



**WRENTHAM ANTIQUES**  
MARKETPLACE

**ORIENTAL RUGS**

**HANDWOVEN ART**

By Vito Nicastro, PhD

Oriental rugs are both a language and a world unto themselves. They can communicate distant ages and cultures to us. They are as diverse and complex as the people of those cultures. There are fine floral city rugs created by a team of professional design artists, dyers, spinners, weavers, and supervisors. There are village and tribal rugs woven by a mother and daughter simply sitting side by side in their home passing on their culture and tradition. Most hand-woven rugs are made by women.

Each of the rugs you see here is completely hand-woven, knot by knot, of pure wool. In some cases, the wool has been handspun and the dyes made at home from natural recipes of herbs and minerals. Many rugs bear designs handed down for centuries, sometimes only in that one tribe or village. They bear the choices of the weaver who combines colors, adds little birds or other designs, spaces the motifs, or even tucks in a miniature self-portrait somewhere. To do so, she plans the design rows ahead of where she is weaving, making these rugs both works of art and considerable feats of skill.

Now is the best time to buy an oriental in the last fifty years. From 1979-2001, the U.S.A. did not import rugs from Persia (Modern-day Iran). But for several reasons the Persians continued to produce, stockpiling a massive surplus. They were eager to sell and when the embargo ended in 2001 prices fell to a fraction of the historic average. Since then buying has been intense, causing prices to rise again, now reaching about half of the normal value. Also, since producers were accustomed to carry a surplus as a form of real estate, many of the rugs available now were produced years or even decades before the embargo, creating a situation where semi-antique carpets are available without having been used, and at less than the cost to produce them today.