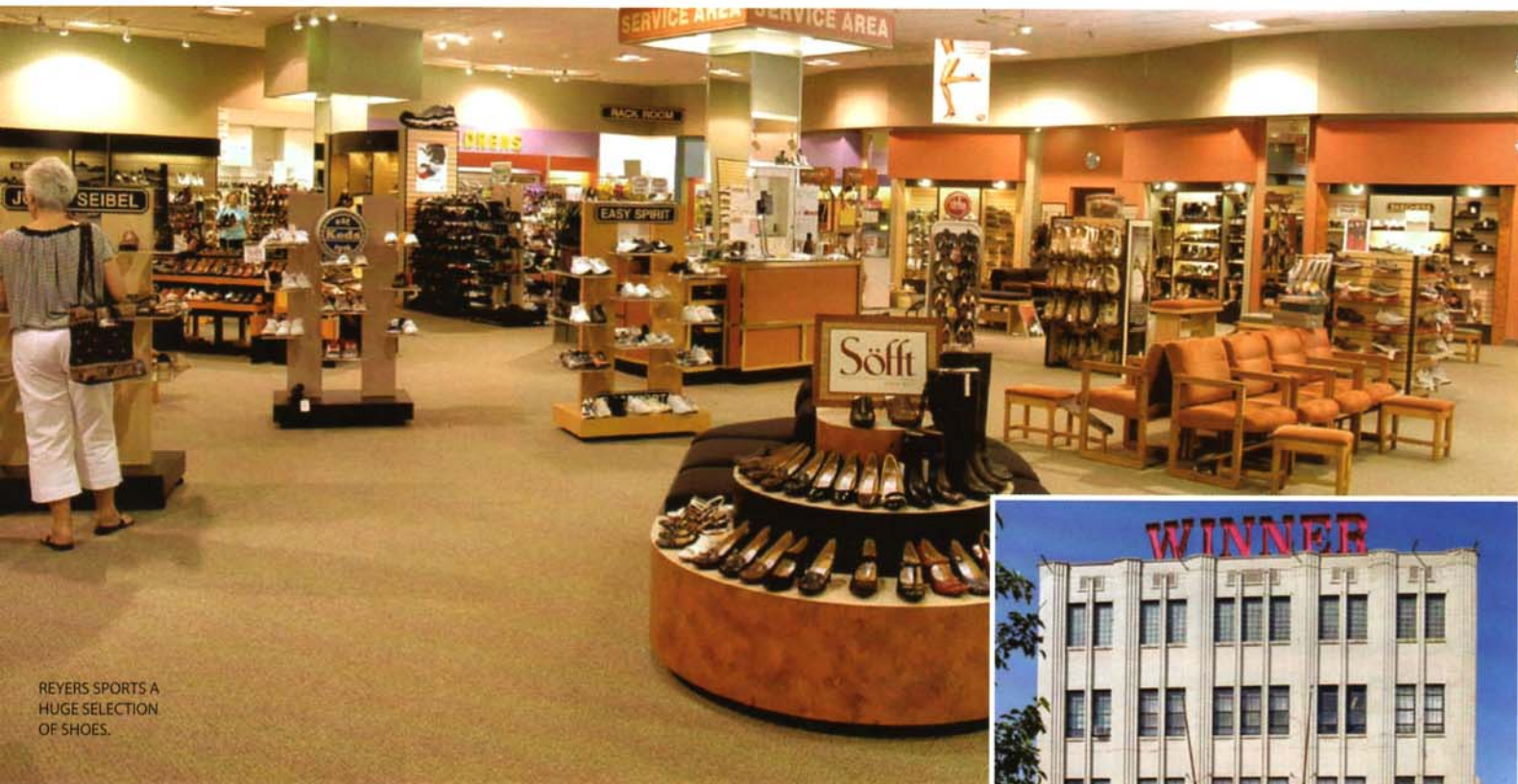


Reyers, The Winner and Daffin's



REYERS SPORTS A HUGE SELECTION OF SHOES.



JUST ACROSS THE STREET FROM REYERS IS THE WINNER, WHERE ANY WOMAN IS A WINNER TRYING TO FIND FORMAL WEAR.

opposite: DAFFIN'S OFFERS ALL KINDS OF CANDY, BUT IS NOTED FOR ITS CHOCOLATE.

By **Marsha S. Morgenstern**
Photos contributed by www.MercerCountyPa.com

IMAGINE: THE WORLD'S largest shoe store, world's largest off-price fashion store, and the world's largest candy store all on one trip. On a recent visit to Sharon, Pa., in Mercer County, I found all these things and more. Tie on your sneakers and don't forget your wallet or your sweet tooth, extreme shopping awaits!

Reyers

Our first stop on the extreme shopping tour is Reyers. Founded in 1886, by German immigrant cobbler John Reyer, this is the place to go both for shoe lovers and those with a love-hate relationship when it comes to shopping for shoes. As you step into this store, you are immediately astonished by its size. Reyers takes up 36,000 square feet, all on one floor! However, Reyers was not always this big. According to Mark Jubelirer, president, in the early 1950s, his father, Harry Jubelirer purchased Reyer's from Carl Reyer (John

Reyer's son). The store was just 1,200 square feet and only sold women's shoes and narrow sizes. "Harry at once began to stock medium widths too and very soon he doubled his business," Jubelirer says.

Around 1960, word of mouth, combined with an increased variety of footwear and discounts, fueled the business' growth. Soon, Reyers became the largest shoe store between New York and Chicago.

Then, it earned the title of the largest shoe store in the country when a neighboring J.C. Penney building became vacant and Harry

Jubelirer tore down the adjacent wall. "The growth continued, and in 1986, Reyers moved across town into a 36,000 square foot space," Jubelirer says.

This is when Reyers became the largest shoe store in the world. "Anybody who opens a bigger shoe store has got to be crazy," Jubelirer jokes.

In addition to the size of the store, what really makes Reyers stand out is the knowledgeable, "mom and pop" style of personalized service. "We do business the old-fashioned way. We sit down and measure

your feet and we have your size," Jubelirer says. (Reyers carries women's shoes from size 4 to 14, from super slim to super wide and up to size 22 in men's shoes.)

"If you haven't been to Reyers, you haven't been to a shoe store," Jubelirer says. "We offer a unique, customer-friendly shoe-shopping experience. If you are hard to fit, you should come here. If you want service, you should come here. If you want selection, you should come here."

The Winner

Within walking distance of Reyers is the The Winner, with its bright pink awning that beckons extreme shoppers to come on over.

The Winner's prices are 10 to 40 percent off regular retail prices. A newly added bargain basement sells items from 50 to 90 percent off. Currently, three floors of shopping are available at The Winner, with a fourth floor tentatively opening this fall.

After stepping inside, the selection of evening gowns alone will leave a woman breathless. Gorgeous chandeliers dangle from the ceiling of each floor and, on the weekend, beautiful live music emanates from a concert grand piano played live by John Mancino or Doug Nold.

A men's lounge located on the first floor has been available since The Winner's inception in 1988. It is equipped with a television, newspapers and popcorn. But what really makes the men's lounge unique is the free beer tap. "In the winter time, men are watching the football games while the women are shopping. It is a sight to be seen," says supervisor Mary DeCapua, who has worked at The Winner for more than 20 years. "Right now we have Iron City Light on tap. Before, we had Rolling Rock, so it changes."

The Winner takes pride in its selection and customer service. A cruise-wear section offers swimsuits year-round and the accessories department offers everything from rhinestones to casual jewelry. This is also the place to find a wedding gown or an evening gown. The Winner's prom and homecoming registration is especially unique. "If a girl comes in and buys a dress for homecoming or prom, we register the style, number and color so nobody else from that school can purchase the same dress. A lot of the girls shop early because of that, so they can be the first one to have a dress," DeCapua says.

Daffin's

The smell of chocolate immediately wafts from Daffin's Candies upon entering. You will notice that one wall is lined with over 250 hard candies. Daffin's own chocolate, nationally known, is encased on the left wall. Employees are more than happy to help you find the perfect bite to satisfy your sweet tooth. "Our caramel pecanette, caramel and pecans that are covered in chocolate, is our No. 1 seller," says Connie Leon, retail manager and an employee of Daffin's for 43 years. "Our five or six flavors of melt-a-ways are also popular. We manufacture all our chocolates, popcorn, peanut brittle, and things like that," she adds.

Although Daffin's primarily is the place to go for chocolate, the middle of the store holds the area's largest selection of Hallmark cards, gifts and other collectibles. Visitors can also check out the Chocolate Kingdom, a quaint village made of solid chocolate that includes a 400-pound chocolate turtle and other assorted animals. According to Leon, the Chocolate Kingdom was created in the early 1970s at Daffin's original location and was only out at Easter. About 10 years ago, the display grew to what it is today. "We moved some of our larger pieces down to the factory so when guests tour our facilities, they get to see those as well," Leon says. Daffin's factory is in Farrell Pa., just two-and-a-half miles away from the Sharon retail store. Usually, advance registration is required to tour the Chocolate Factory; however annually, two Sundays before Easter, the factory is open to the community for "Swizzle Stick Day," a free event. A shuttle service between the factory and the Sharon retail location is provided. "We attract thousands of people that day," Leon says.

So if you are in the mood for some extreme shopping or just looking for a pair of shoes, a new gown, or perhaps some fresh chocolate, consider visiting Mercer County. You are sure to find just what you need, or never knew you needed! ■



IN THE KNOW

Other Mercer Highlights

While you are visiting Mercer County, check out:

Quaker Steak and Lube — Original Location
Founded in 1974, "The Original" Quaker Steak and Lube is located in Sharon, Pa. Initially an automobile service station, the building has a fun ambience similar to its sister locations. It is full of car and racing related memorabilia. Known for their "atomic" wings (so spicy, guests ordering them are required to sign a release form), the restaurant did not actually begin serving chicken wings until 1976.
— Source: quakersteakandlube.com

Tara — A Country Inn & Buhl Mansion Guesthouse and Spa

Thinking about spending a night or two in Mercer County? Consider staying at one of these two luxurious inns. Tara offers romantic "Gone with The Wind" getaway packages and casual or formal dining. Buhl Mansion Guesthouse & Spa's overnight Castle Escape package and day spa offer the ultimate in pampering. The Buhl Mansion and Tara are 6 miles apart in Sharon and Clark, Pa., respectively.
— Source: www.winnerhospitality.com

Wendell August Forge — Flagship Location

Wendell August has offered handmade giftware that since 1923. Free tours of Wendell August's flagship location in Grove City provide an overview of the production workshop, where artisans create gifts and collectibles one-at-a-time. Shoppers can also peruse items made of aluminum, bronze, copper and pewter. The intricate and unique patterns offered are a "must see."
— Source: www.wendellaugust.com

Grove City Outlet Mall (Prime Outlets)

Intersection of I-79 and Route 208
Grove City, PA 16127
724-748-3875, 888-545-7221, fax: 724-748-4944
Regular Hours: Monday - Saturday, 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Sunday, 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. Closed Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.