



Kim Van Fossan, at The Pink Geranium resale shop.

Treasure Hunting

Resale shopping for fun and great finds

AH, TREASURES! THIS NOUN MEANS a quantity of precious metals, gems, or other valuable objects, a very valuable object, or anything especially pleasing that can be found at a resale, secondhand, or antique shops. Alright, the last bit of the definition may be fudged, but as many devotees of television programs like “Antiques Roadshow” and “American Pickers” know, there are objective, subjective, and sentimental treasures waiting to be discovered at local shops, barns, garage and rummage sales.

What constitutes a treasure? The answer is ambiguous, for each of us has our own definition of treasure. For some, finding a necessity, boots, a winter coat, or a sofa on sale or at a really great price is treasure hunting and satisfying. For others, a treasure is not any one object, but consists in the thrill of the hunt and ultimately finding something of real value.

Dedicated treasure hunters, at one time or another, experience the excitement of finding a true blue 14 or 18-carat gold brooch in a pile of grandma’s costume jewelry at a garage sale, the giddiness of discovering an original, signed piece of art in a group of prints leaning together against a wall in a resale shop, the heart-stopping exhilaration of wiping years of tarnish from a silver object marked \$5 at a flea market only to find sterling hallmarks from England or (jackpot!), Paul Revere’s distinctive “R” stamp. It *does* happen.

Treasure hunters may be born, yet most catch the fever through a friend or family member that drags them on a treasure hunt. The reluctant shopper finds something that catches their eye – perhaps it is shiny, something they need and have priced at a retail store. They pick it up, examine it, check out the relatively reasonable price and then put it back down. They are not ready to buy. But

then a need arises. More seating for a holiday dinner, a dresser for the soon-to-be-used guest room, or a sofa for the basement.

Who knew that custom made sofa with yards of lightly or rarely sat upon Ralph Lauren plaid upholstery could be so inexpensive? A Henredon dining set is how much on consignment? Is that a Baker coffee table? Frederick Cooper lamp? Sterling water pitcher? Chanel purse? Tiffany ice bucket?

There is always something new, exciting, vintage, unusual, antique, downright cute and reasonably priced at second-hand venues. As the novice treasure hunter becomes more confident and skilled so does her decorating style – a painted piece of furniture surfaces in a wood filled room. A great lamp with a funky shade appears at a bedside table.

Experienced treasure hunters value quality. They recognize that “new” is not necessarily better. Savvy shoppers inspect craftsmanship, materials, patina, and appreciate the “Made in America” stamp. They respect a well-made piece that has character and history. Purchases from consignment, resale, and antiques shops are recycled. It is the ultimate in green shopping.

Recently, a call came into an area resale shop. The caller was looking for bird prints of a particular type. Drawn, colored, and printed by a famous 18th century artist named Gould, she wondered if the shop had anything like them. Yes, it had a pair of nicely framed Gould reproductions. “Are you sure they are reproductions”, she asked? “Quite sure”, came the reply, “are you interested”? “No”, she said, she was looking for the real deal, not reproductions.

The caller was then informed that original Gould prints were available for sale at art galleries and antique print shops, but that they cost thousands of dollars. Yes, she knew that, but she confessed she was calling resale and consignment shops hoping to find the actual prints leaning against a wall, amid stacks of other prints, at a good price. U

Kim Van Fossan co-owns Pink Geranium, a resale shop on Lageschulte Street in Barrington. Her co-owners at Pink Geranium are Karin Cummins and Debbie Smith.