

# PRESS-REPUBLICAN

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## Business

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### PEOPLE IN BUSINESS

## Antiques emporium hopes to start new trend in AuSable Forks revival

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**AUSABLE FORKS** — From jade lions to Japanese scrolls, lacquered cabinets, trench art, furniture and quilts to tools and antiquated but functional kitchen ware.

Karla Oehler and Bill Berkmann's Tea Time Antiques is as eclectic as it gets.

"We picked the name so people will make a connection with the hours we are open, 3 to 6, which is generally associated with tea time," said Oehler. "Many businesses have unpredictable hours and seasonal schedules, but you won't be disappointed at Tea Time. That's when we'll be there. We're not your average dusty old antique store."

Reflecting on their previous experiences, Oehler said, "We had a book store and art gallery and a nature store in Lake Placid, so we will be giving it another shot."

Oehler and Berkmann are long-time residents of Au Sable Forks, familiar to many residents and business people.

The couple is interested in assisting in a resurgence of business enterprises in AuSable Forks, as in the last few years there has been a downturn with the closing of stores such as NAPA and Aubuchon hardware, which has resulted in empty spaces in the downtown area.

The 100-year old Tahawus building where the shop is



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**Standing in front of a jam-packed curio cabinet, Bill Berkmann and Karla Oehler show off a multi-hued ceramic chicken.**

located rises up between the bridge over the West Branch of the Ausable River and the Hollywood Theater. The building's owners, Appleby Foundation (Craig Brashear and Rebecca Kelly), have restored the classic wood store front that harkens back to a busy time in the town's history, and they feel the fit for Tea Time Antiques is perfect.

"After the loss of several businesses on Main Street in the last few years, we see this as a very exciting and positive step in the revitalization of the town," said Brashear,

speaking on behalf of the non-profit Appleby Foundation.

"Though we will miss the vibrant years of the ground floor Windows Galleries and its extraordinary exhibits, it has always been part of the original plan to install a business on the ground floor which enlivens Main Street and to develop the culture and education activities of the Tahawus Center's permanent home in the second-floor gallery and the third-floor dance studio."

AuSable Forks, a historic town established in 1825

around the lumber and forging industries, was chosen by Berkmann and Oehler for several reasons.

"There are a lot of real people in towns like this. People drive through the town headed to Lake Placid and other areas and we want to give them a reason to stop," Berkmann said.

The proprietors make a concerted effort to discover the history and other facts concerning their merchandise.

"We buy virtually everything locally, mostly through yard sales and auctions. We

try to research what these items are and discover the provenance and tell their stories. We're trying to create an atmosphere," Berkmann explained.

However, they usually don't purchase items from people who may just walk into the shop with an item or two to sell.

In order to help all businesses, Berkmann and Oehler are considering a map on which other businesses are listed.

"We want to work together with the other businesses in the town," Berkmann said.

Oehler hopes the new store will become a place where people will gather and talk, browse and learn, shop and meet for tea. She considers it as a place with an emphasis on the unusual, one-of-a-kind pieces ranging from Ethiopian food baskets to vintage lighting, which covers the spectrum from antiques to modern art.

While complementing the other antique stores that exist in AuSable Forks, Berkmann and Oehler bring their fresh perspective with new items arriving daily. They are hoping that one day AuSable Forks, already filled with hidden treasures, will become an antique-hunter's destination.

While the hours of operation are 3 to 6 p.m. daily, this may change during the summer season.

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