



Gardner-Collier Jewelry Store has been family-owned for the past 86 years. Carol Collier has pioneered custom jewelry making and designing for the store. Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Jewelry store sells history

BY SHANNON WALTER
Staff Reporter

Historical Places

Gardner-Collier Jewelry Store on The Square has been family owned for the past 86 years, boasting custom-made jewelry and gems from all over the world.

The store was established in 1924 when Ray P. Gardner bought into the Miller Jewelry Company, according to the 1986 Adair County Historic Inventory. Gardner's daughter Carol Collier said she spent a lot of time at the store as a little girl after her father bought out the company in 1936. Carol's husband, Bruce, bought into the store in 1950, which is when the name was changed to Gardner-Collier.

"One of the fun things about the jewelry business before Wal-Mart and other modern stores came about — we used to sell custom jewelry at a dollar a piece, and it was all boxed and gift wrapped free of charge," Carol said. "I can wrap a gift faster than anybody."

Carol's father was a watchmaker, which is mostly what the store carried in the 1930s and 1940s. In the 1960s, Gardner bought Harrington's Jewelry Store, which was in the building where Washington Street Java Co. is now located. Carol said many of the antique cases in the store now are from Harrington's.

Carol said the jewelry store has been robbed a few times, but the incidents have all been resolved in their favor.

"A long time ago somebody broke the

front window and took whatever — some rings," she said. "I guess his conscience caught up with him eventually, because he mailed them back. But he mailed them to the wrong jewelry store."

Cook's Jewelry Store on the opposite side of The Square was robbed, and the thief attempted to sell the jewelry to Gardner-Collier, but the crime had been reported so the robber was caught, Carol said.

"We had a man steal two Rolex watches," she said. "He wanted to try them on, and then he took off, but Rolex watches are all numbered, and he was caught trying to sell them in St. Louis. So we were lucky each time."

When Bruce and Carol bought the store in 1950, the store moved its focus from watches to jewelry and gems. Carol said she studied jewelry finishing, jewelry making and gem identification to work at the store. She said these classes are very important for jewelers to be able to help their customers in the best way.

"It's very easy to identify gems incorrectly," she said. "There are five 'C's' to recognize a good diamond. If somebody is advertising a really good price on a diamond, you ought

to see it first because it may not be the best color, it may have visible flaws, and there are a lot of things that factor into the value of a stone."

Carol pioneered custom jewelry making and designing for the store in the 1970s, which completely changed their business. They have several casts so customers can choose a piece that is perfect for them.

"If you had an idea for a piece of jewelry, you could draw it up, bring it to the store and we would custom make it," Bruce said.

Bruce and Carol have traveled to Bangkok and Hong Kong to buy gemstones.

"Our first trip to Hong Kong was in 1974, which was a time of real depression for Hong Kong," Bruce said. "We went to stores cutting opals that we wanted. They opened the safe and started sweeping out packages of opals for a very low price. They gave us so many that we still have some. There were stone cutters everywhere, and it was an interesting introduction to a very different world."

The historical beauty of the store is very important to Bruce, but he said he is more concerned with the business going on inside the store rather than the beauty of the façade. He said he likes the canopies in front of his business because it keeps his customers out of bad weather and close to the store windows.

"Even though they're not attractive, it keeps people out of the rain," he said. "I'm a business person, and I think the most beau-

tiful parking lot is Wal-Mart because it's full of cars. A non-business person will disagree with me. But we want cars — you shouldn't be able to see the building, because we want cars in front."

Carol and Bruce are both retired now, but Bruce still goes to the store every day for about an hour to help Bryan, who bought into the store in 1978 to share ownership with his parents. Bryan started helping at the store in high school and became interested in jewelry making, so he went to the Gemological Institute of America and became a gemologist.

"I worked for my parents for many summers, and then I just stayed," Bryan said.

Like his parents, Bryan said he thinks custom jewelry and design sets their store apart.

"We do all of our own setting here in the store," he said. "In other words, our jewelry doesn't come in a set. We buy the diamonds and gems separately and set them ourselves. Most other stores buy a finished product and sell it."

Bryan has two children, but he said they are interested in endeavors other than jewelry. He said he plans to manage the store until he retires, but he doesn't know if the store will stay in his family.

There are other Gardner-Collier jewelry stores in Ottumwa and Oskaloosa, Iowa. The Colliers also own the Northtown Shopping Center and the Downtown Cinema 8.

Sniffer Chief rocks banquet hall



BY RUSS BECKMAN
Reviewer

Until Feb. 4, the Journal Printing Building was just a quaint little banquet hall that was a good location for banquets and formal dances. That all changed when it hosted the annual Winterfest concert. Bands Sniffer Chief and The Creepers rocked that place.

Underneath the banquet hall is an underground bar and stage that reminds the audience of an unfinished basement: A perfect setting for a rock show. Sniffer Chief was the first band to take the stage. The four-piece band consisted of Kirksville's Aron Jackson on vocals and rhythm guitar, Shelby Kramer on lead guitar, Denver Nichols on bass guitar and Dillon Nichols on drums. They played mostly stoner rock, which can be classified as grungy-sounding hard rock music.

Sniffer Chief played very well. They had good synchronization and two tempos to their music: fast and faster. This created a wall of sound that made the audience want to bang their heads and jump up and down. It was clear the band was having a good time — they exuded energy and cracked jokes with the audience and among themselves. It created a feeling of community down in the old basement.

The band enjoys playing the music for music's sake. Jackson said he doubts they've made any money and that he equates it to gambling.

"You try not to keep track of the ups and downs because you're going to keep doing it anyways," Jackson said.

Sniffer Chief's best qualities were in the details. For instance, the lead guitarist often threw in impressive solos or riffs at the



The band Sniffer Chief played fast and caused the audience to want to bang their heads. Russ Beckman/Index

end of a song. When the band covered Thin Lizzy's "Jail Break," the nuances were impressive. They seemed to know every intimate detail of the song and tried to pay respect to each one.

But there were aspects of the performance that needed work. The lead singer was great but the backup singers were off-key and distracting. Furthermore, Sniffer Chief did not utilize their talented drummer. When he played, he used the drums and cymbals very creatively and improved the energy of the music. More drum solos and fills would increase the intensity of the music, a vastly important aspect of playing rock 'n' roll.

Sniffer Chief clearly loves playing the music and does so with a great amount of talent, but lacks the ambition to go onto bigger and better things. Currently, they have five original songs available on their MySpace page.

The Creepers, second on the stage, is a local band that is

somewhat of a Kirksville super group. Each member of the band also is in at least one other band, but they sometimes get together to have a good time. They have a deep pool of talent and with a more serious approach at their career, they could become much bigger.

The band is made up of local artists Nick Gorham on the bass and vocals, Willy Newell on the keyboard, Mike Tripp on guitar and vocals and Joey Crifo on the drums. They played in a style similar to Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, sometimes playing soft ballads but also turning up the volume and tempo to rock out. Their set list consisted of slightly altered covers from popular bands that sounded so good it was as if The Creepers had written them, despite the band's lack of practice together.

Drummer Joey Crifo said that out of their entire set list, all but two of their songs had never been practiced. Crifo said the band usually decides what to play only nights before the show via e-mail.

"Someone will just shout out a tune and if it sounds good, then we'll do it," Crifo said.

Two of their best songs were "Dear Prudence" and "Helter Skelter" by The Beatles. The Creepers did a great job with the instrumental halves of the songs. "Dear Prudence" had a delicate balance of soft cymbals, keyboard and subtle guitars that really conveyed the personal feeling of the song. The cover of "Helter Skelter" was slightly different than the original. This time, the song was performed at an in-your-face volume, and the guitars, keyboard and drums were constantly competing to make the most noise in a way that could be described as a controlled cacophony.

However, the lack of practice was evident in the vocal portion of the songs. The lead singer was usually on key, but similar to Sniffer Chief, they lacked any sort of four-part harmony that the original songs did. Furthermore, the instruments drowned out the lyrics and the audience was deprived of the vocal talent of the lead singer.

The Creepers were a fantastic band and should take themselves more seriously.

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