

unexpected for a small-town market that has specialized in big-time service ever since opening its doors in 1956. *20 Main St., Peterborough, NH. 603-924-3101*

**Treasure Hunt:
Wilbur's Antiques**

As far as we're concerned, the best antiques stores remind us of old locked trunks: mysterious, slightly musty, with the possibility of forgotten treasure inside. A healthy dose of clutter helps, too, and a knowledgeable guide—like Rena Wilbur, who leads you through her jam-packed kingdom of clawfoot tubs, fire hydrants, and vintage bottles with the cheerful enthusiasm of an expert tour director. Prices are reasonable; the marital advice is free. *11 Key Hill Road, Greene, ME. 207-946-5711*

**Anything You Need:
The Willey's Store**

In this age of over-specialization, it's just about impossible to find a proud



Wilbur's Antiques
(Rena Wilbur)

generalist—which is why New Englandville requires a solid, family-run general store that isn't all tarted up to merely look New Englandy. With a traditional meat counter plus bread, cheese, local produce, rugged cloth-

ing, cast-iron bakeware, an epic candy aisle, lawnmowers, wine, hunting and fishing supplies, gas pumps, bulletin boards, and more ... In other words, it's the heart of a small town, the place where folks meet up over a bucket of washer nuts, and reason enough to keep Walmart at bay. *7 Breezy Ave., Greensboro, VT. 802-533-2621 (grocery), 802-533-2554 (hardware); www.truevalue.com/willeys/Home.aspx*

**Come Together:
The Alternative Food Co-op**

Whoosh, there goes Brendan, the roller-skating cashier, right at home in a co-op that's been around since 1970, when even Bob Dylan was fresh. Friendly manager Rosemary sets the welcoming tone in this little brick storefront, one of New England's oldest co-ops, and a fine example of how we all come together over food. *357 Main St., Wakefield, RI. 401-789-2240; alternativefoodcoop.com*

SHOPPING AT A TOWN'S MEMORY: WILSON'S DEPARTMENT STORE

The lady needs an electric can opener.

It's a Thursday morning at Wilson's Department Store in Greenfield, Massachusetts, and, so far at least, a quiet one at the 130-year-old downtown landmark. On one floor there's a woman in search of a button-down shirt for her son; another, one floor above her, looking at jewelry. Then there's the older gentleman who seems to have found a morning habit of entering the store, saying hi to all the clerks, and then heading back outside for a bit before starting the routine all over again. "Hey, Tony," says a pretty young woman behind the perfume counter. "Weren't you already here before?"

Down on the lower level the woman in search of the electric can opener circles a few shelves and then turns to the sales clerk. "I'm sure they're right in front of me, but I just don't see them," she says.

The clerk smiles and points to a shelf directly behind the woman. "I knew it," the customer says with a laugh. After perusing her options, the woman turns back to the clerk. "Where could I find those metal roosters?" she asks.

"You mean the decorative ones in the store window?" the clerk says. "They're on the third floor."



And that, in a nutshell, is the beauty of Wilson's. In an age when the downtown department store is near extinction, Wilson's, owned by the Reid family since 1929, has endured. Picture it: Card shufflers and puzzles; vacuums and toasters; mothballs and electric grills. And that's just in one section of Wilson's basement level. The store stretches over four long floors of a big brick-and-metal building right in the heart of downtown. You find men's clothing and women's sportswear on the first floor. On the second it's women's fashion and kids' clothes. Head up to third for home furnishings and those decorative hens.

Can you find these things on Amazon or at a big-box store? Probably; they might even be cheaper. But good luck finding a beauty salon (Wilson's has one), a delectable little candy counter (it's got that, too), a sales staff who'll walk your packages out to your car, or "Betty Brewster," who'll take your order over the phone—even suggest some options for that nephew for whom you have no idea what to buy. It's a store *and* a part of a town's memory. And that's the point. *258 Main St., Greenfield, MA. 413-774-4326; wilsondepartmentstore.com*

— Ian Aldrich

COURTESY OF WILBUR'S ANTIQUES (RENA WILBUR); IAN ALDRICH (WILSON'S); LANCE BOOTH/COURTESY OF MASHUA TELEGRAPH (THEATRE)