

Digging on Depot

a kaleidoscope of innovation, craft and entrepreneurship

When the time is right, a vision takes root. “I wasn’t afraid to be the only one on Depot,” said Cabell Tice of Orchard Coffee. “If you build a business focused on making something worthwhile, filling a niche and serving your local audience,” he said. “People will find you.” Recently celebrating their five-year anniversary, Tice speaks from a place of passion and enthusiasm for Waynesville’s latest blooming economic corridor having witnessed the Depot Street revival firsthand.

“Something that is not lost on me is that we took a chance on a side street and then Waynesville took a chance on us on a side street,” said Tice of Orchard’s off-the-beaten-path Depot Street locale.

The once lonely lane is now home to a kaleidoscope of independent small businesses abuzz with innovation, enthusiasm for craft and entrepreneurship.

Room with a Brew

@ 39 Depot Street

Stepping up to **Orchard Coffee** the first thing you notice is the incredible facade that houses the specialty coffee shop. The three-story Art Deco building from the 40's was once home to a photography studio. After moving to Waynesville in 2018, Cabell Tice was in search of just the right space to open his family business. Tice was drawn in by both the architecture and the opportunity to rehab the forgotten building. Looking past the cobwebs and outdated infrastructure from having been in a revolving "for sale" state for some forty-plus years, Tice saw more than a coffee shop. "To be in a building where we can have our business downstairs and live upstairs," Tice said, "It's a throwback to the way that people used to do business...where the shopkeep was kind of always around."

As multilayered and interesting as the architecture, so is the Orchard experience itself. In addition to serving specialty coffee and scratch made goods, Orchard added "listening room" style shows to their menu. Intimate. Rare. Experiential. "We've had some great artists that you could say don't belong in a space like this," said Tice recalling talent such as members of The Lumineers, Blind Pilot and Chris Staples to name a few. "It's really exciting to have the opportunity to turn our small space into a live music venue 3-4 times

"Seeing this building with the corner windows up top, the circle window in the kitchen upstairs and the glass brick," Tice trailed off, gesturing around him. "I loved bringing something to life that had been forgotten for so long."

"We're a people-first coffee shop." That work ethos has appealed not only to customers but also to their employee base. Over time the Orchard team has grown from Tice and his mother working every shift to a talented team of eight (not including themselves). "It's really cool to have not just shown up and opened something," said Tice, "but now we've added something to the community—like jobs. That's where I think the story is."

Having seen Depot Street come to life over the last five years, Tice speaks enthusiastically about the growing number of neighboring businesses popping up as Depot winds gently from Main Street down towards historic Frog Level. In fact, he believes so strongly in the potential this corridor holds that Tice invested in a second property to house his craft roastery and hopes to eventually hold coffee tastings there. "Everyone on Depot is doing something so interesting and different," Tice said. "You could spend several hours popping in and out of completely different, unique experiences."

a year," said Tice, seizing the opportunity to fill a specific niche in Waynesville.

Reflecting on Orchard's fifth anniversary, "Ultimately we wanted to create something that would be warm and welcoming and kind and a space for everybody," Tice said.



—Photo courtesy of Cabell Tice



AWL IN

@ 41 Depot Street

Cross the threshold of 41 Depot Street, in an equally stunning building, **Axe & Awl Leatherworks** sits next door to Orchard Coffee. Husband and wife team, Spencer and Courtney Tetrault, are the stoutly makers behind the handmade leather goods business. You're likely to spy one or both of the founding members leaning over a table, meticulously at work. The upscale shop is part retail, part workroom on the first floor with an apothecary on the second floor. Handmade leather goods are merchandised beautifully throughout the space alongside goods from other local makers.

"It has been about ten years now," said Courtney. Spencer, a former firefighter in the City of Asheville, and Courtney, once a full-time medic at Mission Hospital, are no strangers to envisioning something out of nothing.

"Hobby tinkering in 2014 went in the direction of making," said Spencer, when (by 2015) the demand grew beyond friends, family and co-workers. That's when the two decided to give Axe & Awl Leatherworks a proper go.

"Early on it was never about generating income," said Spencer. "It was always about let's try something new, now let's make this or let's make that or try this skill."

Axe and Awl is but one of many small businesses cited by authorities such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics to have been positively driven by the pandemic. "COVID hit in 2020 and we didn't know what would happen," said Spencer. "Our e-commerce business continued to thrive." Courtney described the momentum as driving them to pursue a brick-and-mortar business. "Not a lot of people were buying business property at that time," she said, "but we had an established e-commerce brand with demonstrated potential to grow."

Fast-forward to 2022—hundreds and hundreds of handcrafted items later, sold out trade shows, and a robust e-commerce business—the couple made the leap to open their brick-and-mortar store with a proper on-site workshop.

"We've seen this really piqued interest in all of the angles of what we do," said Spencer.

Success has enabled the duo to reinvest their earnings into another small business as partners in Cultivate Garden Shop located just down the way. “And collaborative projects,” said Courtney, “like partnering with other local makers to sell their premium items in our store.” Axe & Awl is contributing to the viability of the economic corridor, growing their team of two to eight employees.

“One of the lessons we’ve learned from many other entrepreneurs and business owners, is about going with your gut,” said Spencer. “Taking a risk and not delaying decision-making really carries a tremendous amount of weight.”

Courtney echoed Spencer’s business acumen.

“We’ve always been crafty and we’re hardworking folks,” she said. “We thought, we have a vision and we’re going to execute it.”

In addition to traditional retail, Axe & Awl hosts events such as their annual Holiday Night Market, private parties and small-group workshops. For this team, everything comes down to building community. “We’re hosting a private wallet workshop with nine guys who take a yearly motorcycle ride with their church group,” said Spencer. “For the last 3 years, they have come by as one of their stops along the way.” More than merch, Axe & Awl Leatherworks is focused on fostering unforgettable moments with their growing base of customers.

What do these optimistic, invested entrepreneurs hope to see as Depot Street continues to grow? “It feels really good to see the fly shop open...Single Tree (restaurant)...and now Sawdust & Me just opened,” said Spencer. “It’s an exciting time to be on Depot.”

“How great would it be to see the whole downtown become one big, thriving, walkable set of blocks,” said Courtney, “that build one upon another.”

Open Wednesday-Saturday, 10am-5pm // (828) 246-0996





TURNING SUCCESS FROM GENERATIONS OF HARD WORK

@ 136 Depot Street

“This was originally my great-grandfather’s service station,” said Cathey Bolton, gesturing around. “He opened around 1928.” For decades, locals relied on her great-grandfather, grandfather and uncle for car repairs at Walker’s Station, a staple in the community.

“It’s a fairly large place,” she said. “We always wanted a high-end restaurant here as well as a combination retail space with my pottery studio.” Bolton’s vision for the multifaceted business came to life with **Corner Station Olive Oil, Third Bay Filling Station café and Single Tree** restaurant on the top floor while building her clay works studio downstairs, all located at 136 Depot Street.

“I opened my first studio and gallery at

The legacy of the successful small businesses that existed in the space prior is not lost on Bolton. “Generations of my family have raised successful businesses on this corner,” Bolton said, “that drives me to constantly innovate and challenge myself.”

another location in 2008,” said Bolton. “It was the worst time to open a small business, especially one that wasn’t offering necessities.” Through sheer grit and what Bolton calls being “stubborn,” she carved out a name for herself in the clay works industry by focusing on creating utilitarian product lines that she sold wholesale to other small businesses. Being a new mom at the time, failure wasn’t an option.

Being ever curious and willing to experiment with marrying her pottery with other passions, Bolton dove into the gourmet foods world.

“Food is my love language,” Bolton said.



“I was already doing a pottery line specifically for olive oils so combining my passion for cooking with my retail space was a natural expansion.”

The concept for Corner Station Olive Oil was born. It is now home to 90 different olive oils and balsamics and over 250 different spices and seasonings. You will find other local artisanal products from agripreneurs like award-winning Copper Pot & Wooden Spoon in the shop. Bolton is keenly aware that her success has been built through partnerships and that spirit is evident in how she does business.

How did Third Bay Filling Station café come into being? “We had this extensive inventory in the retail shop,” mused Bolton, “I thought, how am I going to get people to understand the different spices like Turkish kofte and sumac (for example).” Realizing she could make aioli and put it on a sandwich or roast chicken with a dry

rub. “As people were eating it and saying ‘this is really good...what’s in it?’” said Bolton. “Boom right here.” Sold.

“The appetite for something unique is growing in Waynesville,” said Bolton.

“The palate of our customers also inspires our inventory.”

Enter stage left—summer of 2022 marked the grand opening of Singletree Heritage Kitchen in the airy, light-filled Walker Service Station building. Josh Weeks, founder and chef, is the talent driving the concept of bringing together locally inspired food, community stewardship and people.

Bolton was familiar with Weeks’ food, having frequently dined at a restaurant where he served as executive chef. “When Josh found us,” gushed Bolton, “it was a dream come true.”

After a distinguished career in other kitchens, Weeks was ready to open his own restaurant and Bolton was more than happy to share her space. “We knew his background and his vision,” said Bolton. “There’s such an intentionality to his food.”

With a multifaceted business housed in a historic building, rich with generations of family history, where does Bolton see her ventures going and growing? “I would love to see a walking corridor expansion to Depot’s infrastructure,” said Bolton. “It would be amazing for people to explore from one interesting business to another.”



Corner Station Olive Oil // Open Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-5:30pm // (828) 246-6868

THE LANGUAGE OF TREES

@ 147 Depot Street

For ages, poets, philosophers and ecologists have mused that trees speak to one another. If trees do indeed talk, Rob Huffman is listening.

With each new tree or bit of wood that comes into the shop at **Sawdust & Me**, “Rob actually starts becoming friends with the wood,” said Debbie Bragg of her business partner. “He says, ‘look at those worm holes, look at how old this is’ and that’s his gift.” Huffman added, “We have, for example, a red oak cookie with 225 rings on it.” Noting growth rings that indicate the tree was around when Andrew Jackson was president, rings that indicated the tree survived forest fire, knots and burls that tell other stories.

The cottage-style charmer at 147 Depot Street, at the corner of Depot and Haywood, is nearly a hundred years old,” said Bragg. “We started ripping the layers off to reveal the character of the building—and then built back what we felt represents our vision for the space.”

Having spent 32 years working in general contracting and interiors, Bragg’s eye for both function and form is evident throughout the shared workshop, design and retail space. “We love to recycle, repurpose and “relove” the wood,” said Bragg of the live edge furniture and reclaimed wood pieces on display. “Never give up (on wood)—don’t throw it away, keep it, there’s going to be a purpose for it.”

From getting calls about downed trees to purchasing, Bragg and Huffman intend to maintain sourcing their wood locally.

In addition to custom woodwork, Bragg operates the full-service interior design arm of the business consulting on projects that include renovations and new builds. “Right now, I have several projects in Lake Junaluska,” said Bragg.

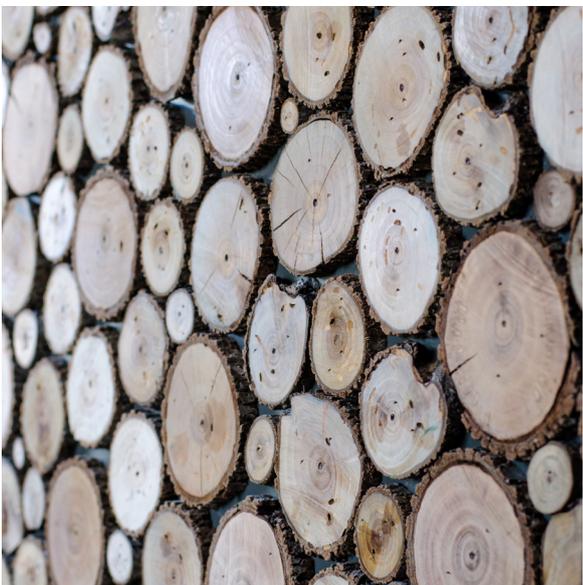
What potential do Bragg and Huffman see on the horizon for Depot Street? “We’re not on Main Street proper nor are we technically in the Frog Level Historic District,” said Bragg. “We’re somewhere in between which offers an opportunity to brand our own identity and put ourselves on the map.” Bragg and Huffman’s idea for forming the “Gas Light District” was born. Slowly exterior lighting on theirs and surrounding businesses are being replaced with lantern-style fixtures.



“Back in Franklin, Tennessee, I came upon a piece of sassafras that was on the historic battleground of Franklin,” said Huffman. “So in turning the wood and making it I saw a little lead bullet in there... that is a taste of history!”

Bragg and Huffman also like to be supportive and mindful neighbors “You can’t succeed without collaborating with other business owners... your neighbors...to support each other,” said Bragg. “So, we’re like, (to our customers) you want leather straps to go on that wood? Check out Axe & Awl Leatherworks, just up the street.” Looking for houseplants to bring life to your newly remodeled home or aprons with leather straps for your new kitchen? Bragg sends her customers right down to Cultivate Garden Shop.

Intentionality is the spirit that Bragg and Huffman bring to the revival of Depot as their small business takes root.



DEPOT STREET REVIVAL

Breathing new life into existing structures is in direct alignment with trending asset-based community development taking place in rural towns across North Carolina.

From the heart of Main Streets to the “veins and artery” side streets that make up small towns, revitalization and redevelopment planning efforts aim to capitalize on what a community has as a jumping-off point for strengthening economic vitality. These street-level solutions are rooted in local contexts, based in community strengths and rely on the grit of entrepreneurial partnerships for transformative placemaking. There’s no place this is more evident than the Depot Street revival.



Credits.

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