

Upper Lake Mercantile - Artistic Shopping Fun

(Blog entry by Featherbed Railroad owner Tony Barthel, 1/18/15)



Having lived in Lake County now for six years we are beginning to see a renaissance of activity coming to the area with new businesses opening. One of those is the Upper Lake Mercantile, a unique store that celebrates local style in the quaint town of Upper Lake, just a few minutes from the Featherbed Railroad.

Upper Lake Mercantile offers a variety of items that focus on locally-sourced and locally-made items and showcases the talents of some of our incredible local artists. By their own description Upper Lake Mercantile offers an ever-changing variety of interesting and useful things and, when I stopped by, this was absolutely the case. There was everything from

jewelry to jams and things for home or person and even locally-made musical instruments! Pretty nifty for browsing and shopping, actually.

Upper Lake Mercantile proprietress Susan Saunders stands by some incredible locally-made instruments.



The proprietress is Susan Saunders who had a store across from where the Upper Lake Mercantile is now. As she was looking to expand she crossed paths with Lynne and Bernie Butcher who already own two signature businesses in Upper Lake and a team was formed to create something new.

Taking over the old bank building, the nice size of this space allowed Susan to offer more of what she and her customers loved. Susan is a talented artist in her own right and her association with others of her ilk leads to some really cool stuff in the store.

For example, I noticed the locally-made guitars which were really incredible and had a really unique style to them. They sounded great, too, and are made right on Cobb mountain, a local artists community.

There was also quite a selection of jams which were very tempting but the locally-sourced honey was what ended up finding its way home with me. I've read that a sure way to eliminate allergies to is eat a teaspoon of locally-sourced honey every day. Whether this is true or not, I get to eat a

teaspoon of honey a day and there is no bad in that. Now I've got a good, reliable source.

The artsy items in the store really reflect Susan's talent at both her own craft and that of the people she associates with. We are truly fortunate in Lake County that the life here is affordable enough that we have some people who can focus on their incredible talent rather than having to worry about making payments on a million dollar telephone booth-sized house.

Upper Lake Mercantile is the latest store in this quaint town that harkens back to the wild west days when Western settlers found their way into Lake County. With quaint covered sidewalks and beautiful vintage-style street lamps this is definitely a place to stop on your next vacation here.

Upper Lake certainly has its share of closed storefronts but the ones that are open are a wonderful celebration of local style. There are other shops along the streets including antique stores, a gift items store and more. Of course there is also Lake County Wine Studio where boutique wineries have their hey day and no trip to Upper Lake would be complete without a visit to the Blue Wing Saloon, a terrific eatery in a beautiful setting in the shadow of the immaculate and historic Tallman Hotel.

Today Upper Lake is coming back as are many towns after adjusting to newer ways of doing business and different sorts of shops that can stay afloat in this era of shopping for necessities on line. Upper Lake Mercantile is just the kind of place that celebrates local art, culture and style and its location in a historic bank building with covered sidewalks out front and a friendly shopkeeper inside make it one of the many reasons you should plan a getaway to Lake County soon.