



Editor [Adina Genn](#) adina@patch.com



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Taking 'Retail Therapy' to New Heights in Port Washington

A new shop off Lower Main Street opens its doors Friday.

By [Adina Genn](#) | [Email the author](#) | September 25, 2012

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Walking into [Wit & Whim](#) just off of Lower Main Street in Port Washington is a bit like stepping back in time. Inside a restored 1885 building, the gift shop is filled with eclectic items that are “handmade, vintage or up-cycled,” said proprietor Laurie Scheinman.

Here, you can find items from around the globe, and at every price point, from a \$10 necklace to a \$2,000 seven-foot iron pagoda. Also in the mix are hand-embroidered belts; 90-year-old seed bags – adorned with vintage hardware –that now double as iPad cases and totes; 1940s Baccarat crystal; and even cell phone cases made of cashmere.

As a retail spot, the building holds historic significance. Once a cobbler shop, and then the Carlton Market grocery store, the building was home to the Janet Brown boutique, where wealthy shoppers were first introduced to cutting edge designers. But not long after Brown unexpectedly passed away in 2007, the store, and the two-family home it is attached to, was up for sale.

Ultimately, Scheinman and her husband entered the picture. Having raised five children, the couple began looking at two-family homes, with the thought that perhaps their kids might want to settle in town.

To Scheinman, the retail space attached to the home brimmed with possibilities. The couple closed on the property and spent a year renovating it.

It was new territory for Scheinman, who has spent 26 years as a family therapist. Still, while Scheinman says she enjoys working with clients, she also has a passion for the arts, shopping and philanthropy. And part of her mission is to help worthy nonprofits raise money and awareness.

This month, Wit & Whim is collaborating with [Barbara Spivak](#), a local artist whose digitally enhanced images of the Port Washington train station are available as limited edition photos, decorative items and note cards. Proceeds from this collection will go to [HEARTS](#) (“Helping to Enrich the Arts”) in [Port Washington Public Schools](#). Scheinman calls the venture “by Port, for Port, to Port.”

She is planning other such collaborations and also welcomes hosting events including BINGO nights, to help raise money for local organizations “in a fun, community-based way,” she said.

Scheinman, who declined to discuss her investment in the shop, says she has never before owned a store. Still, she picked up some retail training back when she was a kid, when her mom sold goods at Roosevelt Raceway. Scheinman would tag along, selling ice pops, and saw all kinds of goods and vintage items.

"It must have had impact," she said, with a laugh.

Currently, Wit & Whim has one employee, a strategy that right now works for Scheinman as she sticks to her budget.

"I'm hoping the store does well," she said.

Scheinman aims to build buzz, largely through word of mouth. To date, she has 234 Facebook likes, with more than 100 collected in just three days, she said.

Lower Main Street, she noted, with retailers such as Suite 275 and Glen Bradford and others, bring foot traffic to the area.

She hopes shoppers will like her inventory as well.

"The proof will be in the pudding," she said.

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9:04 am on Tuesday, September 25, 2012
I am excited to learn about the pending opening of Wit & Whim, especially at a location in Port Washington with such a rich history and in an area of town that has managed to weather the economic downturn and, in certain cases, witness an increase in locally-owned business during a time of severe economic constraints. I very much look forward to visiting the store at some point during the all-day opening on Friday and I hope that others will support Wit & Whim in the coming days/weeks.

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10:13 am on Tuesday, September 25, 2012
Bob Persons I hope the store doesn't get taxed out of existence by Nassau County, The Town of North Hempstead, The School District, The Port Washington Police District, and all the other taxing districts (sewer, sidewalk, lighting, part town highway, parking, water, garbage, fire protection, county police headquarters, nassau community college, environmental bond fund and the business improvement district,

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