

OLD GLORY

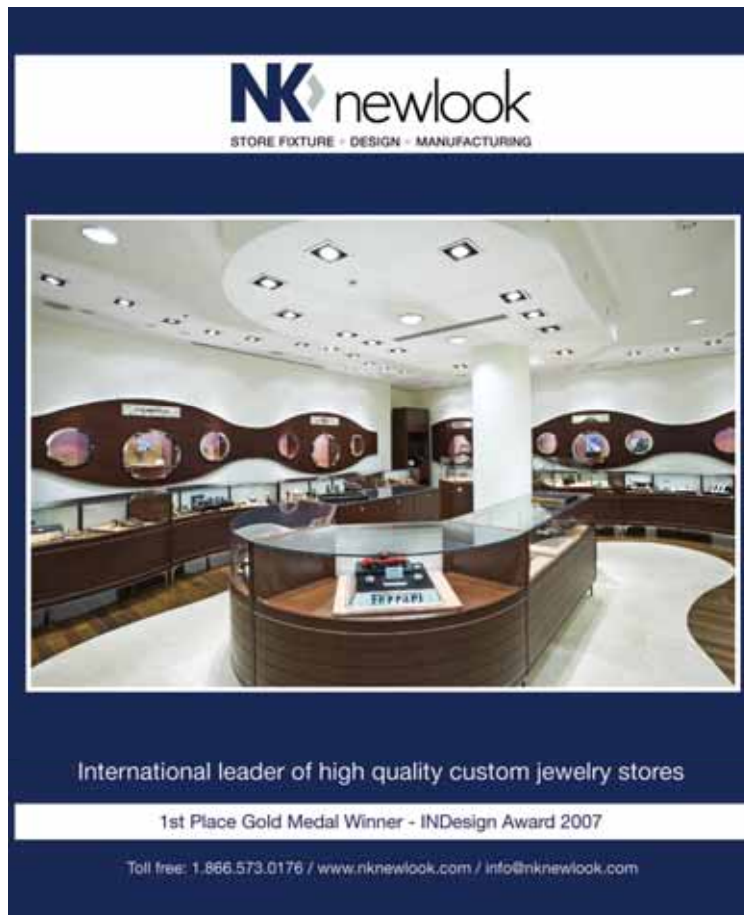
IN ITS 124TH YEAR, NEW YORK JEWELER STILL THRIVES



WILLIAM BARTHMAN JEWELERS
NEW YORK, NY

URL: www.williambarthman.com
OWNER: Jerry Natkin
YEAR FOUNDED: 1884
OPENED FEATURED LOCATION: 2006
INTERIOR BUILD-OUT COST: \$2 million
REVENUES: Over \$10 million
STORE AREA: 5,000 square feet including office space
EMPLOYEES: 18
SLOGAN: "Witnessing history and becoming a part of history itself"

CAPTIONS
»» After 123 years in the same location (top), where a clock marked its location in the sidewalk, (middle) William Barthman moved down the street to a location triple its former size (right and far right). »» Above: Ads highlight the store's history.



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AFTER 123 YEARS on the corner of New York's Broadway and Maiden Lane, William Barthman Jewelers took a monumental leap — down the street — in 2006. The company packed up its vintage mahogany cases and brass chandeliers, and relocated from 174 Broadway to 176 Broadway. It had to be done. The store desperately needed more space. But for employees, some of whom had felt comfortable at the old place for decades, it required a psychological adjustment. And the move had the potential to confuse customers and vendors. The most important thing, owner Jerry Natkin says, was getting the word out to customers, who might have imagined the worst. "When they go to the corner where you've always been and you're not there anymore, people say 'Oh, God, they went out of business.' They don't think to look down the street. So we called, we sent out postcards, we e-mailed and we put up signs."



5 Reasons THIS STORE'S SO COOL

HISTORY MAIDEN FIXTURE

1. Company founder William Barthman, a Civil War veteran and jeweler apprentice from Germany, opened a jewelry store on Maiden Lane, the center of Manhattan's jewelry district in the 1870s. By 1884, William Barthman Jewelers had moved to the corner of Maiden Lane and Broadway, where it was a fixture for 123 years, well known in the neighborhood for the clock implanted in the sidewalk just outside the store.

The clock has kept time since 1898. Current owner Jerry Natkin and a partner bought the business in 1983 from the descendants of William Barthman. "I bought the business, the building and kept on all the employees. Even the owners stayed on working," Natkin says. He also kept the name.

Renee Kopel, director of sales and marketing, thinks Barthman's descendants weren't the only Barthmans who stayed. She suspects that William Barthman's benevolent ghost lingered as well.

"One time when my assistant was in the gift gallery sitting in the middle of the room facing the door, she suddenly got up and said, 'May I help you?' I turned around and she looked funny and then the door slammed closed. She told me she saw someone start to come into the gallery but when she spoke he disappeared and then the door blew shut. She was totally freaked out and I was laughing. I told her to relax and that she had just met Mr. Barthman's ghost."

Natkin valued the old location, but couldn't sacrifice progress to history. In November 2006, the business moved and, in the process, expanded from an 800-square-foot sales floor to nearly 3,000 square feet.

The ghost of William Barthman, though, apparently stayed behind in what is now a vitamin store. There were no ghost sightings at the new location in 2007.

AMBIENCE BLENDING TWO WORLDS

2. "We're looking to increase sales and reach out to all the people who weren't customers before who might enjoy this shopping environment," Natkin says. "It's much more comfortable and less congested."



The mahogany casework and brass light fixtures date from the mid-1800s. The move meant packing it all up and carrying the same ambience down the street.

The benefits of a larger space were many, and included being able to give the gift gallery a prominent home on the main sales floor. But Natkin and company were careful to preserve the character of the store.

"William Barthman Jewelers is like a functioning museum and tribute to the past," says Kopel, who has been at the store for 19 years. "Three centuries co-exist in the new store."

New showcases were designed to complement the original cases. Even the antique wood paneling was installed in the new building.

"The lighting and everything was a little old-world," Natkin says. "Even the fixtures were from 1850. We didn't want to lose the ambience of that. We have a pneumatic tube system, where money and credit cards slide through the walls, just to keep that same ambience."

RELATIONSHIPS ALL IN THE FAMILY

3. Renee's husband, Joel Kopel, has been manager since Natkin bought the business. The pair aren't the only married couple working there nor the only employees with a long tenure. Watchmaker Albert Speranza has been with Barthman's 51 years.

"Nydia, our receptionist, is married to Jesus, our shipping clerk. Joanne, our bookkeeper, is married to Guilo, our bench

jeweler," Renee Kopel says. "We like to think of ourselves as a team, and because we do not work on commission, there is a stronger feeling of community. Our customers notice how we are all willing to work together or help each other out."

Natkin says he values a convivial workplace.

"I'm a relationship kind of person," he says. "I always say, 'Good morning. How are you? How's the family?' I don't like tension. It's a cool atmosphere. I hear about other companies, and unless you're very lucky I know you can be very uncomfortable where you work. We buy everyone a case of apples every week. We want to keep them healthy and show them we like them."

RESILIENCE 9/11 SURVIVAL

4. The business made it through not only the Great Depression and the economic uncertainty associated with two World Wars, but also survived 9/11-related theft and damage.

"We fought back after 9/11, determined to reopen our store after suffering devastating physical and emotional damage," Renee Kopel says.

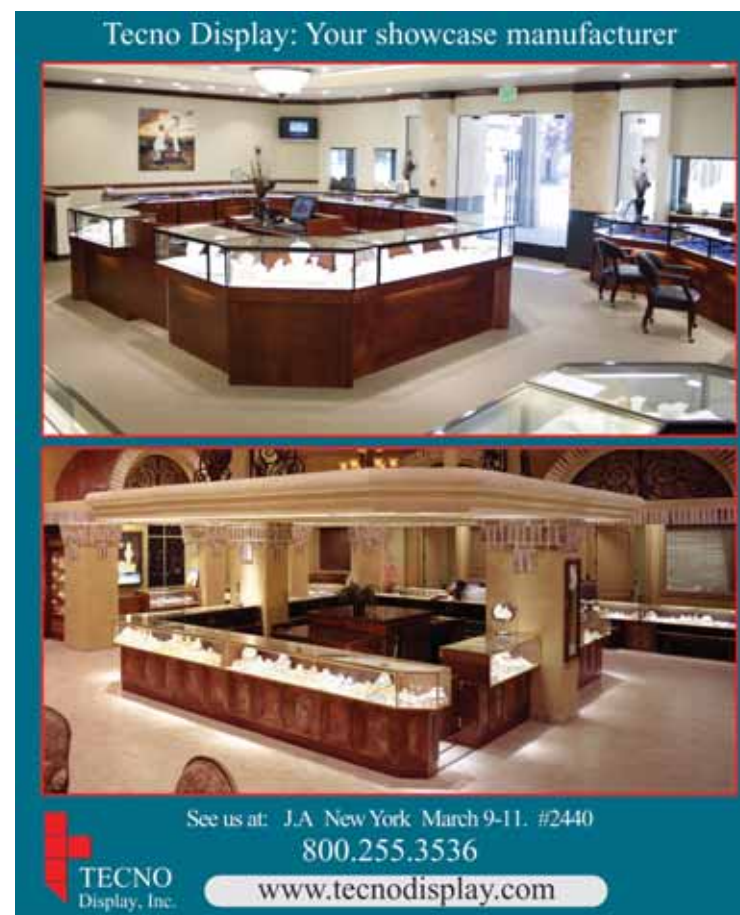
"It took us 10 weeks with all hands on deck to clean, polish and refurbish our store after all of our windows exploded from the attacks, and looters



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BARTHMAN 121

ransacked our store. Every one of us pitched in to help.

“Joel and I risked our lives to come back and check on the store and the building. I kept in constant contact with police. But despite my vigilance the store was still ransacked. One set of thieves was caught and I worked with the district attorney’s office to help prosecute. I testified at their trial.”

Natkin says he was out of the country, sick with worry, and wasn’t able to return for a week.

“I couldn’t get in touch with people, couldn’t get a plane,” he says. “And when I got back the store was seriously damaged. All of Lower Manhattan was closed. I ended up in the hospital for three or four days. I think it got me sick, the air and the stress. It was the only time I was ever in the hospital.”



From left, Jerry Natkin, New York Yankees outfielder Johnny Damon and manager Joel Kopel attend a store event.

FIVE QUESTIONS WITH

JERRY NATKIN

OWNER, WILLIAM BARTHMAN JEWELERS

1 HOW DID YOU GET INTO THE BUSINESS? I was going to law school, my father passed away and there was nobody to pay the bills. I had a part-time job working in a jewelry/electronics/record store, and my part-time job became a full-time job and I just stayed in the business.

2 WHAT WAS IT ABOUT THE JEWELRY BUSINESS THAT MADE YOU STICK WITH IT? It’s very positive. Doctors deal with illness and lawyers

sue people. Police have to chase people. Usually, when we’re selling things, jewelry and watches, it’s for a good occasion.

3 HOW DO YOU MAKE CUSTOMERS FEEL WELCOME? We stress customer satisfaction to our sales staff and our support staff. We don’t work with commission. So there’s no arm-twisting; we just try to give them good information and honest opinions and send them a thank-you card when they buy something.

4 WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO STAY IN LOWER MANHATTAN?

I invested a lot of money to support the expansion because I’m positive about Lower Manhattan. I could have closed, relocated or retired and played golf, but I chose to make a statement. And other people are coming to the same conclusion. Lower Manhattan is becoming a destination.

5 HOW DID THE MOVE GO? It’s a lot of work dealing with contractors, the building department. And people (employees) are afraid of change. They’re all quaking in their boots until it’s done, then they say, “What were we afraid of? This is so much better.”

SPONSORS THE YANKEES

5 As an official sponsor of the New York Yankees, the store has designed and distributed commemorative rings to children 14 and younger for the past seven years at William Barthman Fan Ring Day at a Yankees game.

“It is such a huge hit that the game is always sold out,” Renee Kopel says. “The kids love the ring and we get phone calls and letters from them for months afterward. The best part of our affiliation with the team is how they have become like extended family.”

The affiliation began when William Barthman Jewelers began making trophies for Player of the Month and Pitcher of the Month.

Joel Kopel, who acts as Yankees liaison, has always been a fan. He says having a relationship with the Yankees serves as a strong endorsement of the store’s quality to New Yorkers.

“It’s brought us a lot of visibility,” he says. “A lot of people believe in the integrity of the Yankees. “Players come into the store to shop and we have the opportunity to sponsor a lot of their charities.”

Players also attended a William Barthman fundraiser in June that raised \$50,000 for the Wounded Warrior Fund to benefit disabled soldiers returning to New York. — EILEEN MCCLELLAND