



## *A Day at Herrick House*

By Abigail Kulick, Main Street Manager

Monday morning, February 7, 2005 I made my way just off the Main Street to one of downtown Clare's newest retail businesses. Herrick House, which has acquired the same location as the former Grandma's House, is now under new ownership and has been up and running since August 20<sup>th</sup> of last summer. Owner, Mary Ann Shurlow, a registered nurse, has spent thirty-seven years doing her part to save lives in the health care profession. Mary Ann adores her nursing career and still works part time for Dr. Harshman, but has recently added a new passion to her world and is now responsible for saving a business.

Her new store, Herrick House offers a variety of products on a variety of scales from a greeting card to a wedding gift. Mary Ann specializes in themes and every single item in the store can be translated into one of three themes; garden, vintage, or country. Mary Ann's business occupies a large, Victorian house from the Civil War era. Many of the original floors, staircase and woodwork have been charmingly restored in the gorgeous old house. Such a great building gives Mary Ann space to carry out her product themes in different rooms of the house. Spending the day in the Herrick House was much like shopping out of my own home, the atmosphere is comfortable and welcoming and you feel invited to stay all day. It is not uncommon to hear customers say, "Oh, I just want to live in this house!" as they explore their way through the lovely Herrick House.

Mary Ann has had a dream of owning a business for six years. She has planned and re-planned business strategies waiting for the right idea and perfect timing, but one detail has remained strictly constant throughout her six years of planning; the title. Mary Ann knew that no matter what type of business she opened, she wanted to title it Herrick House. Mary Ann was raised in the Herrick Community three miles East of Clare, it has always been important to her that her heritage contributes to her business, thus the name was born. Mary Ann says naming her store Herrick House is *pure nostalgia* for her.

After six years of planning and wanting a business of her own, a lot of hard work, and help from her family, Mary Ann opened Herrick House. This is truly an example of a family business; Mary Ann handles the bookwork, buying and pricing, while her husband, Doc acts as the faithful maintenance man and gardener. While I was in the store Doc teased me that Mary Ann doesn't pay him enough, but I could tell that he loves helping his wife with her new business because he willingly followed directions as she sent him downtowns to clean and pain the basement. Mary Ann is also blessed to have occasional help from her mother, son, grandsons and cousin when she needs it, but the family member that Mary Ann relies on the most and can share the love of her business with is her daughter-in-law, Jenny David. Jenny manages the store and runs the creative side of the business; merchandising and constructing brilliant, eye-catching displays. Mary Ann and Jenny are a fabulous mother/daughter-in-law team. They are a balancing act for one another; bringing separate strengths into a common goal. They learn from and build off of one another. Mary Ann considers Jenny her biggest asset.

I asked Mary Ann how she determines what products to order and sell at Herrick House, especially being new to retail business. She told me that she chooses products that *make her heart sing*. She loves the products her store offers and feels good about selling them. She wants Herrick House to be a place of happiness for everyone who walks through the door. Mary Ann has been a nurse since 1968 and along with the many joys of health care, unfortunately much sadness also occurs. Through opening Herrick House Mary Ann has created an uplifting environment where people can escape from sadness and be surrounded by lovely, heart warming products. Some of the lines offered at Herrick House include vintage children's toys, indoor and outdoor garden accessories as well as country and vintage home decorations. They also offer a line of Swedish specialty foods, which they know quite a bit about since Mary Ann's daughter-in-law, Jenny is actually from Stockholm, Sweden.

Mary Ann feels she has found the ideal location for her new business. She loves being part of downtown Clare and is actively involved in the Main Street project. She told me she has received a wonderful welcome from the downtown retailers and is graciously thankful for their helpfulness and receptive gestures. The location of Herrick House just off of McEwan at 120 East Fifth Street offers the perfect setting for Mary Ann's store. She is able to participate in all downtown and Main Street activities and yet still gets a front porch and yard! (Quite necessary for a vintage garden shop!)

Herrick House is new to town and they definitely plan on sticking around for a long time. Mary Ann and Jenny are constantly making changes and improvements in the new store. They are excited about growing the business and celebrating its success. The women at Herrick House have a lot of ideas for expanding their garden, vintage and country themes and I am excited to see what will come next!