



# THE GREATER SALISBURY BUILDING

200 W. Main Street, Salisbury, MD 21801



## SUCCESS STORY

The success in this story isn't purely the restoration of a beautiful downtown historic property. It is rooted in what has taken place inside the walls of the now, Greater Salisbury Building, located on the Downtown Plaza. Originally built in the early 1900's, the structure was home to the County Trust Company, which eventually became the Maryland National Bank during the mid-century. While it occupied the space, Maryland National Bank added a second floor to the structure, which was lowered years later when builders determined there was the need to accommodate ADA requirements. Later it became evident that there were structural issues in the building as well.

Shortly thereafter, in 1989, aviation pioneer and philanthropist, Richard Henson, took a vision he had for the local community and brought it to life. He wanted to build a facility in downtown Salisbury where non-profit organizations could thrive with stable and affordable occupancy rates. Maryland National Bank agreed to transfer the building to Mr. Henson, and he agreed to fund the extensive renovations required to bring the building back to life, adding his personal touch to the project. Members of the Greater Salisbury Committee also contributed funds and materials to the redevelopment of the building. Mr. Henson held the note without interest, which was paid off shortly thereafter by the original tenants.

Henson strongly believed in principles that supported educating youth through leadership, developing entrepreneurial spirit in the community, and giving the disadvantaged a hand to help themselves. He also encouraged others to give their time, talent and personal resources in support of initiatives designed to make the community a better, more inclusive place to be.

As a driving force in the community, Mr. Henson engaged Palmer Gillis of then, Gillis Builders, whose experience in downtown renovation was quickly gaining momentum. He paid Gillis Builders a \$10,000 management fee to renovate The Greater Salisbury Building into a structure with

\$750,000 worth of investment in modern updates. He then leased space to several non-profits - Junior Achievement, The Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore, The Greater Salisbury Committee, Delmarva Water Transport Committee and The Henson Foundation. Gillis donated his professional services, time and materials as a service to the community.

Construction began in 1989 and took a year and half to complete. The Gillis team secured and restored the building and its structural foundation, while simultaneously working on aesthetics throughout the building, all the way to the top-level ceiling. Keeping the character of the existing architecture - including the massive vault doors, ornate door openings, plaster ceiling trim. The work also included adding an entrance lobby, modern elevator and stair tower on the Camden Street side of the building. As the work took place an ornate stained-glass ceiling system was discovered whose existence was unknown and covered up with an acoustical ceiling. Once unveiled, this feature became of utmost importance to the renovation and esthetics of this project. Restoring this ceiling system required that each glass panel of the ornamental stained-glass display on the ceiling would be individually packaged up and delivered to a local artisan who restored each of them by hand, one at a time. This time instead of making the stained-glass panels part of the actual skylight, they were installed with a roof overhead and back lighting to create a skylight effect, for people to enjoy as they entered Mr. Henson's office. Quite an impactful gift and long-term investment for our community - in many, many ways.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Historic Downtown Renovation
- Community Focused
- Structural and Aesthetic Restoration

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