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Salvaged treasures

For 80 years, Caravati's has been the place to shop for authentic, old-school household goods.

by CLAY BARBOUR
photography by TODD WRIGHT

Jimmy Kastelberg has been salvaging sinks and dealing doorknobs since he took over Caravati's in 1984.



This is a story that begins and ends with toilets. Richmond in the 1930s was transforming from a city of the Old South into a more modern metropolis, which meant it was time to move plumbing indoors. This led to the destruction of thousands of brick privies. You know, the fancy types.

Toward the end of the decade, Louis Caravati was tearing some down when he noticed an interesting trend. He would drag the rubble to the roadside and leave a sign with it that read "Free." The next day, the bricks would be gone.

Recognizing an opportunity, Caravati started a company selling salvaged home goods. That company, Caravati's Architectural Salvage, celebrated its 80th anniversary last year.

Now led by Caravati's grandson, Jimmy Kastelberg, it has become the go-to spot for everything from doors, flooring and reclaimed wood to fireplaces and clawfoot tubs.

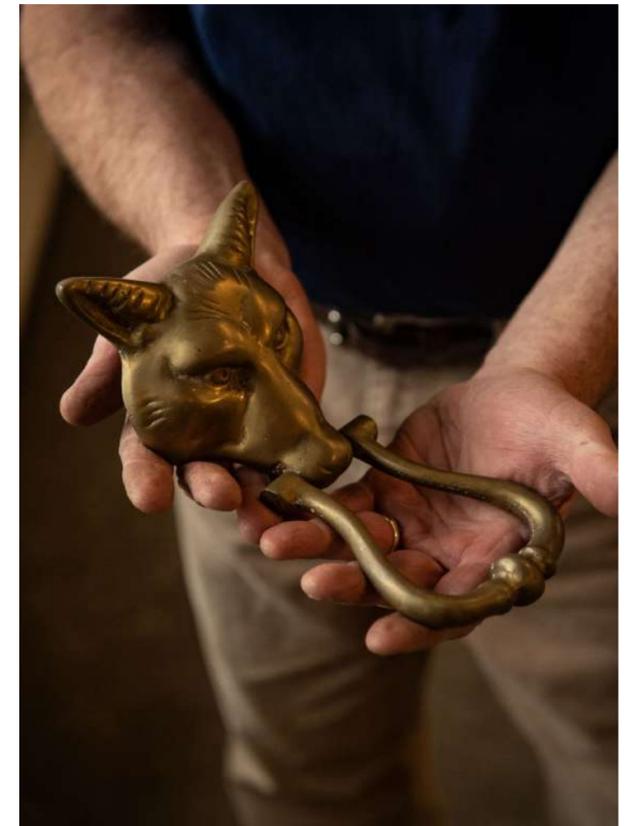
TV shows like *Fixer Upper* and *Flip or Flop* have led to a wider appreciation for using authentic materials, so most of Kastelberg's clients are homeowners and contractors. But occasionally movie sets will need brick rubble, or an old radiator and they'll come hunting treasure. If you watched *The Walking Dead* recently, you probably saw some of Caravati's bricks.

Changes are coming soon, though. Caravati's is selling its warehouse in the Manchester area of Richmond. Kastelberg says he is not sure exactly where they will land, but the plan is for the company to keep being the place to find everything from porcelain doorknobs to antique tile to yes, toilets – rows and rows of toilets. ■



The market for vintage housewares has grown exponentially in recent years. At Caravati's, you can find everything from rescued tile to antique window sash weights.





Caravati's has put its cavernous warehouse up for sale, taking advantage a hot real estate market in Richmond's Manchester neighborhood. The area's constant construction can make for a challenging trek, but it is well worth it if you're in the market for clawfoot tubs or antique fascia.