

BEDFORD BULLETIN

Wine, cheese shop opens

By John Barnhart

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

A building originally constructed to house a lawyer's office now hosts a wine and cheese shop.

Craig Amo, who owns and operates Cup-a-Joe, opened Vinos del Zorro at end of October. It's just four doors down from the coffee shop on South Street. The buildings are known as "Lawyers' Row" because all four were originally attorneys' offices, conveniently located a short walk from the courthouse.

Built of sun-dried bricks, made from red Bedford County clay, the building was built in 1840, according to Amo. It has been completely renovated. This involved stripping the interior down to the original brick walls and coating them with a sealant. A new subfloor was installed under the original heart-of-pine flooring. This flooring has been sanded to expose the original color of the 166-year-old wood and sealed with polyurethane.

The process of renovation revealed the building's original central fire place. It's actually two fire places, back-to-back, sharing one chimney. This is now the primary heat source. The chimney works and Amo installed gas logs in both fire places. Although he has a standard heating and cooling system, the 19th century fire places work well. On a cold, wet November afternoon, the shop was toasty-warm with the fire places alone.

During the renovation, a hole in the wall proved a challenge. At some point in recent years, a hole had been knocked in the back wall to allow the installation of a window air conditioner. What to do? Amo contacted Shelly LaTreill, of SER Art, for a stained glass window to fill the square hole.

"All I told her was that I want a bunch of grapes," Amo said.

The resulting custom window can be seen just above the check-out counter.

Another local artist did a wall mural and two other paintings based on the Roman murals at Pompeii. Amo notes that one of the good qualities about Bedford is its artistic people.