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Obituaries

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H. Silverman, 93; business and civic leader for 70 years

EAST GREENWICH — Herman N. Silverman, 93, the Main Street retailer who earned the title of "Mr. East Greenwich" as a fixture in town business and civic affairs since the early days of the century, died yesterday in Kent County Nursing Home, where he had been a patient for several months.

Mr. Silverman was the husband of the late Jennie (Solomon) Silverman, an East Greenwich native who died in 1953, 45 years after their marriage on the eve of the opening of the clothing store that bears his name.

Mr. Silverman, who brought his energy to the growth of the town, was remembered as a man with the business sense to build a firm which three times grew too large for its quarters, and the civic sense to extend generous credit to his neighbors during the dark days of the Depression.

"Dad's credit department was in his heart," one of his sons recently observed.

Mr. Silverman was the father of many ideas which were thought outlandish in their time but later proved to be prophetic.

In 1913 he led what was then a controversial fiscal battle to purchase the town's first fire engine. In 1928 he bucked local opinion to push for what was then the town's first modern school building, the Eldredge School on First Avenue. In the 1940s he fought for the construction of the USO building, against the judgement of townspeople who thought a center for sailors would be detrimental to the morals of East Greenwich girls.

More than a dozen lonesome servicemen formed friendships at that USO which later led to happy marriages.



Herman N. Silverman

where Mr. Silverman continued to report to his office daily until six months ago, despite failing eyesight.

In 1927 he was chairman of the town's 250th Anniversary celebration, which drew 50,000 visitors. He was also head of the 300th Anniversary celebration, which will be held this July.

He was active in the Chamber of Commerce, of which he was president for several terms. He was also an original trustee of Kent County Memorial Hospital, and served in that capacity for 18 years. For 25 years he was a director of the town's Visiting Nurse Association.

During the 1938 hurricane he headed the town's disaster group and during World War II he was a member of the Oil Ration Board. After the war he worked for the erection of the War Memorial Stadium.

Mr. Silverman explained his public spirit offhandedly in 1968, when he was about to move his stores to the south end of Main Street at the age of 84.

"The town has given me a good living and has helped me raise and educate my family, so the least I could do is give my best to the betterment of the community," he said.

Mr. Silverman was born in Troy, N.Y. Oct. 10, 1883, the oldest of nine children of the late Joseph and Lena (Bielinski) Silverman. His parents were Polish immigrants, his father a successful retail clothier in Troy.

Mr. Silverman was educated in his hometown public schools until he "was graduated cum laude from the fifth grade," as he joked in later years. From there he went to work at $3 a week in a Troy collar shop. Later he attended night school at Cooper Union in New York City.

He was a travelling sales representative for two years and at age 21 became a clothing store salesman in Albany, N.Y. His younger brother, the late Morris Silverman, later ran the same store until 1966.

At age 24, while visiting relatives in East Greenwich, Mr. Silverman met and married Jennie Solomon, whose family ran a clothing store which became closely associated with his own.

He opened his women's apparel and shoe store at 241 Main St. the day after his wedding, June 25, 1908.

Twenty years later he moved to larger quarters at 191 Main St., a building he expanded in 1940. In 1968 the store moved again to the site of the former Our Lady of Mercy Church.

He was among the founders of the East Greenwich Savings and Loan Association and served on the Industrial National Bank's advisory board for 30 years.

His many civic memberships included King Solomon and Redwood Lodges, F & AM, the East Greenwich Lions Club and Odd Fellows and the Varnum Continentals. He won a Rotary Club service award in 1971.

Mr. Silverman is survived by four sons, Irving and Howard, both of Cowesset and both managers of his business, Arthur, with whom he lived for 35 years at 132 Church St. until his illness, and Benjamin of Palo Alto, Cal.; a daughter, Ruth Silverman, also of 132 Church St.; two sisters, Mrs. Ethel Hyman of Los Angeles, Ca. and Miss Minna Silver of New York City; five grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

His funeral will be held Sunday at 2 p.m. at Temple Beth-Am, 40 Gardiner St., Warwick. Burial will be in Lincoln Park Cemetery, Warwick.

SILVERMAN, HERMAN

SILVERMAN, Herman

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IN MEMORY OF

HERMAN N. SILVERMAN

SILVERMAN'S & BEN SOLOMON STORES

EAST GREENWICH

WILL BE CLOSED ALL DAY

SATURDAY, JANUARY 15