

Look Up, Down, Under For Homestead Treasures

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SHREWSBURY (York Co.) —
 Roosters are in. Cows are out.

Country is in. Victorian is out, or at least not quite as popular as in past years.

Rust, of all things, is in.

But all of it is there, somewhere, in the extensive inventory of beautifully-crafted merchandise tucked into the endless nooks, crannies and display areas of Homestead Country Christmas.

In this restored, century-old

house on the edge of the historic town of Shrewsbury, craft lovers and collectors can literally spend hours examining rooms stocked from floor to ceiling — plus more hanging from overhead — with creativity. While some items of Victorian elegance remain popular, the tastefully-arranged country-oriented items of wood, soft fabrics, tin, and basketry are in far greater abundance than things shiny and glittery.

The fact that some of it is rusty enhances its customer popularity.

Rust-crusted items are especially trendy in the craft market right now, according to Homestead house proprietor Megan Shaub. In fact, items featuring rusty metal, like holiday ornaments and tree-topping stars, command great customer interest. They're almost as popular as the patriotic-themed items which are flying off the shelves and display areas faster than the consignors can supply restocking inventory.

"We are unique to this regional area," says Megan Shaub, who with her parents, Robert and Margaret Shaub, owns and operates The Farmer's Daughter Craft and Garden Center. A decade ago, they added the twice-yearly season craft and gifts displays in the Homestead craft house, adjoining the retail garden center.

The Homestead specializes in consigned creativity, with merchandise selected from dozens of craftsmen and artists who submit their specialties for sales consideration. Each submission of work is "juried," or selected by a management team, which determines if the work meets their standards for quality, variety and inventory need.

The Shaub family purchased this neighboring house to their farm just west of Shrewsbury in 1974, following the death of former owner Charles Fiddler. For almost 20 years, they utilized it primarily for storage space for The Farmer's Daughter Craft and Garden Center, which grew from a garden produce stand Megan began selling from as a child.

An employee of the Shaub's, Connie McKay, approached them in early 1992 about opening a craft house, an interest she had pursued earlier at her own home in North York. Plans moved quickly into a hectic few summer months crammed with getting local permits, then wiring and remodeling the house. Meanwhile, they were also jurying po-

tential merchandise, as well as running their farm and the garden center businesses.

"We went down to the wire," Shaub says, recalling hectic days preparing to begin accepting craft consignments by mid-September. "I wouldn't want to do it again."

By their early October opening, 11 rooms on two floors of the refurbished house were overflowing with attractive displays of craft consignments from nearly 100 artisans. Built in the shape of a cross, the house's room layout is the same on both floors, with a spacious attic overhead where excess and off-season supplies can be stored for easy access.

Customers are encouraged to "look up, look down, and look under" the displays in each area, most with somewhat of a theme. Dainty homemade scented soaps and attractive jewelry might be in one area, while rustic — and rusty — tin ornaments fill holiday trees in another. A children's area features hand-crafted games and toys, dolls, including the once-again-popular Raggedy Ann.

Consignors have become friends over the years; Shaub relates stories of them as she moves from room to room showcasing their creativity. While showing attractively-decorated, electric-switch plate covers fashioned from greeting cards, she explains with sadness that the elderly gentlemen who crafted them recently died very unexpectedly. The Homestead will continue sales of his inventory on hand.

As success of the Homestead grew, checkout lines often would often wind through the display area; creating something of a retail traffic jam. A checkout room added to the rear of the house has helped to minimize customer traffic congestion, along with adding expanded office space and some additional wall display area. Computerized registers checkout quickly while maintaining a constant inventory of items on hand.

"That enables us to quickly contact consignors for more merchandise," Shaub says. Most consignors live within a 100-mile radius, though at least one who has since relocated from the area continues to send her specialty items from Texas.

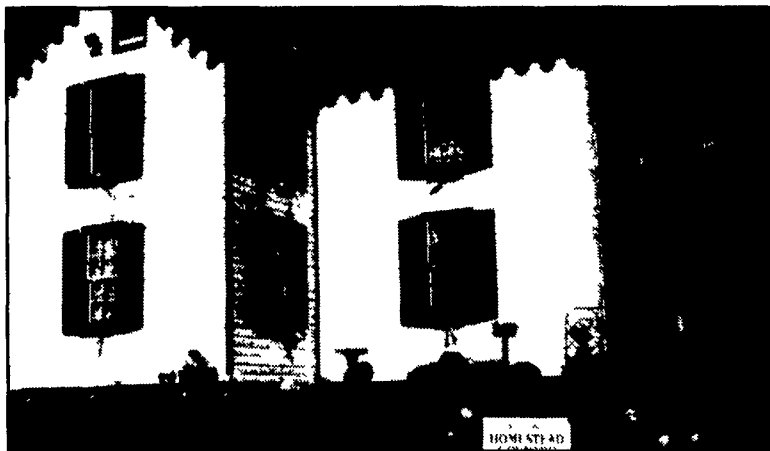
"We still have some of our original consignors," says Shaub. "They're kept busy staying up with the 'trends' in the crafts business. I attend two major shows each year and buy additional gift merchandise to complement the consignments, especially unique sorts of things."

Two managers and two assistants staff the Homestead, which is open for eight weeks prior to the Christmas holidays, and will run through Dec. 2. Spring and Easter season opens March 1 and continues through to April 14.

Hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

Those interested in having merchandise inspected for approval for the spring consignment show, should request an application by writing to the Farmers Daughter, 351 W. Railroad Ave., Shrewsbury, Pa. Megan will mail a packet with jury dates and information.

Homestead Country Christmas is located on Route 851, one mile west of Interstate 83, Shrewsbury exit. For additional information on the show, contact the Farmer's Daughter Craft and Garden Center at (717) 235-1614.



Restored and modernized, the century old home on the edge of the town of Shrewsbury has every room overflowing with seasonal and holiday crafts, collectibles and unusual gift items. The craft house, open for its 10th year with Country Christmas, is unique to the area.



Especially popular this year is a section of the Homestead dedicated to patriotic items. Proprietor Megan Shaub restocks a few of the red-white-and-blue themed pieces.



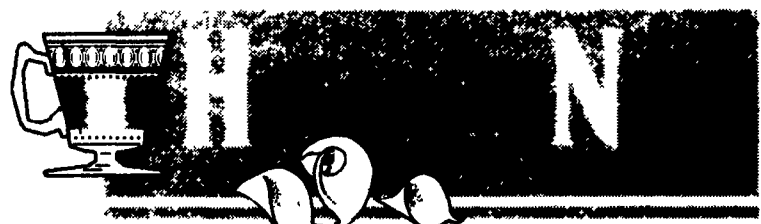
Restoration of the Homestead house was planned around marketing. This closet, utilized as a niche merchandise display, still has some of the original wallpaper and old clothes hooks left on the wall.



Megan and her father Robert Shaub, are delighted with the extension they added for customer checkout. The addition, which blends nicely with the original structure, keeps long register lines moving and inventory constantly updated.



"Rust" is one of the hottest, country-style decorating trends. The Homestead's consignment inventory of holiday, rust-encrusted items ranges from tiny ornaments to this large tree-topper star.



Glass with dainty, hand-painted floral designs is available in a variety of decorative and serving pieces.