



A Day at Antique Marketplace

By Abigail Kulick, Main Street Manager

April 11, 2005 at 10:00am on a bright Monday morning, I made my way to Main Street's newly relocated Antique Marketplace. As I approached I saw Virginia Mandrigues, store owner, helping vendors load antique furniture into their vehicle. Virginia's store accommodates antique vendor booths as well as consignment antiques. This mix of vendors gives Antique Marketplace a wide variety of antiques to offer.

Antique Marketplace joined the downtown neighborhood six months ago when it moved to 511 N. McEwan, but after only four short months Main Street's new antique store outgrew the building. On February 10, 2005 Antique Marketplace opened the doors to its new and permanent home, just down the block at 523 N. McEwan.

Virginia has been exposed to antiques her whole life and believes the love for antiques is in here blood. Her grandmother and aunt were collectors and as a young girl, Virginia would wander around their houses learning the dates and value of her relatives' precious antiques. Virginia has been in the antique business for eleven years. Prior to her life on Main Street, Virginia ran the Vintage Victorian, her first antique store, out of her home on Maple Street. A few years later she moved her business to a building on South Clare Avenue, eventually to wind up on Main Street in the heart of the community. Virginia is enjoying the downtown atmosphere and the supply of customers that

downtown activity provides. She has already seen the benefit of owning a business on Main Street, this past Sunday alone, from 11:00am-1:00pm Virginia heard her cash register ring 35 different times!

The legal definition of an antique is an item that is aged 100 years or more. However, collectors use the term loosely because people are interested in all eras. Modern day decorating and fashion trends affect the antique business considerably. Presently, vintage antiques from the 1950's and retro antiques from the 1970's are immensely popular. Even teens and college students are appreciating antique comic books, jewelry and decorative accessories for dorm rooms and apartments. The quality of antiques is what sets them apart from today's reproductions of the same style. Virginia had me notice the elegant detail on a bedroom dresser from the early 1900's. I was impressed that a piece of furniture that was over 100 years old could be more solid than a similar item right off the market. Antiques do not need a warranty because they have stood the test of time. Furniture that is strong enough to last one hundred years is no doubt strong enough to last one hundred more. The exquisite craftsmanship from long ago made that dresser a very valuable and practical item.

Virginia compares the antique business to a treasure hunt for both dealers and collectors. People who love antiques are always searching for the perfect addition to their collection. Antique dealers have to stay in tune with the market, just like any other retailer, they must always know what types of antiques are popular at the time so they can search for products that will sell. Unlike most retailers, Virginia cannot order her products from catalogs. Virginia and the vendors with booth space in her store must travel to auctions, sales and shows to purchase their inventory. Many days Virginia attends a sale before she opens the store at 10am and makes a stop on her way home at the end of the day to offer an on-site appraisal. If you ask Virginia why she is in this business she would tell you she loves the thrill of the hunt!

Spending the day at Antique Marketplace, I found myself lost in my own imagination several times. Antiques are entertaining. Each one tells a story and offers so much history. Every item in Virginia's store has touched someone's life in one way or another. Many times, the items have been passed down from generation to generation and have meant something different to each new owner. Now the items are on the shelf again, waiting for the next person to pick them up so their story can be passed on.

The antique business is growing fast downtown Clare and Virginia is already looking into ways to expand again! Although the origin dates of antiques are old, the products available at Antique Marketplace are always new; since antiques are not replaceable Virginia's inventory is fast moving and never the same from one day to the next. The irreplaceable quality of antique collecting is the draw that makes this hobby so popular. People from all stages in life have come to Antique Marketplace to enjoy antiques; young people who think it is hip to be retro, middle aged people with the desire to collect, redecorate, or appreciate history, or one of Virginia's favorites, those sweet older couples who just come into the store to reminisce. Antique Marketplace meets the needs of all people.