

THE MAGAZINE of *SPLENDID HOMES and GARDENS* • JULY/AUGUST 2013

# DESIGN

NEW ENGLAND

## SUMMER MEMORIES

THE PAST  
IS PRESENT  
IN **FOUR**  
**INSPIRED**  
**GETAWAY**  
**HOUSES**



## ANTIQUES

A BURL WALNUT cabinet, circa 1670, with exquisite inlaid work (RIGHT) is displayed in Grand & Water Antiques. Water Street (BELOW) runs parallel to the harbor and is one of two main streets in the Borough, a section of Stonington, Connecticut, where some houses date from the 1700s. A vintage wooden whale sign (BELOW, BOTTOM), (\$325), hangs at Grand & Water.



## Shopping Seaside

Stonington, Connecticut, is scenic, quaint, and full of furnishings and accessories from the last four centuries

WRITTEN BY JILL CONNORS • PHOTOGRAPHED BY KELLY DAVIDSON

AS IF THE BEAUTIFUL HARBOR ON LONG ISLAND SOUND and the well-preserved Colonial, Federal, and Greek Revival houses weren't enough to compel a person to spend time in Stonington, Connecticut, there's the added appeal of antiques. Several shops within an easy stroll of each other on Water Street (plus a couple outlying spots that require a car) make it possible to find everything from a 17th-century burl walnut cabinet to a mid-20th-century Modern lamp, and still have time to grab a lobster sandwich at Skipper's Dock.



Those who fancy seeing the New England coast from the water can secure a mooring for their yacht at Dodson Boatyard at the foot of Water Street, walk up the hill to purchase a first-edition copy of *Chips off the Old Benchley*, and head back to the boat to enjoy the 1940s humor from the cockpit.

The heart of Stonington is “the Borough,” a small point of land about seven blocks long with two primary streets, Water and Main, running parallel to each other. Just a few steps from the handsome 1900 stone building that is the Stonington Free Library in Wadawanuck Square, is Grand & Water Antiques (147 Water Street), where shopkeeper Deborah Norman offers a carefully edited selection. A 1670s burl inlaid “cabinet on stand” is among the oldest pieces in her inventory, while a pair of 1950s club chairs

DEBORAH NORMAN, OWNER of Grand & Water Antiques, has had a shop in Stonington for 19 years. Her inventory includes this 19th-century Copeland Spode teapot (TOP RIGHT), priced at \$125.



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upholstered in gray flannel represents Norman's appreciation for the modern. Norman herself has an impressive antiques lineage: Her great-grandmother wrote for *The Magazine Antiques* in the 1920s, and her grandmother had an antiques shop in Norwich, Connecticut, for many years. Her own background includes a degree in American history, decorative arts training at the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum in Wilmington, Delaware, and some 19 years as an antiques dealer in Stonington.

"This is my third location in Stonington," she says, showing a visitor a towering 1890s letter cabinet with dozens of drawers, a piece she saw in someone's basement locally and bought on the spot. "I love the history side of antiques, and Stonington is great for its historical environment."



SHIMMERING PIECES OF mother-of-pearl highlight a vintage metal, fish-shaped bottle opener (TOP LEFT) that is one of Norman's favorite small finds. Among the other unusual pieces at Grand & Water is the 1920s pierced brass hanging lantern (ABOVE), priced at \$450. It is reflected in an ornately framed mirror, which sits next to a rescued vintage curved shutter.

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## ANTIQUES



VINTAGE GILDED MIRRORS and a captivating portrait rest atop a mantel in the upper room of The Source, a shop owned by Barbara Lentz, whose expertise includes 20th-century American paintings and mid-20th-century furniture. A lighted mirror (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM) that reportedly belonged to Katharine Hepburn, who was known for putting on her makeup outdoors, and a mid-century vibrant orange Cappellini chair (FACING PAGE, TOP) are also at The Source.

Although her shop is situated in the heart of an old New England village, Norman knows her younger clientele leans toward mid-century Modern objects these days, so her back room includes a 1950s vignette complete with a 6-foot-long teak-frame sofa outfitted with cushions in period-style fabric. To show customers the joy of mixing periods, Norman rests a Victorian birdcage atop an early 1900s table and places a tall 19th-century walnut card table in the center of the room, noting that it would make a great kitchen island.

"I tell people they just need to trust their instincts and release their worries about everything being perfect," says Norman. "That's what you see in great houses, a lot of trust and release."

Another shopkeeper known for her exquisite eye and good advice is Barbara Lentz, owner of The Source (123 Water Street), just a few storefronts down the street from Norman. Although this shop just opened last December, Lentz has been coming to Stonington since the 1970s and says she has had 38 places over the years, including art galleries in New York and shops in Charleston, South Carolina, and Florida. "Even when I had painting galleries in New York City, I loved to come to Stonington," she says. "There are so many



things about the village that I love — the smells, sounds, everything.”

Her shop is alive with paintings and mid-century furniture and objects, such as a vibrant orange 1950s chair and a large painted makeup mirror that reportedly once belonged to actress Katharine Hepburn. Lentz says her Stonington customers are savvy about mixing periods, citing one 17th-century saltbox house where 20th-century Georgia O’Keeffe paintings grace the walls. “Even people with beautiful 18th-century furniture collections want mid-century pieces now.” She adds that “it’s a trend that is driven by designers everywhere.”

Next is Devon House (72 Water Street), a shop located on the site of an 1850s hardware store. Here, farm tables handcrafted from 17th- and 18th-century pine are the specialty for shop owners Robert and Marguerite Mead, who opened their antiques business 11 years ago but switched emphasis in serendipitous circumstances. “We used



Jill Litner Kaplan Interiors  
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ANTIQUES



AT DEVON HOUSE, an artisan-crafted farm table (TOP) is made from 18th-century oak floor planks, and its legs from old cherry and hickory; the 87-inch-long table is priced at \$2,850. A folk art fish (ABOVE) made from salvaged pieces is priced at \$350. The shop on Water Street specializes in repurposing old wood into made-to-order "antiques that fit."

to import antiques from England," says Robert Mead, "but about eight years ago we found ourselves with access to a supply of old barn wood, and we found craftsmen to make pieces to order. I guess you could call them 'antiques that fit.' " They fill a niche, he says, recalling the days when customers would look at old furniture with interest but be dismayed that a table wasn't exactly the size they needed. "People buying now, in their 30s and 40s, are mixing Modern with antique-looking, and they don't care about following a formula. They like the simple country look of these farm tables."

Rounding off the shop list is the by-appointment-only showroom of Roberto Freitas (156 Water Street). There is also anticipation that longtime Washington, D.C., gallery owner Glenn Randall (more recently the seller of famed Newport,



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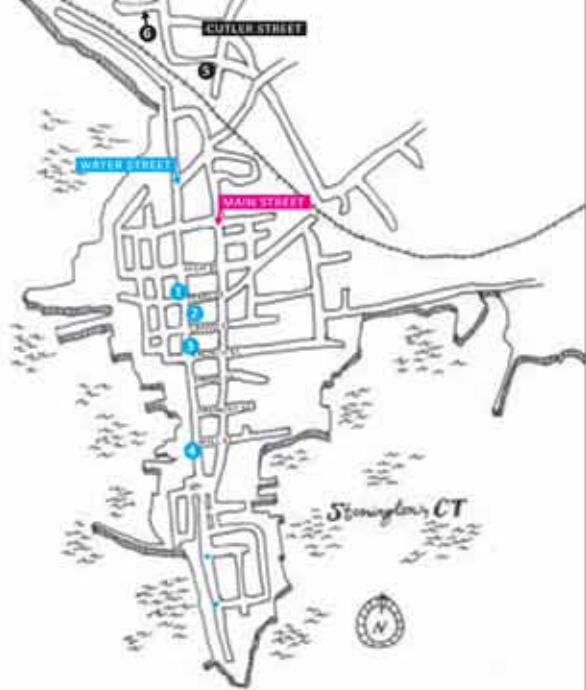
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### The Borough and beyond ...

GENERAL INFORMATION  
[stoningtonboroughct.com](http://stoningtonboroughct.com)

- 1] Roberto Freitas  
 156 Water Street, 860-535-1797
- 2] Grand & Water Antiques  
 147 Water Street, 860-535-2624;  
[grandandwater.com](http://grandandwater.com)
- 3] The Source  
 123 Water Street, 860-245-4449
- 4] Devon House  
 72 Water Street, 860-535-4452;  
[devonhousestonington.com](http://devonhousestonington.com)
- 5] Rue Auber  
 65 Cutler Street, 860-501-3251
- 6] Antiques & Interiors  
 Route 1, 860-535-1017;  
[antiques-and-interiors.com](http://antiques-and-interiors.com)

Rhode Island, mansion Clarendon Court) is establishing an antiques gallery at 145 Water Street.

Two other antiques sources lie a short drive from Water Street. The owners of Rue Auber Antiques (65 Cutler Street) no longer keep regular shop hours but hold tent sales, with great finds for the buying, on summer Sundays. A couple of miles south on Route 1 is Antiques & Interiors, a shop where antiques and vintage objects are arranged in room-like settings.

All in all, Stonington is a satisfying destination for antiques lovers, offering an irresistible combination of shops, architecture, and a nostalgic glimpse into a New England maritime village where maybe, just maybe, you will find an object of your heart's desire. Trust and release. ■

ILLUSTRATION BY JENNA TALECOTT



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