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Teri and David Stone with pieces from their collection of sanded majolica pottery.



Discovering Sanded Majolica

By Terry Ely

Five years ago, David and Teri Stone bought a \$40 vase at a flea market when a friend wouldn't pay more than his \$35 limit.

"At the time," says Teri, "I didn't really like it that much; I just thought it was interesting."

Today, the Stones have collected over 1,200 pieces of what is called sanded majolica pottery.

According to the book *Majolica American & European Wares* by Snyder & Bockol, majolica is a soft, low fired earthenware molded with decorations in relief. The pieces are coated with an opaque glaze or slip and painted with brightly colored lead glazes.

The difference between regular majolica, which is also highly collectible, and sanded majolica is easy to spot. Sanded majolica usually has a large area of rough textured background or in some cases a regular majolica vase will have a sanded trim area around the top.

The Stones are avid motorcycle enthusiasts who enjoy taking weekend trips, stopping at flea markets and antique shops along the way. They have now incorporated their love of searching out sanded majolica into their motorcycle outings.

"One of our biggest finds was in a small town in Indiana near I-70. A dealer there had brought in 20 or so pieces from his personal collection. As we were checking out, the proprietor told us the same dealer had more sanded majolica for sale at several flea markets in the area," says David.

The couple drove to each market and bought every piece available, purchasing most of the dealer's collection and adding 50 pieces to their own. Another trip took the Stones to Springfield, Ohio, where they made another major addition to their now flourishing collection.

"In reality, these pieces are usually not that easy to find," says Teri. "Sometimes we can stop at places all weekend and not find anything."

Teri says the most common sanded majolica pieces are tiny pinch pots and eight inch vases. Since the price range for these items is \$25-\$50, she says these smaller pieces are a great way to start a collection without spending a large amount of money. Rare objects include baskets, clocks, smoke sets, banks and anything covered.

"One of the things we find most interesting about sanded majolica is the mystery involved

in attempting to identify a piece," says Teri.

She says about 75 percent of their collection is unmarked. The Stones must make an educated guess of the piece's provenance by comparing it to a similar piece that is identified in a published book.

"For example," Teri explains, "we own a sanded yellow-ware smoking set with no identification made from the same mold as a Moehling (a producer of majolica in Bohemia from 1849-1875) piece covered with a dark brown glaze. Since the mold is exactly the same, we assume our piece must have been made at the same company."

As avid members of the Majolica International Society, the Stones are eagerly awaiting the upcoming convention in St. Louis, May 2-4.

"It's just a guess," says Teri, "but our collection will probably be a bit larger by the time we return from that convention."

For more information on regular and sanded majolica check out the Majolica International Society's website at www.majolicasociety.com. ☼