



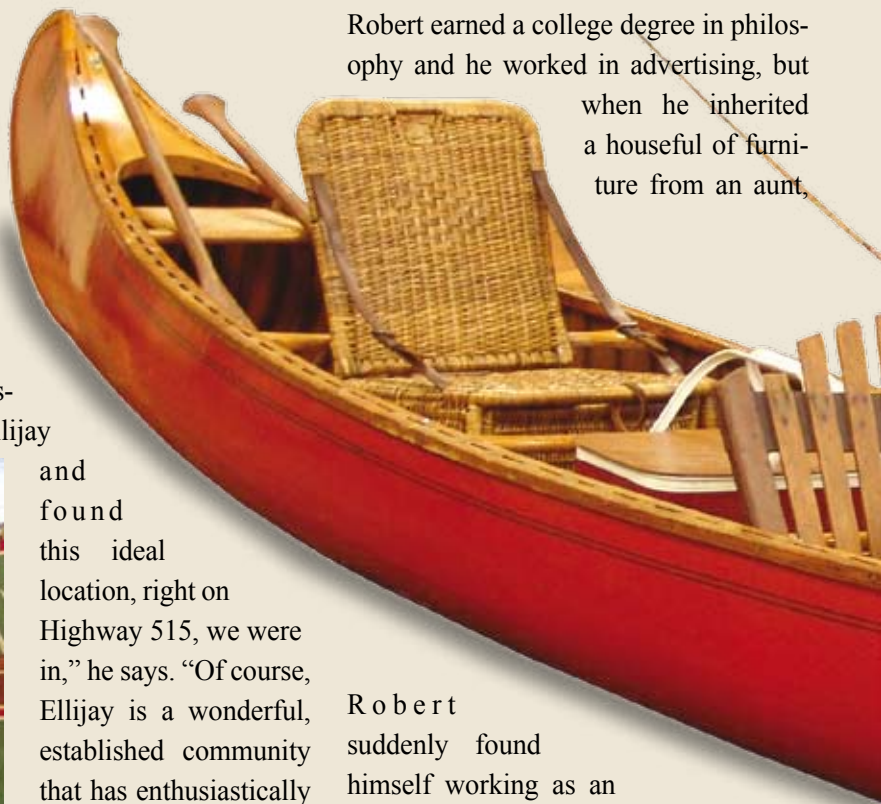
# BLACK BEAR ANTIQUES

*Where Everyone Wants to Be...*

If you ask Robert Ahlers, the owner of Black Bear Antiques in Ellijay, why he chose to open a beautiful, upscale antiques market in Ellijay, his answer comes quickly: “Because this is where everyone wants to be!”

“Without question, the natural beauty of the North Georgia mountains is the main attraction, but there is also easy proximity

to Atlanta, tourism is growing and second home sales are constantly on the rise. When we discovered Ellijay



Robert earned a college degree in philosophy and he worked in advertising, but when he inherited a houseful of furniture from an aunt,

and found this ideal location, right on Highway 515, we were in,” he says. “Of course, Ellijay is a wonderful, established community that has enthusiastically embraced us. In fact, the biggest surprise for us is the volume of customer traffic we get. It’s way above our original expectation, and the numbers keep growing steadily, month after month.”

Of course, anyone who has ever been inside of Black Bear Antiques

Robert suddenly found himself working as an antiques dealer. “I discovered I had a knack for both the sourcing and the management aspects of the antiques business,” he says.

Robert has what might be considered progressive ideas in a business all about things that are...well, old. First of all, the stores have been designed to be very customer-friendly and easy to navigate—with wide aisles and good lighting. “We emphasize attractive marketing,” says Ahler. “That gives the customer a better



experience overall. We also encourage our independent dealers with the sales support they need to succeed. That may sound like basic common sense, but these important details are often overlooked. Our merchandise is, by nature, a nod to the past, but the way we operate has to stay abreast of the times.”

There is also a focus on customer service; no one enters Black Bear Antiques without a friendly greeting from the staff. They make sure you leave happy too. Says one fan, “I was looking for a special gift for my wife at Christmas, and she finally found the perfect something at Black Bear Antiques...on December 23rd! Although I wanted the gift to be a surprise, I knew it would be hard to get it in time without her knowing. When I called the

store about my dilemma, they arranged for me to pick it up after the store had closed on

**Christmas**

Eve. Now that is what I call customer service!” Fabulous merchandise and excellent customer service wouldn’t be possible without great management, though. For that, Robert Ahlers relies on Michael Daehn, General Manager, who has 30 years of experience in retail home furnishings with 10 years



specifically in antiques. In addition to managing Black Bear Antiques, Daehn also manages 14th Street Antiques Market in Atlanta.

Lynn Asher and Sam Northey are the assistant managers who run the day-to-day operations. Lynn also designs displays and handles product merchandising while Sam shares the knowledge he has gained over his many years as a dealer in collectibles. “The most remarkable

a fantastic range of items in every price point. They are so good at what they do, it would be hard to imagine anyone leaving empty-handed. I mean, really!”

But in order to appreciate what Black Bear Antiques has to offer, you really need to stop by. You won’t be disappointed; after all, it is where everyone wants to be!

Black Bear Antiques is open daily, Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm, and on Sunday from noon until 6 pm. You also can call them at 706-635-2327, or visit them online at [www.shop-blackbear.com](http://www.shop-blackbear.com).



thing about our business is our dealers.” says owner Ahlers. “We attract some of the southeast’s best dealers. They bring in