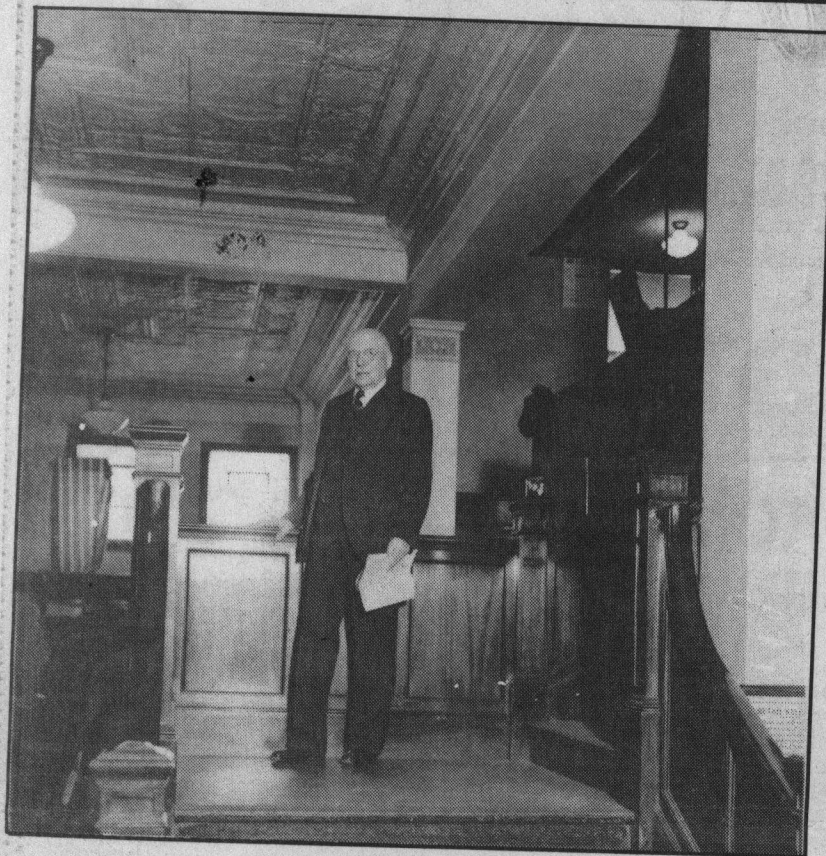
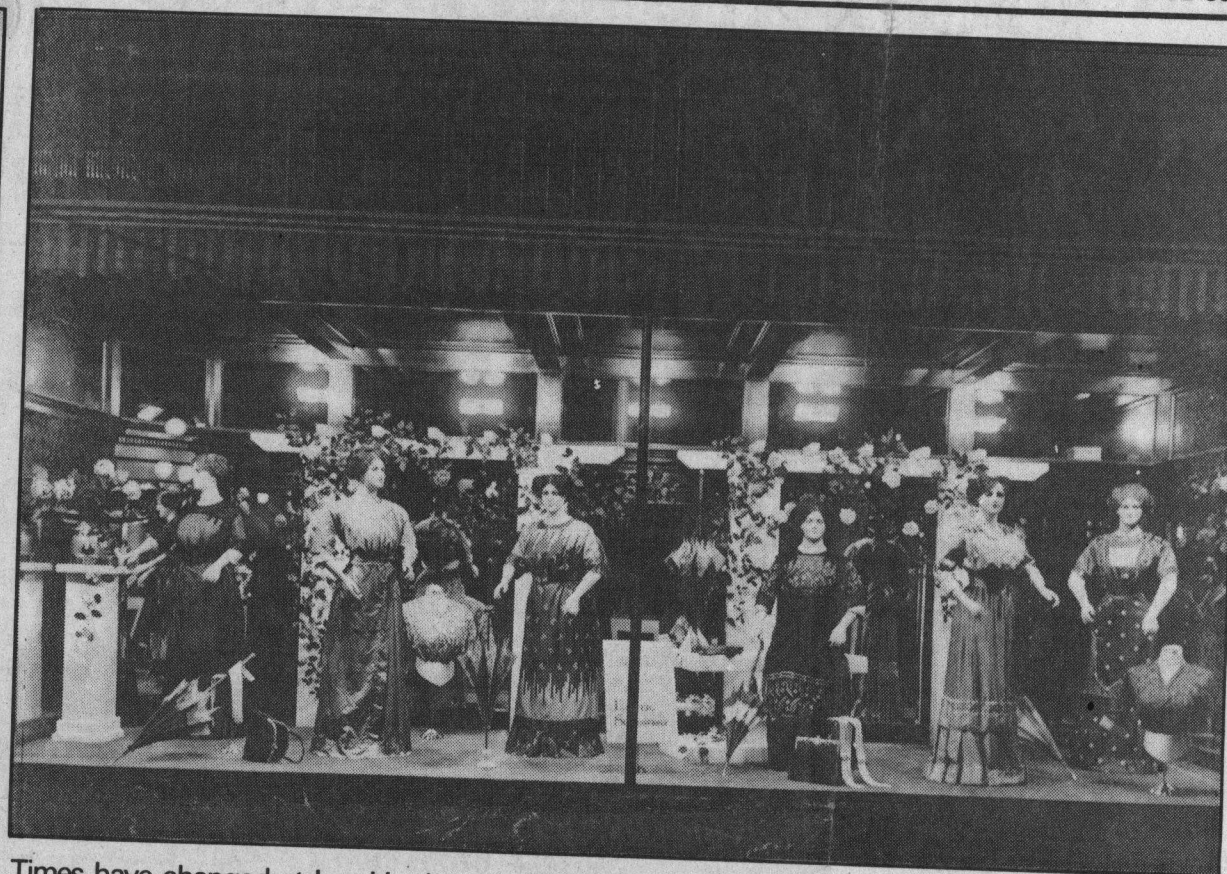


# Local

A-2—Santa Cruz Sentinel



Scotland-born Samuel Leask I founded the store in 1892.



Times have changed at Leask's since this 1911 window display, and the changes will continue.

## ✓Curtain falls on 96 years of Leask's

By DONALD MILLER  
Sentinel staff writer

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SANTA CRUZ — Wednesday's announcement that Leask's department stores have been sold to a Fresno-based company brings down the curtain — or at least changes the storefront windows — on nearly a century of retail history in Santa Cruz.

It began when Samuel Leask I established his first store in Santa Cruz in 1892.

The Scotland-born Leask had come to the United States in 1883, working for a time in Boston in a retail store, finally arriving in Watsonville in 1885, where he worked for the Charles Ford Co.

Leask later opened his own store, which he named "The Seaside Store," in Santa Cruz, with John Johnston as his partner.

In 1896, Leask bought out Johnston and

took over the store himself.

In 1899, Leask purchased an adjoining clothing store and then six years later bought property at Church Street and Pacific Avenue, with plans to build a store and office building.

Leask's plans were delayed by the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, which caused problems in getting materials, but the store was still completed later that year.

Leask then bought additional buildings on Pacific and on Church in 1910. All the buildings were unified in 1926 by an extensive reconstruction program. Later, the Gillen store on Pacific and the fire house and adjoining city property on Church were acquired in 1945 and 1946, which eventually resulted in more reconstruction on the block.

The modern, boxy architecture of the present Leask's building at Church and Pacific represents a marked departure from the ornate and embellished facades of other Mall buildings.

Leask's opened a midcounty store in Aptos in 1964. In 1969, the family acquired another building on Locust Street, which housed a number of small businesses. That building, the old Hotel Alexander, was recently sold by the Leask family to a San Jose developer who turned around and sold it to a San Francisco developer.

Leask's expanded downtown again in 1977 when the family bought the former World Savings building on Pacific. The new building was integrated into the interior of the existing Leask's store.

In 1986, Leask's opened an 11,200-square-

foot store in Scotts Valley. That was the same year the family decided to expand into Capitola, purchasing property in the Capitola Mall for a store that, it turned out, would never be built.

Samuel Leask I was around for most of the expansion, dying at age 103 in 1964.

Samuel Leask Jr., 94, lives in Los Angeles. He served as the city of Los Angeles' chief executive officer for many years, and headed the state Health and Welfare Department under then-Gov. Edmund G. "Pat" Brown. He also held a number of other statewide offices, and was general manager of the May Co. in Los Angeles.

Samuel Leask IV, who runs the family stores and negotiated the deal with Gottschalk's, took over management in October 1981 after the death of his father, Samuel Leask III.