Who Remembers…The Ann & Hope Outlet?

Ann & Hope Outlets started in 1953 and never closed completely (Squirm114)

Here is another installment in our *Who Remembers?* series. You can browse previous articles by using the search bar on the right. These articles are strolls down memory lane. In some cases the buildings may still exist, but new businesses have replaced them. In other instances, the buildings or even the properties have been razed. Either way, it can't stop us from taking the Memory Lane stroll!

As always we would rather this be a discussion. No one knows this area better than those who grew up here! Please, leave constructive criticism, feedback, and corrections. We'd love to hear your anecdotes. Please share!

As a kid, I was dragged to Ann & Hope at least twice a week and definitely every weekend. Moms across the South Coast made the Ann & Hope Outlet a prime destination. Outside of Arlan's it was the number one place to get anything and everything in one place. Heck, Sam Walton who founded Wal-Mart (visited in 1961) and Harry Cunningham who founded KMart, got their ideas from visiting Ann & Hope.

There were at least eight locations in Massachusetts – Westborough, Danvers, Weymouth, Millis, Randolph, Seekonk, Raynham, etc. – but there was only one that mattered: the Dartmouth location.

So where did Ann & Hope come from? What happened to it? Where did they go?

Ann & Hope was founded by Ukrainian Martin “Marty” Chase. In 1946, Mr. Chase bought a Mill complex in Cumberland, Rhode Island that was built in 1886. This mill was called the Ann & Hope Mill in tribute to Ann Brown and Hope Ives, wives of successful, iconic 18th century Portsmouth merchants John Brown and Thomas Ives who made a fortune in Far East Trade. Apparently these fellows *really* loved their wives, because they had two of their vessels, including a flagship dubbed the *Ann & Hope*.



Let’s bring back
these prices!

This story is really a large one and deserves its own article, so we won’t go into too much detail. Suffice it to say, that the names Ann & Hope go back to the mid 18th century Rhode Island. Martin Chase started his business in a mill named after these merchant’s wives and kept the name when he opened his flagship store in 1953 and maintained the name as it expanded.

What separated Ann & Hope from other department stores is that you didn’t need to tell a clerk or serviceman what you needed and they would pick your order. You could freely roam the store with a shopping cart – supposedly the first department store to use them. In addition, there was what was called a

sub-tenant, which utilized the concept of a Garden Center, for example. Chase was the first to use a check-out area with multiple counters, that seem so “normal” today.

By 1969, business boomed and Ann & Hope revenue was calculated at $40 million dollars annually. In the 80s, Ann & Hope came to Dartmouth as simply a department store on the site where Lowe’s is now. However, it quickly became so popular that it expanded and took over the adjacent land and became the Ann & Hope Plaza – which some of you dinosaurs may recall held Child World (Christmas Tree Shop), Heartland Supermarket (Kohl’s), and a Newport Creamery (USPS).

By 1990, competition from other department stores and local businesses hurt Ann & Hope and the company began to decline. Stores began to close rapidly, and by Spring, 2001 only two – the Warwick and Cumberland locations – remained, but were downsized.

Ann & Hope may have closed, but really didn’t go anywhere. The company still owns Ann & Hope Plaza and operates the Curtain & Bath, as well as the Garden Outlet stores there. And guess what? Ann & Hope stayed alive with its stores in Rhode Island and many Outlet Stores and began to make a profit again. Expansion began once again and as of 2011 there were 7 Ann & Hope Outlets in Massachusetts, and a few in Rhode Island and Connecticut and revenue approaches $24 million dollars.

Would you like Ann & Hope to return to the area? The closed Shaw’s in Fairhaven? What were your memories of Ann & Hope?