



The Downtowner

The Newsletter of Friends of Historic Downtown Louisville

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Randi's Flowers Celebrates Tenth Anniversary

Shopkeeper Grateful for Decade on Broad

Randi's Flowers, Gifts, Interiors on Broad Street will mark its 10-Year Celebration on Friday April 4, 9 am to 6 pm, and Saturday April 5, 9 am to 3 pm. Randi's will offer refreshments, sale items, door prizes, and surprise giveaways for all who stop by.

"Anniversary sounds so formal," says business owner Randi Beckwith. "I didn't want to call it that because that's just not my style. But then my child gave me a bad time for calling it a birthday," she laughs, "so I decided to call it a 10-year celebration."

This is as much a milestone for the Louisville community as it is for Ms. Beckwith's business. "I wanted my customers to know that I thank them for ten years," she offers. "That's a lot of time to be supportive. I've seen a lot come and go in downtown Louisville. This wouldn't have been possible without faithful customers; so this celebration is a little thank you."

Ms. Beckwith bought her mother's flower store in 1997 when it was located across Broad Street next to what is now the Methodist Thrift Store. By February of the following year, she purchased the current building opposite the Market House, and by April of 1998 – just two short months later – she was open for business in the new location.

Though it has a cozy feel, Randi's occupies two and a half times the floor space of the old building. Much of the 4,000 square foot facility was nearly gutted at the time of the purchase. How did the proprietor manage such a rapid transition? "I cussed a lot," Ms. Beckwith confesses with another laugh. "I couldn't afford to be working and paying here and across the street for very long."

Ms. Beckwith decided to mark a decade in her new building rather than hold something last summer for the anniversary of her business not least because this time of year seems more fitting for the milestone celebration. "It's spring, it's happy, colorful – and flowers are fun and happy," Ms. Beckwith says.



Ms. Beckwith has been in the flower business since she started helping her mother with the work in her senior year of high school in 1990. "99% of my customers who walk through that door," Ms. Beckwith notes, "watched me grow up."

"I have a huge extended family," she says of the intimacy of her line of work. "I'm a part of a lot of people's lives – you know, the good and the bad. There are girls where I did their pageants, recitals, prom flowers, and now I'm marrying them off. You feel like you're a part of their family instead of their florist."

That's not all Ms. Beckwith is grateful for. "The thing that I'm happiest over," she says, "is the fact that I get up and enjoy coming to work every day. There are a lot of people – I'm 34 years old – that really are just getting settled or figuring out what their path is and I feel like mine is set, somewhat successful, and rewarding." She has also enjoyed the support of her husband Danny (on their first date, he gamely helped hang Christmas lights).

At home with hard work and entrepreneurship, Ms. Beckwith explains, "We're used to running our own businesses. My granddad had a business and my dad bought it from him. My mom had a store and I bought it and now she's opened another store and is in here with

me."

She has been astonished by how well received her efforts have been. "Eight years ago I started doing the interior part – helping people with colors and going in arranging things for them. I do in-home decorating at Christmas – putting up people's trees, decorating their mantels, porches, and so on. I work with about fifteen people in the course of three weeks – and that's all after-hours." Some of her customers "just don't flat have the time"; others may feel they don't have a knack for it. That's where Randi's comes in. Ms. Beckwith is pleased to report her interior business "has probably tripled from what I started with."

A fan of the downtown improvements, Ms. Beckwith might be describing her own business: "It's so pretty! It really has a more polished, 'we care' look: we've got stuff going on."

Inside this Issue

<i>Image of the Month</i>	2
<i>Yazoo Scandal Rekindled</i>	2
<i>Fire House Gallery News</i>	3
<i>Kiwanis, Garden Club Azalea Sale</i>	4
<i>The Pal, The Bistro</i>	4

The Downtowner's Image of the Month



Scandal Rekindled – the Yazoo Land Fraud Documents Burned in Louisville in 1796 ... or Did They?

Scandalous Yazoo Documents Recovered

In a bizarre twist of fate and history, the infamous Yazoo Land Fraud documents, long believed to have been burned during the winter of 1796 on the front lawn of the Georgia State Capitol in Louisville – the site of the Jefferson County Courthouse today – have been recovered intact ... well, nearly intact.

Late last week, Friends of Historic Downtown Louisville was contacted by an operative within the Georgia Bureau of Investigation claiming to have new information concerning Louisville's brief but eventful tenure as capital of Georgia. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, the GBI operative reported that several sets of the Yazoo documentation – a collection of hand-penned land deeds and assignments on parchment looking “pretty much like the Declaration of Independence or whatever” came to light through a highly secret nationwide investigative program being coordinated by the FBI. The sting, known to participants as Operation HERITAGE (for Historic Evidence Recovery Initiative Through Aggressive Government Effort) surveys websites trafficking in historic mementos and souvenirs in an attempt to locate important documents and other historic artifacts pilfered from archives and

museums all across the country.

Always naïve, *The Downtowner* asked the GBI informant (an Atlantan, we noted, with no trace of an accent) whether the problem of stolen history is big enough to warrant such a remarkable police effort. “Are you kidding?” he responded. “Absolutely it is. Maybe not everywhere, but in the South it's a huge criminal problem. Like, I can't begin to tell you the kind of stuff people will buy. Just last week we picked up internet chatter about the impending sale of the splint Dr. Mudd used to set John Wilkes Booth's leg. A Civil War buff had lifted it from a historical society in LaPlata, Maryland. We collared that guy, and, believe you me, he's going away for a long time.” What kind of lowlife steals historic artifacts, we wondered aloud. The GBI man had a shocking answer. “These are reputable people. It's appalling. There's a woman doing 10 to 12 in North Carolina – a *college professor*, man – for selling swatches of the dress Jefferson Davis wore during his escape from Richmond ... on eBay! I could tell you stories like that all night!” We had heard enough, however, and declined.

Like the Jeff Davis dress swatches, the

Yazoo papers also turned up on eBay – laminated as a set of placemats for twelve with – to our horror – several documents cut into smaller squares to make a set of matching drink coasters. We asked our informant if he could share any information about possible suspects. He said GBI is pursuing several persons of interest. “Lawyers, all of them,” he said with contempt. “Can you believe that!” Sadly, we could. We were afraid to ask if any of them have Louisville connections.

Still, we were curious to know what the precious papers went for. “Hard to say where the bidding would've ended up,” he said. “We nabbed them before the auction was over, but let's just say they were up to \$1500 in heavy trading with two days to go and the reserve hadn't even been touched.” What happens to the documents now? The GBI man sighed. “They'll be in a vault at headquarters long after we're gone – that's for sure. These cases take forever to close. After that ... they'll probably end up in the Capitol Museum in Atlanta.” Any chance of them finding their way back to Louisville? “Depends,” he said and lowered his voice to a whisper. “What's it worth to y'all?” Honestly, we weren't sure, so we gave him Leroy Lewis' number.

News From

The Fire House Gallery



Arts Guild Struts Its Stuff in New Spring Venue



Junior by Arts Guild Member Mary Reynolds

**The Spring Exhibit of the Arts Guild
April 16-27 in The Fire House Gallery and
the Abbot & Stone Building
Artists' Reception, Friday, April 18, 7-9 pm**

It's the best time of year at the Gallery again – April! – time for the annual Spring Exhibit of our favorite exhibitors, the Arts Guild of Jefferson County. Known far and wide as an occasion to enjoy fine art, good food, and a terrific party, the Spring Exhibit brings artists and art lovers to little Louisville from all over the state and beyond.

This year's exhibit promises to continue

that successful tradition while introducing an important new twist.

Last year, the exhibit included the work of 50 artists, and, as a sign of the Arts Guild's expanding reach, over a third of them were living and working outside Jefferson County – some as far away as the West Coast. This year, the Arts Guild expects that expansion to continue, while still providing a welcome showcase for our talented Jefferson County artists.

The Spring Exhibit will also offer Louisvillians an opportunity to get to know something about incoming Gallery intern manager Dan Rekshan (see article below), who will have several of his oil paintings on display in the show.

But the big news for the Arts Guild this spring is *location, location, location!* "Even after the Gallery opened three years ago," says the Gallery's Helen Aikman, "the Guild was a little like the Israelites wandering in the desert. The event is simply too extensive to fit entirely in the Gallery, and the Guild has had to go from one vacant building on Broad Street to another to another to supplement the Gallery with the space needed for this wonderful event. Now, at last, it seems that they've found their Canaan!"

Ms. Aikman is alluding to the fact that starting this year the exhibit will finally be under one roof – in the Gallery and the spacious premises of the adjacent Abbot & Stone Building right in the heart of downtown.

This year, as in the past, the exhibit will grace both locations through its opening weekend. In the following week, a single representative piece by each exhibitor will hang in the Gallery through the show's close on April 27.

We understand, though, that it won't be long before the Arts Guild darkens the door of the Abbot & Stone Building again. With the change in management of the space formerly occupied by Southern Home Interiors, discussions are reportedly near conclusion between the Guild and the new proprietors of that space about establishing a dedicated permanent exhibit space the Arts Guild.

(More about the exciting changes at the Abbot & Stone Building in the next issue of *The Downtowner!*)

Friends and the Gallery are delighted by the prospect of having the Guild move in right next door. Meanwhile we look forward to seeing all of you out and about downtown for the Spring Exhibit!

Rekshan to Succeed Beard as Intern Manager

After an arduous search, Friends and the Gallery have successfully completed efforts to recruit their third intern manager. On June 1 our trusty right hand woman, Maiben Beard, will be replaced by intern manager and artist Dan Rekshan.

Explains Friends secretary Kathleen Galvin, who spearheaded the search along with Friends board chairman, Lil Easterlin, and president, Helen Aikman, "We made a deliberate effort to get the position announcement out to more colleges and universities this year, leveraging the Gallery's close ties to artists on numerous faculties. The results were gratifying – we had six very well qualified candidates from six different schools in three states. We looked at each candidate very closely and invited three finalists for visits to Louisville. It was a tough choice, but we are completely

thrilled to have Dan joining us."

Mr. Rekshan is a graduating senior at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland – a small liberal arts college famous for its *Great Books* curriculum. He is a prolific oil painter raised by two artist-parents.

If you didn't have a chance to meet Mr. Rekshan during his Louisville visit, you may be taken aback by his accent. Unlike his predecessor, Ms. Beard, Mr. Rekshan is something of a Yankee – born and raised in Marquette, Michigan – about as far north as you can get without either getting very cold and wet or setting your feet on Canadian soil. That doesn't dampen Mr. Rekshan's enthusiasm for his new position. Says Mr. Rekshan, "I couldn't be more excited about moving to Louisville. Marquette isn't much bigger and it's much more remote. Louisville seems really unique – I see so much here to paint. And the people have been really

nice to me." He looks forward to painting Louisville and Louisvillians as a way to get close to the community. Mr. Rekshan will take up residence over the Gallery in the last week of May. Till then you can learn more about him and his work on his website at www.rekshanart.com/Daniel/index.



New Intern Manager Dan Rekshan Chats with Gallery Supporter Leroy Lewis at Hurt Opening

Friends of Historic Downtown Louisville



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Kiwanis, Garden Club Azaleas Sell Out Early

When the page turns from March to April in the book of months, it must be azalea time in the CSRA. As always at this time of year, next week all of America will tune its HDTVs to Augusta National Golf Club for its favorite rite of spring, the Masters, and between swings everyone will *OOH* and *AAH* at the profusion of bright azalea blossoms along those emerald fairways. But nothing they'll see on the big screen could compare with the bustling scene at 8 am on Saturday, March 29th, in the Queensborough parking lot right here in little Louisville.

Once again this year, the Louisville Kiwanis Club teamed up with the Louisville Garden Club, with an assist from Queensborough National Bank and Trust, to offer Louisvillians a spectacular array of azaleas at bargain basement prices, and Louisville



Kiwanian Maiben Beard and Garden Club
Member Mary Frances Pilcher

turned out in force to take advantage of the deal. "It was total bedlam!" exclaimed Kiwanian and Garden Club member Lil Easterlin, pausing to catch her breath. "They swept through here like locusts!"

Donna Borders confirmed that the azaleas were basically sold out by 8:30. She laughed and whispered, "Of course, we all have our trunks full!"

By the time *The Downtowner* staff arrived on the scene at the respectable hour of 9 am, all that was left were a handful of handsome hanging ferns and tomato seedlings being sold by students from Jefferson County High School.

But a late arrival didn't mean we missed out on all the bright colors – no, indeed! The new, hot pink aprons worn by Garden Club Members continued to herald spring long after the azaleas were gone!

This Month

At The Pal . . .

The Pal's offerings for April were not available when this issue of *The Downtowner* went to print. For up-to-date information, call The Pal at 478.625.9998.

Show Times – Friday, Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday at 7 p.m.

. . . and The Bistro

- Friday and Saturday, Apr. 4&5 – Pete Love Party Weekend – Pete Previews his New CD
 - April 7-10 – Bistro closed for Spring Break
 - Friday, Apr. 11 – Velocity – New Pop Rock Band from JCHS
 - Saturday, Apr. 12 – Thomas Steele – Classic Acoustic Rock
 - Friday, Apr. 18 – Wrens Tornado Benefit Featuring Multiple Artists
 - Saturday, Apr. 19 – Ronnie Mullis Tribute to Elvis
- All Entertainment begins at 7 p.m.**