

Magical realm of marvelous things

Canal Towne Emporium a special gift shop

BY MIMI ESTES

For the Times Herald-Record

BEST GIFT STORE

1st - Canal Towne Emporium
2nd - Corner Candle Shop
3rd - Frazzleberries

Since 1869, the Holmes family has owned and operated the same mercantile building in Wurtsboro. And since 1976, they have developed an outstanding reputation for running a very special gift shop, the Canal Towne Emporium. Today, Lyman and Gary Holmes are tasked with keeping the family tradition vibrant and alive.

Still going strong, thanks in part to the firm, yet simple, principles their mother, Doris, used for merchandise being carried in the store. One favorite is, "If it costs a dollar, it must be worth a dollar."

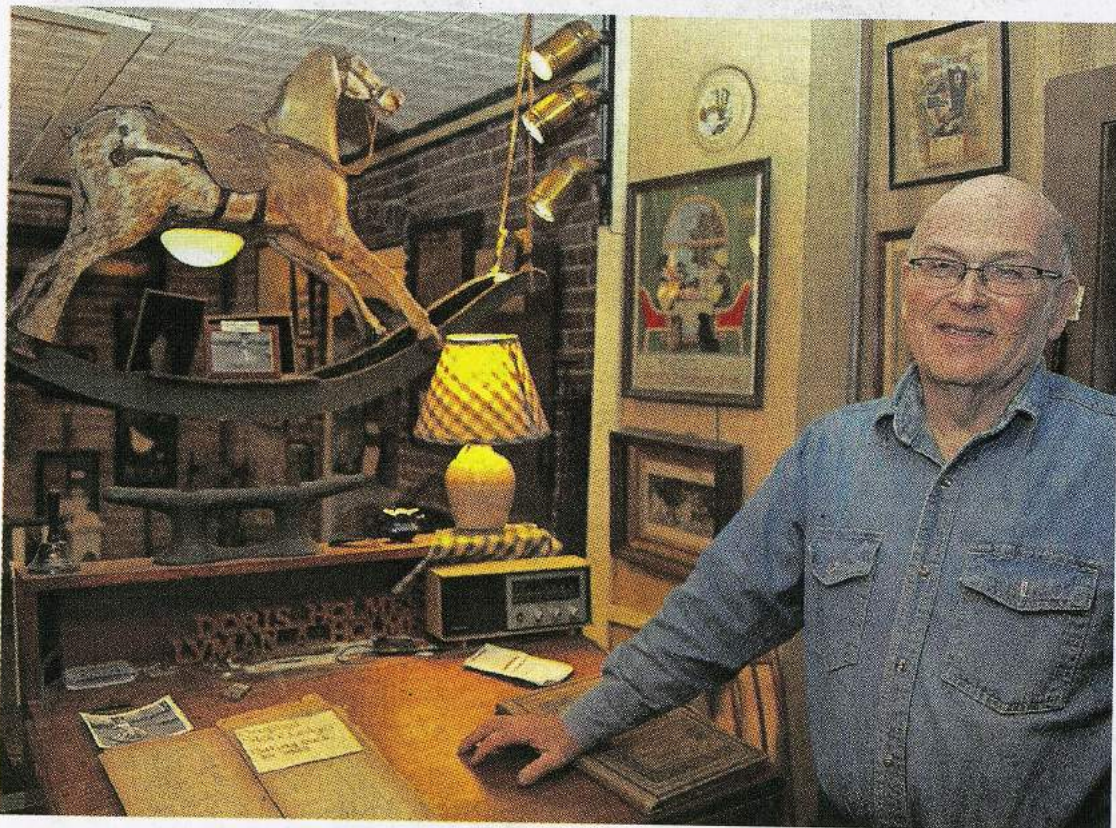
Doris decided to re-open the

store after it sat idle for a few years. She and longtime family friend, artist and professor, Gary Eckhart began to refurbish the building, removing layers of previous renovations, bringing the front rooms of the historic brick building back to their original glory. The brothers have continued to open and add onto the original site, keeping a keen eye

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A precious family heirloom — a hobby horse dating back to the mid-1800s, pictured — is on display at Canal Towne Emporium in Wurtsboro. Co-owner Gary Holmes says that he and his brother rode the toy horse when they were small children; the same horse is represented in the store's logo. [PHOTOS BY

MIMI ESTES/FOR THE TIMES HERALD-RECORD]



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on preserving the structures' history. Eckhart still comes back at Christmas to direct the decorating of the store. Don't miss the built-in shadowbox going up stairs; it contains historic items that were found throughout the store.

As soon as you cross the threshold, it's like stepping into a magical realm filled with marvelous things — exquisite cards and paper, luxe soaps and lotions, shelves filled with mouthwatering confections — and that's only the beginning. Winding through the store, it's a treasure trove of delightful objects at every turn, gifts you can feel confident giving to the most discriminating person.

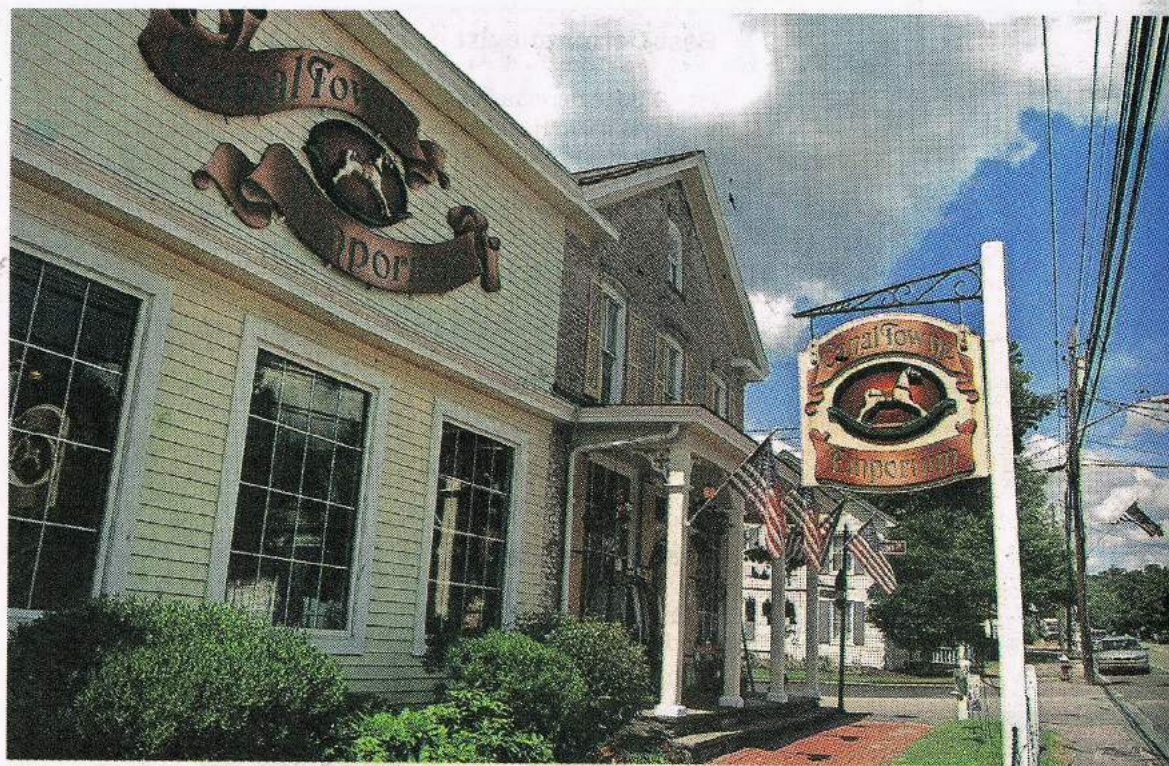
It's the same for their Christmas Shop; a wonder to behold, a splendid collection of distinctive brands. Canal Towne has been on the ground floor with many fledgling artisans

who have gone on to great recognition. This is a theme that runs throughout the entire store.

How do they consistently hit it out of the park? Simple. Before purchasing is done for the store, they ask themselves, "What would mom do?" Or, "Is this really Canal Towne?" Even though Doris didn't start out knowing how to run a store, she truly believed, good value would always pull you through.

The brothers also understand the tremendous contribution good employees make. Many have worked there for years. "Our wonderful staff is part of the charm of shopping here, they're like family," says Gary. Also acknowledging how important it is to "anticipate what your customers will want, it's like learning a new dance, or solving a new puzzle." The brothers are, "very honored for everyone's votes, we won't rest on our laurels, it always motivates us to try to make things even better."

Everyone is invited to the "Dance of the Lights," a



Even the exterior of the Canal Towne Emporium looks cheery and inviting. During the holiday season, "Dance of the Lights" is shown across the front of these buildings each night.

Christmas tradition for many families. It's a syncopated light and music show that flashes

across the entire storefront. Take your place across the street, at 7 p.m., for a once-a-night

performance, that runs from day after Thanksgiving until Christmas Eve.