

Retailers find that items with local theme are big sellers during Christmas

During this most sentimental time of year, songwriters have long touted the importance of hometown roots.

Hearing a few bars of “I’ll Be Home for Christmas” or “There’s No Place Like Home for the Holidays” will get many folks longing for the good old days.

Several Port Washington businesses are capitalizing on that nostalgic connection with popular localized gifts.

At the Pear & Simple gift shop, 314 N. Franklin St., personalized Christmas ornaments have long been a favorite for gift-giving.

Virtually any ornament with a smooth surface can be inscribed with names and dates, creating instant keepsakes while the customer waits.

That personal touch can be taken a step further with a collection of Port Washington-themed ornaments and decorations.

Images of the iconic lighthouse, the historic Light Station and towering St. Mary’s Catholic Church are available on a series of hand-painted ornaments. All have proven to be popular gift items.

Small statues of the lighthouse and glass trivets portraying scenes of the city are also offered. A table of local decorations welcomes guests near the front door.

Although especially busy this time of year, the store offers a year-round selection of Christmas items for those who want to get a head start on next year’s gift giving.

If you want to wear a familiar landmark around your neck or wrist, Sharbuno Jewelers, 216 N. Franklin St., offers an intricately detailed charm of the city’s art deco lighthouse.

The charm is available in two sizes, and comes in sterling silver, 10-karat and 14-karat gold. The price ranges from \$35 to \$400.

“We’ve even customized some, adding gold to simulate the light or inseting diamonds,” Tom Sharbuno said.

Although the lighthouse charms are a big hit as gifts during the Christmas season, they are even more popular when the weather turns more inviting.

“They are big sellers in the summer when we have a lot of tourists in town,” Sharbuno said.

As for Christmas sales in general, he said the store is seeing brisk business.

Port gifts have hometown marketability

Written by MARK JAEGER

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“Things are good. We are actually doing a lot of custom jewelry work,” Sharbuno said.

A turn toward the whimsical takes over with unique gifts that are hand-crafted in chocolate at the Chocolate Chisel, 125 W. Grand Ave.

“Something we offer that really says Port Washington is our chocolate fish, which is 1.5 ounces of chocolate, in either white, milk or dark chocolate. It literally says ‘Port Washington, Wisconsin’ on it,” said Elizabeth MacCrimmon, who runs the shop with chocolatier John Reichert.

“The design uses the same salmon John sculpted for the Fish Day run trophies, so everyone can be a winner if they buy one of our fish.”

If something that proclaims “made in Port Washington” is reason enough to include as a hometown gift, there is no end to the variety of uniquely sweet treasures for the holidays made in the chocolate shop.

“We are really gearing up for Christmas here. This year we managed to get the antique German St. Nick molds for chocolates depicting Santa in hiking boots carrying a pack, Santa on a reindeer, Santa with a train,” MacCrimmon said.

“The most popular chocolate Santa we sell shows him on a scooter with kind of a scowl on his face. I guess he is very serious about Christmas.”

Other popular Christmas gifts at the shop include edible bell ornaments and “Luscious Lips,” in bright red for milk chocolate and purple for dark chocolate.

“The sales are about 50-50 for the dark or milk chocolate,” MacCrimmon said.

The biggest hit of the season seems to be a chocolate cat and mouse. “As soon as we put them out, they sell,” she said.