



Expanded & Revised

Internet service, a cozy café, reading rooms, plus toys and gifts... the Northshire Bookstore gets more than a facelift

BY JENNIFER HAZARD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HUBERT SCHRIEBL

On the day I'm scheduled to interview Ed and Barbara Morrow, owners of Manchester's Northshire Bookstore. I'm feeling nostalgic, anxious even. Like most people, change unnerves me, and the bookstore's latest expansion has me wondering what I'll find past familiar doors.

Northshire Bookstore has been a favorite of mine for years. At thirteen, I spent hours in the young adult section, which housed an array of novels whose stories were popular with angst-ridden teens.

When I grew tired of young love and loss, I gravitated towards the literature section. There was something special about

THE **KITCHEN**
STORE
AT J.K. Adams



Tools For Cooks



Route 30, Dorset, Vermont
802-362-4422



Join us for dinner & drinks in our
great casual setting overlooking
the beautiful Winhall River.

Thursday: \$12.95 Prime Rib Dinner
Friday: "Pasta Night" \$13.95 Specials

- 70 Label Wine List •
- Children's Menu •
- On and Off Site Catering •
- Major Credit Cards Accepted •
- Pub menu available from 4:00 •

Lunch 11:30 to 3:00, Sat., Sun.
Dinner daily from 5pm

The Out Back at Winhall River
Route 30, Bondville

(1/4 mile south of the Stratton Access Rd.)



802-297-3663

this quiet corner, something that said it was mine for the taking—maybe it was the singular wooden chair placed at its center or the nearby window that provided a sunny, comfortable place to sit and browse. As the years passed, this cozy corner had become a bit too cozy. Often I'd find a small crowd congregating in the space I had claimed as my own.

Even the Morrors never imagined the sheer volume of people who would populate their store. In 1985, the couple moved the bookstore from the small building that is now Factory Point Bank into the Colburn House across the street. "We thought we were fixed for life as far as space," Barbara says.

The Mom and Pop store quickly evolved into a business that required middle management and sophisticated organization. The Morrors considered expansion, but were not ready to take on the project until their sons, Andy and Chris, decided to join the business.

"Their involvement completely changed the store's dynamic and future," Ed says, smiling. Together, the family decided to take the plunge.

After months of investing valued time, money, and energy, the Morrors have watched their bookstore double in size from 6,000 to 12,000 square feet of combined retail and storage space. Visitors will find a new cafe called The Spiral Press, internet service, plus an entire second floor devoted to children's books, toys, and gifts. Readings and lectures will now take place in a section that comfortably seats 80 people. A large screen on a nearby wall will display the speaker for those who arrive too late for a seat. As for the status of the store's best kept secret—a used book annex called The Next Chapter—don't fret. Used books will now be available throughout the store.

The Morrow's expansion project is particularly impressive when you consider how many independent bookstores have closed in recent years. The American Booksellers Association

(ABA), a nonprofit organization that supports independent booksellers, has seen its membership drop more than 60%. In the early nineties, there were over 5,000 members of the ABA. Less than 2,000 members remain today. Ann Christopherson, the ABA's current president, considers the Morrow's decision to expand their store a bold move. "Barnes & Noble, Borders, and non-book retailers like WalMart and Cosco have made it difficult for independent bookstores to survive. Large chains like these simply have more bookselling space available to them," she says. "Couple that with the decrease in book sales over the past few years and there's simply not enough market out there."

In spite of the challenges, Christopherson believes independent booksellers like the Morrors can continue to thrive. "When an independent establishes its own unique place in the

In spite of the challenges,
Christopherson believes
independent booksellers
like the Morrors can
continue to thrive.

bookselling world, it can succeed. And the Northshire Bookstore has an excellent reputation. The right people in the right place can

make things happen."

No one can deny that Ed and Barbara Morrow are in the right place. "We're fortunate to be in a town that is clearly a retail area," Barbara tells me. Located in the heart of Manchester, the Northshire Bookstore draws in a healthy customer base of tourists and second homeowners. "Many people wait to do their book shopping in Manchester and others just seek out the bookstore," she adds.

The bookstore is equally popular with area residents, due in part to the Morrow's ability to create an inviting atmosphere. "Ed and I envisioned the store as more than just a business. We wanted it to be uplifting in every way—a place that's away from home and work where people come to congregate," Barbara says. When the store's new design began to take shape, the couple worked hard to maintain its

intimate, living room-like feel—complete with reading lamps, comfortable chairs, and side tables. “A high level of hospitality is very important to us,” Ed says.

John Hand, owner of Hand Motors, is the Morrow’s longtime neighbor and friend. He describes Ed and Barbara as a passionate, devoted pair. “They care immensely about the community. And they’ve committed a lot of time and money to the store in the face of terrific odds. Through it all, they always hoped and believed they could add something to the town,” he says.

Host to many well-known authors and poets throughout the United States, Northshire Bookstore has become one of the area’s most popular cultural resources. Chris Bohjalian, author of five bestselling novels and a columnist for the Burlington Free Press, is consistently impressed each time he visits. “A good bookstore is so much more than a big roomful of books,” he says. “It’s a community of readers—booksellers and customers alike—who know how much fun reading can be, and who don’t view reading as a solitary pleasure. The Northshire Bookstore is precisely that sort of world. As a customer and an author, I always feel incredibly welcome there.”

Another frequent Northshire guest, Archer Mayor, a mystery writer from Newfane, believes the bookstore is the very best in Vermont. “Their staffers are ‘book people’, the Morrrows have shown a consistent commitment to their employees and their patrons, and that quality shows through in the diversity of the volumes and the ready helpfulness of everyone who works there.”

When I ask the Morrrows what they look forward to most about the new and improved store, Ed, without a moment’s pause, answers, “Experiencing the new space and seeing the way our customers react to it.” Now that I know how much my feedback counts, I trust I’ll find a corner to call my own. ♦

Jennifer Hazard is a freelance writer and bibliophile who often contributes to STRATTON.

SPRING 2004

DORSET MANOR *Designer Showhouse*



PREVIEW PARTY Friday, May 21
SHOWHOUSE Saturday, May 22 – Sunday, May 30

For more information call 802-362-1775

Showhouse will feature the work of the area’s most acclaimed interior designers, landscapers and craftsmen in an enchanting turn-of-the-century manor house in Historic Dorset Village, Vermont.

All proceeds to benefit **BURR & BURTON ACADEMY**



*Just possibly
New
England’s
finest
furniture
store.*



Haynes & Kane, Inc

A STORE YOU CAN TRUST

Where you can depend on Quality.

Mon.-Sat 9:30 to 5:30. Sunday Noon to 5:00.

802-442-9100 • 802-442-8802 • Business Route 7A, Bennington, VT

DESIGN SERVICE AVAILABLE