

Lancaster Farming

*Antiques Center***Fishertown Shop Specializes In Folk Art**

Liza Mishler is quite proud of the gleaming jelly cupboard in mint condition which is a part of her shop.

LINDA WILLIAMS*Bedford Co. Correspondent*

FISHERTOWN (Bedford Co.) — "When most teen-agers were spending their money on clothes or the movies, I was buying antiques," said Liza Mishler, owner of Spring Meadow Antiques and Folk Art.

"I grew up in Montgomery County in an 1830 farmhouse that was full of antiques," Liza said. "We lived in Skippack, and the town had six antique shops, one hardware store, and a restaurant. There wasn't a lot to do, so I haunted the antique shops and learned about antiques."

With her ice cream shop earnings, Liza would buy antiques on the layaway plan. Knowing she would be good for the money, the dealers cooperated and encouraged her growing knowledge of antiques.

By the time she married at age 23, she had a house full of antiques needing only a bedspring and mattress to set up house-keeping.

For 10 years, Liza owned an antique shop in Johnstown where she quickly learned that, to be a good dealer, you have to specialize in one thing. "That thing for me has become folk art and 1840s' vintage furniture," Liza said.

Her small shop in a restored summer kitchen overflows with colorful folk art, both original and reproductions. "Some artists, such as Greg Shooner of Ohio, have become so skillful at reproductions," Liza explained.

"That their pieces are also very valuable and will become more so with time."

Shooner specializes in red ware pottery which was originally made all throughout Pennsylvania because of the red clay soil. A late summer sun dances

on the colorful Shooner pieces she has placed in an 1840s' vintage corner cupboard. Both floors of the shop contain sturdy pieces of quality made furniture.

"They had to be built well," Liza said. "Think how they must have been moved in horse-drawn wagons. Some even in the Conestoga wagons."

Another popular folk artist was William Schimmel, 1817-1890. Schimmel was a roadside artist who did carvings with a pocket knife and sold them for a few cents. Because he was an alcoholic, Schimmel would trade his carvings for booze. Consequently, many bars in the Lancaster area had original Schimmel carvings. Today, his work is adeptly copied by David Strammer.

"Poor Schimmel must turn



A chair made from an old spinning wheel. As the spinning wheel became obsolete, folks made them into chairs.

over in his grave if he knew his work today sells for \$50,000 and up," said Liza.

Other attractive and decorative items in the shop include kitchen gadgets, Lt. Moses Willard Lighting, forged iron, hooked rugs, and unusual sterling jewelry.

Over the years, Liza has seen three big changes in the antique business. "The first was the advent of the antique mall. It used to be the wife would sit in the shop all day while the husband went out to find antiques or did repair work. Today, it is much more difficult to make a living, so antique dealers often have full-time jobs and then rent a spot in an antique mall."

Bedford County has a number of these malls, including "Treasures Through Time" and "Founder's Crossing," both in the town of Bedford.

The second big change was major publications which catered to antiques, such as *Country Living*.

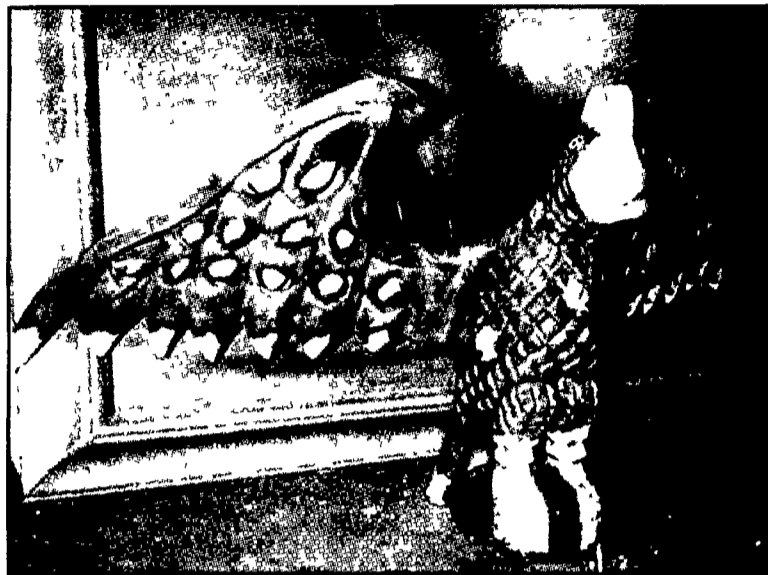
"If *Country Living* runs an article on decorating with watering cans, every dealer in the area is sure to sell out of watering cans within a month," Liza said.

And the most important change has been the Internet, and selling antiques over the Internet with the whole world at your fingertips.

"It used to be that antique dealers would depend a lot on 'pickers,'" Liza said. "Pickers are people who go to yard sales with limited knowledge of antiques, but occasionally find some good stuff. They would sell it to antique dealers and make a quick profit. Today, they keep their findings and sell them on E-Bay."

Liza admitted that she intends to get on the 'net herself.

Master Card and Visa signs lead Liza to add a fourth change



A Schimmel reproduction of an Eagle. Both original Schimmels and the reproductions were carved with a pocketknife.

in the antique business. "We used to sell a lot with layaways or on credit," she said. "Today it's the credit card. Most of my small items are purchased on impulse. However, a larger piece of furniture takes thought and some make these purchases using the credit card to make payments."

Liza's love for antiques fits easily into the Mishler's own 1830s' farm house in an area once known as "Quaker Valley."

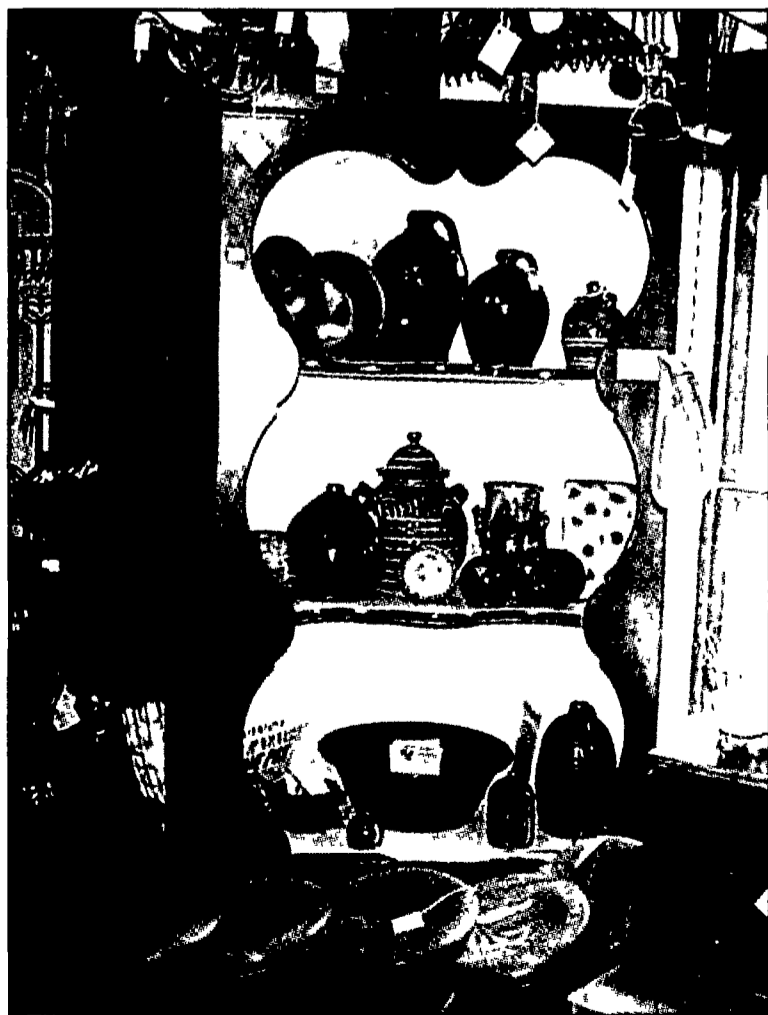
"It was a part of the Underground Railroad," she said. "A covered bridge located nearby used to be a hideout for the runaway slaves. They would be picked up by Quaker farmers carrying wagonloads of straw or hay and taken to Richland

Township, where they would meet their next ride toward Canada."

Liza believes her own home was a part of the Underground as she found bottles, dishes, and even a shoe under the floorboards of the picturesque summer kitchen, which houses her shop.

At Christmas, Liza decorates the large farmhouse in an 1830s' folk art style and holds an open house the first two weekends in November. "I'm already getting calls to see if I am planning an open house this year."

Her shop is located just off Rt. 56 and 25 minutes from either Johnstown or Altoona. The telephone number is (814) 839-9120 and it is always a good idea to call before going.



Redware reproduction pottery gleams in an 1830s' vintage corner cupboard.