

Vintage clothes get a new look in Lynn

By Bridget Turcotte / The Daily Item | Posted: Friday, August 28, 2015 3:00 am

LYNN — A vintage clothing warehouse that inspires designers and provides costumes for Hollywood movies has been operating out of Lynn for more than 10 years.

The hub of Bobby from Boston, a well-known vintage shop in the South End of Boston, is located in the Prime Manufacturing Company building. The entire second floor of the building is dedicated to the plethora of vintage clothing that founder and owner Bobby Garnett has carefully collected over the years.

He has worked with countless designers, including Ralph Lauren, Armani, Marc Jacobs, Tom Ford, Gap, and L.L. Bean, which, he said, use his clothing for inspiration. They also use them for heritage lines, which he described as collections that are based on what the company has created in the past.

“Michael Kors came in himself the other day,” Garnett said. “We had four people go from working at our shop to Ralph Lauren. We’ve had Ralph in our store.

“Almost every week we have someone in here,” he said. “They take things and use them for inspiration.”

His vintage clothing shop and warehouse are not to be confused with thrift shops, he said. Though they both sell vintage clothing, Bobby from Boston offers multiples of items so shoppers can get them in the correct size they need.

A lot of it is new, never-been-worn old clothing, he said. They still have the original tags attached from decades ago.

Finding the items to feature in his warehouse is an acquired talent in itself.

“I have people calling me up,” he said. “I go to an area and go look. I like to find old businesses with old stuff in the basement.



Vintage clothing

Vintage clothing seller Bobby Garnett, who has a warehouse in Lynn, sells hats and many other accessories to movie costume designers.

“I found a hat company in New York that I went to a lot,” he said. “Once they got to know me, they told me they had a warehouse of stuff across the street.”

His warehouse holds thousands upon thousands of items, including suit jackets, shirts, pants, overalls, shoes, hats, and basically any other clothing item you can think of. Most of the items are dated from the turn of the century to the 1970s.

He also sells novelty items like old name patches, tools, lunch boxes and thermoses.

“Now period stuff is ’70s and ’80s too, so we’re getting more of that,” he said.

Garnett has worked with costume designers for more than 50 Hollywood movies, he said. He provides clothing for anywhere from two to 10 movies a year, he said.

“‘Gotham,’ ‘Casino,’ ‘Benjamin Button,’ ‘Cinderella Man,’ ‘A Beautiful Mind,’ ‘American Hustle’ ... ‘Men in Black 3,’” he said. “Anytime there is a flashback period scene.

“‘Black Mass,’” he said. “Johnny Depp was here, dressed as Whitey Bulger.”

He also said he helped to clothe Will Smith in “Ali” and “The Legend of Bagger Vance” and Tom Hanks in four to five movies, including “Forrest Gump.”

“The first movie I ever did was ‘Mermaids,’” he said. “Winona Ryder’s boots came from me. They actually bought three pairs in case anything happened to them.

“A costume designer has two to three assistants, and they’re going everywhere, to every source they have,” Garnett said. “We’re lucky to be in their repertoire.”

When they come in to dress a character, they sometimes buy 10 times and they sometimes buy 600, he said.

“A movie can come in and clean you out,” he said. “I’m always looking for stuff.”

Garnett first realized he had a knack for the vintage fashion world when he was hired to work at Kracker Jacks, a clothing store in Cambridge when he was 16 years old.

“It taught me a lot,” he said.

In 1971 Garnett opened his first vintage clothing store called Muddy River Trading Company. In 1974 he opened another, called Uptown Strutters Ball, he said. He worked there for 11 years. He has had a shop in London and one in Montreal.

Twenty years ago, in 1995, he opened his South End store.

“Then I opened the warehouse at least 10 years ago,” he said.

He was drawn to Lynn by fabric store Zimman’s in 1972. Before that, it was a big family department store, he said. The owners later opened a store called Grandpa’s Attic.

“Even in the early ’70s, he knew vintage clothing,” Garnett said. “They had old clothing from the ’30s, ’40s, and ’50s that had never been worn. It was mecca for me.”

Years later, he knew Lynn would be a good location for his warehouse.

Despite the immense amount of success Garnett has had in the vintage fashion industry, he still strives to do more.

He’s holding a pop-up shop in Portsmouth, R.I., at the Green Veil Vineyard this Saturday, he said.

“I still think I have a long way to go,” he said. “I dream of having a store in Newport.

“It might not happen, but it’s in the plan,” he said. “Always look forward.”