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Our Guide to Antique Treasures and Bargains in Curious Shops Around the State

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Sure you can sit on your couch, laptop on your knees and bid on a bobbin from a New Hampshire textile mill or a 19th-century Canterbury Shaker duster, but is that really antiques in the Granite State? We think not.

While eBay and Craigslist, not to mention the anemic economy, have resulted in fewer antiques shops in the state and the country than there once were, there are still plenty in New Hampshire - hundreds in fact - and they offer more than the Web could ever provide to those who love the thrill of the hunt, New England-style.

First there's authenticity. While New Hampshire antique shops tend to offer an array of items from "smalls" to furniture, they usually have something in which they specialize. That results in dealers and experts who have to maintain their reputation in the industry, and in many ways become historians of their particular specialty.

Take Nancy Winston at **Willow Hollow Antiques** on Route 4 - otherwise known as **Antiques Alley** - in Northwood. Among the array of items in her store, including early butter molds, ironware, pewter and banks, she also specializes in Shaker items, especially those from nearby Canterbury Shaker Village. Not only does her shop have Shaker treasures like tools, boxes and tinware but she met and talked to the last living Shakers that used to reside at Canterbury.

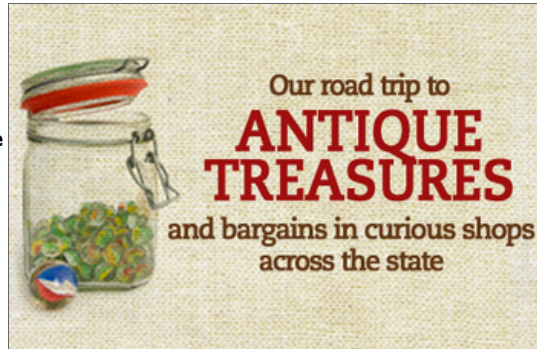
She has some great stories, like the time Eldress Gertrude Soule, one of the last Canterbury Shakers, came to her shop and pointed to almost everything and said it was Shaker, whether it was or not. And Winston recalls the content of some letters she once possessed.

"It was between two Shakers and the subject matter was a little spicy, shall we say."

That's definitely not something you'd get on eBay. Nor would you get the plateful of gingersnaps and complimentary hot chocolate in the fall, the smell of wood smoke from the corner Franklin stove lit in the winter or the handpicked lilacs in the spring displayed in a vintage bottle.

"It's true there aren't as many shops as there used to be here," says Wilson, who has been a member of the New Hampshire Antiques Dealers Association for the past 30 years. "But what's left is the good stuff - the shops whose reputation for authentic, early items have kept them in business a long time."

One of those shops is the **Antiquarium** operated by Sharon Platt and Hollis Brodrick



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Holmes incorporates a personal touch to

overlooking the Piscataqua River on Ceres Street, Portsmouth's "Olde Harbour District." The shop itself is housed in a 200-year-old warehouse building with the original thick, hand-hewn beams supporting the low ceiling. It's an organic atmosphere for the high-end early American decorative arts in which it specializes. On a recent visit, for example, were a pair of women's lime green silk brocade shoes that were worn by a New England woman about 30 years before the American Revolution began. The price - \$3,400. One of the rarest and dearest items in the store was a Revolutionary War-era, hand-painted hatchment armorial crest in its original wooden frame selling for \$25,000.

In many ways this and other antique shops in the state are like museums where you can touch the artifacts from the early days of our state and country, but a museum where everything has a price tag. Even if you don't have the means to buy some of the items, the fact that it's for sale allows for the daydream of acquisition.

And in most stores there's usually something anyone can afford. So while the 1775 man's red cape at the Antiquarium might be out of reach for many people with its over \$7,000 price tag, most of us could afford a slice of Americana in the form of a 204-year-old exercise book written in the hand of a local girl on sale for \$65 or a Colonial clay pipe for \$20.

"I love handling these objects," says Brodrick, considered by many in the business to be the king of Colonial and Revolutionary War-era New Hampshire antiques. "If I could afford it, I wouldn't sell any of it. I'd have 27 barns filled with everything I've ever loved and purchased. You can read anything you want about American history but there's nothing like holding a Naval commission of a New Hampshire sea captain in your hand that was signed by John Hancock in 1776 or a wallet that belonged to a Revolutionary War soldier from Londonderry." That's not something you can get online.

Lakes Region

There's more to the Lakes Region than water sports. In all there are more than 40 antique dealers throughout the region - many with great views of Lake Winnepesaukee.

At **Waukewan Antiques and Used Furniture** on 55 Main St. in Meredith we get our baby boomer on with some nifty toys, games and advertising art from the 1960s and '70s in addition to the shop's vintage country furniture and objects. OK, we confess. We bought an AM/FM radio that looked like a box of Tide detergent. It's all about the eclectic here. In some cases the buildings that house antique shops are as fascinating as the stuff inside. Such is the case with **Dragonflies Antiques and Decorating** in Wolfeboro in what some still call the Brummitt House, a massive, yellow beauty built in 1820 with its funky Wizard of Oz homage yellow brick road paving in the courtyard. Inside the store specializes in all matter of antiques including New England furniture and folk art. The Lakes Region also has its share of niche antiques like Frances and Tony Governanti's **Alexandria Lamp Shop** on 126 Pease Rd. in Meredith, which specializes in selling and restoring antique lamps, from those that were fueled by kerosene to whale oil lamps of the 18th century. "We started with kerosene lamps in the 1970s because of the fuel crisis," explains Frances Governanti, who co-owns the shop with her husband Tony. Looking for a light bite to eat, check out **Sartori** on the rooftop or shade gardens of **Chi-lin Asian Arts and Antiques** for lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday.

Antique Alley

Though its ranks have been thinned in recent years by the rough economy and the Internet, Antique Alley - the cluster of shops on a 20-mile stretch of Route 4 between Chichester to the Lee Rotary - is still the state's premier route for people interested in antiques.

Hundreds of dealers are represented on or around the former New Hampshire Turnpike that was followed by the Marquis de Lafayette on his triumphant tour of the state in 1823. At **Keepers Antiques**, where four dealers share space, Gail Piatt specializes in early American furniture, hook rugs and early samplers. Another dealer passes time carving wooden spoons beside a glass display of spiked German helmets and other World War I memorabilia. A 1907 Stevens-Duryea motor car that the owner swears is not for sale sits in one corner. At **Northwood Antique Books** there is a large collection of town histories and vintage leather-bound volumes. At **Parker-French Antique Center** more than 100 dealers share space. We were intrigued by the Native American craft objects. **Fern Aldridge and Friends** in a heated two-story barn right beside town hall in Northwood has museum-quality furniture displayed in room settings with written descriptions. Try to make your trip during lunch or dinner and check out **Johnson's Dairy Bar** in Northwood. It's a throwback to the '50s with knotty pine booths. It's famous for its lobster rolls, fried clams and frappes.

Merrimack Valley

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While the rest of the state has mountains and lakes to brag about, you can't beat the Merrimack Valley for shopping therapy and that includes dozens of opportunities for antique hunting, especially in large group shops.

For those who are fond of one-stop browsing, the **New Hampshire Antique Co-Op**, 323 Elm St., Milford, has 20,000 square feet of display area where nearly 300 antique dealers sell their wares - everything from '50s kitsch to fine art, Native American snowshoes to flow blue china. Love the bling? We do, especially when it's vintage. We swoon at baubles by the likes of Coro, Kenneth Jay Lane and Miriam Haskell.

Antiques at Mayfair at Salzburg Square in Amherst has lots and lots of wares and more than 200 dealers, but mainly we go to ogle the outrageous sparkle, shine and color of their great collection of designer costume trinkets. These pieces are not just paste and junk; Mayfair specializes in costume jewelry with designer marks. Diamonds might be a girl's best friend but you don't have to wait for your ship to come in or a proposal to indulge in costume chic.

Seacoast

The New Hampshire seacoast was a Tory stronghold during the Revolutionary War and now it's known as a bastion of vintage goods and authentic Colonial-era antiques.

And what better way to keep track of times past than an antique clock? At **Peter Sawyer Antiques** on 17 Court St. in Exeter, you'll find clocks from the 18th and 19th centuries. We fell in love with a barometer made in the 19th century in Peterborough. The **Antiquarium**, in a 200-year-old warehouse on 25 Ceres St. across the street from tugboat alley, not only specializes in artifacts of early American history, but does so in a setting that's as historically significant as the items themselves. Owners Hollis Brodrick and Sharon Platt are as knowledgeable about the earliest days of our country as any museum docent. At **M.S. Carter Antiques**, close by in another historical warehouse on Market Street, Melissa Alden says she keeps her eye out for whimsical items for visitors who want to purchase that one-of-a-kind item to remember their trip to the Port City. We loved the old, hand-carved wooden puppet heads, with smashed noses and battered eyes as a result of so many Punch and Judy shows.

Monadnock

Perhaps it's because we went to college in this part of the state but we just have a special feeling for the Monadnock Region with all its nooks and crannies of natural beauty and funky shopping opportunities - no super malls, just one delightful shop after another - including 40 or so antique boutiques.

The town of Fitzwilliam, which looks a lot like those villages you put under a Christmas tree, is home to a half dozen or so antique shops including **Dennis and Dad Antiques** situated in a 1776-built house on 33 Rte. 119. Dennis and Dad specializes in 18th- and 19th-century English ceramics including Staffordshire figures, mocha, cream and yellow ware and children's dishes. The city of Keene, with all its great restaurants (we have a soft spot for **Lindy's Diner**, a Paramount-style vintage diner made in New Jersey and an antique in itself), also has its share of antique shops. The delightfully named **Yankee Smuggler Antiques**, 69 Windsor Ct., Keene, specializes in 18th- and 19th-century Americana and has been in business for 50 years. If we had \$375 to spare we would definitely pop for the hand-carved and painted 15-inch George Washington puppet with a real little Colonial uniform and a tricorne hat in its original box.

Sunapee

So many flock to this region every summer for the annual League of NH Craftsmen Fair. But on the way to buying new, quality arts, crafts and collectibles, check out some of the best of arts and crafts from times gone by.

Prospect Hill Antiques, Prospect Hill Rd., Georges Mills, is a three-story antique horse barn with 12,000 square feet of antique furniture, pottery and antique reproductions. The aqua blue glass seltzer bottles had our names written all over them. As its name suggests, **Lyme Creamery Antiques**, Route 10 and Creamery Lane, is in a renovated antique creamery building - it's one of many historical agriculture structures in town. Inside are American and English antiques including quilts, tools and furniture. For \$75 you could pick up a 135-year old birchwood cooper's croze- a tool used in barrel making. **Pewter and Wood Antiques** on Crystal Lake in Enfield specializes in 18th- and 19th-century American antiques, especially those with original paint.

North Country

While so many head north in New Hampshire to ski or sightsee, there are also opportunities to take in some quality antiquing.

One of our favorite picking spots is **ADMAC Salvage**, in the **Tannery Marketplace**, 111 Saranac St. in Littleton. This shop, housed in a 19th-century tannery building, specializes in architectural antiques and building materials from stained-glass windows to cast iron radiators. Think of it as a kind of vintage Home Depot. **Three of Cups** in Bethlehem, co-owned by Bode Miller's mom, Jo, is a former apothecary that now houses two floors of vintage clothing, jewelry, pottery and books. **The Potato Barn Antiques Center** in Northumberland is a 21-year-old co-op in an 81-year-old agricultural warehouse that specializes in vintage hats and clothing as well as railroad lanterns, vintage sleds and old tools. With a gold dome on the roof and a drinking fountain out front, **Israel River Trading Post** in Lancaster has two stories of antiques.

How to Buy Antiques

by Jason Hackler of New Hampshire Antique Co-op

Collecting is a personal endeavor and adventure. It's that certain *je ne sais quoi* that shouts out to us from the antique shop shelf, "Buy me! I'm meant to be yours!" Rare is the collector whose pursuit parallels another. Each quest is unique and individual.

By the time I was 8, I was already well on my way to collecting, buying and selling. Found rocks were my first forays, next came World's Fair memorabilia and early advertising. Since I was raised in the realm of antiques (my parents founded our family business, New Hampshire Antique Co-op, in 1983), fate had determined my early collector beginnings, yet I was free to choose what I collected. Now, 27 years later, I still love the game, though I've segued into a lifelong pursuit of paintings, antique furniture and objects d'art.

People often ask me what to collect and what will grow in value. My response is always to collect something that you love, something that gives you a visceral rush. Learn everything you can about it and buy the best that you can afford. Sometimes you will get lucky with a super deal.

I collect objects that make me happy. My collection is varied and all objects collected are enjoyed, looked at and part of our daily life. My three-year-old daughter is already a collector of sorts: feathers, dolls, bits of string and paper. She even sets up yard sales of her items in the driveway! People wonder how we can have antiques throughout our home with a three-year-old in residence. I suppose it's because we have, by example, shown her how to appreciate art, objects and history and to begin collecting.

Collecting antiques does not have to be expensive. For a few years I collected vintage paint-by-number paintings. Today I laugh to think I worried about overpaying for one picture at \$60, when I was also at the same time buying fine art for many thousands of dollars. Some of the favorite finds in our home cost a mere \$5 or \$10 at a flea market. Other treasured favorites required careful consideration prior to purchase as they were serious investments.

Some of the best ways to learn about antiques are to browse antique shops and galleries, attend auctions and pay attention to what things are selling for, visit museums and historical societies and read books and articles pertaining to your interests. Also, always ask questions!

Antiques and fine art typically do not depreciate as new pieces do. I sold a painting to a collector I have been working with 10 years ago for \$4,500. When he moved and did not have a place to display it, I sold it again for \$8,500. Today, I could sell it for over \$10,000.

Collecting antiques is not only a "greener" way to go in decorating your home but also is a unique pursuit of individuality. To quote William Morris, the father of the early 1900s Arts and Crafts movement, "Have nothing in your home that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful." Your collection is your own personal style, your aesthetic. You love it, that's why you collect it.

Six quick tips for buying at antique shops:

1. Respect the pieces on display and refrain from handling everything without asking.
2. Ask questions to further learn about an object and if there is any provenance.
3. Be attentive to condition and inquire about restoration and repair.
4. Inquire as to whether the shop is affiliated with any associations (such as the New Hampshire Antique Dealers Association) to know if there is a guarantee.
5. As the economy is not fantastic, you can ask if there is a better price or a sale, but be prepared to pay by cash or check and to not expect delivery or return. If you know the piece is already a good deal, just buy it.

6. Most importantly, if you are excited about collecting antiques and fine art, build a relationship with a dealer or shop.

Antiques Week

New Hampshire has more antique shops per square mile than any other state. You could spend weeks exploring barns and storefronts from Portsmouth to Pittsburgh for that one-of-a-kind item that will kindle conversation for years, or you can take advantage of Antiques Week in New Hampshire, seven days of antiques in Deerfield and Manchester that culminates with the 53rd annual New Hampshire Antiques Show Aug. 12-14 at the Center of New Hampshire.

The week kicks off with a three-day auction of Americana at the Center of New Hampshire. If you have a taste for ephemera check out the vintage volumes, maps and autographed items at the Book and Ephemera Fair on Aug. 8 at the ice rink at JFK Coliseum in Manchester. Pickers who want to take some of the cobweb clearing out of their search for a diamond in the rough should check out the Manchester Pickers Market Aug. 9 in the Furniture World building on Porter street in Manchester. On Aug. 10 more than 150 dealers will offer 18th- and 19th-century furniture at the Americana celebration Antiques Show in the Deerfield Fairgrounds.

www.barnstar.com/mnchstr.htm

www.nhada.org/show.cfm

<http://hq.abaa.org/books/antiquarian/otherfairs.html>

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