

## OUR REGION

by Ned Depew

# Troy Rug and Carpet



Scenes from the Rug and Carpet Outlet of Troy. Photos by Ned Depew and courtesy of Rug and Carpet Outlet of Troy

What can you say about a “Mom & Pop” company, founded more than half a century ago, now run by the grandchildren of the founders? Bucking the trends of flight from downtown to the malls, and of the deep pockets for advertising of big box competitors, Rug and Carpet Outlet of Troy has been at home on Fifth Avenue in North Troy and has no plans to change the successful formula they’ve developed. The keys to that formula are quality merchandise, years of experience and hard-won expertise, and the kind of service you only get from a company where the owners’ name is on the door.

In the dog-eat-dog world of retail business, Troy Rug is an anomaly. Over more than 60 years, the Altounian family has built a reputation that has sustained them through down-turns and done them proud during booms. They have seen the trends in fashion come and go and seen that high-quality workmanship and solid design are the things that last. Working hard to make themselves a part of that system has kept the customers coming in.

They take pride in their hands-on, one-to-one relationships with their customers. Unlike many sales-rooms, they do their own measuring, gauging—based on their long experience—what layout will make the most economical use of the material, while making installation efficient and placing any necessary seams where they will not present potential problems. It’s this kind of follow-up and attention to detail that has kept those customers coming back.

Of course, longevity in business has its rewards. Not only has Troy Rug sold replacement carpets to customers to whom they originally sold decades earlier, they have sold to the siblings, parents and cousins of those cus-

tomers, and as the years have passed, to their children and even grandchildren. Being “part of the neighborhood” involves them in its history—even when families have moved away, they keep coming back to shop because, for them, there’s nowhere more trusted or more reliable to shop.

It isn’t only the long-term relationships with customers that informs the Outlet’s expertise, it is also the fact that their ties to major carpet manufacturers go back half-a-century, to the days when many of them had mills along the Mohawk River in our region. That familiarity has persisted, even though most of the smaller companies have been absorbed by a few large ones and their manufacturing operations have moved into the lower-operating-cost climate of the southern states.

The long-term relationship, coupled with the fact that they have kept abreast of all the developments in carpet making, from new and improved fibers to various treatment procedures to fashion trends, makes talking deals with sales representatives from the mills relatively easy. Because of their long-standing ties, they have an inside track to special deals on high-quality limited stocks, close-outs and over-productions, which allows them to pass along reduced prices to their customers.

And even though the carpet manufacturing industry may have moved out of the region or even out of the United States, they haven’t. On this point, the Altounians are very proud. Although they do carry a careful selection of higher-end rugs from the Caucasus, Europe and India and some lower-end pieces from China for the economy market, the vast majority of what they sell—about 95%—is manufactured right here in America.

American technology is equal to or better than the best in the rest of the world. Rug and Carpet Outlet of Troy has seen the industry develop for 60 years and they know the level of quality control the manufacturers insist on and their steady development over time. The best American makers, like Shaw and Mohawk are still in business for the same reason that Rug and Carpet Outlet of Troy is: because they deliver a quality product at a reasonable price.

American-made rugs can be ordered without worries about overseas shipping costs or delays. American manufacturers, like the Altounians themselves, stand behind their products, and are here to stay. They are proud to be supporting American workers and products that keep profits and payrolls here at home.

And now, in addition to their traditional functions as design statements and items that add softness underfoot, rugs and carpets are beginning to be recognized as having yet another valuable function in today’s energy-conscious world. Rugs and their underlayment can have significant insulating value, cutting down on drafts that can pass between floors of a dwelling—especially between unheated cellars and first-floor living spaces—providing thermal heat transfer resistance (R-value). An industry study found R-values for the best carpet/underlayment combinations could rise as high as R2.46, which is higher than the R-value for most insulated windows.

Of course, such values alone won’t assure coziness, but as part of a building system that provides its own R-value factors, carpets and rugs can add a few percentage points of protection that allows thermostats to be turned down by a few percentage points without a perceptible reduction in

overall comfort—and each percentage point represents energy savings. Keeping floors—where cooler air naturally tends to pool—warm is an essential part of the feeling of well-being occupants get in a building, and rugs provide an easy and attractive way to do that.

The Altounians have the kind of understanding of the industry that enables them to pinpoint the correct choices for each consideration of use, function and budget. A heavy-duty, easy to clean rug that is suitable for an entry-way might not be as good a choice in a family room in front of the couch. The carpet under a dining table needs to have different features than one for a child's bedroom. A carpet for a home office or a commercial application will be purchased with different priorities in mind than one for a living room.

And the parameters are many—fibers from natural wool, cotton or even jute, to a wide variety of synthetics of many different qualities including some that are hypo-allergenic, and others that are manufactured from recycled plastic water bottles! Even within the same classes of materials, rugs can have very different textures. Patterns and colors make a significant difference in the way rugs and carpets enhance a room and a rug of the right pattern, fiber composition and weave in a high traffic area can greatly mollify the traces of hard use. There are different treatments for stain resistance and different underlayments, that can give the carpet a very different feel underfoot.

Beyond what is available in the showroom, there are sample books that offer almost limitless variations of color, pattern and materials. The Altounians offer years of experience as practiced guides in helping customers make the right decisions about the many choices offered. Putting together the different elements that go into making such a decision is daunting, but the experience of decades in the business—including learning from mistakes customers have insisted on making—has given the staff at Rug and Carpet Outlet of Troy an insight into the long-term results of various combinations in various settings.

In addition to ordering various rugs, Troy Rug has a large and ever-changing selection of special buys, including ends-of-run and “remnants” (some large enough to do all but the biggest rooms), as well as special carpets selected by the Altounians from the many collections offered to them. Members of the family have even traveled to Armenia to develop contacts with traditional rug makers, some of whose works-of-art they offer in the store.

There's a lot of history, a lot of expertise, and a lot of choice packed into one relatively small (by Big Box Store standards) space. But if you are looking for carpets or rugs, for any use from a deck or patio to a rental unit, to your living or bedroom, your office, or as a special highlight for some area of your home, the staff at Rug and Carpet of Troy can steer you to the best available choices and help you decide what is best for you.

Just talking to them is an education in the modern history of the industry—much of which they've been part of. If you want to buy local, buy American, and make the best choices about style, color, materials, textures, energy-efficiency, comfort, durability—even if you just want to find out what considerations should be part of that process—you couldn't choose better advisors than those at Rug and Carpet Outlet of Troy.

Rug and Carpet Outlet of Troy is at 320 Fifth Avenue in Troy. Their website, which has a lot of information is at [www.rugandcarpetoutlet.com](http://www.rugandcarpetoutlet.com). You can just walk in, or make an appointment to talk to them by calling 518/235-7940. 🐾

## Breast Cancer Survivor...

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Jonathan Prince and Bridget Hughes  
Photo courtesy of Bridget Hughes

structure filled with modern furniture and environmentally friendly materials, such as bamboo and burlap.

Hughes teaches classes also in Lenox and Great Barrington, MA, and her particular specialty is a combination of yoga-Pilates-cardio. She is most keen on having area residents participate and encourages them to locate the class schedule on her website, [www.thepastures.org](http://www.thepastures.org).

This story would not be complete without further mention of her husband, Prince, who is a much acclaimed creator of the sort of sculptures often moved by cranes. An affable partner, he has co-conceived their dramatic living-work space. His work area is filled with massive machinery, where he crafts metal, stone and glass, which become large, shiny mixed-media cubes, circles, funnels, etc. His attention-stopping work is exhibited at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza at the U.N. in New York; The Broad Art Museum at the University of Michigan; and ABC Stone in Brooklyn, NY.

Hughes herself has exhibited and sold ceramic planters at the Berkshire Botanical Garden in Stockbridge, MA, earth-toned vessels in a minimalist style. She uses a palette of browns for those; for her own bowls, vases, dinnerware, she works with white glazes. Of her pottery studio, she said on-site, “This is where I love to be.” And one can't help but imagine, surrounded by such creativity on all fronts, that this is just what the doctor ordered. 🐾

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