

WABASH VALLEY

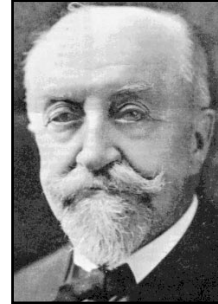
P R O F I L E S

A series of tributes to hometown people and events that have shaped our history.

Adolph Herz

Innovative, charitable and civic-minded, Adolph Herz ranks very high in the history of Terre Haute's most popular retail merchants.

For nearly 50 years, the native of Schwabish Hall, Wurtemberg, Germany, owned and managed a downtown store. Born August 7, 1843, he worked briefly in New York City and Huntington, Ind., in 1866 before moving to Terre Haute the following year. For a while he worked for tailor Joseph Erlanger. In 1869, he opened Herz Bazaar on South Fourth Street north of Ohio Street, selling ladies skirt hoops and other furnishings. The business soon outgrew the location. For nearly 20 years, he was located in the Deming Block at the northeast corner of Sixth and Wabash.



In 1906-07 William Riley McKeen erected an attractive five-story enameled brick building at 646-652 Wabash Ave. (next to McKeen Block). Built to Herz's specifications, the structure featured Green River Stone trim. Its mezzanine, wide aisles, mahogany countertops and fixtures, three large elevators, a pneumatic tube cash system, attentive floorwalkers and quality merchandise were the talk of the town. Reputedly, "A. Herz" — as the business was called — maintained the largest stock of ladies' furnishings, notions, rugs, curtains and leather goods in Indiana and boasted 250 employees. There were 600 feet of glass cases on the first and second floors alone. Elegant Herz Tea Room lured shoppers and businessmen for lunch.

Though constantly seeking new ways to improve and promote the store and keep his employees happy, Adolph did not restrict his activities to the business. Whenever a local charitable or civic project materialized, he responded. For many years he was a leader in the Commercial Club, predecessor to the Chamber of Commerce, and served three terms as its president. He was also a director at McKeen National Bank (a predecessor of Terre Haute First National Bank), long-time trustee at the Rose Orphan Home and a pioneer in the Terre Haute Retail Merchants Association.

Herz married Pauline Einstein of New York in 1872 and the couple raised four children: Bertha, Milton, Rose and Henrietta Pauline. They resided for many years at 309 S. Sixth St. and owned a summer cottage at Lake Maxinkuckee near Culver, Ind. When Adolph died Dec. 17, 1917, at age 74, one local headline read, "City Loses Man Loved By People." Though the funeral was private, downtown stores were closed in his memory. Pauline died Sept. 3, 1928, at age 80.

Son Milt — who married Mae Herman of Cincinnati — succeeded his father as manager of A. Herz Department Store and it continued to prosper. Bertha married Adolph Joseph, son of Terre Haute merchant Max Joseph; Rose wed Max Hammell; and Henrietta married Harry W. Cohen, founder of General Investment & Realty Co. After Milt died Jan. 24, 1932, at age 55, the family sold its interest in A. Herz, Inc. to outside investors. In 1946, it became a part of Alden's Department Store chain and was renamed "Alden's-Herz," under Alexander Stern's management. Eventually, "Herz" was dropped from the store name. The building was razed in about 1971.

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