Turpin's Hill Street Antique Mall caters to area collectors, bargain hunters

By ROBERT PIERCE • Daily Leader

A building located just off U.S. Highway 83 in the small town of Turpin, Okla., has a unique history, and it is now home to a great collection of pieces of history.

The building that now houses Hill Street Antique Mall, operated by Helen Harper and an employee, her daughter, Terrie Behrendt, was originally a grocery store.

Behrendt said Turpin did have a grocery store prior to that time, but it was severely damaged by a fire.

"They couldn't sell things out of the front of the store anymore,"

she said. "They built this building, and it was a grocery store for many, many years."

Harper said an electrician next moved into the building.

"He was here for a little while," she said. "He put the petitions in to divide it off. He had appliances out here and worked on things in the back. He took off, and another man and his wife got the building.

They put the antique mall in. They were here four years, and then I got it. I've been here six years."

Harper said the store sells a number of items, including furniture, quilts, farm implements, used books and pocket knives.

"Stamps if I can find anybody that wants any," Behrendt said jokingly. "Collectibles. Cookie jars. Plastic toys. Just whatever is collectible. We've got some metal toys. Pictures. Picture frames.

Just whatever somebody is collecting."

Behrendt said there are 25 people who bring things to the mall for sale in their own booths.

"They all bring different things," she said. "They price it themselves. They display it themselves. We have a lot of stuff."

Harper said she and Behrendt also provide help with things such as pricing, but Behrendt said they do not appraise for the general public.

"With a lot of it, you get an idea what it might be worth, but a lot of it depends on whether you went out and bought it at an auction or if you had it in the family for 30 years," she said. "It's pretty speculative about how much it actually is worth and who it's worth what to."

Harper said the cost of an appraiser's education are another factor the two considered in not appraising.

"An appraiser goes to school, and it costs them money to do that so they can appraise," she said. "They have to learn the laws, tax laws, to go along with that, so we don't do that for

people."

Behrendt said she and Harper will occasionally have vendors bring in items they will buy for themselves, but they do not buy items to sell at the mall.

"We really don't have room to buy more items to bring in," Harper said. "We bring in a small item every now and then to add to what we've got. The dealers that come in bring furniture and different items and put them in the area where they have room to put them."

Harper said she has been interested in antiques since about 1980.

"My husband and I for quite a long time, we set up at shows around the area," she said. "We traveled a lot and looked and bought items that we were interested in. I've had items in a number of different malls before I got this one."

Hill Street Antique Mall is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday.

"We both live locally, so when the weather's really, really bad and nobody's moving, we might be closed," Behrendt said. "Once in a while, we take a day off and do something different, but generally we're open."

Behrendt said the store has a lot of visitors from all over the world, including Europe, Canada, Mexico, Alaska and Hawaii.

"About every state," Harper said.

Behrendt said when Hill Street was initially open, she and Harper had a notepad to keep track

of the different places people came from.

“We’ve had some really fun people,” she said.

Harper related a story about one such person from Scotland.

“I made the comment, ‘My people came over from Norway.’ He said, ‘Close,’” she said.

Behrendt told a story of one man who was taking his brother to Colorado.

“His brother had died,” she said. “He was going cross country with the ashes. He kept saying, ‘I need to get back to my brother.’ We thought the brother was sitting in the car waiting for him. He kept saying, ‘I really need to get back on the road. My brother’s going to be waiting for me. He’s not a very patient person.’ Here he is in an urn, and I don’t think his brother really cares.”