

voices

THE WEEKEND TOURIST
BY LINDA KOUTSKY



BUZZA BUILDING // 1006 W. Lake St.



PHOTO BY LINDA KOUTSKY

The Buzza building is now home to 136 loft-style apartments.

Checking out the buzz at Buzza Lofts

Driving East on Lake Street in Uptown you can't help notice the letters — five feet tall at the top of the tower shouting “BUZZA.” The building's been there for years sitting rather quiet and nondescript but now it's all cleaned up, dramatically lit at night, and welcoming renters to live at Buzza Lofts.

But what's Buzza? Born in Iowa, George E. Buzza (1883–1957) moved to Minneapolis after drawing cartoons briefly for the Chicago Tribune. After gaining experience here in printing, illustrating, advertising and writing, he opened the Buzza Company in 1909. The beginnings of the American greeting card industry began in the mid-1850s but greeting cards began to flourish in the early 20th century. The first Buzza cards were printed in 1910. By 1927

the company was making \$2 million a year and was one of the nation's largest greeting card companies.

Every major department store in the country bought Buzza greeting cards. They were known for high quality design, innovations in printing, hand-painted accents and lavish embellishments. The Buzza Company hired leading artists, printing experts from Europe and nationally known writers and humorists to capture sentiments ready-made for their customers. The charming, bright colored, Art Deco cards are highly collectible today.

Buzza's original offices were on 14th and Hennepin. As the company grew and expanded they needed more space. An existing building on Lake Street had formerly been home to the Self-threading Needle Company. Buzza hired Minneapolis architectural firm Magney & Tusler (Foshay Tower, Downtown Post Office, Calhoun Beach Club) to design the addition and signature tower. Six hundred employees settled into the new building, called Craftacres, in May of 1927.

Five floors and three buildings were filled with artists, designers, printers, engravers, gold leafers,

salesmen, order takers, packers and shippers. The basement level loading dock opened onto the railroad tracks. The place was bustling as the Buzza Company manufactured and shipped 40 million greeting cards a year!

In addition to cards, the Buzza Company also produced bridge score-cards, framed sentimental mottos, place cards and a variety of books on topics such as entertaining, etiquette, bridge and many childrens' books.

George Buzza sold his interest in the company in 1929. He moved to California and started another greeting card company named Buzza Cardozo. Production at this facility ceased in 1942 but George Buzza lives on in his many products that are out there being sold as vintage collectibles on Etsy and in the recently opened Buzza Lofts. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2012 as a historic manufacturing facility.

For more diversions, follow the Weekend Tourist on Twitter (@WeekendTourist).

LUNCH TIP

Order Mee Kah Teeh (rice noodle with red curry), the signature dish at Tum Rup Thai, 1221 W. Lake St.



Be a creative buddy!

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Volunteer for Art Buddies this spring! Help a child from a low-income family know the joy of self-expression by working with YOU.

Art Buddies

Creative mentors helping kids build dreams
www.artbuddies.org

Photos: Doug Knutson

I believe
that Minneapolis needs
a downtown casino.

The Legislature needs
to start the process.

Otherwise,
we're all going
to pay more taxes.

And that's not all.

Dan Cohen

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