

Mixing old with new



PAUL CUNNINGHAM / THE TIMES RECORD

SHOWN AT Cabot Mill Antiques at Fort Andross, from left, are David "Doc" Breyer of Harpswell, Ronald Scott Turcotte of Lisbon, and Evan Wilson of Brunswick. The three antique dealers talked about their businesses and the effect the Internet has had on selling. Breyer does 20 percent of his business on eBay, Wilson does 20 percent and Turcotte has 10 percent of sales through eBay. They all also sell items at Cabot Mill Antiques.

Antique dealers combining online sales with retail sales

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BRUNSWICK

For some, the antique business has changed with the end of lots of small, independent stores, and dealers combining online sales with group retail sales.

"The larger group shops seem to thrive. There's a threshold size to bring people in. You need foot traffic. If there's not enough turnover in items, people will come in once and they won't be back for three months," said David "Doc" Breyer of Harpswell.

He was one of three antique dealers interviewed at Cabot Mill Antiques at Fort Andross who talked about their business and the effect the Internet has had on selling. Breyer does 20 percent of his business on eBay, Evan Wilson of Brunswick does 20 percent and Ronald Scott Turcotte of Lisbon has 10 percent of sales through eBay. They all sell items at Cabot Mill Antiques as well.

Breyer said because of eBay, many rare items are no longer rare.

A Tiffin Glass Co. novelty lamp from the 1920s once sold for \$400 to \$500, but now sells in the \$200 to \$250-range online. The most well-known version of the Tiffin novelty lamp is a parrot. In a retail space, it may sell for \$300 to \$400.

"So for certain items, prices are high and other items, it's saturated," he said.

Breyer still believes in eBay and calls it a good outlet for buying and selling. Most of the sellers have items for purchase on eBay and at Cabot Mill, said Deborah Stufflebeam, manager of Cabot Mill Antiques.

"To really do well, you really need to have more than one source and do it all the time," she said.

Specialty items sell online. Breyer said that fountain pens are not sold at Cabot Mill, but they can be sold on eBay.

Trends go in waves and, right now, antique toys are selling well, Stufflebeam said. The store has several glass cases filled with miniature tanks, lunch boxes and dolls.

The same antiquing rules apply.



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David "Doc" Breyer of Harpswell

"Condition is everything in this market," Turcotte said.

"Especially toys," Wilson added. Turcotte has noticed more people

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getting involved in part-time work selling antiques thanks to group shops and eBay. As a full-time dealer, he sells in Cabot Mill, online, with private sales and at antique shows in Maine and throughout New England.

"A lot of road time. A lot of packing and unpacking," Turcotte said.

Working in the antique business is like panning for gold. It takes persistence and knowing what is valuable and what isn't.

"Most of the time you're sifting and get nothing," Breyer said.

The search has taken a Massachusetts friend of Breyer's to sift through Dumpsters and in refuse left on the street outside homes.

"There's good stuff in Dump-

sters. Good stuff," he said.

Breyer's friend, a house painter, spends two hours a morning, five days per week searching for buried and discarded treasures. He makes \$20,000 a year in online and retail sales.

"He pulled a \$1,500 Steuben lamp out of the trash. He pulled jars of coins out of the trash that people didn't want to roll. Jewelry. It's consistent year after year. And the smelly stuff isn't where the antique stuff is. You won't have the orange peels with the jewelry," he said.

EBay can act as a research service for people who may want to ensure that they sell at good prices at a yard sale rather than tossing them. They can go online to see the asking prices of similar items and see how available they are.

"And now everybody's a dealer," Breyer said.



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EVAN WILSON of Brunswick checks items at Cabot Mill Antiques at Fort Andross.