



## Frontier Expands its Western Boundary

In 1981, when Stuart Derochie was establishing his Frontier Western Shop in Claresholm, the staff numbered two and "Internet" wasn't yet a word, let alone a tool for strengthening commercial identity.

Today, Frontier employs 20 people – 24 during the summer season – boasts a strong web/mail-order presence and ships its goods to 14 countries. It's an example, says general manager D. J. Woodward, of the popularity of the Western lifestyle, and Frontier has just about everything to enhance and accessorize that way of living.

Frontier's merger with Gone Southwest Furniture of Nanton in early 2009, effectively doubled its showroom space and helped earn the company SouthGrow's 2010 Award of Recognition in its Business Retention/Growth/Expansion category.

"We were surprised to even be nominated, and honoured to have won the award," says Woodward. "There were some great nominees in the category."

Purchasing Gone Southwest a year ago and adding Western furniture in a 10,000-square-foot store adjacent to its established locale on the northwest corner of Claresholm's famous Highway 2 traffic-light intersection has made Frontier the largest and most diverse Western and rustic home decor supplier west of Ontario. (For the record, the official address is 5111 First Street W.)

But while orders come worldwide, Woodward says a majority of customers are southern Albertans and the store still has the homey feel of a small-town operation.

Frontier's top three lines include tack, clothing and home décor, some made locally, the rest imported from Mexico and the United States. Because of its "main street" location, Frontier enjoys tourist notoriety in the summer, and picks up orders on its website at westernshop.com, attractively redesigned in the fall of 2009.

"While it is still improving on a daily basis, I feel our website is one of the best in the industry," says Woodward.

Frontier also offers its customers the ability to shop by mail order with spring and fall catalogue printings, sent out free to Frontier customers twice a year.

Woodward says the addition of antique items has strengthened Frontier's lure for travelers, a line-up including saddles, tack and a few other unique items such as a buffalo coat.

In all, Frontier is riding high in the saddle, a small business growing with technology, but able to retain its traditional Western roots and small-town attractiveness.



Josh Toews, tack consultant. Frontier saddles up an online market, too.

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