

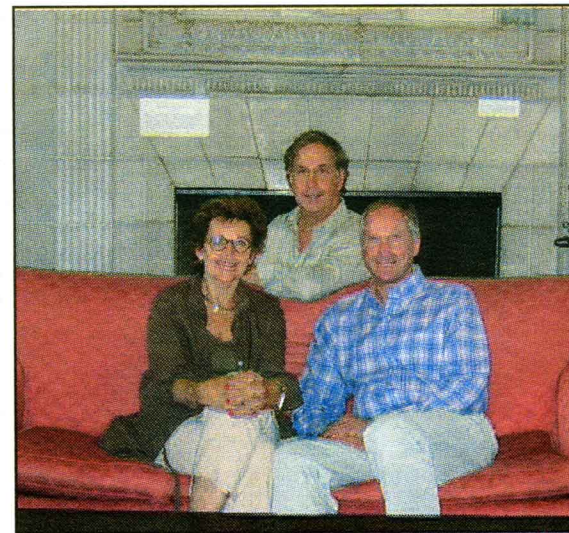
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## Antiques Assume A Modern Air

**I**t's a curious concept, the idea of "modern" antiques. Yet, for antiques that aren't so antiquated an emerging marketplace is being established. That will be in evidence in Washington Depot, when the Washington Connecticut Antiques Show [WCAS] comes back to Bryan Memorial Town Hall for its 25th straight year this

**Above, Bryan Memorial Town Hall, site of the antiques show. Right, co-chairs Regine Laverge, left, Jay Morton and J. Rodney Pleasants, rear.**



October.

The classics aren't being displaced, necessarily. Furniture and accessories from the Colonial and subsequent Federal period, which begin with 1620 and extend another three centuries, will likely always have a cachet for dealers and collectors.

But if an antique is defined as something built no fewer than 100 years ago, then it's only a matter of mathematics that merchandise from the early 20th century now falls into that category and, henceforth, is worthy of representation in the WCAS, an event to benefit the Gunn Memorial Library & Museum.

"We have 24 dealers and 13 of those are new this year; they have a more eclectic and younger look," said WCAS Committee member and one of its three chairmen, Jay Morton. "Antiques are now 20th century ... they are antique, but they are also modern to us."

The committee feels that during the past quarter-century the demographics of the area have shifted. It's true that the median age in practically every Litchfield County town, including Washington, has gotten older. In Washington, in the first decade of this century, the average age rose from 42.6 to 45.5.

But it is also true that many of those in the market for antiques represent a new generation and a new mindset. Furniture from a hundred years ago may not be reminiscent of a precious museum piece but it possibly engenders memories of grandma's beloved dining room set.

"Washington has had an influx of a younger crowd. These are people with different taste than those seeking the old English or old Connecticut antiques," noted WCAS committee member, and another of the three chairmen, Regine Laverge.

Those accustomed to the event—which one weekend a year divides the town hall's meeting room with partitions that allows each vendor his or her own little makeshift room—need not feel disenfranchised. There will be plenty of return vendors, hailing from as close as New Preston and as far away as Toronto, with those remarkably sturdy pieces from centuries ago. The upstairs balcony will this year become a marketplace for more modern, decorative art pieces.

Though the event is conducted the first weekend of October, the Friday evening before the show will offer a highly recommended gala preview. And, of course, there will be a silent auction featuring the most exquisite items, most notably a five-night Colorado vacation in a home built for six.

The totality of the offerings may best be described as eclectic, a statement not used to describe previous antiques shows. When the term was suggested, WCAS committee member Rod Pleasants, the third of the chairmen, had to admit, "That's a good word, eclectic, for the whole show."

The times are changing, but it won't be a matter of out with the old, in with the not-exactly-new, but newer. It will be an exhibition that marries periods and attracts a broad spectrum of curious collectors.

"We're going to have less of a focus this year on the dark brown antique furniture with that older look. We're trying to come into the 21st century," continued Mr. Morton. "We have to admit that younger people, the 35-year-olds, are not so interested in Chippendale."

Chippendale is Thomas Chippendale, by the way, a famous English cabinet-maker and furniture designer in the late 18th century.

The new focus is not very unlike the focus of a library—the way classic literature and new media blend harmoniously together and are made available to the public at the Gunn Memorial Library. It is, to quote executive director Jean Chapin, "the cultural center of Washington."

The nonprofit entity is run almost entirely by donations, and a person need not be a member to enjoy its

numerous scholarly and entertaining offerings, such as the Stairwell Gallery and many concerts, talks by authors, programs and workshops.

"This is the biggest fund-raiser of the year for the library," said Mr. Morton. "The library gets very little from government. It's funded by the citizens and this is the event we use to benefit the library the most."

A Washington without its library would be a Washington underserved.

Local real estate magnate Carolyn Klemm will serve as the event's honorary chair. The preview party, for which reservations are strongly encouraged, is from 6:30-9 p.m. Friday, Sept. 30. The WCAS will be open from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. the next day and from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. the day after that.

For details on ticket prices and more information, see the Web site at [www.gunnlibrary.org](http://www.gunnlibrary.org). ■