

The Pillow Lady

Mary Jane McCarty's use of antique fabrics to make pillows and other items became a hit among decorators earning her the endearing appellation, the pillow lady

by Bob Waite

Mary Jane McCarty, known to some as "the pillow lady," spent 12 years designing costumes for films and television. It was an exciting career, but it didn't fit her plans to adopt a child and move into a restored colonial fieldstone house outside of Easton. "I come from a lineage that includes both seamstresses and antiques shop owners," she said. "I tossed around ideas about a starting some kind of home business."

Mary Jane's lineage probably had something to do with her love for antique fabrics. Shortly after moving to Easton, she found drapery made of Victorian cut velvet at a yard sale. "I was in the

process of decorating our house and used the fabric to make some pillows. A friend of mine who was an antiques dealer saw the pillows and wanted to buy some for his shop."

In no time Mary Jane's new business took off. "I began buying antique fabrics to make pillows and then selling them on consignment in antiques and gifts shops in Bucks County—New Hope and Lambertville."

Area decorators noticed Mary Jane's antique pillows, and they began to ask her for custom work. The overwhelmingly positive response to her creations gave Mary Jane the idea of taking her pillows to New York.

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Paul Wesley

Opposite, Mary Jane in her workshop cutting fabrics to be made into pillows. Top, Buddy, a Brussels Griffon, sits amongst toile du Jouy pillows. Bottom left, selection of pillows that are English printed linens c. 1920. The little pillow in the middle is an 18th-century Italian needlepoint. Bottom right, Mary Jane in her workshop putting the finishing touches on a lampshade.