



Fish & Game

For Bookworms Only

When we need to lay in a few more volumes for our winter reading, these are two of our favorite places to find books.

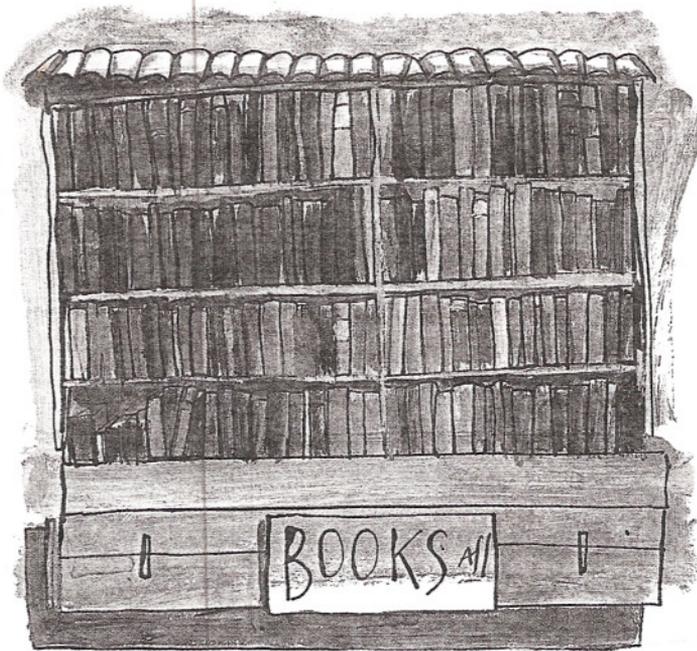
BETHANY, CONNECTICUT

Fresh Eggs, No Fiction

YEARS BACK, MY parents learned to cope with dusty bookshelves, since they'd given me the job of dusting them. Weekly, this would yield the same tableau: Me standing on a chair, rag dangling, transfixed with Capone, John Brown, the North Pole, the Irish potato famine.

Which is why I now set aside entire days for Whitlock Farm Book Barn in Woodbridge, Connecticut. Inside this old turkey barn, with the ceiling only inches from my head, I stand for long minutes, pondering the prose of a Russian naturalist, the old and grave *American Forestry Atlas*, the ancient volume on animal husbandry. A Bach cantata floats by; somewhere I hear the rapid two-fingered typing of proprietor Gilbert Whitlock.

You would think any book-



store could accomplish this, and you would be wrong. Whitlock, a modest, unhurried man in plaid shirt and heavy glasses, makes informed, eccentric choices: no fiction, outside of some hooty dime-store novels in the paperback racks ("She had a shape like a three-dimensional dream"), no condensed stuff, no Time-Life Psychic True Life Crime, nothing

much pre-1970. He exhibits a decided and welcome bias toward farming, fly-fishing, and woodcraft in the old, outdoors sense. He could also charge more — and doesn't. Once I picked up Peter Freuchen's *Book of the Eskimos* paperback for a quarter; it had been in Margaret Mead's estate. I'm still deciphering her margin notes.

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I feel at home in this gentle, esoteric selection, among floors that sag this way and that, where rocking chairs appear instead of step stools. There is silence here, a respectful quiet during which a page turns or a floorboard creaks. Before the slanting windowpanes are geraniums, wooden angels, myriad old gewgaws. One table holds pages of oddball Victoriana, carefully cased in Saran Wrap: inexplicable illustrations of marionettes and jungle natives; engravings of serpents; portraits of British singers. Everything invites perusal: I have to poke my way out.

After much practice, I have perfected a long transition back to my car. First, a stop at the old sheep barn next door, where discounts and lesser volumes — *The Great American T-Shirt*, circa 1975 — are arranged in more skittish fashion. Upstairs, a pause for the excellent view of cow pastures, then a prolonged tour of the print and map room, filled mainly and well with the latter. Later, there is grass to trample, goats to pet, roses and thick drifts of perennials to admire. Whitlock, a former farmer, provides free pears in season and advertises strictly fresh eggs for \$1.25 per dozen.

— DIANE CYR

ESSENTIALS:
Whitlock Farm Booksellers,
20 Sperry Rd. Tues.-Sun.
9-5, 203-393-1240.