

MARKETPLACE



Shop Around the Corner

Bittersweet Antiques

By Nicole Hagan

“Life at best is bittersweet”
- Jack Kirby

Pamela Platt, owner of Bittersweet Antiques on Route 6 in Galeton, understands this remark all too well. Her shop of pre-1900 American furniture is a collection of old memories—both personal and historical. While the name of her shop in part originates from the native wild bittersweet vines, Platt also realizes that her antiques are a nostalgic remembrance of the good things past that are still cherished and enjoyed today.

From the first moment that Platt went to an antiques auction over thirty years ago, she was captivated by the charm of old American furniture (ironic, considering she’s originally from Addiscombe, England). “I think my shop has been successful because the younger generations are finally growing to appreciate their grandmas’ furniture,” Platt explains. “When they were younger, they didn’t take notice of it, but now they look at the new stuff and see that it has plywood backing and realize how nice the older furniture actually was.”

Her love for antiques—old and abandoned furniture that just needs a little care—quickly turned into a profession as she began selling antiques from her garage. But Platt soon found the need for more space as the the pile-up of furniture spilled into her home.

“I needed my house back,” Platt jokes. “I had furniture all over the place, and I needed another space for my business.” To solve the problem, Platt built a carriage house on her property in the spring of 1980. Today Platt’s clients come to the carriage house for her collection of dry sinks, pie safes, cupboards, cherry chests, desks, and early

country lighting—the 100-year-old primitives, or hand-made furniture that “the settlers made themselves,” according to Platt.

The search for these antiques is what keeps Platt going, even at the age of eighty-six. “Hunting for antiques gets in your blood, and you just can’t give it up,” she says.

Over the years, she has come across painted high-back dry sinks, desks that come in plantation styles, pewter cupboards in their original paint, and even an 1825 Sheraton chest—one of the oldest antiques she’s ever found.

And when she finds a piece that isn’t in selling condition—a cupboard speckled with watermarks or a desk that needs a new finish—Platt knows how to soften the bitter marks of maltreatment.

“I’ll take the varnish off, but I never sand it,” Platt says. “Then I’ll use early-American stains to give a honey color to the pine and finish things up with tongue oil to give it a nice soft finish.”

Much like the old American craftsmen who first created it, it’s a style and a personal touch that she’s developed through time, and Platt agrees that it’s the individuality of each piece that makes every pie safe, step stool, and dry sink unique.

Platt’s antique shop will reopen its doors for the season in March, but it will only remain open until the property is sold. Platt put her home and the carriage house up for sale, and, as a result, this may be its last year in business. So if you’re looking for hand-crafted furniture that’s stood the bitter test of time, make your way to Bittersweet Antiques. 🏠

Mansfield University student Nicole Hagan is an intern for Mountain Home.

Shop: Bittersweet Antiques
Owners: Pamela Platt
Address: 793 Route 6, Galeton, PA
Phone: 814-435-9916
Hours: Saturday & Sunday, 9 a.m.–6 p.m. (and by chance or appointment during the week)

