

## Gritz

Did you know a street used to run through the middle of O'Neal Plaza and that there used to not be a plaza at all? Prior to Gritz, this building had been occupied by several successful businesses and used to be curbside on Price Avenue before the street was transformed into what is now known as O'Neal Plaza. Now, rather than a car ride, a quick stroll from Red Velvet Bistro down O'Neal Plaza will take you to Gritz, an upscale brunch bar known for their authentic southern cuisine. If the walls could talk when walking down O'Neal Plaza, they would ooze with history.

I'm Steve Jones from Community Relations and I'm here with Rylee Govoreau from the Conference Center and Tourism Department. We have a lot more history to share with you on our Audio Tour, so stay tuned while we tell you more on your tour to Discover Douglasville.

Steve: When you are walking into Gritz, have you ever looked up to the top of the building and noticed the symbols?

Rylee: Yes, I have! Can you tell me more about what the symbols stand for?

Steve: I'd be happy to! Above Gritz, you will notice the Masonic Compass, Odd Fellows chains, and another symbol. The Odd Fellows and Freemasonry organizations have continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and both are two of the largest united international fraternal orders in the world. Just like many other towns, Masonic Lodges were one of the first organizations to be entrenched into Douglasville's culture. There were many different lodges, but by 1909, the Masons found their home thanks to Dr. J.R. McKoy and R.E. James. The Masons occupied the second floor of the building that now contain loft apartments for their meetings. The Masonic Lodge played a huge role in Douglasville life.

Rylee: That's interesting, Steve! What about the businesses that used to be on the first floor of the building?

Steve: That's a great question, Rylee. Unlike the second floor of the building, the first floor has been home to many different businesses. The building has housed a post office, a grocery store, and even a family medicine practice. The longest running business in this building has been the shoe repair shop!

Rylee: Wow, this building has really housed quite a few businesses!

Steve: It sure has, but that's not all. Have you heard of the Ice Cream Social event the City puts on in July?

Rylee: Absolutely! Who doesn't love ice cream?

Steve: Well, Rylee, the City thought the same thing. At one point, this building housed Sweet Southern, an ice cream shop that helped adults and children cool off from the summer heat. The City created the Ice Cream Social event in downtown to draw residents to O'Neal Plaza and the downtown area. Sometimes, community groups and the City will put on events to draw specific businesses downtown.

Rylee: That's important that the City takes a sincere interest in promoting downtowns and their businesses! It seems like this building continues to be the home of thriving businesses.

Steve: That's true, and no matter what type of business has occupied the building, this building has always encouraged entrepreneurs to create!

Rylee: Well Steve, I don't know about you, but I am ready for some brunch! Want to sit on the patio at Gritz and enjoy the view on O'Neal Plaza?

Steve: That's what I was thinking! There's a lot of rich history in this area and more to still learn, so if you haven't listened to the whole Audio Tour yet, stay tuned and head to the next stop!