



This year *Cooperative Living* is taking a road trip along Route 360 as it crosses Virginia from the Chesapeake Bay to North Carolina. Each issue, correspondent Deborah Huso will relate her experiences along the way.

Story and photos by
Deborah Huso,
Contributing Writer



Survivors and Citizens

Two communities persevere on both sides of the James River along Virginia's Route 360, one with scars of World War II, one with vestiges of a more industrial past.



While much of Richmond's heritage centers on the Civil War, there is a lot of hidden history in this city, too. The casual traveler along Route 360 probably doesn't realize that at one time, Richmond was home to a fairly substantial community of Holocaust survivors and was, according to Virginia Holocaust Museum Marketing and Public Relations Director Rhys Van Lienden, one of the larger survivor cities after the war. Others included New York, Chicago, and Washington, D.C.

It was at the behest of some of these survivors that this somber testament to the experience of Jews and other Nazi-designated internal enemies was established in 1997. Today, the museum occupies a former warehouse along the James River just blocks from Route 360 on Cary Street. Among the museum's founders was Jay Ipson, a Lithuanian Jew who survived World War II with his family by hiding in a potato-storage hole on a farm until the Russians liberated them.



Alex Keisch, who came to the United States in 1950, is shown next to a photo of himself, his brother and their parents, part of a display at the Virginia Holocaust Museum.

A PERSONAL MEMORIAL

The museum is rife with stories about local survivors like Ipson, and that is what distinguishes it from much larger facilities like the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in D.C. "We focus on individual stories of survivors and their families," Van Lienden explains, noting that all the personal stories featured in museum exhibits are those of survivors who settled in Richmond. Today, he says, there are only a dozen of them left. "Jay is one of the youngest," Van Lienden says. "He was 4 at the end of the war."

The survivors have been an integral part of the museum's operation since its original founding at Temple Beth-El nearly two decades ago. They frequently give museum tours. Among them is Alex Keisch, who does not peg himself as a survivor but as a refugee. He was born in a displaced-persons camp following liberation. His

mother was Ukrainian and his father was Polish. The two had met during the war as partisans.

As Keisch leads me around the museum, he pauses for a moment in front of a picture of himself as a child with his brother and parents in the DP camp. "All of my aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents were killed in World War II," he says. "And my mother died four years after I was born."

Keisch came to the United States with his father and brother in 1950.

There is no bitterness in Keisch, however, despite the loss of so much of his family in the war. Quite the contrary, he is jovial and quick to crack jokes, particularly with the museum's Austrian intern, who is part of a countrywide program whereby Austrian students can elect, instead of mandatory military service, to volunteer for the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service. These young people serve at Holocaust memorial institutions in 23 countries, part of a form of restitution as well as education for Austria's role in the Holocaust.

The most moving part of the museum for me, however, is not the photographs and stories of individual survivors but the güter-wagon that stands outside the museum's front doors. An original rail car that once carried 100 to 120 people at a time, without food or water for days, to concentration camps in the heart of Nazi-occupied territory, the dank, dark car gives me pause, as I imagine the abject misery of the people it once carried, more often than not, to eventual death.

BRINGING BACK OLD MANCHESTER

Directly across the river, rebirth is happening, however, in Richmond's Old Manchester neighborhood. While there is still some sense of a crumbling community here in this once largely industrial sector of the city — empty storefronts and broken-up sidewalks — local residents and business owners, with support from the city, have been working to revitalize the neighborhood and turn it into a safe, pedestrian-friendly community, where people can shop, walk, and live while still having right-across-the-river access to downtown Richmond via Route 360.

Among the businesses that stand to benefit from the revitalization of Manchester is Legend Brewing Company, just a few blocks off Route 360, on 7th Street. Opened more than two decades ago, it is the oldest craft brewery in Richmond, and its on-site pub and restaurant offer expansive views of the downtown skyline.

Rhys Van Lienden (below) is marketing and public relations director of the Virginia Holocaust Museum. The güterwagon (right) that stands outside the museum's front doors is an original rail car that once carried 100 to 120 people at a time, without food or water for days, to concentration camps in the heart of Nazi-occupied territory. Below right is a view of the interior of the rail-car.



Downtown Richmond's northside skyline stretches out across the horizon in the view from Legend Brewing Company, which resides on the south side of the James River. The oldest operating microbrewery in Virginia, Legend Brewing Company (left) opened more than two decades ago.



Dave Lott (above) is vice president of operations at Legend. At left is some of the brewing equipment.

Legend is also the oldest, still operating microbrewery in the state of Virginia.

How has this seemingly off-the-beaten-path brewery survived when so many other microbreweries have come and gone? Vice President of Operations Dave Lott says it's pretty simple: "We produce beers people want to drink."

And to prove his point, he offers me a sampling of nearly a dozen Legend brews at the bar, describing each in detail as I sip (wondering all the while how I landed such a great writing gig!). I find myself favoring the rather light and citrusy Golden IPA, though Lott tells me Legend's Brown Ale is their number-one seller.

"The explosion of people trying craft beer — if you had told me it was going to go wild like this, I never would have believed it," he says, having been in the craft beer business since long before it was popular. But with popularity comes challenge. "Being the oldest guy on the block makes it hard to remain relevant."

Lott admits Legend brews, which can be found on tap in restaurants all over Richmond, have lost market share with the increasing number of craft breweries popping up around the state; but he feels having a restaurant keeps the company ahead of the curve. "People still want to eat when they go out for a drink," he says, "so having a pub has been a real advantage for us."

While Lott says Legend sees plenty of local regulars, tourists play a big role in the brewery's business as well. "We get tourists from around the world," he says. "There was a time when you couldn't get beer like what's in Europe in the U.S., so Europeans gravitated toward us."

Legend owner Tom Martin is a second-generation brewer whose father worked for Anheuser-Busch. "Tom wanted an alternative to the American light-yellow beer," Lott explains. "Prohibition had killed so

many of the small breweries in the U.S."

As I sip my Golden IPA, Lott tells me a story about this brew, which came into existence because of the British Army's beer rations. "Beer spoils, so when Britain colonized India and they were shipping beer on boats across several months, it would be ruined by the time it reached the soldiers," he explains. To solve this problem, British brewers made a beer designed to survive the trip. It was made bitter with hops and contained a higher alcohol content so neither length of storage nor heat would impact its taste. The result was IPA. Lott chuckles, "Or perhaps because of the higher alcohol content, the soldiers didn't care what it tasted like!"

After I've had my fill of ale, along with a pub burger piled high with bacon and bleu cheese, I head down Route 360 a little further to Artworks, a local gallery featuring the works of 75 different artists, many with studios on site. Owned by artists Paula Demmert and Glenda Kotchis, the gallery has occupied its current space for over a decade.

Demmert, a photographer and sculptor, came to Richmond from New Jersey and originally had a studio in Richmond's

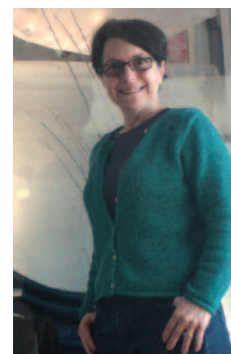
Shockoe Bottom before deciding to purchase this current space to house artists around the city looking for studio space. "There's every style of art in every price range here," Demmert says. That's helped by the gallery's minimal commission charge.

The gallery has over 25,000 square feet of exhibit and studio space and includes everything from oil-painted landscapes to fine-art photography. Wandering down narrow hallways and into boxy studio rooms, I browse for well over an hour, marveling at how such a gem exists in this once-overlooked neighborhood on Richmond's south bank.

Demmert, who has been doing photography on the side for 20 years, says she and Kotchis couldn't have grabbed up the gallery space at a better time. "Since we bought it, the building has doubled in value," she remarks. These days, she doesn't have quite so much time for photography, though you can see some of her work at Artworks as well. "This place takes up my energy now." ■



Paula Demmert (right) co-owns Artworks with Glenda Kotchis. Artworks features the works of 75 artists, many of whom have studios on site at the gallery.



● IF YOU GO ...

Get your bearings at Richmond's main visitor center at the **Greater Richmond Convention Center** (405 North 3rd St., 804-783-7300, www.richmondcenter.com, open daily 9-5). This year marks the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, which makes a visit to the **Virginia Holocaust Museum** (2000 E. Cary St., 804-257-5400, www.vaholocaust.org) particularly apropos. Admission is free, and the museum contains the

only full-size replica of the Nuremberg courtroom in the world.

Across the river, explore the works of 75 different artists at **Artworks** (320 Hull Street, 804-291-1400, www.artworksrichmond.com), and then grab lunch at **Plant Zero Café** (3 East 3rd St., 804-231-6500, plantzerocafe.com). Or nab craft beer and a burger at **Legend Brewing Company** (321 West 7th St., 804-232-8871, www.legendbrewing.com). ■