

ALL IN THE BROTMAN FAMILY BUSINESSES

Family is the nourishing force behind Jewish-owned businesses. Many successful companies today inherited their soul from generations past. Times may have been tough for early merchants, but their optimism and ingenuity carried them through. Their heritage of ***Shalom!*** lives on.



Two images: Private collection, courtesy of WSJHS

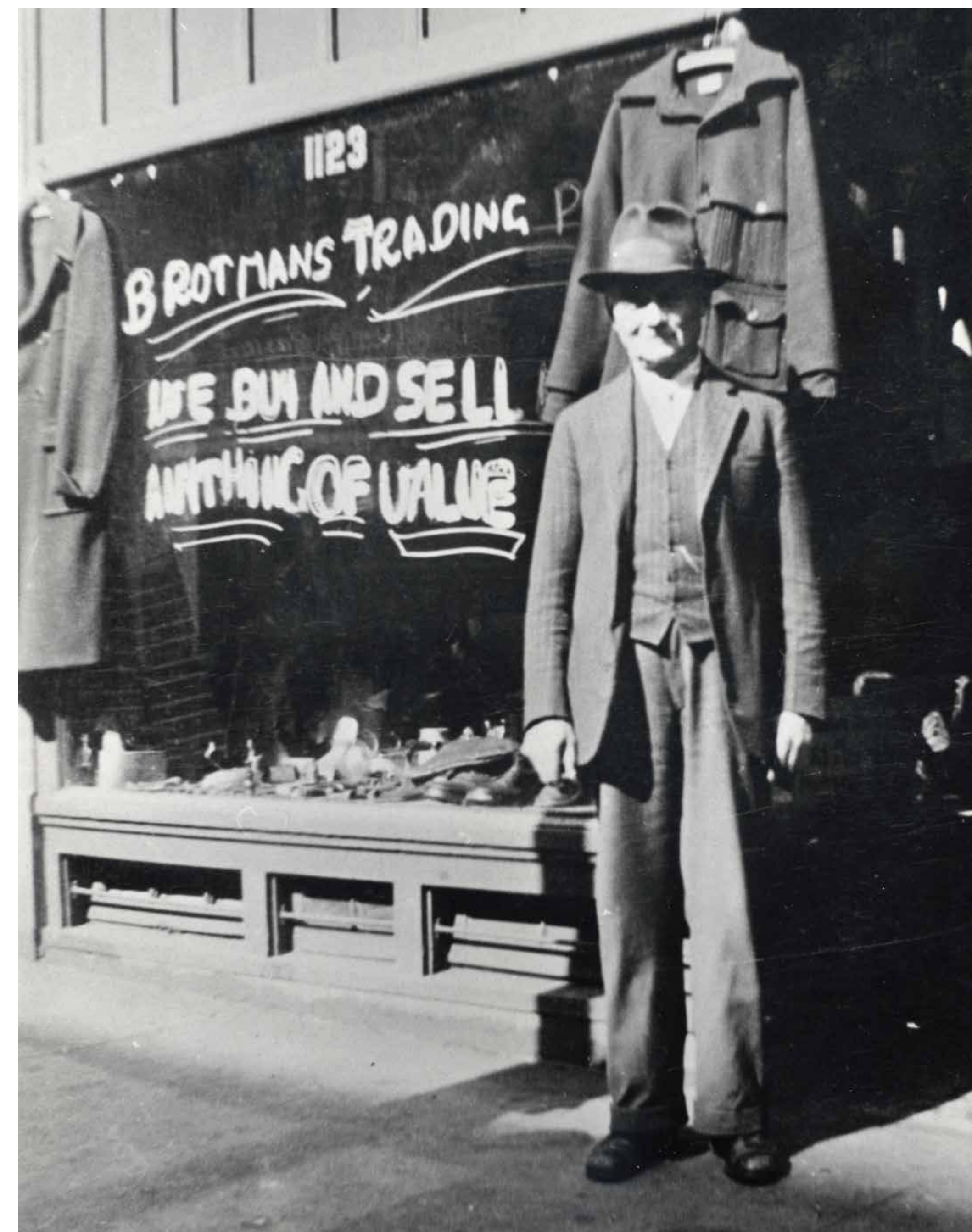
THE 1ST GENERATION

Edel Brotman emigrated from the former Central-Eastern European kingdom of Galitzia in the late 1800s, arriving in Canada as a Polish speaker. He operated a wine and liquor wholesale business in Winnipeg called **E. Brotman and Son**.

THE 2ND GENERATION

He and wife Leah had 10 children. Samuel, the second eldest, ventured out in 1906 to open a general store in the tiny Saskatchewan village of Wapella, but later opened a larger store in the bigger city of Regina so that his children could get a better education. Around the same time, Samuel's brothers Phil and Moe ran a liquor business in Regina, following in the footsteps of father Edel.

In 1923, Samuel and his wife Fanny left Canada for Tacoma, bringing six of their seven children with them. Samuel opened **Brotmans Trading Post** on Commerce Street downtown under the cheerful slogan: "We buy and sell anything of value."

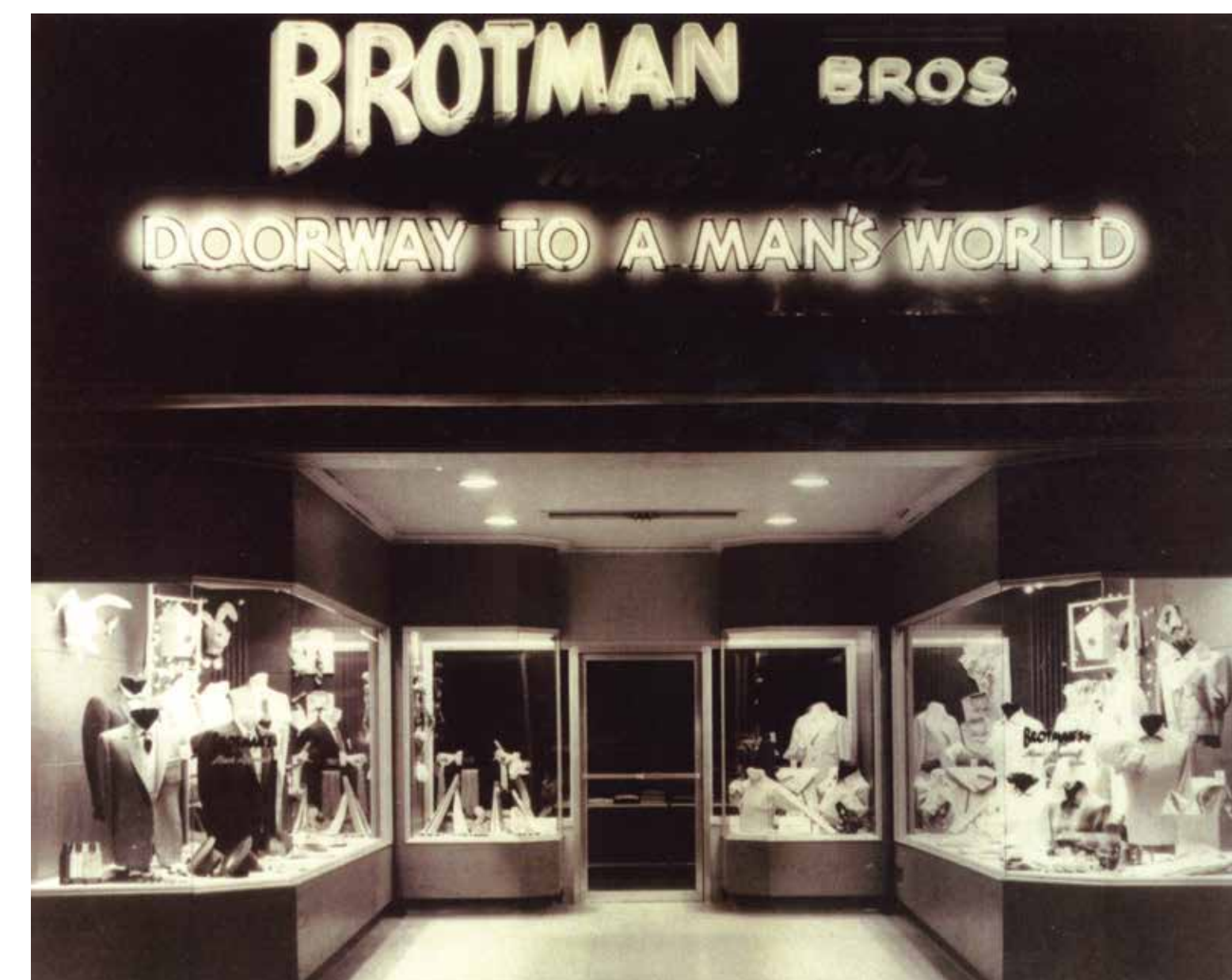


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THE 3RD GENERATION

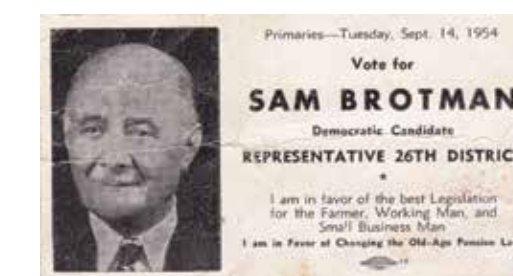
Advancing both in age and irascibility, Samuel took a trip with Fanny to New York in 1948 to visit their daughter Rose. While gone, their sons Hal, Morley and Bernie shut down Brotmans Trading Post, much to their father's surprise – and chagrin.

Hal, Morley and Bernie already had opened their own business, **Brotman Toggery**, a traditional men's clothing store they later rebranded as **Brotman Brothers**. The business expanded to two locations, both in downtown Tacoma.

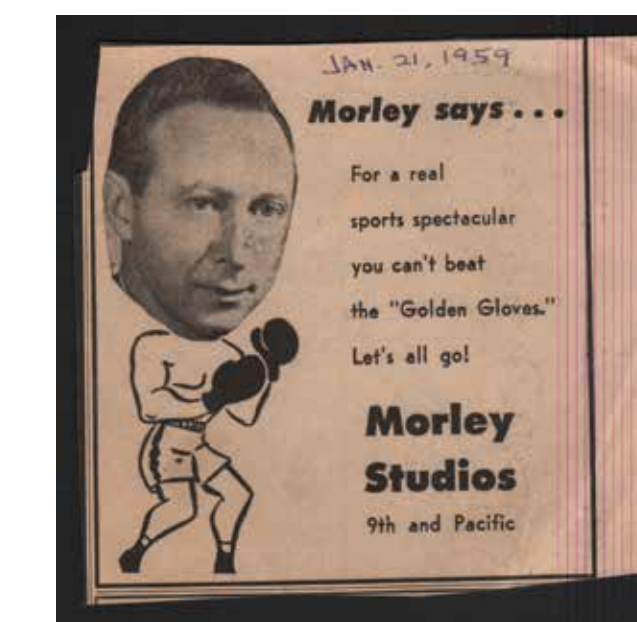


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Samuel vowed never to forgive his sons for their chicanery but he relented eventually, making bank deliveries for their stores. He also kept busy with a campaign for the State House of Representatives in 1954. He lost the election.



Private collection, courtesy of WSJHS



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Morley began pursuing his real passion – photography. His big break came during World War II, when he entered into a deal with the general at Fort Lewis to take photos for free of the GIs stationed there. In exchange, the general let Morley send copies of the photos to the soldiers' families, along with a form to order a nice print. Many bought the prints, and Morley made money. Morley eventually opened his own photography business in Tacoma, **Morley Studios**, and became the official photographer for the Seattle World's Fair in 1962.



Private collection, courtesy of WSJHS

Bernie was noticing that men had begun dressing more casually and preferred building their wardrobes more affordably. He broke away from brother Hal and opened **Bernie's Men's Wear** in downtown Tacoma to fill that market niche. He wanted to call the store Bernie's Bargain Basement, but his wife Pearl wisely vetoed that idea. A second Bernie's location near the University of Washington recorded skyrocketing sales, and the chain took off. Bernie's grew to 18 stores and set fashion trends for an entire generation of young men in the Pacific Northwest – attiring them in everything from trendy bell-bottom jeans to silky Qiana shirts.

THE 4TH GENERATION

Bernie and Pearl's two sons Jeffrey and Michel (pronounced "Michael") learned the art of discount retail through their father at Bernie's. But like the Brotman men before them, they had a hankering to run their own stores. With their father's help, they launched **Bottoms**, which catered to a new generation of women able to wear pantsuits, slacks and even jeans to work. Bernie's and Bottoms sometimes shared the same storefront.

In 1980, the brothers truly broke out on their own, opening **Jeffrey Michael** in downtown Seattle and several local malls. Jeffrey Michael was a more sophisticated version of Bernie's, reflecting the maturing fashion tastes of the two Brotman brothers who ran it.

Each brother eventually went his own way. In 1989, Michel opened **Simply Seattle** – a gift shop at First and Pine that now has a second location at Pier 56. Michel also opened **Chocolate Box** in 2007, a confectionary shop next-door to the original Simply Seattle store.

And what became of **Jeff Brotman**? He and a business partner met in 1982 to draw up a plan for a new wholesale club business, borrowing the same discount ethic that served his father so well at Bernie's. In 1983, the partners opened their first store in Seattle – and the business has grown by leaps and bounds.

You know it as **Costco**.