

A photograph of an antique store interior. The room is filled with various antique items, including wooden furniture, a wicker chair, a small table, and a sign that says "TELEGRAMS" with an arrow pointing left. The floor is made of wooden planks. The text "Down East GUIDE TO MAINE ANTIQUES" is overlaid on the image.

Down East
GUIDE TO
MAINE
ANTIQUES

Maine's International
Authority on Antique Rarities

140 Dealers Under
One Roof in Brunswick

Calendar of Summer
Antique Shows and Auctions

Down East GUIDE TO MAINE ANTIQUES

SHOPPING for antiques has been part of the Maine summer for more than a century now, ever since the first rusticators started carting old chairs, sea chests, and highboys home with them after Labor Day. Today's collectors come to the Pine Tree State clutching the latest issue of *Maine Antique Digest*, with copies of local guides to antique shops, or with a laptop connection to eBay. But at its heart, antique shopping in Maine is still the same scavenger hunt it's always been. And as a summer pastime, it's hard to beat.

The sheer number — and variety — of antique dealers in the state is one attraction. If your interests run toward high-end art, artifacts, and autographs, it pays to make the acquaintance of someone like **Marvin Sadik** (page A4), a former director of the National Portrait Gallery who has become one of Maine's most knowledgeable and respected private dealers. If, on the other hand, you're just looking for an excellent group antique shop where you can while away an afternoon browsing the booths of more than a hundred Maine dealers, then you should know about **Cabot Mill Antiques** in Brunswick (page A8). Or maybe you prefer the bustling, festive atmosphere of an antique fair. Check out the **Calendar of Summer Antique Shows and Auctions** (page A11) to find the one that suits your schedule.

No matter the size of your wallet, the breadth of your interests, or the level of your expertise, you can find what you're looking for in Maine. And who knows? If you search long and hard on the antique trail this summer, you just might discover that rare, Colonial-era candlestick that nobody else has recognized.



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A Mall Unlike Any Other

Located just off Route 1 in Brunswick, Cabot Mill Antiques is light, airy, and loaded with interesting items. By Rebecca Martin Evarts.

THE first thing you notice when you enter Cabot Mill Antiques in Brunswick is that it smells as it should, like the attic of a grand Victorian house — of wood, mothballs, citrus wax, and that particular aroma that old things have just by virtue of their age. But no one would confuse the vast space housing this multi-dealer emporium with a dark attic. In fact, it's hard to imagine a space more congenial to the selling of antiques. Sun streams in through huge windows, and plants trail their leaves and tendrils down from the tops of display cases. Follow your nose through the light and airy aisles. With 140 dealers occupying 15,000 square feet, chances are good you'll find something to take home.

The shop is located in a restored factory hard by the white-water falls of the Androscoggin River. The brick mill, a former textile plant, had fallen into disrepair when a Brunswick real estate developer, Waterfront Maine, bought it in 1986 and rechristened the building Fort Andross, after a fort erected on the historic site in 1688.

"There were a few warehouse tenants, but all the windows were boarded up and pigeons pretty much ruled the building," explains Waterfront

Maine Vice President Anthony Gatti of the mill's condition in the mid-eighties. The developers' vision was to transform the 100,000-square-foot building into a mixed-use office, retail, light manufacturing, and warehouse space, while retaining the essential character of the historic building.

And they wanted antiques to play a part in its revival. Early on, the company's general managing partner, Coleman Burke, saw the potential for situating an antiques emporium on one floor of Fort Andross. "He had seen the Colony Mill shops in Keene, New Hampshire," explains Gatti, "and wanted to make something like that happen here."

Gatti and the company's marketing director, Christopher Flag, began going to auctions and making cold calls to recruit dealers to move into their planned group shop. "We were looking for quality, for real antiques and collectibles," says Gatti, though an early idea of handling more high-end pieces gave way to what the two describe as the "Maine antique style — a country feel and specialty dealers."

The first selling point was the location — right off Route One, fifteen minutes from Freeport, thirty minutes

from Portland and Augusta, and just an hour from Camden and Rockland. The second was the space itself.

"We had photos of the mill, to show to people unfamiliar with the spot," says Christopher Flag. "We were able to show them the sixteen-foot ceilings, the river views, exposed bricks, a really handsome space with column and beam construction, to sell it from an aesthetic point of view. We felt that with the height of the ceiling, it was going to have a kind of grandeur not often found in antique malls."

The developers left the scarred wooden floor that once supported clacking textile looms and built dozens of finely detailed locked cases for valuable "smalls." White paint brightened up the cast-iron columns, exposed beams and pipes. Floor areas were divided with white rail fencing. "We were aiming for something that would be a departure from the clutter found in many multiple-dealer shops," says Flag of the clean design.

CABOT Mill Antiques opened in 1996 with twenty dealers and a few cases in a walled-off section. Gradually, more dealers began to see the visibility the space presented, and



within a few years the shop expanded to its present 140-dealer size. It's easy to see why. "We wanted to distinguish ourselves with friendly service," says Flagg, "to make the experience of buying and selling antiques pleasant for dealers and customers alike."

Apart from the monthly fees dealers pay — one price for a display case and a per-square-foot charge for floor space — there are no other costs. "We do all the work," says Anthony Gatti. "We run the shop seven days a week, ten to five, we even take out the taxes and pay them to the state."

Not surprisingly, dealers at the shop are enthusiastic. Gustavo Umpierre, a retired college professor of Spanish literature who formerly sold in Manhattan and Millbrook, New York, describes the staff as "helpful" and the shop as "very well taken care of." A self-described generalist who fills his floor space as well as two locked cases with African and Oriental artifacts and sculpture, European and American porcelain, as well as small pieces of furniture, he notes that "there is very good traffic here even on cold days."

Tom Manning, of Jackie Manning Collectibles and Antiques — a sideline venture for the eponymous and prolific

Maine author of romance novels — concurs: "This is considered the top rung of the various antique malls. There are lots of good dealers here."

FROM the customer's point of view, Cabot Mill's strength is its mix of high-quality collectibles and its uniform labeling rules, which require that each piece for sale in the building be tagged clearly with price and description, often including probable date of origin.

Eclectic is an understatement here. In dealer Rachel Thelan's case, for example, a northern pike taxidermy mount shares shelf space with Aunt Rose's post-war mink stole. Two cases over, dealer Jack Sharkey has assembled World War II memorabilia, including a genuine radio operator's head gear and goggles. A little farther on there is a case of unusual tools — a four-inch Underhill stick, a drawer knife, a vicious-looking shingle ripper, and a screwbox, among many others.

If your interests run to mid-twentieth-century popular culture and you long for the halcyon days, circa 1962, of elementary school lunchrooms, dealer Marianne Miranda offers a collection of lunchbox thermoses: Alvin and the



In addition to huge windows that flood Cabot Mill with sunshine, the mall is neat and orderly. Dozens of display cases and well-arranged floor spaces reduce the sensory overload and make browsing a pleasure.

Chipmunks, Shari Lewis, Ludwig von Drake in Disneyland, and a later edition featuring Twiggy. Nearby, you'll find a 1910 baseball card of Gus Dorner, playing for Kansas City; a tin figure of Mortimer Snerd; early cameras (Brownie, Polaroid, and Instamatic); iron buggy stops; an antique rosary; a Lenox Castle Collection of ten great castles (Taj Mahal to Chambord); mercury doorknobs; and pressed iron rosettes. There's so much here it's hard to take it all in at once.

Floor stalls hold larger items and furniture. You can find things ranging from a six-foot-tall Chinese noodle cupboard made of elmwood (\$2,200) to sheet music for "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive (Mister In-Between)," featuring a beaming Bing Crosby (\$3). And, yes, there is a porcelain sink, as well as a Hoosier kitchen, old cookbooks, and Hall china at Coffin's Collectibles.

Specialty stalls hold Maine postcards and antique newspapers, vintage clothing — the veiled Sunday hats your mother wore — and a graduated set of cast-iron frying pans. Maine signature items like cupboards with original paint, hooked rugs, copper kettles, tin boxes and metal signs abound. Country tables; Bar Harbor rockers; a child's booster seat made, amazingly, of velvet upholstered into an upside down sea turtle shell; old Quimper, newer Quimper, Haviland, blue willow, flow blue, Fiestaware; a well-priced Depression-era dining set; a shelf of pedestal oil lamps; a carved Madonna de-accessioned by the Brooklyn Children's Museum; the list runs on.

Best of all, the stock changes fairly often. Dealer Gustavo Umpierre, for instance, tries to rotate his stock every six weeks or so, and the management says it "encourages" dealers to refresh their offerings periodically. "We're in constant dialog with our vendors," says Christopher Flagg. He adds that the owners try to make dealers feel that they're part of a group, with a collective mission, rather than just individual sellers. Turnover means you may need to act fast. As one alert shopper was overheard to remark to another, "The time to buy it is when you see it." □

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