

Pittsboro's Reclaimed Spaces

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Baristas
Terrance Ross is a staple at the Chatham Marketplace's Deli.



Chatham Marketplace

The Chatham Marketplace is located in the old Chatham Mill just off Hillsboro Street in Pittsboro. The building was built in the mid 1920s, manufacturing silk labels for textiles until 1996. At one point it was the largest silk label mill in the world and was the main industry in Pittsboro.

The mill now houses a mix of event spaces, offices, and businesses including the Chatham Marketplace, a food cooperative that has been in operation since 2006. Chatham Marketplace sells organic and locally sourced produce, grocery, deli, bakery, bulk and dairy items. It has a cafe for made to order items and a hot and cold lunch bar. Evan Diamond is the Chatham Marketplace manager.

"It's a little quirky being located in the space," Diamond said. "Refrigerators and displays have to be built around pillars. You have to be creative and repurpose the spaces. That's part of the charm."

The benefit is hard wood floors, an incredible front porch, and a business that fits its rural, quirky atmosphere.

"Pittsboro has a good variety of small, independent, businesses," Diamond said. "There's a lot of good options and a co-op which is unusual for a town of this size. It's a beautiful community."

Customer
Alicia Castrogiovanni travels from Raleigh to visit the Chatham Marketplace.



General Manager
Evan Diamond moved from Pittsburgh to manage Chatham Marketplace.



Wendy Dufour co-owns French Connections with her husband, Jacques.

French Connections

The building at 178 Hillsboro St. that houses French Connections was once home to the Thompson family, who worked as cotton farmers. Built around 1900, the house used to be located on Thompson Street just around the corner from where it currently sits. The building was moved in the 1920s when the family donated land.

Wendy and Jacques Dufour acquired the property in 2000 soon after moving from West Africa. Wendy was a Morehead Scholar at UNC-Chapel Hill and the couple wanted to return to the area. The couple rehabilitated the house which required a new roof, porch, and lifts to raise the old floors which were sagging. In October of that year, they opened French Connections, which sells French antiques, African art, and a large selection of imported fabrics. They also sell a wide variety of yard art which is displayed in the front yard.

"It's about quality of life," Jacques Dufour said. "Having a store like this in a town like Pittsboro isn't easy. We could have opened in a larger city. But we had had enough of living in a big town. Here we are five minutes from town, our four kids were minutes away from the store when they were at school. And it's not everywhere that you can leave all this stuff outside. That type of quality of life is what you find in a small town like Pittsboro."



Employee Skylar Walsh sorts through the large collection of fabrics for sale at French Connections.



French Connections is in the former home of the Thompson family which was built around 1900.



French Connections sells a variety of african art such as these baskets.

Postal Fish



Postal Fish lead bartender Dani Vandermark also provides lunch service.

The Postal Seafood Company is a venture conceived by Executive Chef James Clark and Sous Chef Bill Hartley. The duo chose the to open the restaurant in the old post office building on Salisbury Street in downtown Pittsboro. The project involved revamping the former post office into a full service restaurant. A prep kitchen, new bathrooms, and an open-view kitchen were all installed.

"The biggest draw [for the building] was that we wanted a space that was unique, that had history, and stories to be told. Before mail delivery, that's where everyone met. We want to create a place where people feel comfortable to meet and dine with their neighbors," Hartley said.

The restaurant uses locally sourced foods for the menu and they visit the North and South Carolina coasts twice a week to procure fish, oysters, clams, and shrimp. This year, the restaurant was named by the News and Observer as one of the 10 best new restaurants in the Triangle.

"Pittsboro is unique and unique business fill this community," Hartley said. "We want to support local businesses because that's how you support the community. One of our striving goals is to support the local community as best we can."

Postal Fish offers a range of fresh, local seafood dishes such as this order of oysters and homemade chips.



Elizabeth's Pizza

Before opening in Pittsboro in 2004, owner Ahmed Hassan and his former partner operated a restaurant in Siler City. They found customers would come to Siler City from Pittsboro to purchase their pizza and they realized there was a need in Pittsboro. They located a former gas station on the corner of Hillsboro and Thompson Street and went to work reclaiming the space for Elizabeth's Pizza in Pittsboro.

"It was very challenging because it wasn't equipped to be a restaurant," Hassan said. "We had to put in the right plan and make the changes. We had to maneuver around things. It was very challenging and we try to do our best to make that spot a good place for our customers. And we are always trying to improve ourselves."

The restaurant celebrated its 15th anniversary last week, an achievement Hassan credits to his strong customer base and the efforts of his amazing staff.

"Even though new fancy restaurants are opening in Pittsboro, we are still strong," Hassan said. "That is because of the support of the customers and the hard work of our employees. I want to thank every employee and customer that walks through the door."



Elizabeth's Pizza owner Ahmed Hassan credits his great staff for his success.

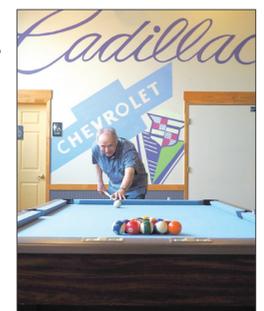
Pittsboro Roadhouse

Standing near Pittsboro's traffic circle, next door to the former hospital called the Mathiesen Clinic, Pittsboro Roadhouse occupies the building that used to be Justice Motors. The building was a car dealership for decades under at least two different owners. When Wheeling Chevrolet closed, the space was then used by two different businesses. In the front half of the building was the Pittsboro General Store and the back portion housed a repair shop for emergency vehicles like ambulances and fire trucks. The General Store took over the rear portion, investing a lot of funding to refurbish the back into a dining room. But then the recession hit.

In 2012, Greg and Maria Lewis bought the property and began remodeling it, knocking down walls, redoing floors, installing a sound system, and generally bringing the building up to code. The result was the Pittsboro Roadhouse, a restaurant in downtown Pittsboro. "We had space challenges," Lewis said. "We had to try and figure out what to do with an area that wasn't meant to be what we wanted it to be. The county and the town were really helpful and made the transition much easier by working with us."



Pittsboro Roadhouse owner Greg Lewis (left) and chef Erik Monroe are preparing to serve lunch.



Pool shark Jimmie Vaughn prepares to break at the Pittsboro Roadhouse. The building used to house Justice Motors.



Snuffy Smith of Pittsboro (left) and Ralph "Screech" Swager have been working to get the parking lot ready for the Grand Opening of Davenport's Cafe Diem.

Davenport's Cafe Diem

This quirky, steampunk-inspired coffee shop is returning to Pittsboro at its new location on Hillsboro Street across from the old Chatham Mill. General Manager Emma Lee Cabrera's business had previously been located in downtown and with the help of Pittsboro resident "Snuffy" Smith, is reclaiming what used to be a restaurant attached to a motel for her shop, which is scheduled to open in March. The restaurant and hotel were known by several names over the years. When the mill was open and 15-501 through Pittsboro was the main route north, visitors from all over the country to drop into the restaurant. Orders for food would be delivered daily to the Chatham Mill across the street. To the best of Smith's knowledge, the motel was the first in Chatham County.

Smith acquired the property "the day before the depression started," referencing the economic downturn from a decade ago. Smith, with his wife Pam, owns several properties in Pittsboro's historic district, most notably the Beggars and Choosers building which now houses the Screaming Vintage shop.

"I've been restoring old buildings for years," Smith said. "I like saving them... recycling...if there's anything to salvage, I'll save it. We love old Pittsboro."