

ANTIQUE
What's Old Is New

By Laura Jean Whitcomb
 Photography by Jon Gilbert Fox

Marcia Armstrong, owner of Lyme Creamery Antiques, with one of her favorites, a 19th century satinwood tea caddy.



Bruce Bower, owner of Norwich Antiques, with a jug with incised bird decoration, circa 1838, from Julius Norton of Bennington, Vt.

People carrying oddly shaped and haphazardly wrapped packages enter Tracy Hall in Norwich. Once inside, they unwrap their bundles to reveal prized possessions — silver candlesticks, a few pieces of china, an atlas published in the 1800s — and proudly place them in an antique dealer's hands as part of the Upper Valley Antique Appraisal Day.

Chances are there is at least one antique item in your home. Perhaps it's a hand-embroidered linen tablecloth your grandmother sent you one Christmas, an old woodworking tool that caught your eye at a flea market or the desk your husband has had since he was a teenager.

"There's just a warmth about antiques, sort of like old friends," says Marcia Armstrong, owner of Lyme Creamery Antiques. "It feels good to have them around."

Living with Antiques

You are moving to a house with all hardwood floors and would like a few area rugs. Or you've just rearranged the furniture in the living room and need another end table. A good portion of buying is function-

al, but whether you purchase new or antique is a matter of individual taste.

"I have a kitchen table where you can see indentations from someone doing their homework on it," says Armstrong. "It's fun to have things that have a history. There's a warmth, a homey feeling that you don't get from new furniture."

"There's just a warmth about antiques, sort of like old friends. It feels good to have them around."

—Marcia Armstrong, owner of Lyme Creamery Antiques

"Antiquing can be an expression of self, almost an artistic expression," says Bruce Bower, owner of Norwich Antiques. "There are some great quirky interests — fishing gear, children's books, stamps — or collections by interest, like anything from Sharon, Vt., or items that relate to the medical field."

Michael Hingston of Michael Hingston Antiques, Inc. in Etna finds that there are

two basic categories of antique buyers. "There are collectors with their own idea about what they are looking for. They have specific criteria, like antique furniture made in Boston in the 18th century," he says. "Then there are people who decorate their homes with antiques. They don't have any preconceived notions. They think: 'Will it look good in the house?' not 'Will it fit in my collection?'"

Andrew Katz of Windham Antiques in Norwich began his career in antiques as a collector — digging up old bottles when he was 8 years old. "People who like antiques are collectors at heart," he says. "They could be packrats, saving everything, but still it's that collecting instinct."

Whether the antique has been handed down from generation to generation or is part of an individual collection, most people want antiques that fit into their lifestyle. Which is a good thing — buying antiques as an investment is a tricky business. "People think they are investing when they buy an antique, but it is difficult to predict what will

continued on page 24

be in style,” says Hingston. “Every house had a spinning wheel 50 years ago. Today you can’t even give them away.”

“It’s hard to buy for a trend,” agrees Armstrong. “It’s better to buy what makes you feel good.”

You Can Never Have Enough Antiques

A short drive outside of Hanover will lead you to several antique shops.

CANAAN American Classics

Meryl Weiss offers quality Americana furniture, paintings, textiles, folk art and unique accessories. By appointment only; call (603) 523-7139.

Antiques on Canaan Street

Stop at Antiques on Canaan Street for fine china, glass, furniture and clocks in a beautiful 1840s barn. Open daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (except Tuesday and Wednesday) between Memorial Day and Columbus Day. By appointment the rest of the year; call (603) 523-9621.

CORNISH

Studio House Antiques

Fine country French antiques (as well as select period American furniture) are available at Studio House. Open by appointment only; call (603) 675-2510 or e-mail frenchantiques@valley.net

ENFIELD

Pewter & Wood Antiques

Barbara Boardman Johnson offers 18th and 19th century American furniture, painted smalls, folk art, textiles, primitives, stoneware and decorative accessories. Open May thru October by appointment; call (603) 632-9822.

Poverty Lane Farm Antiques

This old Victorian house has an eclectic mix of primitive country, art deco and Victorian antiques. Open six days a week (every day except Friday). Located on Route 4 in Enfield. Call (603) 632-9813 for information.

HAVERHILL

John Page

There’s no shop at the present, but John Page offers a small but choice stock of furniture, textiles, ceramics, works on paper

She mentions the recent popularity of old painted furniture with collectors, which wasn’t as popular with people buying antique furniture for their home. “People don’t want to worry about the paint scratching off. They don’t live that way; they live casually.”

and accessories, with an emphasis on regional/documented examples. Check out his exhibit at the Antiques Collaborative in Quechee, Vt., or call him at (603) 989-5978.

LYME

Bonnie Hame Antiques and Decorations

Toy Storey and Jack Stewart’s shop on Route 10 is open June through October. Hours are noon to 6 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday. Call (603) 795-2669 for more information.

ORFORD

Town Hall Antiques

This shop on Route 25A offers midrange priced antiques and collectibles, featuring glass, paper, linen, old clothing, sterling silver, kitchenware and furniture. Open daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., May to October. Call (603) 353-4433.

SUNAPEE

Prospect Hill Antiques

A rambling barn provides 12,000 square feet of display area for an unparalleled collection of beautiful antique furniture and fine quality replicas from New England, Ireland, France and Great Britain. Open every day, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call (603) 763-9676.

WEST LEBANON

Robert James Walsh Antiques

Antiques, art, fine books, toy soldiers and civilians are available at the Anichini Company Store in the Powerhouse Shopping Arcade. For more information, call (603) 359-3434 or e-mail RJWAntiques@aol.com

Colonial Antique Markets

More than 75 dealers offer anything and everything, from old to new. Open seven days a week, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. A flea market is held from May to October in the Seven Barrel Brewery/LaValley’s parking lot on Route 12A. But get there early for the good stuff; some dealers open at 5 a.m. Call (603) 298-8132 for more information.

Katz, who has been providing research and appraisal services since 1987, has noticed that many New Hampshire and Vermont homes have New England antiques. “New England residents tended to settle here and stay, and a number of homes descend through families from generation to generation,” says Katz. “Antiques accumulate in houses over the years, and you can often find furniture made by the homeowner in the style of the times to fit in the house.”

Except for a few items, there’s no need to treat antique furniture any differently than new furniture. “Most of these things are not as fragile as you think,” says Hingston. “A 200-year-old desk has lasted this long, and it will probably last another 200 years.”

Although an investment in antiques may not make you rich, there can be a high return if the market forces are with you. During an estate appraisal, children of the deceased told Hingston that the house was recently refurnished with new upholstered furniture. He had to tell them that they’d probably only get \$1,500 at auction. “You never really see that with antiques,” he says.

Except for a few items, there’s no need to treat antique furniture any differently than new furniture. A 200-year-old desk has lasted this long, and it will probably last another 200 years.

“New furniture is like a new car — the minute you take it home it depreciates significantly,” says Katz. “Antiques tend to retain their value. They are also better quality — solid wood (no particleboard) and solid construction.”

Regardless of the economy, if you find an antique you like, buy it. “Good antiquers know that there is not another chance to buy that item. Many of these items are unique, and you may not find another one in exactly this condition at exactly this price,” says Hingston. “If you find something you like, it is always a good time to buy it.”

Antiquing 9 to 5

How does an antique dealer become an antique dealer? “A lot of antique dealers start

out as collectors,” says Hingston. “Then the collections get way too big. They go to a few shows and have fun — and lo and behold, they can also make money.”

For Armstrong, it was a lifelong hobby, but didn’t become a profession until retirement. Armstrong and husband John started out their married life in Lyme in 1956, when John was an undergraduate at Dartmouth, but didn’t move back to the area until 1993 when John retired from the tool manufacturing business.

“On our travels we’d buy at other shops, from individuals, at antique shows. We always loved antiquing and decided that in order to support our habit we had to sell antiques,” says Armstrong. “It’s a sickness really. That’s why people get into the antique business.”

The Armstrongs started offering antiques in group shops in Quechee, Vt., and Bristol, N.H. When a realtor said that it would make a great antique store, they bought the old Lyme Creamery Co. in 1995 and started renovations. Lyme Creamery Antiques opened in May 1996. “You fall into a lot of things in your life,” says Marcia. “This was one of the things we’d never thought we’d do.”

Hingston, on the other hand, learned the business by watching his dad at work. “My father was an auction manager for 38 years with Richard W. Withington, Inc., in Hillsboro, N.H.,” he says. “I’ve never known a time without the antique business.”

Besides a few pieces of upholstered furniture, there wasn’t anything in the Hingston house that could be bought in a store. “I always thought growing up with crazy old furniture was normal,” he says. In high school, Hingston worked along side his father and Withington on the auction block, lifting and lugging merchandise.

After studying geology at Dartmouth, Hingston found employment as a research scientist with a few local consulting companies and the college. But he preferred to work on his own, and started his wholesale antique business full time in 1997.

“A significant portion of what I sell goes to other antique dealers who are going to resell it,” says Hingston. “Thirty years ago there used to be more wholesale traders, like me, but there are fewer today. When you’re wholesaling, you have to realize that the next

person along the line has to make a profit as well. That lowers prices, and antique dealers can make more money selling retail.”

Special Interests

Bower also started out as a runner with an auctioneer. “When you are showing merchandise, it’s very important to hold up a dresser so the drawers don’t fall out,” he says.

After graduating with a degree in art history from the University of Vermont, a friend said that he could get Bower a job in the antique business. “His sister was married to an antiques dealer, but he was only willing to make introductions if I really loved the business,” recalls Bower. “I really loved it then, and I still do.”

“I always thought growing up with crazy old furniture was normal.”

—Michael Hingston,
Michael Hingston Antiques, Inc.


The introduction led to a job at the Antiques Collaborative in Quechee, Vt., a year-round antiques shop with more than 100 dealer spaces in 10,000 square feet on three floors. Bower answered customer questions, helped dealers move product in and out of their space and worked on projects such as advertising. It was a great introduction to the world of antiques. “I saw a lot of product,” says Bower.

Each antique dealer has his own personal interests, which sometimes leads to a specialty focus for the business. Hingston, for example, deals in American furniture before 1820. “Before 1820, furniture was handcrafted by few people. After 1820, furniture was handcrafted in an industrial setting,” he explains. He also dabbles in silver, fine arts paintings and furniture and accessories from the arts and crafts period.

Armstrong also has her favorites. “I love wood. I like drawers, boxes, unusual unique things,” she says. “Things for men, like tools. Some things just speak to me.”

Bower considers himself to be a generalist. “It’s a dying breed,” he says. “Auctioneers are generalists, but many antique dealers are specific.” He’s interested in all types of antiques, from children’s

continued on page 26



bella

bel

bella

bella

clothing & shoes

43 South Main Street Hanover

Monday-Saturday 9:30am-5:30pm

Sundays 12:00-5:00pm

603.643.5698

WHAT IS A RAPTOR?

- A. Helicopter
- B. Dinosaur
- C. Bird of prey, such as a hawk or a falcon

If you didn't answer C, don't worry. You can learn more about raptors at the VINS Nature Center in Quechee, Vermont. Grand opening June 2004. 802-FLY-5000



www.vinsnaturecenter.org

© Matt Palmer

Antiques continued from page 25

books to modern Danish furniture. However, his pulse does start racing at a particular interest: Vermontiana. He describes the features that define a one-drawer inlay stand as a Vermont-made piece: thicker legs and the use of local woods such as tiger maple and cherry.

Always an Education

Bower's analysis of the stand includes minutiae that the average shopper might overlook. It takes time to acquire this type of expertise. "You learn little by little," says Armstrong. "You don't ever know it all, but you get a feel for things, almost a gut reaction."

"Find something that you like and start collecting. Buy a book, read up about it, do some research, talk to other collectors. You get more sophisticated the more you learn."

—Andrew Katz, Windham Antiques

It also takes a passion for the subject. "It's hard to get knowledge these days. Museums are roped off, so how does the general person get to know antiques?" asks Bower.

Bower wanted to learn more about furniture, so he developed his own self-study program. He signed up for hands-on seminars with Boston's Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), a museum and national leader in preservation, research and innovative programming. Bower was able to handle colonial era furniture from SPNEA's collection while an expert explained manufacturing techniques and characteristics of specific regions. He read scholarly articles written by museum curators or decorative arts students, and attended lectures by Historic Windsor and seminars in historic Deerfield, Mass. His interest in the historical aspects of furniture grew and, after working in furniture restoration in Boston, Mass., he opened Norwich Antiques in 2002.

Another way to learn about antiques: "Find something that you like and start collecting," says Katz from Windham Antiques.

"Buy a book, read up about it, do some research, talk to other collectors, learn what is desirable, upgrade your collection. You get more sophisticated the more you learn."


For appraisers like Katz, the Web has been a great source of information. eBay, for example, provides a global trading platform where practically anyone can trade practically anything. On any given day, there are more than 16 million items listed on eBay across 27,000 categories, including antiques.

"The Internet has really done a lot to change the antiques market," says Katz. "It's a great information source for the general public, dealers are able to reach a much larger audience and appraisers can use selling prices for market comparison. For instance, there used to be only a few reference books to look up values of rare books and historical autographs. Now there are a variety of Internet sources where I can find out what dealers are offering."

It doesn't matter if you're online or offline, aspiring collectors or dealers should "not be afraid of asking questions," says Bower, who suggests developing a rapport with a knowledgeable dealer.

Hingston agrees. "Find someone that you are comfortable with and trust what they have to say. There's not anything you can't ask an antiques dealer. Most will spend more time than you want talking about something."

You may not get an answer for questions like "How much did you pay for this?" but an antique dealer will be happy to tell you what the object is, if it has been repaired or restored and where they bought it. In addition to his retail store, Bower does some estate appraisal work as part of his continuing education program. "Turning out a house is hard work, but I can find a few interesting items and touch history," he says. "The more you learn the more you can appreciate. You never stop learning in this business, and it's never boring."

"If you are interested in this business, the key is to get out there into the marketplace, look around and start collecting. Hitch up with another dealer and learn from them," says Katz. "There's so much out there, I'm still learning. It doesn't matter how long you've been in the business, the excitement of the hunt — seeing something different, seeing something new — never wears off." 




SIMON PEARCE
Original designs in glass and pottery 

Hanover, NH 603.643.0100
Quechee, VT 802.295.1470
Windsor, VT 802.674.6280
SimonPearce.com

THE STRATTON COLLECTION


Inn-dulge yourself



At Laurance S. Rockefeller's Four Diamond Woodstock Inn & Resort, you'll enjoy a long tradition of excellence. Defining country sophistication, the Woodstock Inn & Resort offers gracious hospitality and eminently comfortable lodgings, an exquisite dining experience and spectacular Sunday Brunch, Vermont's best golf course, world-class tennis, and a host of spa services at our Health & Fitness Center.

"Four Diamond Lodging...Four Diamond Dining." - American Automobile Association
"A golfing experience that approaches perfection." - Boston Magazine
"Sumptuous guestrooms." - Yankee Magazine

To make your reservations, call toll-free (800) 448-7900 or email@woodstockinn.com.


Fourteen The Green, Woodstock, VT
800.448.7900 | www.woodstockinn.com

*Private Residence
Hanover, NH*



**Residential
Commercial
Industrial
Institutional**

Trumbull-Nelson Construction Company, Inc
200 Lebanon Street, Hanover, NH 03755
603 643-3658 / 603 643-2924 fax
www.t-n.com

