

Little

genuine antiques - the remainder is utilitarian." According to Mrs. Johnson, prospective buyers are evenly divided between those 'antique-hunting', and those concerned with the practical. "And then a lot of the young people like restoring some of this Victorian era stuff - they're looking for the early 1920's style. Its not antique, but they are looking out for it."

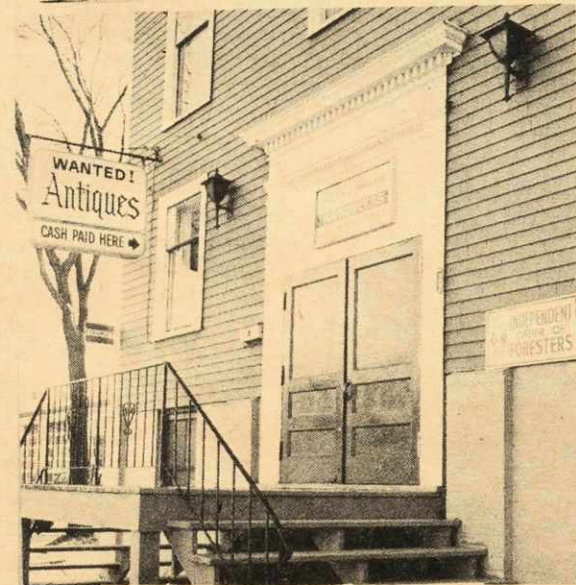
As the quality of new furniture deteriorates, antiques dealers are revising their standards as to what constitutes a genuine antique. "A real antique must be one hundred years old .. but, today, antique dealers are very interested in anything made of pine." Furniture made of pine or, of any solid wood is regarded as a novelty, and subsequently - a collector's item.

Miller and Johnson are having better luck than most small businesses in acquiring used merchandise. "We just sit here - and it comes." Initially, they ran ads in the provincial weeklies, and on television and radio. In five years, **Miller and Johnson** have earned a reputation.

A common source of goods, is the estate closure. **Miller and Johnson** accept no "reserve bids" (i.e. a minimum price can be set). For their fee, they retain 20% of the selling price on each item; if the sale is conducted on Chargex - the company retains 25% of the sale price.

The two main groups of bidders are students and antique dealers. The antique dealers buy in winter, the students - In September, look - we just can't get enough beds and bureaus. Now in May, they will send them all back to us, and we'll sell it for them. Usually, they'll get the exact same price that they paid for it. So actually, they've rented it."

Bids for a home desk in good condition might open at \$15 - closing in the vicinity of \$35. A mattress ("in good condition") and box spring would sell for approximately \$30, whether it be a single or double. Chrome sets go for up to \$55; a good "box-lot" of dishes and unmatched cutlery, from \$7-10. Chesterfields, depending on their condition, can range from between \$30-\$65; big comfortable chairs, between \$15 and \$20. Bookcases "run high", and can go anywhere from \$30-\$60. A fridge or stove, depending on age and condition can run between \$30 and \$110. Miller and Johnson accept no washers, as they cannot adequately test them before the



Miller & Johnson -
2882 Gottingen St

sale. However, fridges and stoves are "running" all day Wednesday - the one day a week that the public can inspect the items to be auctioned.

As well as the above-mentioned utilitarian item, **Miller and Johnson's** weekly assortment can encompass the bizarre. Interspersed between the practical might be an old oxen-yoke, two institutional Proctor-Silex coffee warmers, a Chinese mother-of-pearl-inlay jewel box, and a small Coca-Cola vending machine. A box of books can include such catchy titles as - *Secrets of Radar*, *White Collar Girl*, and *Tarzan and the Antmen*. A suitcase-full of curlers smothered a collection of Tony Bennett albums.

Novices are to beware of the dread 'auction fever' known to affect bidders. While George

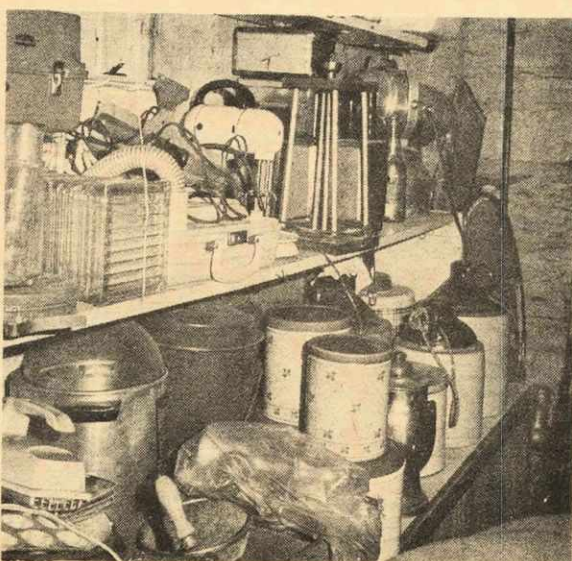
Miller may explicitly state that the refrigerator to his right has never kept anything below room temperature, the bidding may mysteriously rise, and close at an astounding \$25.

Mrs. Johnson offers advice to students on bidding: "Set a ceiling for yourself on each item that you plan to purchase, because you can be carried away at auctions. If it goes over that price - forget it...because next week you'll get it for the price you want. Something will turn up."

"If you enter a closing bid on an item, you are bound by law to buy it. When 'the hammer falls', the ownership has changed."

An honest mistake can be "reconsigned" - the new owner can pay Miller and Johnson their 20% fee, and leave the item to be re-sold next week.

Mrs. Johnson is reminded of the axiom of the trade - "Let the buyer beware."



Melvin S. Clarke Co.

Melvin S. Clarke Co. Ltd. - Auctioneers, 1726 Argyle St. deals primarily in utilitarian-type furniture, despite the sign proclaiming "Antiques". According to one long-standing employee - "The antiques just aren't coming from the old country anymore."

Clarke's conducts bi-weekly auctions each Tuesday and Friday between 9:30 and 11:30 am. But, the company is experiencing problems locating utilitarian furniture, and some weeks go by with only a Friday auction, as Tuesday morning finds the showroom only half-full.

A handsome, maple chest-of-drawers with matching bedstead brightened up the display area, but, the "reserve bid" and opening price - \$350 for the chest-of-drawers; \$150 for bedstead - might scare all but an Oland away.

Salvation Army

The modern, glassed-in **Salvation Army Retail Store** on Gottingen St. is the supermarket of the second hand. The customer circulates with a shopping cart through heaping bins of garments.

The furniture collection is upstairs, and consists mainly of assorted mattresses which sell in the vicinity of \$12 for a double. A "good" chesterfield and chair set was marked \$75. A more worn set could be purchased for \$40. Stoves and fridges are in the range of \$55-\$60. Desks and bureaus are scarce. As Mrs. Henderson, the cashier, states: "We might see half a dozen desks a year, and these are gone as soon as they are out on the floor."

Clothing prices range from \$4 for a "brand new men's suit", to \$3 for a ladies long dress, to \$.25 for sweaters or shirts.

The atmosphere is priceless. As there are no try-on rooms, the prospective buyer skitters halfway into the garment of his or her choice. The only mirrors in the store ripple and compress the viewer. A bi-focaled woman is seen conferring with the Chihuahua dog clutched under her arm. On the odd, quiet afternoon, some of the staff may model the new winter line.

Divine Sales

Divine Sales on Maynard St., (between Charles and Cunard) is the enterprising venture of the Halifax followers of Guru Maharaji, - the Divine Light Mission. Over the past few months, they have accumulated a large selection of quality used clothing and furniture, through the leafleting of middle-class neighborhoods.

Doug Sage who runs the store, explained that over 5,000 leaflets were distributed, announcing that the Divine Light Mission would be picking-up used goods on a certain street, at a specified time. The response was overwhelming.

Divine Sales has some of the best second-hand stuff in town and at a very reasonable prices. The expensive clothing item - a man's suit - is from \$2-\$3. All other clothing is under \$2. For \$10, a body could be outfitted for winter three times over.

The somewhat limited furniture supply is in fairly good condition. Comfortable chairs are between \$5 and \$10; used electric stove is \$10. Doug won't charge more than \$20 for a mattress and box spring in good condition, explaining that "Divine Sales has a reputation to think of."

Church Groups

If you are really hard-up for funds, three North-end churches give away free used clothing.

Every Tuesday morning between 9:30 and 11:30, the basement of the **Brunswick United Church** is converted into a free store. There are no eligibility requirements (other than need) - anyone can collect after having received a yellow slip from the office. Don't offer to pay for a garment, as the United Church ladies who have been dispensing clothing for "years and years", are adamant that no money be exchanged.

Call up **St. Patrick's Church** (also on Brunswick St.) and enquire about their used clothing - again, they give it away. A concerned voice may question you about your urgency - "Do you have enough to get you through the weekend?"

The **Cornwallis Baptist Church** (just off Gottingen St.) holds a weekly give away at 1:00 pm each Saturday.

Barrington St. Recycling

The **Barrington St. Recycling Shop** (across from the Bean Sprout) sells clothing aged to a funky turn, as well as a few 'never been worn' items.

The "Antique" women's dresses are genuinely used and over priced at \$10 apiece, but, the new stetson, and homburg - "Humphrey Bogart type" hats are also \$10, and really snappy. A man's new "1940's style" Harris Tweed overcoat is \$30. Zoot Suits' abound at \$15 each. The owners soon hope to be receiving more clothing for women, and intend to lower the price of the average dress to \$5.

Most places selling furniture will deliver. For bargaining purposes, its best to check-out local retail prices on electronic equipment before haggling with people like Harry or Joe. Harry's used Univac 6-operation calculator at \$49.95 is undersold by Simpsons at - \$39.95. Joe's Smith-Corona Classic 12 portable, manual typewriter ("selling new at \$200) would not be priced over \$154 at Eaton's.

The illusive bargain is really not so hard to find, and the "hunt" is an experience in itself. In the search, ones values can become distorted, so beware of that red herring or white elephant that can be yours for only .\$.? Concerning the second-hand market in general - cast a sober eye on that merchandise and ask yourself ... "Why is this here in the first place?"

