





THE
RETAILER
ISSUE

Jeweler by the

FALLS

Retail jeweler
Larry Bruno has
created a destination
store in northwestern
Pennsylvania complete
with natural wonders,
history, and local color.

[BY PEGGY JO DONAHUE]

[PHOTOGRAPHS BY BOB LIRO
AND MIKE REZNOR]

Springfield Falls: the view
from **Bruno Jewelers'**
picture windows



▲ **Bruno Fine Jewelers** sits atop a glacial rock shelf, looking down on the ancient gorge of Scollard Run. To the left, outside the photo, Springfield Falls roars; below the store are the rocky remains of Springfield Furnace, which smelted iron from 1837 to 1862. The opening through which iron once poured is just visible at the bottom of the rock pile.



JEWELER BY THE FALLS

Three years ago, when a realtor showed Larry Bruno the land on which his new store sits, the jeweler instantly grasped the possibilities. He could site the store at the edge of the glacial gorge of Scolard Run, directly across from Springfield Falls, a beautiful natural wonder, which is now mostly on his property. His windows would frame magnificent views of the falls, and Bruno could invite customers who made major purchases to have their photos taken at the foot of the waterfall, turning his store into a romantic destination.

The IJO member jeweler, whose previous store was in Hermitage, Pa., noted other advantages. The area around Springfield Falls, in the heart of Pennsylvania's old iron and steel region, had recently become a popular shopping and tourist destination. A high-fashion outlet mall, Prime Outlets at Grove City, was drawing tourists from Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and cities as far away as Toronto. The verdant, hilly countryside is dotted with picturesque small towns, art and antiques stores, and several great local restaurants, Bruno says.

Bruno also discovered that a historic early 19th-century iron furnace was practically buried beneath the cliff on which his store is perched. A retired professor from Youngstown State University in Ohio approached him about excavating the site. The jeweler welcomed the professor's team of archeologists and, for the past three years, joined them every Friday and Saturday morning as they meticulously unearthed the buried treasure.

Now, in addition to the waterfall, the jeweler has opened up the iron furnace ruin to visitors, placing signage to explain the furnace's historic significance [see box]. He also restored the original 19th century house, adjacent to the store, in which the ironmaster lived, now a venue for events and art exhibitions.

Bruno realized almost immediately that the design of his store had to suit the glorious location. A lifelong fan of architect Frank Lloyd Wright and his naturalistic settings, the jeweler wanted his store to blend organically into its surroundings. He also wanted to fill it with treasures and motifs that honored the site's history.

In the pictorial essay that follows, you can see the results. ■

Peggy Jo Donahue, Donahue & Associates, is a communications consultant, writer, and editor.

▼ An architectural antiques dealer helped Bruno find 8-foot-high outer doors, which were sourced back to a 19th-century Belgian castle. The doors, made of quarter-sawn white oak, had been hidden in a barn for 50 years.



▼ Bruno had his architects incorporate local stone into the construction of the store—including some from the Springfield Furnace archeological dig. Here, stones frame an inner oak door, set with antique glass that reminded Bruno of a **Frank Lloyd Wright** design.



◀ A hand-painted mural by local artist **Stephanie Palmer** (above the windows), wraps around a circular nook that juts out over the gorge and offers the best views of Springfield Falls and Furnace. The mural depicts what the area looked like in the 19th century and furthers the story of Bruno Jewelers' surroundings.



◀ Jewelers, visitors see a cozy fireplace framed by a 200-year-old mantle from an old tavern in Ohio. The mantle is hand-painted in a style called folk paint to imitate the grains in oak, and it's considered a work of art. Above the mantle, as shown in the image at top, is local artist Mike Reznor's conjecture of what the Springfield Furnace site might have looked like when it was in blast.





◀ A view into the back of Bruno Jewelers' showroom, with wall-to-wall windows, looks out onto Springfield Falls and Furnace. Bruno's bench studio, at the back of the store, has a window so customers can view goldsmiths at work. The window is surrounded by stones from the furnace dig. Black carpeting, in a Persian rug style, features a gold floral pattern that allows the wood, stone, and outdoors to work together. The coffered ceiling fixtures have hidden fluorescent lights that complement the metal halide showcase lights. The showcases, a mix of old and new, are oak and walnut. Upon entering Bruno Fine



◀ Within the coffers on his ceiling, Bruno decided to inlay ornate tin panels, another 19th-century throwback, which he obtained in shiny brass. Bruno says the color picks up the gold in the showcases and in the rug pattern.

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JEWELER BY THE FALLS



Local artist **Mike Reznor's** conjecture of what the Bruno Fine Jewelers' site might have looked like in the 19th century, when an active iron furnace was in blast there. Bruno's store would be on the cliff behind the covered bridge that led out to the stone furnace.



The Ironmaster's Gem, sold at Bruno Fine Jewelers, is made from slag, the glassy byproduct of iron furnace smelting. This piece was carved by lapidary artist **Glenn Lehrer** and set into jewelry by designer **Mark Schneider**.

Turning Slag into Gold

Iron furnaces like the one at Springfield Falls, where jeweler Larry Bruno located his store, dotted the landscape of western Pennsylvania in the first half of the 19th century, presaging the industrial steel-making boom that came to the region.

Along with iron, however, these furnaces also produce a glassy byproduct called slag, which is scattered everywhere around the furnace. The best slag material, when viewed in the rough, contains shimmering minerals that flash blue and green. The minerals, embedded in iron's host rock, were liquefied and separated from the iron by the furnace's smelting process.

In that slag, jeweler Larry Bruno saw an opportunity to create unique souvenirs of his store and its historic falls and furnace. Master gem carver Glenn Lehrer is carving some of the most colorful Springfield Furnace slag into his signature styles, and jewelry artist Mark Schneider is setting the finished pieces into pendants. Bruno, a master metalsmith, is having other pieces of slag cut into cabochons, which he sets into jewelry. He has dubbed the stones The Ironmaster's Gem, with a tag explaining its origin.