

Efird's Department Stores ^[1]

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by Wiley J. Williams, 2006



Efird's Department Store in Charlotte, N.C., circa 1949. Image from the North Carolina Digital Collection.

^[2]In 1902 Hugh Martin Efird, with the cooperation of Charles A. Williams of the Williams & Shelton Company, opened a small dry goods store on East Trade Street in [Charlotte](#) ^[3], operating as the Beehive but formally known as Charlotte Mercantile Company. Soon Efird's brother [Joseph Bivins Efird](#) ^[4] joined the firm, as did brothers Jasper W., John Ray, Paul, and Edmund Lilly. The name Beehive was dropped in 1907 and the firm became Efird's Department Store.

On 7 Sept. 1923 Efird's opened a second Charlotte store on Tryon Street, the Carolinas' most prestigious retail location. The store-across the street from [Ivey's](#) ^[5], Charlotte's most fashionable store-featured the Southeast's first escalator, beating even Macy's in New York City. Efird's, with Joseph Efird as president, competed aggressively with [Belk](#) ^[6] department stores for middle-income shoppers who also patronized national stores such as JC Penney, Sears, and W. T. Grant. Under Joseph Efird's tutelage, the firm was a pioneer in central office purchasing, one-price cash sales, and insurance and pension benefits for employees. The Efird's chain, which in 1956 was purchased by Belk, at its peak included more than 50 stores in the Carolinas as well as one in Danville, Va. The last Efird's store closed in Smithfield in 1979.

References:

LeGette Blythe and Charles R. Brockmann, *Hornets' Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* (1961).

Howard E. Covington Jr., *Belk: A Century of Retail Leadership* (1988).

Additional Resources:

"Efird's Department Stores." *The E.S.C. Quarterly* 7. No. 3-4. Summer-Fall 1949. p.92-94. <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/e.s.c.-quarterly-1949-summer-fall-v.7-no.3-4/4239104> ^[7] (accessed September 25, 2012).

Swain, Steve. "Efird's." *Meckburbia* (blog). January 13, 2010. <http://meckburbia.blogspot.com/2010/01/efirds.html> ^[8]

"Efird's Department Store Incorporates." *Wilmington Star*. December 4, 1921. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/gtts/content/2646/> ^[9]

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"Entirely modern and modernistic in many of its appointments is this large Efird Department Store in Charlotte." Photograph. *The E.S.C. Quarterly* 7. No. 3-4. Summer-Fall 1949. p.93. <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/e.s.c.-quarterly-1949-summer-fall-v.7-no.3-4/4239104> ^[7] (accessed September 25, 2012).

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[Businesses](#) ^[11]

Authors:

[Williams, Wiley J.](#) ^[12]

Origin - location:

Charlotte ^[13]

From:

Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.^[14]

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