

Follow the Antique Trail this Summer

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UPPER CUMBERLAND — Antique enthusiast and former Baxter resident Marcia Cole Arnold used to be frustrated when planning antique-hunting trips by searching for stores online.

“I would drive to the location that the Internet noted, and often stores had been closed for several years or the stores did not have the type of objects for which I was looking,” she said.

Then one day, while talking with the owner of a shop called Mall of Memories in Alabama, Arnold decided there should be an “antique trail” in the south. While still in the shop, she called her friend Bruce Pate, an experienced website developer, who helped her with preliminary setup of website details that day.

Now, a few years later, Arnold is the owner of AntiqueTrail.com, which currently lists 127 antique shops in Tennessee, 132 in Alabama, 58 in Georgia, 112 in Florida, two in Kentucky, nine in Mississippi, two in North Carolina and two in South Carolina, with more added all the time. Each listing gives the name, address and phone number of the shop, as well as business hours and photos of what type of things are inside. Users of the website can view shops by state, region or by city in order to organize the most effective shopping trip.

Stops on the local section of the trail include:

- Cottage Antiques in Cookeville
- Depot Outlet Antiques in Cookeville
- Homespun Antiques in Cookeville
- Jon Beasley Antiques and Fine Furniture in Cookeville
- Jones’ Antiques in Cookeville
- Vintage Rose Antiques in Cookeville
- West Side Antique Shop in Cookeville
- Judd’s Antique Mall in Algood
- Rocking Horse Antique Gallery in Crossville
- Stonehaus Antiques in Crossville

“Meeting all the wonderful people who own and manage the shops has been the true reward for this effort,” Arnold said. “I cannot adequately express my appreciation and admiration for these ‘historians.’ I learn something every day about history. Each item could have a book written just about that item. Each owner could write a book about their experience in the antique business.”

Arnold keeps busy visiting various businesses with her husband, Ray, and collecting information for the website. Collecting seems to be in her blood.

“Daddy was always bringing in a ‘treasure’ that he had found,” she said. “He collected coins, arrow heads, old surreys and their wheels. I would search through coins with him to find particular dates, etc. He had some parts of a blacksmith shop. I still have his oak roll top desk that I would play underneath when I was a small child. He loved history and life.”

Her mother and several aunts also influenced her love of antiques with their collections of vintage dishes, of which Arnold now owns more than 100. She has also aquired collections of juicers, dolls, boxes, vintage linens, quilts and children’s chairs.

“I have collections from everywhere I visit; I actually brought a child’s chair from the Yangtze River Valley in China. The people on the airplane really loved that my carry-on was a chair,” she said.

Arnold is currently retired and living in Auburn, Ala, but was originally from Baxter. Her family came from the Cole Store community between Baxter and Gentry. Arnold herself went to Upperman High School and Tennessee Tech before teaching for several years in Putnam County. She also worked as information technology manager for the Boeing company as a contractor for NASA, and in configuration management for the Raytheon company in Kwajalein, an island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

Now, though, she is content to spend her days scouring the country for undiscovered antique stores and sharing them with the public.

“Our vision is to unite the antique shops, the state and local government travel/visitor’s organizations, Chambers of Commerce and other interested parties in helping to promote and elevate the southeast as a destination for antiques,” she said.