. Grindrod was, of course, was torn between relief and anger because Schrieder did not follow the store policy of storing the money in the safe deposit box.

"He was in such a state that only God knows what he said after he found out about the money. I think he thanked me later. There was no monetary reward or anything. I didn't expect anything either. It was just good luck that I had kept the money in that footstool that night."

The store management did not take chances after that incident and began maintaining regular night deposits.

Aside from the Belleville store, Lipson's Stores Ltd. used to have branches in Kingston, Brockville, Napanee, Trenton and Picton where it maintained its head office throughout the decades. The company still has its retail store located at the main street in Picton today. At the time the Belleville store closed in 1992, the Trenton store, which opened in 1925, was also shut down. Lack of business in the downtown areas of both communities was cited as the reason for the closure.

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