

# HOME FRONT

## PIECES OF THE PAST

**They come on weekends, peeking curiously into the stores. But after that first vintage purchase—a pedestal sink, or an antique door with a story to tell—they're hooked.**

They are homeowners, looking for those elusive elements that will add instant character, charm, and history to their new or renovated homes—and they find what they seek in shops and warehouses that sell architectural remnants.

Building and decorating with "used" parts is not a new phenomenon—builders have long been known to scavenge burned, abandoned, or war-damaged structures for stone arches, bricks, and other materials. But now, architectural salvage dealers are everywhere. Salvage sources

offer all sorts of architectural gems including doors and gates, columns, stained and leaded glass, lighting fixtures, wood and plaster moldings, period hardware, wainscoting, wrought-iron doorknobs, bath fixtures and fittings, and fireplace surrounds.

In the architectural salvage business, the merchandise never stays the same. After a salvage trip to Argentina, Jon Tamarin's Los Angeles store, Architectural Antiques, boasts a shipment of doors and gates. "We brought back quite a selection," he says. "There are some Art Deco- and Beaux Arts-inspired gates, and some carved wood doors. We also found old iron balconies—parts of which can be made into headboards and coffee tables." Another specialty at Tamarin's

shop: garden furniture from the '20s and '30s.

Mark Charry has been scrounging around in old buildings for 15 years to come up with the treasure trove of offerings at Architectural Antiques Exchange in Philadelphia. "We consider salvaging to be part of the recycling process," he says. "And we take that process a step further by converting old elements for use today. For instance, we'll take the

carved facade of an old, built-in wardrobe and use it on a new cabinet."

Even if you're not in the market for a particular piece, strolling through a salvage warehouse is like a walk through the centuries—or bits and pieces of them, anyway. At Ir-

## YESTERDAY'S LEFTOVERS MAKE A TRIUMPHANT COMEBACK AS ARCHITECTURAL SALVAGE

replaceable Artifacts, in New York City, that stroll might take you through nearly 12,000 square feet of display space—and they have a 100,000-square-foot warehouse as well. According to sales manager Jim Schmitt, the most popular purchases are mantels, sinks, and doors. And prices run the gamut. Pedestal sinks range in price from \$250 to \$750;

doors cost from \$100 up to \$1,500 for ornately carved doors or those with leaded or stained glass. "All our pieces range in condition from good to 'like new,'" he says. Among the most unusual relics: "A wrought-iron gazebo from a country estate that looked like a giant bird cage!"

## A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

Almost all salvage-house owners are storytellers extraordinaire—it's practically part of the job description. Stuart Grannen, owner of Chicago's Architectural Artifacts, is no exception.

"We tend to have very

**Every item in the packed-full 30,000-square-foot showroom of Chicago's Architectural Artifacts has a story—one that any staff member can tell, the owner says.**



wild and unusual things," he says. Right now, an original cast-iron porch from the Elgin Mental Hospital, built in 1872, gets the nod as the most notable piece in residence. "The historical society has photos of Mary Lincoln on this very porch," Grannen says.

Recently, on one of his buying trips, the devoted salvage hunter discovered the original stairways from the noted Burnham and Root-designed Kansas City Stock Exchange lying discarded in a tire shop. "We are using the balustrades to create tables and consoles," Grannen says. "They're incredibly ornate, and they represent part of this country's architectural history."

Architectural Artifacts sells outdoor ornaments from its 8,000-square-foot "garden." "Statuary is a common purchase," Grannen says, "because it costs so little to install. Gargoyles and terra-cotta pieces need only be set out in the yard—they can take weather and wear."

Grannen does sell some of the more typical salvage pieces; mantels are a consistent favorite. "We keep about 250 restored mantels of all styles in stock," he says, "and prices range

from \$500 for a simple one to \$5,000 for something that's dripping with cherubs and gargoyles."

Another salvage hot spot in the Windy City, Salvage One, has an eye-popping inventory—reportedly the largest in the country—spread out in a 100,000-square-foot warehouse. More than 8,000 doors, thousands of hardware pieces, and myriads of other "stuff" crowd five floors. Years of following local



**The Architectural Antiques Exchange also sells reproductions, like this ornament from a Cincinnati beer garden.**

wreckers around, plus buying trips in Europe, have yielded an astounding mass of materials—in particular, interesting hardware—in the Salvage One domain. A hint: Know what you need and ask for help—or give yourself several days to find it!

Some sources specialize in building artifacts that are in near-perfect condition, some sell only hardware or specific features, and others sell almost anything. Some "salvage" looks decidedly like rubble—recommended only for the hardiest of refurbishers. Look in the Yellow Pages under "Architectural Salvage," and call ahead to make sure they have what you want. Or check out our guide ...happy hunting!

*by Kira Gould*

## SALVAGE SOURCES

Architectural Antiques Co.  
1240 Bank St.  
Ottawa, ONT K1S 3Y3  
CANADA  
(613) 738-9243

Architectural Antiques  
801 Washington Ave.  
N. Minneapolis, MN 55401  
(612) 332-8344

Architectural Antiques Exchange  
709-15 N. Second St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19123  
(215) 922-3669

Architectural Artifacts  
4325 N. Ravenswood Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60613  
(312) 348-0622

Architectural Heritage  
8409 Melrose Ave.  
Los Angeles, CA 90069  
(213) 951-1112

Artifact  
Architectural Antiques  
790 Edison Furlong Rd.  
Furlong, PA 18925  
(215) 794-8790

The Bank  
1824 Felicity St.  
New Orleans, LA 70113  
800-274-8883

Conner's  
Architectural Antiques  
247 N. Eighth St.  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
(402) 435-3338

Great Gatsby's  
5070 Peachtree Industrial Blvd.  
Atlanta, GA 30341  
(404) 457-1905

Irreplaceable Artifacts  
14 Second Ave.  
New York, NY 10003  
(212) 777-2900

Off the Wall  
P.O. Box 4561  
Carmel, CA 93921  
(408) 624-6165

Queen City  
Architectural Salvage  
4750 Brighton Blvd.  
Denver, CO 80216  
(303) 296-0925

Salvage One  
Architectural Artifacts  
1524 S. Sangamon St.  
Chicago, IL 60608  
(312) 733-0098

Swan Creek  
Architectural Antiques  
333 N. Main St.  
Lambertville, NJ 08530  
800-927-3004

Urban  
Archaeology  
285 Lafayette St.  
New York, NY 10012  
(212) 431-6969

Urban  
Artifacts  
1827 18th St. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 462-3838

Westlake  
Architectural Antiques  
3315 Westlake Dr.  
Austin, TX 78746  
(512) 327-1110

Wooden Nickel  
Architectural Antiques  
1410 Central Pkwy.  
Cincinnati, OH 45210  
(513) 241-2985

The Wrecking Bar  
of Atlanta  
292 Moreland Ave. N.E.  
Atlanta, GA 30307  
(404) 525-0468