

162 years of history

One of Singapore's oldest home-grown department stores, known for its "sale worth waiting for" over the decades, will be closing its last two department stores at The Heeren and Raffles City Shopping Centre.

The Robinsons at Raffles Place in 1955.



1858

A new firm, Spicer & Robinson, is founded by Englishman Philip Robinson, then living in Singapore, and James Gaborian Spicer, a former jailkeeper in Singapore. The "family warehouse" business, mainly selling groceries, is located in Commercial Square, now known as Raffles Place.

1859

The firm expands to millinery and dressmaking. By the end of the year, James Spicer leaves the business. A new business partner, George Rappa Jr., comes on board and the company is renamed Robinson & Co.

1881

By this time, Robinsons is the preferred store for European expatriates in Singapore.

1891

After moving several times, including to North Bridge Road and Coleman Street, the store returns to its original location in Raffles Place.

1920

Robinson & Co becomes a limited company.

1941

The outlet at Raffles Chambers is hit twice by Japanese bombs during World War II, but reopens the next day.

1942-1945

The firm is closed during the Japanese Occupation.

1946

The department store resumes trade.

1955

It is the first department store in the region to be fully air-conditioned. Robinsons takes over John Little, previously the oldest department store here started by Scotsman John Martin Little in 1842.

1957

The store undergoes a facelift and is called the "handsomest shop in the Far East".

1958

Robinsons gains the franchise for Marks and Spencer for Singapore.

1972

The store is destroyed by a fire in Raffles Place that kills nine people and wipes out \$21 million worth of property. At one point, flames could be seen from as far as Jurong. It was caused by a short circuit on the ground floor of the building. Robinsons relocates to Specialists' Centre in Orchard Road after the fire.



1983

Robinsons becomes the anchor tenant at The Centrepoint.

1990s

Regular warehouse sales during this period tarnish its reputation as an upscale department store.

2001

A new \$30 million store, covering 85,000 sq ft, opens at Raffles City in March, targeting trendy, young customers. The Centrepoint outlet gets a brand new look.

2006

OCBC Bank sells 29.9 per cent of its stake in the group to Indonesia's Lippo Group, through Auric Pacific Singapore, for \$203 million.

2008

Retail operations are sold for \$600 million to the Al-Futtaim Group based in the United Arab Emirates.

2011

Its new owners attempt to go upmarket and open a 20,800 sq ft concept store at The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands.

2013

The concept store is not successful and closes. A heartland outlet is opened at Jem in Jurong East. Robinsons moves to a new \$40 million outlet at 260 Orchard Road (The Heeren), taking over five floors and the basement. The swanky store, with many new brands, aims to attract a high-end market with its stylish interior and posh atmosphere.

2014

Robinsons at The Centrepoint closes and is replaced by Metro as the anchor tenant. Robinsons' managing director Franz Kraatz steps down.

2016

Robinsons launches its website. It also closes the last John Little outlet at Plaza Singapura at the end of 2016.

2017

The brand enters the Middle East market with a store at Dubai Festival City in Dubai.

2018

A store at Kingdom Centre in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, is opened.

2020

Robinsons closes its store at Jem.

