

**PROVIDENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY**  
**Special Collections**  
**041-03**  
**The Outlet Store Collection**  
1900, 1962, before 1986

**OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION**

Number: 041-03

Title: The Outlet Store Collection

Creator: Providence Public Library

Dates: 1900 March, 1962 May, before 1986

Quantity: 1 folder (29 photographs, two oversized documents)

**ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

Acquisition: Unknown

Accruals: No accruals are expected.

Custodial history: Unknown.

Processed by: The collection was process in June 2016 by Stacie M. Parillo.

Conservation: None.

Language: Materials are in English.

**RIGHTS AND ACCESS**

Access: This collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Providence Public Library, Special Collections department.

Preferred Citation: Researchers are requested to use the following citation format: *[item number]*,  
*VM019, The Outlet Company Collection, Rhode Island Collection, Providence Public Library.*

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**INFORMATION FOR RESEARCHERS**

Separated material None.

Published description Not applicable.

Location of originals	Not applicable.
Location of copies	Not applicable.
Publication note	Not applicable.
Subject headings	Department stores -- Rhode Island -- Providence -- History Outlet Company (Providence, R.I.) Parking garages -- Rhode Island -- Providence Restaurants -- Rhode Island Restaurants -- United States -- History Retail trade -- Rhode Island -- Providence Westminster Street (Providence, R.I.) -- History advertisements department stores bulletins photographs restaurants
<b>SEE ALSO</b>	Not applicable.

#### **HISTORICAL NOTE**

The Outlet Company was located at 168-176 Weybosset Street in Providence, Rhode Island. Established in 1897 by two brothers, Joseph and Leon Samuels, The Outlet Company grew to become one of the largest department stores in southern New England, engulfing an entire city block in Providence's downtown. The store sold furniture, clothing, cosmetics, housewares and held a restaurant with a soda fountain.

In 1922, the Outlet expanded into broadcasting by forming the first affiliated station of the NBC Red Network, WJAR. In 1980-1981, the Outlet closed its retail operations in favor of broadcasting and media pursuits. Eventually the company was sold in 1984. On October 16, 1986 the Outlet Company's former building experienced a fire, and what remained was bought by Johnson and Wales University, who built dormitories on the land.

#### **SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION**

This collection contains photographs and ephemera related to The Outlet Company. The photographs show the interior of the store, featuring merchandising cases, soda fountain/lunch counter, and restaurant. Exterior photos of the building and store are included as well, including demolition and construction of replacement or nearby structures. Several photos focus on the creation and celebratory opening of a "435 car self-parking" garage, called the Big O Garage.

Two ephemera pieces are in the collection as well; *The Outlet Bulletin* from March 1900 advertising for the store's Grand Spring Opening and a poster-sized undated sale advertisement featuring headshots of the store's merchandise buyers, which appears to have been distributed via the *Providence Sunday Journal*.

**ORGANIZATION OF THE COLLECTION**

Materials are arranged by type, and then chronologically when possible.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION**

Item	Title	Date	Folder
1	Outlet Bulletin	1900-03	1
2	The Outlet All Star Buyers Sale	Undated	1
3	Demolished Building	1962-05	1
4	Building Under Demolition with Falling Debris	probably 1962	1
5	Building Being Demolished by Crane	probably 1962	1
6	Rubble of Demolished Building with Crane with Industrial Trust building in background	probably 1962	1
7	Landscape of Building Being Demolished and Coca-Cola Mural Advertisement with Industrial Trust Building and Sheraton Hotel in background	probably 1962	1
8	Cars Parked Outside of Building Under Demolition	probably 1962	1
9	Man Speaking in Front of Group	1962-08-30	1
10	Men Shaking Hands in Parking Garage	probably 1962-08-30	1
11	Procession of cars for the opening of The Big O Garage taken from steps of Providence City Hall	probably 1962-08-30	1
12	Big O Parking Garage with Bunting	probably 1962-08-30	1
13	Cars outside the Outlet Company	probably 1962-08-30	1
14	Interior of The Outlet showing Hosiery Case and Watch Repair	Undated	1
15	Men's Clothing in Basement Outlet	Undated	1
16	Furniture display floor	Undated	1
17	Staircase to Downstairs Store	Undated	1

18	Sewing machines in Basement Outlet	Undated	1
19	Waitress and diners at U-Counter at The Fountain	Undated	1
20	Dining Room at The Outlet Company	Undated	1
21	The Fountain at The Outlet Company	Undated	1
22	Diners at the Soda Fountain at The Outlet Company	Undated	1
23	Diners at the Soda Fountain at The Outlet Company	Undated	1
24	Lot and Sign for the Big O's Parking Garage (photo stamped with WJAR-TV, Photo by James Cute)	Undated	1
25	Exterior of the Outlet Warehouse	Undated	1
26	The Outlet Company Bridge and Alley Between Buildings	Undated	1
27	Group Portrait of Executives	Undated	1
28	The Outlet Company's Exterior	Undated	1
29	The Outlet Company's Exterior	Undated	1
30	Construction site showing steel frame of building under construction with Industrial Trust building in the background	Undated	1
31	Polaroid of Unknown Man	Undated	1