



Samuel Campbell arrived in Riverton, Southland, in 1881. The then bustling southern port on the Aparima River, with its large timber industry base, was an ideal centre for a drapery business.

All this changed, however with the decline of the milling industry, and Invercargill's decision to make Bluff its port.

Closing his Riverton store in the late 1890s Samuel headed to Dunedin, where he established his new drapery in Caversham, on the corner of Playfair Street and Main South Road.

From there he moved to 145 King Edward Street, South Dunedin, the current site of Arthur Thomas Shoes. In 1914 Samuel purchased property opposite, where he commissioned Fletcher Bros to build a new store.

Four years later he sold this business to Wolfenden and Russell, a business which continues to operate from the same site today.

By this time his sons Alexander, James and Samuel jnr had set up a drapery business named Campbell Bros in central Dunedin at 28 Princes Street.

During the great depression this business failed in 1934.

About four years later Mr Alex Campbell was able to venture back into the retail trade, purchasing the menswear store of McGregor Bros on Cargill's Corner in February 1937.

In the revitalised economic climate the business prospered.

Samuel was the great-grandfather of Lindsay Campbell who currently heads Alex Campbell Menswear in South Dunedin.

Samuel died on 30 October 1944 and is buried in Andersons Bay Cemetery alongside his wife Mary Jane (Shore) who died two years later on 28 July 1946.

“I remember Dad (Samuel’s son Alexander) and me riding our bikes from home in Forbury Road to see his new shop at Cargill’s Corner. From then on I knew all I wanted to do was be in business”, recalls Mr Lex (Alexander) Campbell.

After school and school holidays saw him always at the shop and on leaving school, after a brief period in the navy at the end of World War 2, Lex joined his father as a junior assistant.

On December 2, 1947, after a thorough grounding Lex purchased the business.

In the ensuing years the outlet became a real family affair, with his wife Joan, and three of the couple’s five children working in the store.

Their daughter Leslie was employed there too until she moved to Stewart Island, and their sons Donald and Lindsay were managers and directors.

In June 1951 Allan Ward commenced employment as a young school-leaver and went on to become a director. His unexpected death in 2010 halted his completion of a remarkable 60 years service by just a few months.

The opening of their George Street branch in 1955 was the direct result of the demise of the tram system which had been responsible for bringing customers from all over town to the South Dunedin store.

In July 1967 Mr Lex Campbell purchased the present site in King Edward Street, which had been the former premises of London Mantles, and old-established firm which manufactured many school uniforms at the time.

The new shop opened the month before decimal currency was introduced.

In 1974 the Mosgiel store opened which traded for 26 years.

The three stores consolidated to a one-store operation at South Dunedin in the new millennium.

The third generation (or really the fourth) Lindsay purchased the entire business in 2005. His nephew Bevan, who is store manager, continues the proud family tradition.

The store celebrates its 73rd year, but history shows it is really 130 years in New Zealand – a remarkable story of perseverance and success in an ever-changing commercial scene.

Prepared by the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand (www.cemeteries.org.nz)
from information supplied by the Campbell family.