

by Jennifer Workman Lessinger

## Sand, Shells, and Antiques

*Could there be a new reason to visit Sanibel and Captiva?*

Ron Banks (below), manager of Islander Trading Post, oversees a collection of Americana and other collectibles, including this quirky statue of the Blues Brothers.

Take a drive down Sanibel Island's main roadway, and you'll notice that among the usual signs for shell, T-shirt, and gift shops are the signs of a new—or maybe an old—shopping trend on the islands. In the past year, three new stores selling antiques and collectibles have opened along Periwinkle Way. Add those to Albert Meadow Antiques on Captiva and Islander Trading Post on Sanibel, both established in the late 1980s, and some might say the islands are well on their way to becoming an antiques destination.

"The more the better," says Nancy Pritchard, owner of the Wooden Horse Gallery, located in the Heart of the Islands shopping center. Opened in January 2004, her store features a large collection of authentic carousel horses, fine art, and furnishings, all displayed, as the name indicates, like a gallery.

Islander Trading Post, which opened in 1988 on Periwinkle Way, sits at the other end of the antiques shop spectrum from the Wooden Horse Gallery. It specializes in vintage and collectible home goods, country store items, and Americana and has the feel of a small-town antiques shop with hundreds of items displayed floor to ceiling. As owner Bob Averill says, there's something in



every corner, and there are a lot of corners. But Averill didn't open his shop with the intention of selling antiques. Manager Ron Banks explains that antiques are Averill's hobby; as a result, the onetime gift shop morphed into an antiques emporium. "This is a passion, and these are Bob's treasures," says Banks.

It seems that passion is the reason many of the island antiques shops opened. Pritchard says she and her husband enjoy antiquing and buying for the shop; the gallery's carousel horses even originated as her own private collection. Amy Horton, owner of Amy's Something Special in the Olde Sanibel Shops, also has a passion for collecting antiques, says store manager Dawn Dawkins. Horton shops estate sales and auctions to bring unique items into the year-old gift and antiques store, with a focus on jewelry, cups and saucers, and items from highly collectible manufacturers. "You never really know what you're going to find in here," says Dawkins.

When Jimmy Fay and his wife, Wesley, moved to Sanibel, they didn't plan to sell antiques. "We didn't know what we were going to do," Fay says. "We just wanted to



PHOTO COURTESY OF ISLANDER TRADING POST

*Islander Trading Post*

## Treasure Hunting?

For more information on shopping for antiques on Sanibel and Captiva, contact:

- > **Albert Meadow Antiques**, 15000 Captiva Dr., Captiva; 239/472-8442
- > **Amy's Something Special**, 630 Tarpon Bay Rd., Olde Sanibel Shops, Sanibel; 239/472-4421
- > **Islander Trading Post**, 1446 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel; 239/395-0888; [www.islandertradingpost.biz](http://www.islandertradingpost.biz)
- > **The Sanibel Company**, 1640 Periwinkle Way, Lime Tree Center, Sanibel; 239/472-1908; [www.sanibelco.com](http://www.sanibelco.com)
- > **Wooden Horse Gallery**, 1622 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel; 239/472-3300; [www.woodenhorsegallery.com](http://www.woodenhorsegallery.com)



PHOTO BY KATHLEEN BLASE

**Owner Amy Horton attends estate sales and auctions to find jewelry, china, and other items for Amy's Something Special.**



PHOTO BY KATHLEEN BLASE

**Above: Manager Lou Potts poses with one of Wooden Horse Gallery's antique carousel horses. Below: Josephine Anderson and David Doherty trade in fine art and jewelry at Albert Meadow Antiques.**



PHOTO BY KATHLEEN BLASE

come live on an island.” In March 2004, they opened The Sanibel Company in the Lime Tree Center. The shop originally focused just on gifts, but Fay, who has a background in English antique furniture, decided antique furnishings would mix well with the store’s offerings. Though he’s taking a wait-and-see approach to the viability of the antiques business on Sanibel, Fay sold several large pieces at the end of last year’s busy shopping season.

Like many of the other antiques shops, The Sanibel Company’s customers include both residents and visitors. According to Fay, visitors tend to buy gift items, while part-time Sanibel and Captiva residents purchase furnishings, often for their homes up north. Pritchard, who travels to New England and Europe to acquire items for the Wooden Horse Gallery, sees a lot of male customers who enjoy looking at the antique toys or buying conversation pieces for their homes. Banks says many of Islander Trading Post’s customers are visitors, often Europeans looking for Americana.

International visitors also shop Albert Meadow Antiques on Captiva, which opened in 1989 across from the Bubble Room and is perhaps the most specialized of the local antiques dealers. “It’s not an antiques store like you’re used to or have ever seen,” says owner David Doherty, who has been coming to Captiva since 1968. You won’t find wagon wheels or furniture here; Doherty and his partner, Josephine Anderson, specialize in fine art and jewelry.

While the other shops operate year-round, Albert Meadow opens only during the busiest times of the year—ten days surrounding Thanksgiving, and then from December 18 until the first week of April. So Doherty depends heavily on tourists and seasonal residents, which doesn’t seem to be a problem, since collectors tend to buy when- and wherever their coveted items are available.

These days, Sanibel and Captiva offer a wide selection of vintage goods tucked in among the other treasures of the Southwest Florida coast. At this rate, perhaps Pritchard’s wish will come true, and the islands will become an antiques destination one carousel horse at a time. 🐾

*Jennifer Workman Lessinger is a freelance writer and owner of The Write Stuff stationery store on Sanibel.*