

ON THE ROAD FOR Antiques

If browsing, buying and appreciating pieces of the past is your idea of fun, North Texas has a lot to offer.

By Rona Distenfeld

DOWN EVERY TEXAS BACK road you'll find roadside signs offering antiques. In North Texas, a handful of towns stand out as the places to go.

Thirty minutes north of Dallas on U.S. Highway 75, McKinney has a wealth of antique stores, antique malls and the oldest Trade Days in Texas. This may be the best antique shopping in north Texas, both for variety and price. Park on the courthouse square and spend an entire day trying to see all the antiques within walking distance. There are several two- and three-story multidealer malls on and just off the square, as well as numerous individual shops that are worth checking out.

McKinney's downtown is one of the largest historic districts in north Texas and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Several of the landmark buildings are open for tours, and

two of them, The Dowell House and the Tartan Thistle, are now bed-and-breakfasts filled with antiques.

Jefferson, in northeast Texas, is known for its historic homes and inns, and for its wealth of antique shops. You'll find more than 20 shops along Polk and Walnut streets, all within easy strolling distance of each other.



You also can tour some of Jefferson's antique-filled homes during the Historical Pilgrimage each May (this year it's May 3-5), or by special appointment. Carol Randle of the Twin Oaks Country Inn shares her extensive knowledge of antiques as she shows you the museum-quality treasures collected by her family for five generations. The Excelsior House, one of the oldest hotels in Texas, once hosted Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes and Oscar Wilde, among others.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST

Thirty-five miles southwest of Fort Worth on U.S. Highway 377 sits the tiny town of Granbury. This treasure trove of antique shops and historic buildings boasts Texas' first courthouse square to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It also hosts an annual Antique Appraisal Faire in the fall, where anyone can have their family heirlooms verbally appraised by local experts.

There are a dozen antique shops and malls on and around the square, and there's a large antique mall just outside of town with 80 dealers. Antiquing in Granbury is made extra special by places such as the Antique Emporium where owner Bob Thompson can't wait to offer you a real Dr. Pepper made with cane sugar or a Grapette soda. These concoctions were a big part of growing up for

The selection of antiques is as big as all of Texas. That's what brings the collectors and the curious to the Lone Star State's northern reaches.



It doesn't take very long for an antique expedition to turn up something unique in North Texas.



many Southerners, and this is one of the few places you'll find these treats today.

Granbury also has more than 20 bed-and-breakfasts, many of them in historic homes just off the square, including the Baker Carmichael House, circa 1905, and Manor of Time, circa 1890.

OLD TIMES ARE BOOMING

Forney, the official Antique Capital of Texas, sits 20 miles east of Dallas on U.S. Highway 80. More than 375 dealers give you 380,000 square feet of goodies to browse through. The Hiding Place specializes in English and French antiques and Windmill Antiques features antique appliances.

North of the metroplex on Interstate 35, Denton has a growing number of antique shops around its courthouse square. Check Recycled Books and Records for old and rare books

dating back 200 years, and visit the Courthouse-on-the-Square Museum across the street for lectures on specific antique topics. Denton is also home to the Texas Institute of Antiques & Collectibles, which offers Saturday classes.

The Antique Center of North Texas in Gainesville houses more than 100 dealers and 50,000 square feet of 19th- and 20th-century pieces. Addison has the Unlimited, Limited Antique Mall with 250 dealers offering good quality antiques, most from the early 1900s, but some older.

North Texas offers several huge flea markets. Canton's First Monday Trade Days has operated since the 1850s and now offers 75 acres filled with vendors. The Civic Center building on the site (enter from state Highway 64) sports only antiques and collectibles.

McKinney's Third Monday Market Days is the oldest trade market in Texas, with more than 300 vendors on 36 acres. Antique dealers are scattered throughout.

Grand Prairie's Traders Village is the biggest of the bunch, with 2,000 vendor spaces on 106 acres. You'll do some hunting for the real antiques here, but the variety of goods for sale makes it worth the visit. It's open every weekend and also hosts special events such as barbecue cook-offs. ■

RONA DISTENFELD is a freelance writer based in Austin, Texas.

Where to Shop and Where to Stay in North Texas

CANTON

- **First Monday Trade Days:** (903) 567-6556, www.firstmondaycanton.com.

DENTON

- **Denton Convention & Visitor Bureau:** (888) 381-1818, www.discoverdenton.com.
- **Courthouse-on-the-Square Museum:** (940) 349-2850, www.dentoncounty.com/dept/hcm.htm.
- **Heritage Inns:** Three bed-and-breakfasts in one court just a few blocks from the square. Rates: \$65-\$135. (940) 565-6414, www.theheritageinns.com.
- **Texas Institute of Antiques & Collectibles:** (940) 565-9611.

FORNEY

- **Forney Area Chamber of Commerce:** (972) 564-2233, www.forneytexas.com/chamber
- **Hiding Place Antiques:** Owners Charles and Nell Roberts organize affordable, weeklong buying trips to England for small groups. (214) 679-8062.
- **Super 8 Motel:** (800) 800-8000 or (972) 552-3888.

GAINESVILLE

- **Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce:** (888) 585-4468, www.gainesville.tx.us.
- **Antique & Design Center of North Texas:** 502 E. California, (940) 665-8847.

GRANBURY

- **Granbury Convention & Visitors Bureau:** (800) 950-2212, www.granburytx.com.
- **Baker-Carmichael House/Southern Country Inns:** A strikingly beautiful home just a block from the square. Rates: \$89-\$150. (888) 476-8631, www.southerncountryinns.com.
- **Manor of Time Bed & Breakfast:** Luxury from a bygone era in a charming Victorian home. Rates: \$95-\$120. (877) 437-9110, www.manoroftime.com.

GRAND PRAIRIE

- **Grand Prairie Convention & Visitors Bureau:** (800) 288-8386, www.gptexas.com.
- **Traders Village:** World's Largest Flea Market. 2602 Mayfield, www.tradersvillage.com.

JEFFERSON

- **Jefferson Convention & Visitors Bureau:** (888) 467-3529, www.jefferson-texas.com.
- **Excelsior House:** One of the oldest hotels in Texas. Rooms \$75-\$110, <http://theexcelsiorhouse.com>.
- **Twin Oaks Country Inn:** Museum quality antiques fill this gracious inn. All rooms \$110. (800) 905-7751, www.twinoaksinn.com.

MCKINNEY

- **McKinney Convention & Visitors Bureau:** (214) 544-1407, www.mckinneycvb.org.
- **Dowell House Bed & Breakfast:** Fred and Diane Mueller make you feel like family. Rates: \$125-\$145. (800) 373-0551, www.dowellhouse.com.
- **Tartan Thistle Bed & Breakfast:** Karen and Tom Watson welcome you to spacious, beautiful rooms in their striking Victorian home. Rates: \$60-\$120. (972) 897-4493, www.tartanthistle.net.
- **Third Monday Trade Days:** (972) 562-5466, www.tmtd.com.