

INSTORE®

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE AMERICAN JEWELRY STORE OWNER

AUGUST 2019



SMALL COOL NO. 2
**WANNA BUY
A WATCH?**

SMALL COOL NO. 3
**BALEFIRE
GOODS**

BIG COOL NO. 2
**CROGHAN'S
JEWEL BOX**

BIG COOL NO. 3
**CLASSIC
CREATIONS**

PLUS
**10 HONORABLE
MENTIONS**

**EAT
GALLERY**
SMALL COOL NO. 1

Katherine Cotterill

**ERIK RUNYAN
JEWELERS**
BIG COOL NO. 1

Erik & Leslie Runyan



WAY TO GOOOL



SECOND PLACE: Croghan's Jewel Box

Big Cool Division



- A new website logs up to 15,000 visits per day
- Fourth-generation family member designs a jewelry line around cockroaches
- Antique and vintage jewelry mixes well with designer lines

2019 America's Coolest Stores

Big Cool Division

Croghan's Jewel Box / Charleston, SC

DESTINATION CHARLESTON

Family embraces change while honoring the past **BY EILEEN McCLELLAND**



William Croghan, a bench jeweler who began his career in Charleston, SC, circa 1907, would have been “mind-blown” to see his descendants drawing virtual fences around his jewelry store and designing gold jewelry in humorous celebration of Charleston’s infamous pest, the Palmetto bug.

Not to mention selling the occasional pricey piece of jewelry with a click of a customer’s phone.

On the other hand, William would need no explanation of the Southern hospitality, the hand-written thank you notes his granddaughters sent to each of their 15,000 customers, and their philosophy of saying, “Yes, we can do that!” before saying anything else at all.

In Charleston, SC, past meets present in creative ways.

For sisters Mariana Ramsay Hay and Rhett Ramsay Outten, steering 110-year-old Croghan’s Jewel Box into the 21st century is a constant balancing act, but one they feel equipped to handle by virtue of their willingness to embrace change.

It doesn’t hurt that Charleston is in many ways the perfect location for mixing modern with vintage. It’s also been named the No. 1 tourist destination six years running by Conde Nast Traveler and Travel & Leisure magazines. The hospitable Southern city offers residents and visitors alike an eclectic mix of history and antiques, as well as the latest in dining, shopping and design. It proves to be an irresistible draw in particular for would-be vacationers who live all along I-77, which begins in Cleveland, OH and leads directly to South Carolina.

Visitors are romanced by the city, which leads to an enchantment with and loyalty to Croghan’s itself. Fully 50 percent of their clients are visitors.

“People come from away, where they may have lost their local jewelry store,” says Rhett Ramsay Outten. “So we become their jewelry store. We have four family members on the floor selling jewelry.

“Somehow, we are antique and cutting-edge at the same time. I love that we are a 110-year-old jewelry store in a 1790s building sitting across the



Sisters Rhett Ramsay Outten, left, and Mariana Ramsay Hay adapt their business to a changing retail landscape.

► QUICK FACTS

OWNERS: Mariana Ramsay Hay and Rhett Ramsay Outten | **URL:** croghansjewelbox.com | **FOUNDED:** 1907 | **OPENED FEATURED LOCATION:** 1930 | **LAST RENOVATED:** 2016 | **EMPLOYEES:** 27 | **AREA:** 3,000 square feet | **SHOWCASES:** Grace Showcase | **TOP BRANDS:** Temple St. Clair, Single Stone, Elizabeth Locke, Jude Frances, Seaman Schepps, Henri Daussi, Christopher Design, Mizuki | **ONLINE PRESENCE:** 22,735 Facebook likes, 28,000 Instagram followers, 4.3 stars with 27 Google reviews



SECOND PLACE

Big Cool Division

► JUDGES' COMMENTS

BENJAMIN GUTTERY:

Croghan's has mastered the art of staying true to themselves in a fast-growing resort and vacation market. And encouraging their employees to grow with them by making the workplace fun again! I love the artwork they had drawn up of the shop and building, so iconic!

ELLE HILL: Such elegance and class conveyed with spirit and relevance. There's nothing stuffy about their fun events — movie night! — and their kicky red door on the footer of their website. Relevant elegance with an old school glamour feel. Well done!

BOB PHIBBS: Very fun blog about their Valentine's event. I love the ways they connect to Charleston in new ways.

MARK TAPPER: Either in spite of being over 100 years old, or as a result of being over 100 years old, this company's online presence and social media is just awesome! They should be a model for our industry with a clean and easily shopped website and social media that is about their business, merchandise and their community.

MICHAEL ROMAN: Timeless, traditional and tasteful. Old-fashioned thank-you letters are rare and continue to stand out in people's memories! Beautiful website!

► TRUE TALE

"Our Club Bracelet is made exclusively for us. There is a big backlit ad showing the bracelet in the Charleston airport, where 5 million travelers pass by it every year. A lady came in and said, 'Oh, my gosh! I saw this bracelet at the airport. My neighbor has it and would never tell me where she got it. So I saw the ad in the airport and took a cab straight over here.' Needless to say, she bought the bracelet." — Rhett Ramsey Outten



street from the Apple store. We are dynamic. We wake up every morning and say, 'How can we change and do this differently today.' We've embraced change, and of course, having the fourth generation in the business has been a wonderful thing."

Too many retail jewelers hang onto the image or idea of who they've been in the past, she believes. "Our survival has been based on 'let's try it; let's see what happens.'"

William Croghan was listed as a jeweler in the city directory as early as 1907. After serving in the military in World War I, he returned to Charleston with an appreciation for the German culture and a repertoire of war stories, with which he regaled many a visitor to his small retail shop before bringing them home for a home-cooked meal. Around 1930, he had moved into the 100-square-foot side porch section of the building now owned

by the family. A hand-engraver and jeweler, he spent most of his time at the bench. "He loved life," Outten says. "There was a wonderful aura about him."

By 2000, the family's third generation began to expand the jewelry business into that same building. The expansion initially included a large gift section, but by 2016, with the latest renovation, they reconsidered their merchandise mix and discovered that giftware, while occupying a large percentage of available space, surprisingly yielded only 10 percent of their sales. They decided to limit giftware to best sellers.

"Our survival has been based on 'let's try it; let's see what happens.'"