

From Wilkins Store to Jimmy's Tavern: A Herndon Landmark

By Barbara Glakas

More than 100 years later, the large frame structure at the corner of Elden and Spring Streets remains a Herndon landmark.

In the mid-1800s, Herndon was a small dairy farming community. It began to grow as the railroad arrived in the 1850s. The Depot was built in 1857, and stores, buildings, and homes grew up around it as people moved into the area.

In 1897, Cora Laws, foster daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harlon Waite of Catlett, Virginia, married Magnus T. Wilkins and moved to Herndon, where Mr. Wilkins opened a general store at the corner of Elden and Spring Streets.

The Wilkins and Brothers Herndon Bargain Store is believed to have been built in 1897. The store sold food and other household items. By 1911, the town had about 750 residents, and the Wilkins Store was one of several general stores in the area.

In 1904, Mr. Waite purchased a lot of land from Thomas Reed, a skilled carpenter and cabinetmaker. Reed, along with other local help, built the Wilkins family residence at what is now 637 Oak Street. The Waites eventually sold their Catlett home and came to Herndon to live out the remainder of their lives with Cora and Magnus Wilkins.

Many other businesses occupied the building after the Wilkins Store, including a grocery store, a sporting goods store, a butcher shop, and a tavern.

In 1990, Doug and Pam Roach opened their antique store—Roaches in the Attic— on the upper level of the old Wilkins building. Today, 21 years later, the store remains a popular source for quality antiques and collectibles.

In 1996, Jimmy Cirrito heard about a space for lease in downtown Herndon, on the first floor of the old Wilkins building. He came to Herndon to look at the property and fell in love with it, the town, and the historic atmosphere. He signed a lease in November of that year. After months of planning and renovating, Jimmy and his family opened the doors of their new restaurant and bar, Jimmy's Old Town Tavern, in May 1997.

Jimmy's Tavern has become one of the most popular establishments in town, "where everyone is treated like a regular." It has been included on *Washingtonian Magazine's* register of Best Bars in Washington, earned the Herndon-Dulles Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year award, and—most recently—received *Northern Virginia Magazine's* King of the Wings award.