

ANTIQUES

British Cargo

A CASE OF COLD FEET TURNED OUT TO BE A fortunate malady for Aimee and Dudley Simms.

Two years ago, they had planned to open a retail shop in Dallas that would specialize in English antiques and reproductions. They traveled to England, bought their inventory, and, while the container was in transit across the Atlantic, began to have second thoughts. The considerable expenses of shipping and insurance, not to mention rent for a high-profile storefront, intimidated the young couple.

Still, there was the not-so-small matter of the cargo of antiques waiting at customs. The couple decided to price the furniture for a quick sale, try to recoup their initial investment, and pursue different careers.

"We rented a storefront for a month, did not mark the furniture up much, and opened our doors," recalls Aimee. "People were wild about it. We had so much encouragement. We sold everything."

Thus, the Simmses discovered the idea of short-term sales and initiated the business of Highgate House. Twice a year—for one month only—they rent a space in the Park Cities area, fill it with the spoils of their lat-

est buying trip abroad, and notify the people on their mailing list.

"The first day, there's a line outside our shop. We make the bulk of our sales the first and second days, because there's this sense of urgency," says Aimee. Two containers of furniture are shoehorned into the shop, with oak, pine, cherry, and mahogany tables stacked on top of each other; linen presses and chests lined up toe to toe; and plate racks, vintage linens, and garden antiques squeezed into the remaining space.

Highgate House offers both antiques and less expensive English-made reproductions (distressed to look old) at its sales. The couple also opened a design studio last month at 6801 Snider Plaza, where Aimee operates her interior decorating business and takes orders for custom reproductions and clients' wish lists for the next buying trip. The studio provides plenty of room for leftovers from the semiannual sales, but so far, there haven't been any.

Highgate House's fall sale will be held in the latter half of October. For the exact date and location, which were not determined by press time, call 214-691-8095.

