

The Reading Bridal District A Historical Look at a Proud Success Story

The Reading Bridal District has been a growing and dynamic part of the City of Reading since 1979, when the first bridal shop, Bridal and Formal, opened its doors in 1979. Since that time, the Reading Bridal District, primarily located along West Benson Street and bounded by I-75 and Reading Road, has expanded significantly.

Today, the District is the largest of its kind in the United States, hosting more than 30 wedding merchants serving a full range of bridal needs including bridal gowns and formalwear, children's formalwear, wedding cakes and catering, wedding invitations, wedding photography and videography, wedding DJ and reception entertainment, wedding flowers and decorations, bridal accessories, bridal services and restaurants.

The initial anchor store, Bridal and Formal, has grown significantly too. Today it is the largest bridal store in the country located in 47,000 square feet of space with 70 employees. The family owned and operated business offers the most comprehensive array of products and services in the nation, all under one roof, including bridal gowns, veils, headpieces, jewelry, bridesmaid dresses, tuxedos, bridal and bridesmaid shoes, accessories, gift and registry, and prom, homecoming and graduation dresses.

The size and growth of the Reading Bridal District is only one aspect that makes it unique. Its full array of bridal services and shops makes it a one-stop destination location for local brides. But it is also a destination location for brides from across the region, nation, and world. The shops in the District are so unique in so many ways that brides are willing to travel tremendous distances to shop there. And brides tell merchants, that it is well worth the time and effort to make the trip to Reading.

Another key attraction that makes the Reading Bridal District special is its unique and charming atmosphere located in a quaint, historical setting complete with "gas lamps," brick sidewalks, and tree lined streets. The District truly offers 19th Century charm with 21st Century convenience and style.

Reading Bridal District Retailers

Bridal Gowns, Formal Wear and Accessories

Benson Street Tuxedo
110 West Benson Street
Reading, Ohio 45215
(513) 821-4981

Benson Street Tuxedo rents tuxedos, shoes and shirts. The store offers great value and reasonably priced tuxedos and accessories. It also offers gift cards.

Bridal and Formal
300 West Benson Street
Reading, Ohio 45215
(513) 821-6622
www.bridalandformalinc.com

Bridal and Formal provides a wide range of bridal gowns, bridesmaid dresses, tuxedos, accessories, registry, invitations, and all other products a bride requires when planning a wedding. Bridal and Formal is the country's largest bridal salon. The 47,000 square foot salon is the anchor for the Reading Bridal District. With a staff of 70, each employee is a highly trained specialist that helps brides plan their wedding.

Carrie Karibo Bridesmaids
334 West Benson Street
Reading, Ohio 45215
(513) 821-9666
www.carriekaribo.com

Carrie Karibo carries dresses and accessories specifically for bridesmaids and those attending special occasions. Carrie Karibo's dresses and accessories are simple, elegant, and modern – they are designed to be worn more than once! Each dress is customized and made-to-order to fit each customer's personality, enabling them to be unique and show off their sense of style. The store is also a fantastic place to buy gifts for attendants and find unique gifts for the bride. Carrie Karibo's merchandise is surprisingly affordable for being so unique. All of Carrie Karibo's dresses are designed and manufactured in the United States, and the majority of the store's lines are exclusively carried in the Cincinnati area.

Classic Bride
307 West Benson Street
Reading, Ohio 45215
(513) 821-6509
www.classicbrideonline.com

Classic Bride offers bridal gowns ranging from \$199 to \$1,200, bridesmaid gowns, headpieces, tiaras and jewelry. The store's intimate boutique atmosphere makes brides feel at home. The staff's impeccable customer service and training in arts and design and fashion analysis insure each bride gets unique one-on-one service and is fitted in the dress and accessories that are just right for her.

European Bridal
307 West Benson Street, 2nd floor
Reading, Ohio 45215
(513) 821-6509
www.europeanbridal.com

European Bridal offers upscale bridal gowns, tiaras, veils and jewelry. Gowns start at \$1400 and the store offers one-on-one attention by appointment. The store's intimate boutique atmosphere makes brides feel at home. The staff's impeccable customer service and training in arts and design and fashion analysis insure each bride gets unique one-on-one service and is fitted in the dress and accessories that are just right for her. The store's seasoned, expert staff not only outfits the bride to perfection, creating a complete bridal masterpiece that is elegant and spectacular, but it is also the only bridal store in the area that specializes in just brides.

Colourful Soles
149 West Benson Street
Reading, Ohio 45215
513-984-3939
www.colourfulsoles.com

Colourful Soles specializes in custom dyed footwear and accessories for any formal occasion. The store's footwear selection includes dyeable satin, crepe and silk satin shoes. Colourful Soles also carries evening footwear in silver, gold, black, bronze and clear vinyl. The accessories available include dyeable and evening wear purses, rhinestone shoe clips, appliqués, and a variety of foot pads that improve the shoe's comfort. Colourful Soles is the only shoe store in the area that custom dyes footwear and accessories, where other stores that dye shoes ask the customer to choose from a limited amount of pre-mixed colors. The store also custom dyes items purchased elsewhere. The dye specialists on staff can custom match virtually any color the customer brings to them, and customers are able to have their items dyed to black for free after their occasion to get additional use out of their purchase. Colourful Soles offers exceptional customer service, and the choice of four manufacturers, providing customers with the largest selection of footwear and accessories in the Tri-State area.

Children's Formalwear

Fancy Kids

203 West Benson Street

Reading, Ohio 45215

513-761-8122

www.fancykidsreading.com

Fancy Kids is a children's formal wear store featuring children's sizes from 3 months to size 18. The store also carries a full variety of First Communion and Christening outfits and accessories. Merchandise can be bought from the rack or special ordered. Fancy Kids caters to the younger members of the wedding party.

Wedding Invitations

Perfect Wedding Accessories

137 West Benson Street

Reading, Ohio 45215

(513) 821-1216

www.perfectweddingaccessories.com

Perfect Wedding Accessories offers a variety of wedding accessories including unity candles, flower girl baskets and much more. You can choose from thousands of invitations from four leading designers. Each order is 20% off the original retail price (excludes Tru Line). The store also offers a large selection of bridal gowns at \$99. A large selection of headpieces and veils are also available at discounted prices.

Cakes and Catering

Creative Cake Designs LLC
1753 East Galbraith Road
Reading, Ohio 45215
(513) 821-6868
www.creativecakedesignllc.com

Creative Cake designs offers wedding and all occasion cakes. Their cakes are never refrigerated or frozen and are very moist.

Don Vonderhaar's Catering
19 West Pleasant Street
Reading, Ohio 45215
(513) 554-1969
www.vonderhaars.com

Don Vonderhaar's Catering is a full service catering company offering a wide variety of menus to accommodate each customer's unique tastes and needs. Vonderhaar's offers casual to elegant service including buffet, sit down dinners and food stations. The company caters to groups from 10 to 10,000 guests. Vonderhaar's also offers beverage services, events planning and decorating. A family owned and operated business in its second generation, Vonderhaar's prides itself on its attention to detail that it gives each and every customer.

Maribelle Cakery
8921 Reading Road
Reading, Ohio 45215
(513) 631-8333
www.maribellecakerycincinnati.com

Maribelle Cakery specializes in wedding and specialty cakes for all occasions. Maribelle's cakes are the finest quality cakes available in the greater Cincinnati area. The store has a staff consisting of a full time baker, a sculptor, model maker and business manager. This unique team provides an unsurpassed array of skill sets that result in spectacular cakes that are as extraordinary to see as they are to eat.

Flowers and Decorations

Minda's Touch Floral and Crafts
1000 Jefferson Avenue
Reading, Ohio 45215
(513) 563-9600

Minda's offers a full line of silk bridal flowers and accessories. The store also carries a complete line of basic craft supplies, jewelry findings and beads, and scrap booking supplies.

Photography and Videography

Lifetime Events Photography

132 West Benson Street

Reading, Ohio 45215

(513) 761-2034

www.lifetimeeventsphotography.com

Lifetime Events offers wedding photography, portraits, senior portraits, family portraits, and sport photography.

Petite Productions Videography Services

333 West Benson Street

Reading, Ohio 45215

(513) 374-5515

www.petiteproductions.com

Petite Productions offers wedding and event videography services, capturing and preserving the sights and sounds of each customer's special day.

Specialty Shops

Every Now & Then Antique Furniture Mall

430 West Benson Street

Reading, OH 45215

(513) 821-1497

This family owned shop is celebrating 30 years in business. Located in a 130 year old historical building with pressed tin ceilings and hardwood floors, Every Now & Then houses three floors of neatly displayed, quality antique furniture. The business has a huge selection of beautiful, practical and affordable antique furniture and specializes in bedroom and dining room sets. It also has armoires, buffets, china cabinets, tables, chairs, mirrors and much more. The knowledgeable owner is always on hand to answer questions and assist customers with their purchases. The store will deliver a purchase anywhere in the United States. It also offers appraisals for insurance, probate, estates or to determine market value on a single piece or entire house full of furnishings.

Reading Bridal District Chronological Timeline

1969

Don Vonderhaar's Catering, Inc. opens on West Pleasant Street with 12 employees in an 1,800 square foot store.

1971

Don Vonderhaar's Catering expands.

1976

Every Now & Then Antique Furniture Mall opens on West Benson in a 2,200 square foot facility.

1978

Don Vonderhaar's Catering expands for a second time.

1979

Bridal and Formal opens on Benson Street in Reading, Ohio. The store sold off the rack bridal gowns at discount prices and had two employees.

1980

Bridal and Formal moves to its current location at 300 West Benson which was 800 square feet and employed two people.

1982

Bridal and Formal purchased the building next door and begins the remodeling process to join the two buildings.

1983

Don Vonderhaar's Catering expands for a third time and has 14 full time employees and 35-45 part-time employees in its 10,000 square foot facility.

1986

Every Now & Then Antique Furniture Mall expands to 3,000 square feet.

1991

Bridesmaids and More opens at the corner of Reading and Benson.

Creative Cake Designs opens on Galbraith Road selling wedding cakes and cakes for all occasions.

1993

The owner of Bridesmaids and More purchases the building at 307 West Benson and relocates from their previous location in the District on Reading Road.

1994

Bridal and Formal purchases the building next door to its existing site. This was remodeled as an outlet facility for discontinued merchandise.

1996

Bridal and Formal begins construction to combine their existing building with the outlet store.

European Bridal opens on the second floor above Bridesmaids and More on West Benson with a small boutique atmosphere and bridal consultants with design and fashion analysis training.

Every Now & Then Antique Furniture Mall expands a third time to 3,800 square feet.

Minda's Touch Floral and Crafts opens on West Benson with an 1,100 square foot store.

1997

Fancy Kids opens its store on West Benson specializing in girls and boys formal wear from 3 months to size 18.

2000

Bridesmaids and More changes its name to Classic Bride. The owners do a historic façade remodeling on their building and expand their focus to include bridal gowns.

Minda's Touch Floral and Crafts relocates in the District to Jefferson Avenue and nearly doubles its space to 1,900 square feet.

Lifetime Events Photography opens its store on West Benson.

2001

Bridal and Formal purchases its fourth building for the expansion of its Bridesmaid department. Construction and remodeling begins to join its newest building to the existing location.

2002

Perfect Wedding Accessories opens its store on West Benson with a unique niche of being the only store in the District that sells \$99 bridal gowns.

Footlights Shoes moves from Kenwood Mall to the Reading Bridal District and becomes Footwear 2 Dye 4, specializing in dyed shoes and accessories for any formal occasion.

2003

Benson Street Tuxedo opens on West Benson specializing in value tuxedos in the inexpensive to moderate price range.

2004

Fancy Kids on West Benson quadruples its space, expanding from 800 square feet to 3,000 square feet.

Petite Productions Videography Services opens its store on West Benson Street with 2 employees in its 200 square foot facility.

2005

Bridal and Formal expands again by adding a new Prom, Homecoming and Graduation dress department and a store within Bridal and Formal with products from Camargo Trading which includes unique gift items and registry services. With this latest expansion, Bridal and Formal is the largest Bridal store in the country located in 47,000 square feet of space with 70 employees.

Footwear 2 Dye 4 changes ownership and becomes Colourful Soles, continuing to specialize in custom dyed footwear and accessories.

2006

Maribelle Cakery moves from Norwood to Reading Road. The 17 year old Cincinnati area business has a full-time baker, a sculptor and a model maker on-site.

Fun and Fascinating Facts about the Reading Bridal District's Retailers

Sizeable weddings:

Largest wedding party sold to: 20 Bridesmaids with 50 groomsmen

Largest bridal party sold to: 20

Largest wedding party cake: It fed 850

Largest wedding party to photograph: 29

Most unique purchases:

- A groom bought an extra tuxedo jacket because he thought he would sweat or have makeup on the one from the wedding after people hugged him to congratulate him.
- A bride purchased 5 bridal gowns at once for her ceremony.
- A pair of bridal shoes dyed bright orange, the bride's favorite color
- A customer ordered a pair of "ruby slippers" for her daughter by phone and had them shipped to her because she was playing Dorothy in her school play.
- Miss Kitty from the Cincinnati Tall Stacks Committee purchased 8 dresses for greeters to wear for Tall Stacks 2006
- A wedding cake in the shape of a New years' eve chandelier. It was 7 feet tall each layer was decorated differently and had hand beaded crystal fringe. The cake was topped with handmade gum paste flowers each carefully hand painted and arranged in her grandmother's vase. The wedding took place at the hall of mirrors and was a quick room changeover. The cake required 4 delivery people in order to set it up in time. Overall the cake required several hundred hours of preparation time
- Bridal bouquets and boutonnieres purchased by the bride and groom on their way to get married

Most unique thing a bride or groom has done for his bride:

- A groom to be ordered a wedding gown before he proposed to his bride to be, took her on a surprise trip, proposed to her and surprised her with her bridal gown.
- A groom's fiancé was in the military and stationed overseas, so he picked out and purchased her bridal gown.
- A bride bought all the shoes for her entire wedding party

Farthest distances customers have traveled to buy a wedding gown or other wedding attire or services from retailers in the Reading Bridal District:

- United Arab Emirates for a bridal gown
- North Carolina for a bridal gown
- Bridesmaid dress from Nova Scotia
- West Virginia for children's wedding clothes
- Germany for shoes
- Cleveland for shoes
- Columbus and Lexington for a wedding cake
- Florida for 8 pounds of multi-colored feathers shipped to a Girl Scout Group
- Australia for photography