



the road less traveled

*Far off the beaten path, come visit Good Goods—
a Central California shop that sits among orange groves
and is a favorite with the locals* BY REBECCA J. RAZO

WHILE IT'S NOT UNCOMMON FOR PEOPLE TO BUILD CAREERS OUTSIDE THEIR fields of study, many would agree that, given her educational background, Sandy Hall's career choice is unique to say the least.

Like many college students, Sandy and her husband Jim worked several odd jobs to fund their educations. In 1970, while Sandy was a graduate student studying biochemistry and nutrition at UCLA, the couple began dealing antiques as a side job—Sandy would buy the merchandise; Jim would restore it. Who could predict, however, that the couple would love their side job so much it would become their lifelong vocation?

“We started selling out of the newspaper and it was very successful,” Sandy says. “As soon as I graduated, I just liked doing this better than my field. I even did one year as a postdoctoral scholar at [UCLA's] Brain Research Institute and went right into the antique business. My mother called me the ‘doctor of junk,’” she adds with a laugh. Indeed, Sandy may be a doctor, but what she and Jim sell today can hardly be called junk.

A few years after college, the couple relocated to the small Central California town of Visalia, but they continued to sell antiques in Los Angeles. It wasn't until the early 1990s that there, off a scarcely marked road in the quiet farm town, the couple purchased two acres of barren property where they could both live and run their business. “There was nothing [on the land], not even a well,” Sandy recalls.

(Above) The Halls bought the Chattan House days before the fire department was scheduled to burn it down. It holds an abundance of romantic country items.



Among the many treasures inside the Good Goods barn is the wide selection of new ironware pieces, including birds, brackets and knobs.



(Right) The 4,000-square-foot, turn-of-the-century barn once stood next to a dairy farm facing a well-traveled thoroughfare. Residents passing by in horse and buggy would have seen advertisements for “Dr. Pierce’s pleasant pellet” and “male pouch tobacco” on the outside walls.

Over the next few years, the Halls purchased a number of historical structures from around the area, moved them onto the land, and began renovations on them. To date, the historical buildings on the property consist of two Victorian homes, a 4,000-square-foot barn, a two-room cottage, a tank house, a one-room schoolhouse, two dairy buildings, an old farmhouse and an antique ticket booth. They also have a new four-car garage that is “full of antiques and no cars,” according to Sandy. The Halls reside in one of the Victorian homes while an abundance of one-of-a-kind treasures occupy the other home, the barn and the cottage. These comprise their appropriately named store, Good Goods.

Of all the structures on the property, the one that stands out most prominently is the turn-of-the-century barn, which was taken apart piece by piece and moved to the site from a dairy farm on a highway that runs between Visalia and Fresno in the town of Goshen. In addition to its beautiful cathedral ceiling and the natural light that flows in through windows that run along at the roofline, the outside walls of the barn contain original advertising that reads: “For your liver, Dr. Pierce’s pleasant pellet” and “Treat yourself to male pouch tobacco.” According to Sandy, the building is “one of the few barns left in California with its original advertising.”

The merchandise in the Good Goods barn consists of old and new country treasures, including ironware and finials, enamelware, vintage dishes and other unique finds; refinished furniture; and industrial furniture, which Sandy says is a recent trend among antique and vintage ware aficionados. “Industrial furniture is our best seller right now. It’s very strange and foreign to people, but the people who love it *really* love it.”

Industrial furniture, which generally dates from the ’30s, ’40s and ’50s, includes furniture that comes from any type of commercial industry, school or enterprise. “There are a lot of items that come out of woodworking classes and old metalwork classes—any kind of industry. Yesterday, we sold a 10-foot bank of food lockers that had old green paint and wonderful 4-foot-high drawers that are extremely practical—and all metal.”



Doing the Polka

Sandy displays mostly white-painted garden furniture and accessories in the two-room cottage that was once home to a farm laborer on the ranch across the street (opposite page). The blue polka dot floor, which Sandy painted herself, is a big hit with customers. To create your own polka dot floor:

1. Mark the floor according to how you want the dots arranged, either in a straight line or in a pattern. “I like mine in neat little rows,” Sandy laughs. Use a plumb line or string to mark your pattern, if necessary.
2. Cut a large sponge into a circle. Use tweezers to make the sponge holes bigger and then attach the sponge to the end of a broomstick.
3. For concrete flooring, first cover with a white base made especially for cement. Pour floor paint into a large pan. Dip the surface of the sponge in the paint and blot lightly on a towel.
4. Begin “stamping” the dots onto the floor following your pattern until the paint wears thin on the sponge. Dip the sponge in the paint, blot, and continue to apply the dots until complete.
5. When the dots are dry, use a roller brush to apply seal to the floor. Sandy recommends four coats of Diamond Finish.

Thanksgiving Tips from the lady with the Good Goods

While there are many variations on Thanksgiving dinner—ham and roast beef instead of turkey; a gourmet meal at a five-star restaurant; tamales, rice and beans—traditional Thanksgiving dinner reigns supreme in the country. But that doesn't mean that your Thanksgiving table has to be ordinary.

This year, dress your table with soft-colored roses that match your fine china, white-painted pumpkins and ecru-colored candles to create a warm and cozy atmosphere. You'll enjoy that traditional Thanksgiving country dinner—turkey, sage stuffing, candied yams, fresh cranberry sauce with oranges, and pumpkin pie—all the more.

Country Roads

Visitors to Central California will enjoy the local flavor of these destinations

Main Street in Visalia:

A wide selection of antiques stores and gift shops filled with bargains

Shopping and Dining in Exeter:

Rocky Hill Antiques Collective
297 N. Spruce Road
(559) 592-9115

By the Water Tower Antiques

141 S. "B" Street
(559) 594-4060

The Wild Flower Café

121 S. "E" Street
(559) 592-2656

Orange Blossom Junction

20898 Avenue 296
(559) 592-6726

Look for murals on the walls throughout downtown Exeter, which depict the history of the area and are painted by local artists.

Those with an affinity for all things romantic can walk outside the barn and a few feet to the left to the Chattanooga House, an enchanting purple and white Victorian home that the Halls rescued days before it was due to be destroyed. "The Chattanooga House embodies romantic country and Victorian country," says Sandy. "It's all white inside. I just love white furniture and a whole white room. I love the clean, comfortable, airy, light, fresh look of it and the way it makes me feel."

Between beautiful white furniture with crystal knobs, fine china and teacups, pretty silk flowers in floral-patterned pots, colorful quilts, and hundreds of other romantic decorative accessories, every room of the Chattanooga House is truly a sight to behold. The three upstairs bedrooms showcase carefully arranged antique vanities, bed frames and nightstands, while each of the downstairs rooms is punctuated by one or two particularly striking elements. For example, a black-and-white checkered floor makes a striking impression against the clean lines of the kitchen—a favorite room among customers—and the brown-brick fireplace with a white surround provides an eye-catching focal point in the light-filled dining room.

The two-room cottage, just a stone's throw from the Chattanooga House and barn, is much smaller than the other structures but no less charming. Garden benches, accessories and distressed furniture sit atop a blue polka dot floor under vivid silk lavender plants that hang from the rafters. So vivid, in fact, some shoppers think they are real.

Yet for all its lovely offerings, one can't help but wonder how Good Goods sustains itself out in the country without the help of advertising, a Web site or even a sign in front of the property. "I don't know how it works," says Sandy. "I just think we work really hard to keep a lot of new merchandise in here all the time. People know that when they come here, they are going to find something different each time. Antiques dealers and antiques lovers are a very special group of people. They don't want cookie cutter. They are looking for something individual."

And what about expanding the business into the lucrative world of cyberspace?

"I probably should," Sandy says thoughtfully, "but that is another vocation unto itself. I think that what we want is to keep it as is it—to write all of our receipts by hand, for example. We could very easily have a computer and it would be more efficient, but computers are kind of impersonal. I just like the face-to-face interaction with our customers. I absolutely love what I do. I'm so passionate about this."

And so it seems we've discovered Sandy's secret of success.

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SEE SHOPPING GUIDE, PAGE 92.

The Chattanooga dining room table is set for an intimate Thanksgiving dinner. Sandy likes to accentuate the creamy white dining room with bits of soft color, especially roses.

