

Visionaries reclaim Lebanon's century-old Arcade

*Duo stirs architectural
treasure from its slumbers
in corner of the Square*

STORY AND PHOTOS by KEN BECK

Once the crown jewel of the Lebanon Square, the Arcade awaits like buried treasure to be uncovered, restored and polished to its rightful place of grandeur.

It's now apparent the Arcade's rediscovery has come, and restoration is about to begin via a dream team of Lebanon's Hal Bone, president and owner of Horizon Construction & Development, and architect Mike Manous of Manous Design.

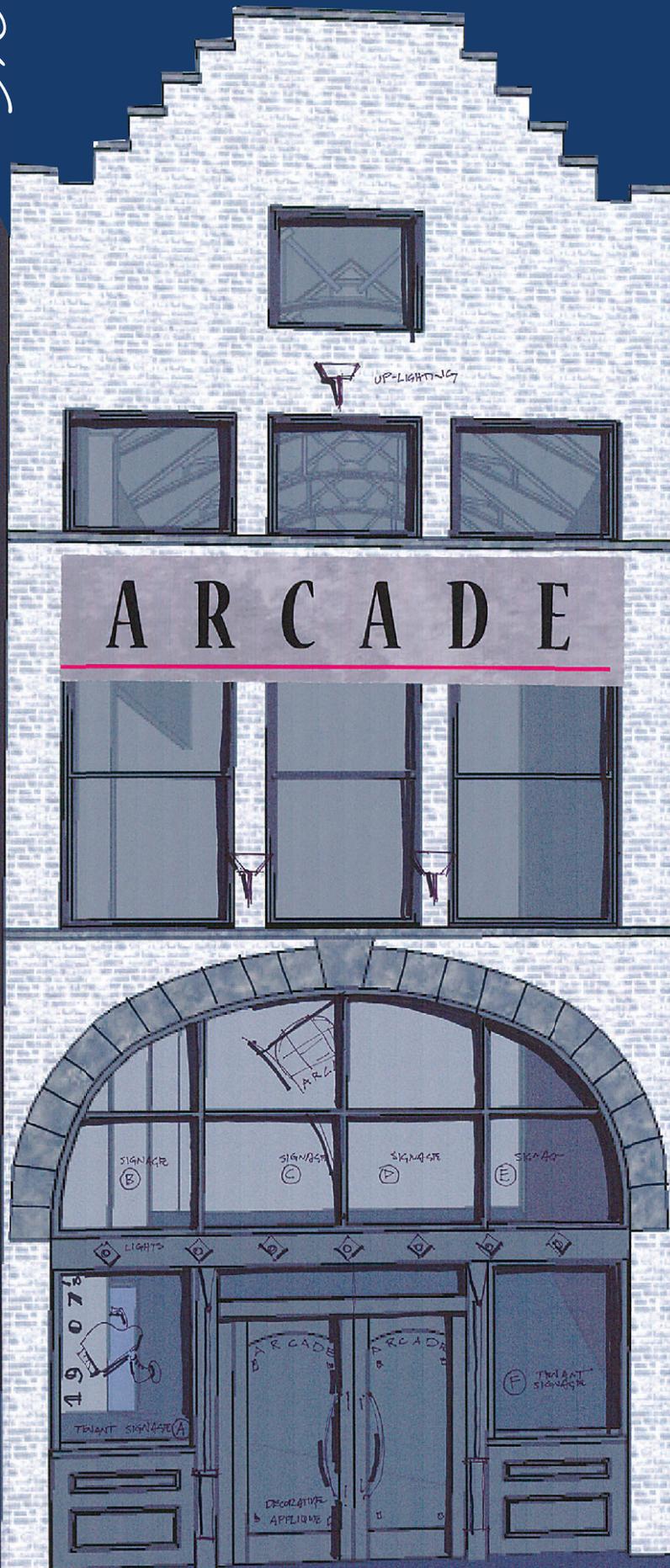
Manous, who restored the main building on the former Castle Heights Military Academy campus into Lebanon City Hall, as well as the D.E. Mitchell House, walked through the Arcade about a decade ago and left spellbound.

"I love the history of our community. When we lost a dear friend in the McFadden Auditorium (that building on the Heights campus was demolished in mid-2010), I was not going to let this opportunity slip by when it came up," says Manous. "The Arcade has been on my radar screen for a long time. I knew how significant it was and how rare in terms of architectural design and planning.

"Phyllis McCullough took me up there one day, probably about 10 years ago, and I just fell in love. I saw what it was. It was like walking back in time to an old city center, akin to some of the train stations I have seen in Europe. 'Wow! This is all still here,' I thought, and it's so easy to see the remnants of the past etched in the floor and the artifacts that are left. If we are successful, I think it's gonna be a win for the community and everybody involved."

Tucked away in a quarter acre of the southeast corner of the Square, the two-story, 23,400-square-foot, brick building has worn its name well for the past 101 years.

However, unless you're 50 or older and grew up in Lebanon, you most likely would not know the amazing piece of architecture that exists behind its austere outer shell. A large section of the structure has re-



If things go as planned for Mike Manous and Hal Bone, the new face to the Lebanon Arcade will look something like this. A highlight will be the exposure of the original stone arch. Architectural rendering by Manous Design

mained practically out of sight and out of mind for the past 40 years.

The richest and most wondrous delights of the Arcade, its skylights in a vaulted ceiling and the upstairs rooms, have been denied to the public since 1968, other than a few brief occasions in the late 1990s and early part of this decade.

Ironically, when R.P. and J.T. McClain opened the Arcade on Nov. 1, 1909, at 142 Public Square, they christened it “the Busy Store on the Corner.” Their McClain Brothers Store served as the anchor, but other businesses thrived on the ground floor as well, including (Neal) McClain & Cerruti tailors, Bain Brothers and C.B. Brown Clothing. On the second floor above were Dr. W.F. Prichard (a dentist) and the Cumberland Rough Lumber Company, while Miss Medora Mahaffy operated a dressmaking parlor.

The McClain Brothers proclaimed in their grand opening newspaper advertisement: *We are proud of our new home, and we want you to meet us there. We want you to know us and our goods better, for we are certain they are the best your money will buy. Our prices are marked in plain figures and are the same to all. If there is anything wrong with an article you buy from us, don't fail to tell us.*

The ad also promoted their ladies' rest room (toilet in our building) as well as touted their suit, millinery and shoe departments.

For six decades shoppers and clients entered the Arcade lobby beneath a stone arch. Once inside, patrons could turn left into the first-floor businesses, but over their heads, all the way to the top of the structure, oh, what a luxurious sight. A succession of metal arches supported the roof where the entire ceiling was covered with panes of glass which allowed 100 percent heavenly sunlight to penetrate the great hallway.

(As for stormy days, old newspaper clippings report citizens saying the rain pounding upon the glass sounded like “a beehive.” Either a storm with strong winds or hailstones broke the windows at some time, and only six skylights were replaced. The rest of the ceiling was rebuilt with wood.)

Thus, imagine a prototype of sorts of today's shopping mall that also served as a shelter for pedestrians from rain or storm, a gathering place for friends to talk over the news of the day or make plans for the morrow. Near the back of this covered, 20-foot-wide by 103-foot-long lobby, a wide stairway with banisters rose to the second floor, where for years numerous Lebanon civic and social clubs held their meetings and banquets in one of the largest rooms available in town and where a beloved optometrist, Dr. Frank Baddour, maintained his practice.

“I remember it well, as a small child climbing those steps to go up to Dr. Baddour's office at the top of the steps,” says Jo Palmer Beard. “I also remember my mother, who was in the Oakland Home Demonstration Club, as she and her club would serve lunch to some of the men's civic clubs. I remember helping Mother serve up there.

“My best memory is my first date with my husband at the Jaycees Christmas banquet on Dec. 16, 1948. I had just met him, and he invited me to go with him. And I remember that good smell that came out of Shannon's Drug Store, a clean fresh smell,” said Beard.

“I remember going up there to banquets. There was no other place as we didn't have a country club or a room large enough, so



From left, Jimmy and Phyllis McCullough have passed along 101 years of history, in the form of the Lebanon Arcade, to builder-developer Hal Bone and architect Mike Manous. The two-story, brick Arcade opened for business on Nov. 1, 1909, in the southeast corner of the Square.

the clubs met there and had banquets and Christmas parties,” said Terrijean Eatherly Crowell, whose father, Terry H. Eatherly, and grandfather, Tim H. Eatherly, owned the Arcade with Nathan G. Robertson and his family from 1913 to 1968. “They had Kuhn's, a five-and-dime-store, downstairs. It was a neat little old store, and it had a soda fountain, and you could buy a sandwich for a dime.”

Jack Howard relates that his dentist father, Dr. Maurice Stone Howard, had his office in the Arcade balcony from about 1919 to 1922, and that Kuhn's was where school children purchased their books.

“We used to buy our books there when I was in grade school, about 1933 to 1939,” said Howard. “During World War II, when you went into the Arcade to the back, that was where you got your ration stamps for gas, shoes and sugar.”

Glenda Baddour Palmer, whose father, Dr. Baddour, practiced optometry in Lebanon from the early 1920s to the early 1960s, believes her father kept his office upstairs in the Arcade from the 1940s until 1961. She and her sister would stop by his office in the afternoon after school for change to buy sweets, but she particularly recalls the food counter in Kuhn's.

“Everybody would cut through the back door of Kuhn's to Kroger (now the site of Simms TV on South College Street). Kuhn's had a counter, and all the businessmen who worked on that side of town would eat breakfast there. Daddy ate there. They had country ham and eggs. The food was very good,” Palmer recalls.

Kuhn's was also a favorite haunt of young Thomas Partlow, but then, so was every other store that sold toys.

“I remember as children in the mid-1940s, we would walk from my house to the square. We would first go to Roses (now the location of Cuz's Antiques), and they had a toy department in the back. We'd go and look at the toys. We'd never buy anything. Then we would go next door to Kuhn's in the Arcade and go to their toy department and look, and then go to Welty's (in the northeast corner of the square) and look at their toy department,” Partlow recalled.

“I also remember when you went into Kuhn's, right in front of the door, this man, Amzi Dickens, who had no legs, sat in a wheelchair, and he sold pencils. I betcha anybody my age would remember him there.”

Many who were children of the 1940s and '50s remember the sight and smells of a popcorn stand in the Arcade, a smaller popcorn stand than the more famous one in front of the old Lebanon courthouse.

Memories of the Arcade are overpowering for some residents. For others its history presents a rich legacy.

"I would say the most historical buildings in Lebanon would be Cumberland University's Memorial Hall and then Castle Heights (Lebanon City Hall), and then next would have to be the Arcade," said Jimmy McCullough, 74, who with Phyllis, his wife of 49½ years, has owned the building since mid-1996 until they sold it to Bone and Manous six weeks ago.

"Not everybody could go to Heights or Cumberland University, but the Arcade was open to the public as a meeting place for the whole community. It was the meeting place for so many clubs. Governors spoke there, as well as WWII Generals during the maneuvers.

"That was an inside shopping mall before we had inside shopping malls. It was the place to go and be seen, too," said Jimmy, who operated McCullough's Office Supply from 1964 to 2008 a half block off the Square on East Main Street.

"The Arcade used to be the center of entertainment of everything that went on," Phyllis said. "The 1930s and 1940s, those were the golden years. It was the only place large enough to serve meals to a large crowd and host banquets. The Arcade just belonged to the community."

Besides the meetings and dinners, the Arcade saw businesses come and go. Those include the Academy of Physical Culture, where health-conscious citizens exercised vigorously in the 1930s. Upstairs held the offices of doctors, lawyers, insurance agents, seamstresses and the Lebanon Chamber of Commerce.

The ground floor was home to Kuhn's 5-10-25-cent store from the early 1930s until about 1970, and then McAdoo's clothing store. From 1949 until 1985, Lois Weatherly served as bookkeeper in an office in the back of the Arcade that served as the headquarters for the 23 Draper & Darwin stores across Tennessee and Kentucky.

"It was so different there," said Weatherly, "just old-fashioned, but it had a real nice look about it. Everything was made out of pretty wood and all. It had a nice look about it. It was kind of a peaceful place. Our office had a warehouse in back. You opened the door, and you were back in the alley."

The Arcade passed through several hands after the Eatherly and Robertson heirs had Fite Realty Company and J.R. Hobbs & Sons put the property on the auction block on April 11, 1968. It sold for \$46,700 to J. Roy Wauford and Vincent Cason.

In 1971 Wauford sold his half ownership, and contractor James T. Manning became Cason's new partner. At some time over the next 20 years, the two changed the entrance by covering the stone arch and seven windows above with the silver-colored tin that masks the original front today. Manning also put on a new roof, bricked the windows of the banquet room and utilized much of the upstairs for storage space.

The lower floor of the Arcade filled the bill for Goodwill Industries from the 1980s into the early 1990s. When the McCulloughs' bought the Arcade in July 1996, they undertook a mammoth job of cleaning, repairing and preserving before transforming the place into an art gallery.



From left, Mike Manous, Hal Bone, Phyllis McCullough and Jimmy McCullough stand on the second floor of the Arcade and admire the vaulted ceiling with skylights. In its early years, the Arcade lobby was open from the ground floor to the roof and the entire ceiling was glass.

"I wanted a place to put more desks and chairs and office furniture, and Phyllis was already decorating some houses and interested in art. So we decided to make an art gallery out of it," Jimmy said.

"I had always been interested in art. We acquired the paintings, and it grew from there," said Phyllis, who estimates their McCullough's Art Gallery, which was open from 1996 until 2008, held more than 5,000 paintings, oils and photographs.

"We got in there and started cleaning it up, and it was filthy. We worked and worked and just fixed it up with a big dream," recalled Phyllis.

"We took out many loads of 30 years of leftovers from contracting jobs in a 24-foot U-Haul. We had five people working for about a month-and-a-half just taking stuff out, not counting the time we spent cleaning the building," said Jimmy.

While battling the heat, grime and spiders, the couple also uncovered numerous little prizes while digging through the dusty past. Jimmy found parts for Edsel automobiles and spinning wheels, among other things. Phyllis found a 1965 Shannon's Drugstore calendar and Chamber of Commerce memorabilia.

"The Chamber was up there 20 or 30 years. I found a lot of things representative of their work—some of the decorations used in parties, thank-you notes and items on the walls. I saved a lot of that," Phyllis said.

The McCulloughs' did their best to leave as much of the original structure in place, thus upstairs visitors will note the ancient wood floors and exposed brick walls. Among the bigger souvenirs of Lebanon yesteryear are two large wooden signs that bear the names of members of the Rotary Club and the Lions Club from four or five decades ago and the original green door to the Chamber of Commerce office with the name painted in white letters on its glass window.

As for the near future, who knows what 21st-century businesses may find themselves snuggled comfortably inside a gorgeous, early-20th-century architectural wonder? Bone and Manous are imagining the possibilities.

"We're working on the development model. It's gonna be touch and go with the current economic climate, but I feel confident we can bring the Arcade back to life if we find the right people who share in this community-wide dream," Manous said. "I think we can make the square a really special place in the next 10 years.

"It appears the obvious niche, thus far, would be all retail on the lower level. Of course, we're dreaming of having a restaurant there. There are design issues that we have to work through, but I feel very positive it could happen if we find that special restaurateur who sees what a special opportunity that could be.



Jimmy and Phyllis McCullough operated McCullough's Office Supply in Lebanon from 1964 to 2008. Phyllis nurtured McCullough's Art Gallery in the Arcade from 1996 until 2008.

The upper floor is ideal for an office tenant mix with the banquet hall serving as a multi-purpose space."

For now the partners hope to have a small office in the Arcade as soon as possible where they will be accessible to meet with contractors, city officials and potential clients.

"Then we will begin selective demolition and peel away some of the stuff that doesn't belong and that doesn't add to the building's history," said Manous, who is raring to go. "I would love to start taking out some of the bricked-up windows in the banquet hall and put some glass in there and bring back some natural light."

For Phyllis and Jimmy McCullough, a hard-working duo that stepped in at just the right moment a decade-and-a-half ago and preserved what was there, the time was now for them to pass the torch along to a new team that could transport the Arcade back to the future and to its rightful, most delightful status on the square.

"We've enjoyed it very much—doing business and preserving the building," said Jimmy. "But we're glad it's going on to the next level, to restore one of the most important buildings in Lebanon."

No one who has meandered through the Arcade, glanced up through its skylights and stared into the heavens above would disagree. 



The Lebanon Bank holds a stockholders meeting in the Arcade in 1951