

APPLICATION FOR NAMING/RENAMING OF A:

11/3/2025

- ☐ Portion of a Park
☒ Designated Facility
☐ Public Area

Mr. Weed would like
to have council approve
this application under
City council initiated request.
Place on council agenda for permission
of council body.

Indicate the name of Candidate (person) or Active Organization to which the area, as indicated in the above check box, is to be Named: **Robert and Susan Vedder** Gazebo

Specific location of the area and details of the request: Rename the Gazebo in Centennial Park.

Is or was this Candidate (person), if deceased, a resident of the City of Venice?

☐ YES

☒ NO If no, indicate nearby residency: **The candidates physical residence is Nokomis, however, the candidate worked in Venice during his employed years for the Venice Gondolier – 33 years. 14 years ago he started and continues to maintain Venice in Bloom as part of VABI. There are many more accomplishments worthy of recognition of this Candidate**

What significant contributions did this Candidate / Active Organization make to the Venice area?

Bob, along with John Kalajian, City Councilman, championed and raised the funds to build the gazebo in Centennial Park, which is the subject of this request. The attached materials expound on the lifetime of substantial contributions.

Note: Please be prepared to have a personal representative present at the applicable Board/Committee meeting to discuss the merits of this application. You will be contacted as to the time and place of the meeting. Applications must be submitted to the City Clerk's Office at least two weeks prior to the meeting at which the naming/renaming is to be discussed.

Attach the following requirements to this application:

- ✓ ☐ Biographical information about the person proposed to have a city-owned facility or park named after them.
- ✓ ☐ A detailed statement explaining why this person meets the criteria for having a city-owned facility or park named after them.
- ☐ An estimate of costs to provide signs or plaques at the city-owned facility or park. Public notice requirements including the cost of advertising in a newspaper of general circulation and mailings as required in Section 46-5 of the municipal code. The cost of updating city-printed and web-based materials related to the city owned facility or park.
The Robert and Susan Vetter Estate
- ☐ Documentation showing support from the community for the naming or renaming of a city-owned facility or park for this individual.

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The Vedders' time in Venice

Bob came to Venice, From New Jersey, in 1978 as a consultant to the Venice Gondolier. In the spring of 1979 Bob became the General Manager of the Gondolier and moved Sue and two boys Todd and Scott and a dog, Carnaby, to Nokomis. We have lived in the same residence in Nokomis for 45 years. I became Publisher of the Venice Gondolier in the 90's. After 2000 I continued to be Publisher of the Gondolier but also was Vice President of Sun Coast Media that had many weeklies and several dailies mostly in the southern part of Florida. He wrote a weekly column in the Gondolier for 23 years.

Bob served on the board and as President of the Florida Press Association and was honored by being enshrined into the Florida Newspaper Hall of Fame.

He retired from the Venice Gondolier Sun in 2011.

The 80's and 90's

While at the Gondolier he was involved in many community organizations

Bob was manager of a Little League team for 15 years, served on the board for a couple of years and umpired after coaching for 5 years. He was given the lifetime Achievement award by the organization.

The first social service organization he joined and has served for over 40 years was the Sertoma Club of Venice. He served a year as its president in the early 80's.

One of Bob's other early organization's was Big Brothers and Big Sisters where he was on the Board and served one term as president.

He served with his wife as the PTA president of Nokomis Elementary (Sue did all the work)

Bob was on the board of Volunteer Center South to which he was President for one term.

He was on the Venice Symphony board for three years. Currently he is on an advisory Board for the Symphony.

In the late 90's he was on the founding of The Venice Foundation board later to become the Gulf Coast Community Foundation. He served 6 years or two terms.

He raised the money for new band uniforms for the Venice High School marching band.

He served as the game announcer for the varsity boys Soccer team for many years.

Along with John Kalajian, City Councilman, they raised the money to construct the gazebo in Centennial Park.

Bob was a member of the Chamber of Commerce Board for two terms and was its president for a year and then the following two years raised the money to add on a second story and expand the walls. This is currently the VABI building next to the north bridge.

In the early 90's he raised the money to almost double the size of the old Venice Library.

In the late 90's Bob was in charge of raising the money to dramatically transform the Venice Art Center. We doubled the size of the art center which in turn greatly increased its membership. This provided the center with a much needed main gallery and added several small galleries and a café along with a wonderful gift shop and a couple of great patios.

He then assisted in raising money for an addition to the Jacaranda Library.

2000-now

In the Year 2000, Bob finally, after years of trying to get something done with the School Board and school administrators, founded the Rotary Futures Program at Venice High School to help youth go on to college or trade school. Some 20 years later, its name was changed to the Rotary Futures College Resource Center to closer reflect its mission. With the help of the Venice Nokomis Rotary Club, Community Foundation of Sarasota County and Dan Parrett Principal at Venice High School we opened in 2000. This organization is helping mostly High School youth advance to further education after high school, either college or trade school. Each year we connect families to the right school and money to make it possible. About 10 million in scholarship money every year makes it possible for hundreds of kids to go to college or trade school. He served as its president for 18 years and still remains on the board.

Bob served on the City of Venice Board of Appeals and was one of the founding members of the Venice High School Foundation

He headed the drive to raise money for a new campus on east Venice Avenue for Loveland for children with disabilities.

He retired from the Venice Gondolier Sun at the beginning of 2011. It was at this time that Bob helped establish the Library Foundation for Sarasota County with Sarabeth Kalajian and Shannon Staub. He served 8 years one as treasurer,

Also at this time I transitioned into maybe my biggest undertaking converting Venice to a flower wonderland.

Flowers in Venice-2011 to present

Immediately after retiring Bob embarked on his dream of bringing flowers to Venice. Sue and Bob had traveled a lot and loved the many gorgeous places they visited. The impression that those places made spurred Bob on to make this his main retirement project. He could not understand why there were almost no flowers in the public areas.

The first thing he needed was a nonprofit that would allow him to seek grants to do much of what we wanted to do. Venice Area Beautification Inc was that organization. He has served on its board all but one year since. He is currently Vice President.

The City was a willing partner and gets credit for helping make this all happen.

The first undertaking was to start with some hanging baskets. We started with 5. We watered them and planted them. We learned a lot from that and expand to 12. We still took care of them. When we hit 20 the city took over watering them. We had two volunteers. We then worked our way to 40 baskets.

We started adding ceramic pots and more volunteers. We got to about 10 pots when we added flower fountains. The first one was at the crosswalk near the Kiosk. Over the ensuing years we would increase to 9 flower fountains of assorted descriptions. Two of them date back to 1926.

In 2017 the city embarked on a large redo of downtown both for utilities and beautification. This was an important point in allowing us to expand. They designed special poles for hanging baskets with irrigation. This allowed us to take our number of baskets to 90 and since we have added 3 more to bring us to 93. This redo allowed us to add large bowls, we have 13 of those. Overall we have 90 pots and or bowls, 93 baskets, 9 fountains and about 20 in ground planting areas. One of those areas is a pollinator garden. We are currently building a butterfly garden in Centennial Park.

We took over the Post Office landscaping, as they did not have the resources to do this.

As we went along we added 4 bronze statues, Sophia, Maria, and Olivia as well as three turtles.

In 2015 I got the City entered in the America in Bloom competition which is a national competition not just on flowers but all other aspects of what makes a great City. In 2016 we entered again and won for the cities our size. We took off a few years for the Pandemic and the city being torn up. We joined again in 2022 and once again won the best in the country for our population category.

In 2023 we bought a flower tower about 7 feet tall that is next to the Kiosk in Centennial Park.

Currently there are 19 volunteers on the Bloom team, about half of them year around.

Bob has been honored by the Venice Nokomis Rotary Club, Sertoma Club of Venice, the Sunrise Kiwanis Club, the Sun Coast Rotary club and The City of Venice Mayor's the "Pillar of the Community award".

The other Vedders

Sue

Sue worked at the Venice Gondolier for 25 years in charge of payroll and human resources. She helped found the Venice Library book store.

Sue has been active in many organizations since coming to Venice. She was very involved with her kids' schools. She was President of Nokomis Elementary PTO a couple of years and President of the Venice Area Middle School PTA. She chaired Project Graduation at Venice High School. She was very involved with MainStreet, with one term as president. She has worked at the Venice Library Book Store for several Years and is still working there.

She was on the MCC Foundation board and chaired the Moonlight concert.

She was on the board of Venice Heritage serving several years as secretary.

She has volunteered for TWIG leading three teams sorting clothes to help families with Foster children.

She has been awarded the Mayors award for Pillar of the Community”

Todd

He went through Sarasota schools most years at Pineview where he graduated 1st in his class as a senior. He went on to medical school and is a successful Pediatrician in Charlotte, NC. He has been awarded doctor of the Year in Naples, Florida and been involved with nonprofits. He started a nonprofit in Naples for Safe and Healthy kids which is very successful to this day.

He and his wife **Beth**, a nurse, have three grandchildren, **Nora** who works for Ernst and Young, **Annie** who is in Honors at the University of North Carolina, and **Charlie** who is a senior at Riverview High School and a rower for the Sarasota Crew, He is an excellent student and is captain of the team. He plans on attending San Diego University while continuing his rowing.

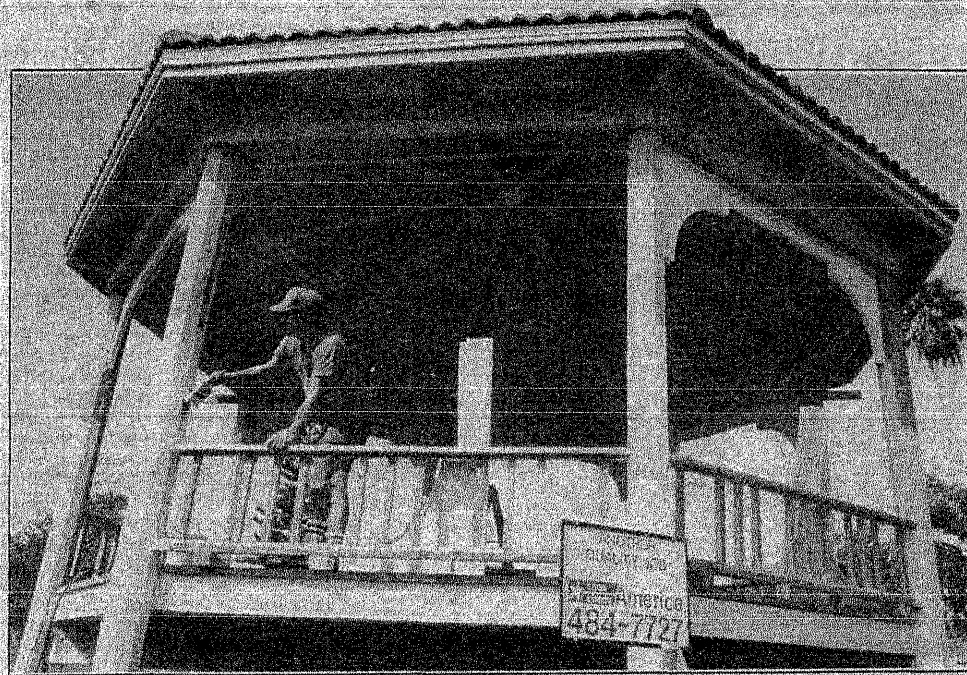
Scott

He attended South County schools with his High School years at Venice High. He did very well in school and was active in sports, drama, and many organizations. His senior year he was President of the Student Body.

He went on to Florida State University where he also was involved with student government.

He and his wife **Nicky** stayed in Tallahassee. Scott has been in wealth management as a CFP, first with Northwestern Mutual and now on his own where he owns his own wealth management group. They have two boys, **Vito** a freshman at Chiles High School. He is on the school basketball and football teams and is an A student.

Will is in 8th grade and is in honors and is a very accomplished soccer player.



Staff photo by Candace C. Mundy

Paul Pfeffer, of Spas and Sheds, puts the finishing touches on the new gazebo in downtown Venice.

Gazebo dedication set Sunday

By LILIANE PARBOT
JOHNSON
Business Editor

For an "old fashion Sunday afternoon in the park," the place to go this Sunday, and anytime thereafter, is downtown Venice.

At 2 p.m., dedication ceremonies for the "First Florida Gazebo" will begin with members of the city council and other officials in attendance.

The entire community is invited. The Venice Barbershoppers and the Keynotes Trio will entertain. Folding chairs should be brought by those who do not wish to sit on the grass, says George Hunter, vice president of First Florida Bank, the underwriters for the project.

The gazebo idea was spearheaded by two Venice businessmen who acted as individuals in getting the concept accepted. John Kalajian of Combined Capital Corporation, and a member of the Venice City Council,

and Bob Vedder, general manager of *The Venice Gondolier* and a past president of the Venice Area Chamber of Commerce first submitted their plans to the city's Park and Recreation Advisory Board.

After endorsement by the board, the project was presented to the city council which gave its approval and appropriated up to \$10,000 for sidewalks and lighting. This part of the work, yet to be done, should be completed before the tourist season, according to Larry Heath, director of Public Works. Heath is preparing the specifications for bids. The gazebo will be illuminated both underneath and on the perimeter.

Kalajian and Vedder then went to First Florida officials to ask them to donate the funds needed for the construction.

The round outdoor stage is located just east of the sponsoring bank's main building. This gift from First Florida to the communi-

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★ GAZEBO

From Page 1A

ty is for the promotion of the downtown area and is to be used to further develop it, says Hunter, himself a member of the Venice Main Street Inc. committee. The Main Street project of the Downtown Venice Merchant Association aims at encouraging development and/or restoration of the downtown area.

"This (gazebo) is not primarily for that purpose, but it will help overall to stimulate the interest of people and bring them downtown," said Hunter.

The gazebo is located on the block east of the

bank property, next to a Jacaranda tree which some 16 years ago became the concern of the community when its demise seemed certain. This was due to the demolition of the old bank building — then the Venice-Nokomis Bank — and the elimination of the Gulf Theater to make room for the present bank structure.

Sickly looking today in the location where it was replanted 16 years ago, the Jacaranda tree is just a shadow of the magnificent lavender cluster-bearing tree that shaded Venice Avenue on the next block. It was located in a very small patch of green between theatre and the bank building.

Gazebo construction in sight

First Florida Bank agrees to support local project

Construction may begin soon for the proposed gazebo on West Venice Avenue.

First Florida Bank Area president Steve Church and other officers of the bank have agreed to cover the cost of the proposed gazebo project.

The concept of a gazebo for musical concerts and other entertainment programs resurfaced a couple of months ago when City Councilman John Kalajian and Bob Vedder, presented the

proposal to the parks and recreation board.

The original idea for a gazebo was first presented a couple of years ago, but never developed for lack of a suitable location.

Kalajian and Vedder made a presentation to have the 20-foot diameter gazebo constructed on the grassy area adjacent to the downtown parking lot just off West Venice Avenue.

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★ GAZEBO

From Page 1A

City council unanimously approved the concept, and now First Florida Bank has agreed to provide the funding for the project.

"We would like to build this and donate it to all of the residents of the area," Church said. "It will be useful throughout the city."

"The city has been very helpful with its showmobile, but this would provide a permanent location for concerts," he added.

Church said he will meet with the architect, Tim Gaus, to see if the gazebo could be altered to have a more Northern Italian theme.

"It may be more functional the way it is," Church said. "But we want to see if they can change it."

The estimated cost of the project is between \$20,000 and \$40,000.

"We have agreed to fund it, no matter what the cost," Church said.

Kalajian said he was very happy with the news of the funding.

"This is the kind of project we knew would be right for First Florida," Kalajian said.

Kalajian said he will now go before council to seek funding to be included in the budget for lighting around the gazebo. The city agreed to do the site work for the project.

Church said he hopes to have a construction crew working in the next few weeks and anticipates completion of the project before the bicentennial celebration of the signing of the U. S. Constitution, slated for the week of Sept. 14.

"I want to stress that this building will belong to the city, but First Florida will be giving it as a gift to the area residents," Church said. "We are very eager to start construction, it should be fun to watch."

Gazebo — 'We love it!'

Lawn chairs covered the downtown Venice municipal park Sunday, around the First Florida Gazebo dedicated at 2 p.m.

"We love it," said Elynor Chea.

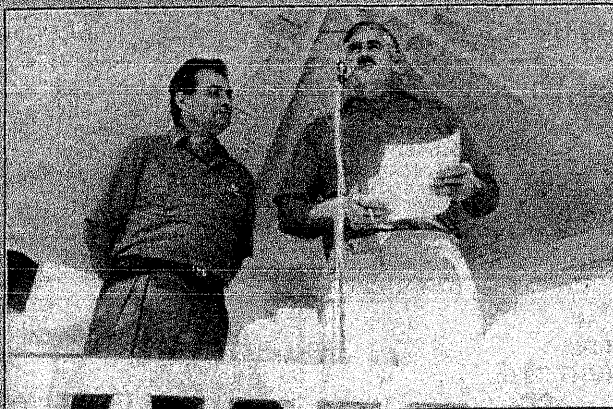
"It's absolutely gorgeous," remarked Val Townsend. "I like that music. They have chosen beautiful music, it (the gazebo) is a great addition to Venice."

"It's great," said Andrea Williams who, like her two friends, lives in Venice. "It would be nice if every afternoon we had something."

Both the Venice Barbershoppers and the Keynotes Trio entertained following the dedication by businessman Bob Vedder and Councilman John Kalajian who, as individuals, are credited for spearheading the project.

Vedder thanked the board of directors of First Florida Bank for funding the entire project. He also thanked

Venice architect Tim Gaus who donated his services and the city council for giving its approval.



Staff photo by Candace C. Mundy

John Kalajian and Bob Vedder stand on the First Florida Gazebo for its dedication.

9-2-87



Staff photo by Candace C. Mundy

With shovels in hand, Venice movers and shakers break ground for the construction of a new music bandshell. From left to right, Howard Reeger, Ken MacIntre, Timothy Gaus, John

Kalajian, Paul Intagliata, Steve Church, Russ Snyder, Bob Vedder, Beverly Seybert, Mayor Harry Case and Mick Gardner.

Groundbreaking held for downtown gazebo

Remember lazy summer evenings, ice cream socials and sipping lemonade while listening to an old-fashioned concert in the park?

Traditional concert events will soon be a reality right here in Venice.

Everyone from Venice Mayor Harry Case to Downtown Venice Association President Beverly Seybert turned out Tuesday morning for groundbreaking ceremonies for a future musical belvedere in Venice.

The 22-foot gazebo-type structure will be constructed on the grassy area near the city parking lot on West Venice Avenue adjacent to the main branch of First Florida Bank, which is funding the estimated \$22,500 cost of the structure. The city is providing \$12,000 for

lighting around the structure.

First Florida Bank President Steve Church said the bank agreed to fund the project for the citizens of Venice.

"This is the first permanent structure we have sponsored," Church said. "We thought this would be the best way to say thanks to the people of the city."

City Councilman John Kalajian and Venice Gondolier General Manager Bob Vedder spearheaded the project to provide a facility for concerts in the park.

"I am happy it is finally underway," Kalajian said. "I would once again congratulate First Florida Bank for sponsoring this for the community."

The idea for a park gazebo

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★ GAZEBO

From Page 1A

was introduced several years ago by Case and Russ Snyder, city Parks and Recreation chairman, who proposed a gazebo be installed in West Blalock Park. The idea was rejected by the city council because residents near West Blalock opposed the location.

Snyder, who was on hand for groundbreaking, said the musical belvedere would be a nice addition to downtown.

"I'm sure the people of Venice will enjoy it," Snyder said.

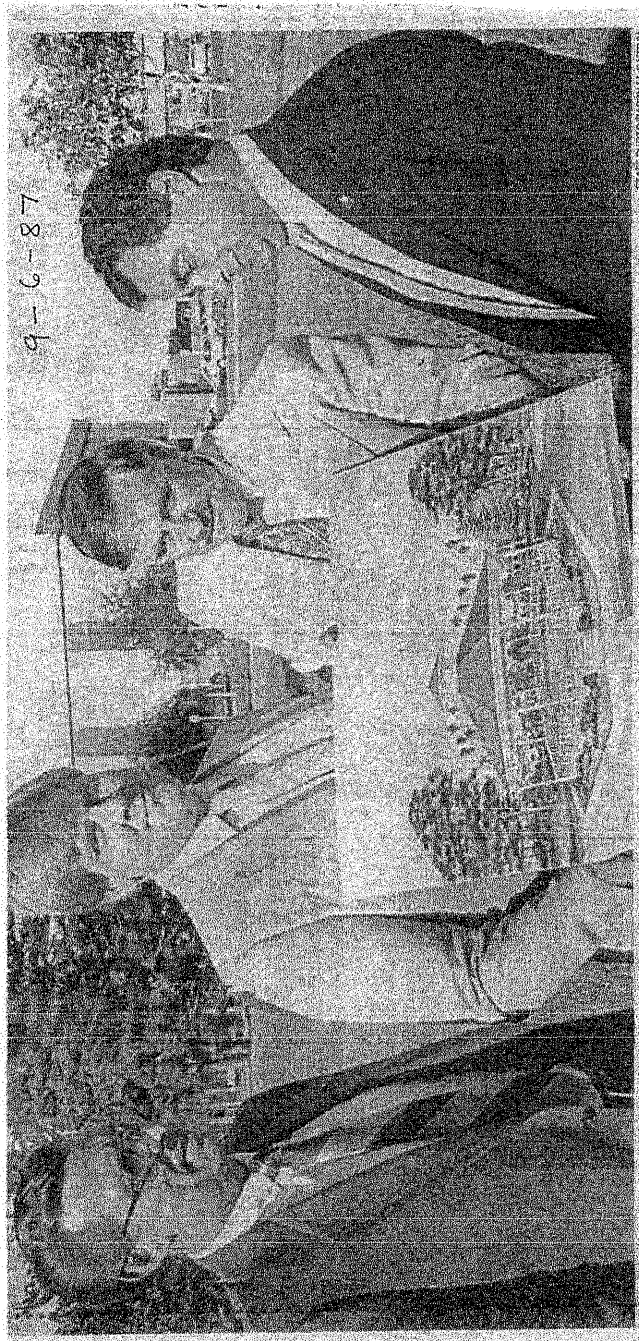
"This is another step in improving the amenities of the city."

"Hopefully a bigger one will be constructed in the future in the proper location, West Blalock Park," he added.

Venice architect Timothy Gaus created the plan for the belvedere in "traditional Italian Renaissance" Spas/Sheds of America will be constructing the belvedere, which is expected to be completed October 1.

Sarasota County has agreed to schedule performances in the facility through the Venice Community Center.

Recreational-
Playgrounds



Showing off rendering are, from left, Steve Church, Timothy Gaus, Bob Vedder and John Kalajian.

9-6-87

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHY FACILITY

An exciting gift has been given to the people of the Venice area.

Through the cooperation of the City of Venice, the Sarasota County Department of Parks and Recreation, funding by First Florida Bank and some inspired suggestions by **John Kalajian** and **Bob Vedder**, ground was broken this week for a gazebo adjacent to the downtown municipal parking lot.

The realization that the public is finally going to have such a facility is causing all kinds of excitement. Ideas are flying as to all the different ways the community can enjoy this most welcome addition.

The gazebo is expected to draw large numbers of people to a variety of concerts, shows and presentations, which will all be open to the public. The schedule for its use will be worked out with the staff at the Venice Community Center and there will be no charge to groups that book it.

Timothy Gaus' architectural

Judy Huskey



Venice Notes

plan has even been amended a bit to reflect the Northern Italian style of building that the community is trying so hard to preserve. The Downtown Venice Association is expected to approve some money for landscaping at a meeting next week. It wouldn't surprise me to see help coming from other quarters that share the opinion that this is an idea whose time actually came long ago, but are no less grateful that it is finally happening.

Just think we can have pops concerts in the park, maybe street dances for the teen-agers, outdoor square dances... it's going to be great.

A Labor of Love

9-6-87

Monday's Hooked on Venice festival, which will be drawing plenty of people to downtown, also, promises to be a wonderful way to spend Labor Day.

It has been a labor of love for the people who have worked so hard to make the whole thing come together as a benefit for the South County United Way.

From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., things will be hopping in and along the 200-300 blocks of West Venice Avenue and in the municipal lot. Booths, bands, food and fun have all been planned to make your holiday a great one.

Downtown Happenings

While we're on the subject of events downtown, last Wednesday saw the parking spaces in front of the Paper Pad and the Collector's

Gallery and Framery full of cars long after closing hours.

A large crowd had come to a "shop-warming" in the combined shops of **Carol Fritsch**, **Freda Kanelsky**, **Peaches Haas** and **Barbara Freeman**. The four have had their work cut out for them during the past several months in a major restoration and remodeling project of one of Venice's oldest commercial buildings.

For as many years as most can remember, the building the shops now occupy was Patton's Hardware. It was one of those old-fashioned hardware stores where you could find a medley of merchandise.

The atmosphere is spanking new, thanks to the project, but the lovely old high ceilings have been retained, as well as the big, plate-glass windows. A mini-gallery is tucked in one corner for local artists.