

The Columbia Paper

Entrepreneurs revive red brick white elephant

August 17, 2016 by LIZZY WEISS



The Bartlett House on Route 66 in Ghent has reopened as a cafe. Photo by Parry Teasdale

GHENT—On Route 66 in the hamlet new life has been breathed into Bartlett House, the 146-year-old brick building with its name painted on two sides in large block lettering.

The four-story building, which has been unoccupied for over a decade, now houses a kitchen, bakery, and café on the ground and second floors, with office space on the third floor and two staff apartments on the fourth. The whole enterprise is under the leadership of business partners Damien Janowicz, Lev Glazman, and Alina Roytberg.

Since its opening on July 28, the Bartlett House parking lot has been filled Thursdays through Sundays with cars of local and out-of-town visitors alike curious about the transformation that has been underway since November 2015, when construction on the old railroad hotel began.

The second level of the four-story building, where the cafe is located, operates as the main public area with a coffee counter, a deli case of prepared foods and an assortment of various kitchen oddities available for purchase. The seating at the cafe is both indoors and second-story porch.

Nearby Chatham and Hudson have seen a recent surge of new businesses, but that trend hasn't been apparent in Ghent. But Mr. Janowicz says it was the building's unique location and character that originally spoke to him and his partners.

"Living in Boston, we drove by this building countless times," he said in a recent interview, adding that he originally imagined the space serving as a commissary kitchen and bakery for the hotel he's developing on Warren Street in Hudson. "But there was an energy here and a feeling of a space that had been through a lot. There was such a need to make this something bigger than what we thought it would be."

Mr. Janowicz, who is from New Hampshire and previously was general manager of the Cape Arundel Inn and Resort and the Kennebunkport Inn, ME, emphasized the location of the Bartlett House's as a crossroads between Chatham and Hudson on Route 66, which worked in conjunction with his vision for the creation of a communal gathering place.

His partners, Mr. Gkazman and Ms. Roytberg, founders of the soap and beauty aids business Fresh.

"We realized this really could be a place where the community could get together—not as a full-scale restaurant, but just a casual place to come and get a cup of coffee or pick up a beautiful baked bread or have a burger for dinner," he said. "Once we got in that frame of mind, there was no stopping us."

Janowicz and his partners commissioned contractor George Lagonia for the renovation, which was completed in just nine months. Given the building's place on the National Registry of Historic Places, Mr. Janowicz stressed the importance of preserving as much of the original integrity of the building as possible during construction.

"We didn't come in and knock down all of the walls and put in a bunch of modern furniture," he said. "We delicately took the window frames off, built a new steel structure, and put the same window frames back in."

Much of the wood from the original floors remains intact, and where floorboards had to be replaced, Mr. Lagonia's team used reclaimed wood. During construction, a banner hung outside of the building displaying a quote from Antoine Lavoisier: "Nothing is lost, everything is transformed."

Constructed in 1870, the building originally served as a railroad hotel, and some new customers of Bartlett House recounted a time when the ground floor, now a commercial kitchen and bakery, functioned as a local bar and in the beginning of this century a few rooms were used by a real estate broker. But it was the not the bustling hub it once had been.

"It feels so good to have people in the building," Mr. Janowicz said. "We're really grateful to be able to connect with the community."

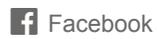
Beyond a communal gathering place, he hopes it will engage with the local community by eventually offering cooking classes and children's art programs. Additionally, he stressed the importance of using local produce in the Bartlett House kitchen.

The café has developed a business relationship with Starling Yards, a family farm in Red Hook. Nearly all of Bartlett House's produce, including a special blend of salad greens, will come from a plot dedicated to the business, which hopes to maintain a seasonal menu throughout the year.

With 19 employees, Bartlett House is not currently at full operation, but Mr. Janowicz said he hopes that the cafe and kitchen will be open seven days a week for breakfast, lunch, and dinner sometime this fall.

Currently the Bartlett House is open Thursday through Sunday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Share this:



Posted in News

permalink [<https://www.columbiapaper.com/2016/08/entrepreneurs-revive-red-brick-white-elephant/>]