



Filene's: Boston's Great Specialty Store (Images of America)

Michael J. Lisicky

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Regarded as the "World's Largest Specialty Store," William Filene's Sons Company, founded in 1870, brought fashion and entertainment to generations of Bostonians. Brothers Edward and Lincoln Filene were revolutionaries who championed employee relations and innovative merchandising. In 1909, Edward organized and opened Filene's famous Automatic Bargain Basement. Lincoln helped found the Federated Department Stores Company in March 1929. Filene's was a pioneer in branch-store development. In its heyday, the store hosted appearances by fashion designers, such as Christian Dior, Pierre Cardin, and Pauline Trigère, in addition to celebrities, like Zsa Zsa Gabor, Gloria Swanson, and Gene Autry. A victim of retail consolidation, the flagship downtown Boston store closed its doors in 2006. Its building, designed by the internationally renowned architect Daniel Burnham, celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2012 and anxiously awaits its redevelopment. Most of these historic photographs come directly from the Filene Marketing Archives at the Boston Public Library.

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