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Haute Boutique receives preservation award

By Matthew Jackson
Staff Reporter

HUNTSVILLE — A restored pressed tin ceiling in the Haute Boutique on the downtown square is just one of the features that Gina Garza and Autumn Dubcak admire about the decor of their year-old enterprise, and now it's careful restoration has won them a coveted local award.

The Walker County Historical Commission will honor Garza and Dubcak with a Preservation Award for the restoration of their store's historic ceiling during a reception today from 5 to 6 p.m. as the store also celebrates its one-year anniversary. Refreshments will be served during the event.

The pressed tin ceiling, restored and repainted by Garza and Dubcak, dates to the early 1900s, and can be seen in photos of previous businesses that occupied the space at 1107 12th St., including the Westmoreland Jewelry store. The building was occupied by Mt. Vernon Gift Shop until January 2010, when Garza and Dubcak, who already operated Audie's Boutique next door, rented the space from owner Robert Ernst and began restoring it to fit their needs.

"We discovered through some fallen tiles in our back room that the original ceiling for the building was beautiful pressed tin, and we knew immediately that we wanted to restore it. It would provide an elegance and feel that we were hoping for," Garza said.

The pair hired Simply Blessed Construction, owned by James Boyd, to do the remodeling and other construction. Their team sanded, caulked, repaired and repainted the tin.

"We chose a paint color and finish that would truly show off the beautiful character and detail," Garza said.

The entire remodeling process, which took about a month, included adding new dressing rooms, new flooring, moving duct work over to the side so not to cover the ceiling, painting, "and of course our beautiful chandeliers, which are the icing on the cake. The finished product was a dream come true and such a feeling of accomplishment," she said.

The historical commission, which is always open to suggestions from residents for deserving recipients of the preservation awards, was recently notified of the ceiling in Haute Boutique, said Kim McAuliffe, commission member and Huntsville Main Street Program coordinator.

The commission's Preservation Committee then investigates, researches and approves that the building meets

the qualifications of such an award. Once the Preservation Committee makes its recommendation to the commission members, the membership votes on the award designation, McAuliffe said. The information about the award recipient is placed in the Local Preservation Notebook and stored in the Walker County Annex building.

Previous recipients of the Preservation Award include the city of Huntsville for the Wynne Home Arts Center, Mary Laura Gibbs for the Pritchett-Kellogg House, Candyce and Dale Dixon for the J. G. Davis House and James and Cecilia Marquart and Rick and Denise Carpenter for the Oakview Bed and Breakfast.

“Receiving this award is truly an honor, and we are so grateful everyone appreciates all the hard work and planning that went into our store,” Garza said. “God has truly blessed us.”