

Houses get historic look at salvage warehouse

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[Photo by Kevin M. Cox](#)

GALVESTON — Walk into the building at 908 23rd St. and you might find several 1880s solid oak church pews or an antique roll-top desk or a marble fireplace mantle from the old Hutchings Sealy Bank.

Doors, windows, shutters, handrails, crown molding, bead-board, baseboard, chair rails — you name it — it's here. Walk out back and peruse the assortment of claw foot tubs, porcelain sinks, wavy glass window panes, roofing tile, brick — there's even a prefabricated commissary house from the early 1900s.

Welcome to the Architectural Salvage Warehouse, which is supported by the Galveston Historical Foundation and sales from donated items.

The building was constructed in 1909-10 and housed the staff of John Sealy, whose mansion was across the street.

Matt Farragher, project coordinator of preservation services, is the overseer who works in tandem with Joe Janota, warehouse manager.

Farragher, who divides his time between the warehouse and foundation, originally is from Ohio. He said he fell in love with Galveston on spring break while attending college in Indiana. He joined the foundation's staff in August 2007.

"I answer questions from residents and work in the resource center where builders or residents come to get restoration help with an historical project," said Farragher, who has a master of science degree in historic preservation. "I take pleasure in teaching future generations the importance of their heritage."

Janota, born and raised in Oregon, visited his aunt and uncle in Galveston and liked it so much he moved to the island. He has a bachelor's degree in anthropology, but his time as a park ranger ignited his interest in historic preservation. He manages the warehouse as well as owning his own construction business.

"This is a great place because it provides a place for locals to come and find resources for their houses," Janota said.

The warehouse also helps to keep materials out of the landfill.

Although most items are available only to island residents, he does make exceptions with smaller items if the buyer is from Galveston County. But the main objective is to keep all salvaged items on the island, Janota said.

"We also give classes upstairs," Farragher said. "We do hands-on teaching and focus on how to finish your floors, research your house, do environmentally friendly maintenance, and how to historically design your landscape. We had a course this past session where we gave instructions on how to clean up cemetery stones and had a work day there."

The majority of items the warehouse receives include doors, windows and furniture.

"We recently got 10 to 12 doors and about 50 shutters," Janota said. "We also have a lot of tongue-and-groove, bead-board, siding, flooring, spindles for porches or interior stairwells, picket fence posts — every day is different. People come in and look for specific things and since I see everything that comes in, I can usually keep an eye out for people who are looking for certain items."

The warehouse operators don't repair or recondition items.

"Everything here depends on style, size and condition," Farragher said. "We don't fix up items beyond basic cleanup and we don't recondition so we can sell things at an agreeable price."

Items go well in old houses as well as new, Janota said.

"A lot of people have a preconceived idea that they have to have an old house," Janota said. "But you can have a newer house and repurpose with many things from our warehouse. Everything here has been loved and needs a little more love."

The warehouse, which has been in business for 30 years, is open Wednesdays and Saturdays and is available for islanders to find what they need to finish their home improvement projects.

Islanders also can drop off their donations during regular business hours on Wednesday or Saturday, or make arrangements for pickups by contacting Matt Farragher at 409-765-3424 or [matt.farragher\(at\)galvestonhistory.org](mailto:matt.farragher@galvestonhistory.org).

All the proceeds from the warehouse go toward operating funds for the Preservation and Conservation Services Department. All donations to the Galveston Historical Foundation are tax deductible.