



Starting a Collection

We thought it would be interesting for our members who are new collectors to hear what four longtime dealers and/or collectors would suggest buying were they a beginning pottery collector attempting to start out in today's market. So, we “gave” them an imaginary \$1,000 and said “how would you spend this if you were going to start a collection?” Here are their thoughts:

By: Mark & Marie Latta

The Managing Director just e-mailed us to let us know that she was going to send us \$1000.00 to start a new collection. What will it be? Even if Grueby or Marblehead could occasionally be found for \$50.00 here I can't recommend trying to put together a collection of these pots as they rarely show up at any price. On the other hand, there are some potteries we can find more abundantly... here in the Heartland.

We had been fortunate enough 10 years ago to start many different collections. Pine Ridge Sioux vases many times were labeled 'Indian pot' not so long ago with a price of \$6.00. McCoy miniatures, the little unmarked or faintly marked NM figurines were all purchased for less than \$10.00 each; i.e., Art Deco deer \$1.50 firm. We found these items at flea markets, garage sales, shops, and even pottery shows. The McCoy finds came from diligently pouring over a McCoy book over and over again. The Pine Ridge Sioux just seemed like such a nice piece and nobody else wanted it (then...).

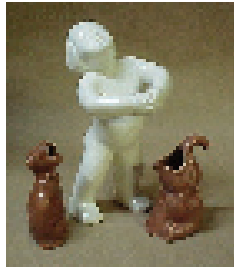
One day about 10 years ago our local auction house advertised an auction with LOTS of Frankoma – mostly in Prairie Green. Some time before we'd acquired the Bess books on Frankoma and had been picking up Ada clay pieces here and there. I stopped at the auction on the Saturday morning of the sale about 7:30 on my way to work to see if we even wanted to bother and about fell over. The tables were full with about 800 pieces of Frankoma – mostly dinnerware and mugs – but also about 50 good early pieces including some figurines. I called Marie on the auction house phone (before cell phone days) and said, "you'd

better get down here – you're not going to believe what's stuck amongst the Anniversary vases." We spent \$550.00 that day and bought choice off each table. It didn't take long to realize that the heavy-

hitter dealers were going to buy the largest piece for the first few rounds of choice. They were buying the casserole dishes and leaving the ada clay figurines and vases. We came home with the best pieces (at least in our eyes) from that auction and had a substantial instant Frankoma collection with one-day effort. Having the knowledge

of what was desirable and unusual gave us the power to step up to the plate and buy the right thing. We still look to add to that collection but the good early pieces are hard to find.

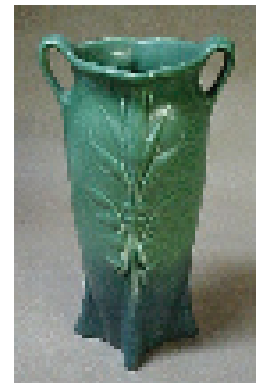
Today there are two very excellent books out on Red Wing Art Pottery by Ray Reiss. A summer convention and the mid-winter get together give collectors plenty of opportunity to look at thousands of the art pottery pieces pictured in his books. Although there is a very comprehensive updated price guide that comes with the book, the show is the best barometer of what to expect to pay for these pots. By studying the books, going to shows, and asking a lot of questions we have a fairly good knowledge of what a good Red Wing collection should/could consist of. Within the Red Wing production



1960's flower arranger (boy) with 2 figural ash receivers

there are MANY avenues for collections. We could concentrate on the Ink Stamp pieces – in all or just one glaze, the more Deco designs for the later Fleck glazes in blue, pink, or yellow, just Dutch Blue, just Nokomis, just figurines, just figurines in Cobalt – I think you are getting the picture... Or maybe some dinnerware might better suit our taste. We collect Lotus (and there are hand decorated vases to match), Flight, and Round-up.

We're going to shop the shows, go



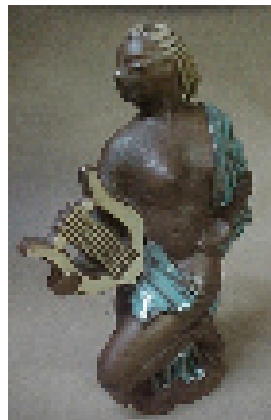
Rum Rill (made by Red Wing) 'Rocket' vase circa 1930's

to Zanesville, hit flea markets and shops and for our \$1000.00 and a few years of looking, a substantial Red Wing Art Pottery collection can be put together. We still find great pieces at bargain prices from time to time. And ... you never know

where the next one will turn up. With the active Red Wing Collectors Society (approximately 7500 members) there is some assurance that our new collection should retain its value in the future. These are the pots us Boomers saw on Grandma's and mom's shelves in the 50's and 60's here in the Midwest. And a collection will bring that nostalgic sentiment back for me (us).

Some other thoughts on starting that new collection might be Burley Winter, which was made in Crooksville, OH or Monmouth Pottery from the same town in west-central Illinois. Both have a great look and are overlooked and misidentified by many.

Now all we need is that \$1000.00 to start our shopping spree. We can hardly wait – after all that Red Wing Mid-Winter Convention is just a month away.



Charles Murphy design from 1942



By: Greg Myroth

Most beginning art pottery collectors we meet are often undecided on where their collecting interests lie. Many new collectors we talk with are not only interested in American art pottery for its beauty or decorative purposes, but consider their purchases a financial investment as well. We routinely receive inquiries from such collectors seeking to determine “What should we collect?”, “What should I buy to start an American art pottery collection?”, or “What should I buy that is going to appreciate in value?”. Beyond the obvious recommendation of collect what you like, we encourage beginning collectors to focus on condition and start out with makers that are more widely traded such as Roseville, Weller, Van Briggle, Rookwood, McCoy, and Hull.

Regardless of what you decide to collect, it is important to realize condition is critical. Even very minor damage will impact the value of most common American art pottery. We recommend to all new collectors we work with to stick to mint pieces until they have a better feel as to where their longer-term interests may lie and a better knowledge to determine the extent of restoration or damage on a particular piece and its associated impact on value. We often see new collectors buying damaged pieces because they appear to be cheap compared to mint pieces. Unfortunately what they often come to realize if they go to resell the piece is that unless the piece is rare, most experienced collectors will wait for a mint or professionally restored example to come along.

In regards to starting out with more widely available and commonly traded lines such as Roseville or Weller, as most new collectors learn more about the various makers of American art pottery, it seems they typically end up shifting their focus from one maker or particular pattern to entirely different lines

or makers. Since most collectors, new and experienced, are on limited budgets of some type, many ultimately end up wanting to sell or trade the pieces that they had started out collecting. So by starting with the more commonly traded lines like Roseville and Weller, new buyers will typically have a more widely available market for adding to their collection and for future trading or resale purposes if that becomes desirable.

Since so many of the beginning collectors we see are often interested in selling their first items as they redirect their collection budget, we also recommend considering lines that appear to have stronger potential for price appreciation. The following provides a listing of some of the more widely trading American art pottery makers and patterns that we feel are particularly suited for the beginning art pottery collector.

Roseville pottery is probably the most widely collected of any American art pottery. While many of the most popular Roseville patterns such as Baneda, Blackberry, Ferella, and Sunflower have appreciated to the point that they may be out of reach to beginning collectors on a limited budget, there still exists a fair number of Roseville patterns that are moderately priced and represent a sound art pottery investment for the beginning collector. A few specific patterns new collectors interested in Roseville may want to consider as a starting point include: Artwood, Mock Orange, Rozane Patterns, and Wincraft. These patterns were selected because they represent among the most affordable of Roseville and in my mind offer among the best potential for price appreciation in the short term. Also, several of the floral patterns from the 1940s such as Apple Blossom, Bittersweet, and Snowberry

offer reasonably priced examples for new collectors.

Weller pottery offers many attractive and affordable patterns for the novice collector as well. Our favorites right now for new buyers interested in Weller include: Bonito, Malvern, Marvo, Sydonia, and Tutone. Once again, these are affordable and representative patterns of Weller that are still readily available in the art pottery market today. Most have some similarities to their higher valued cousins such as Baldin, Coppertone, Forest, and Hudson and appear to have the potential for similar long-term price appreciation.

Van Briggle is another pottery that is often of interest to new collectors. Since Van Briggle is still being produced today, the biggest issue for new collectors is accurately dating examples of the pottery. For price appreciation and resale potential, new collectors of Van Briggle should probably attempt to stay with examples from the 1920s or earlier. Many examples from the 1920s are still affordable and display some of the attractiveness of form and glaze quality of the early pieces that made the company famous. The 1920s and earlier examples are also the most commonly sought-after by experienced Van Briggle collectors.

Any of these makers would represent a great entry point for the collector on a budget to start an American art pottery collection. As

I have said previously, it has been my experience that many new collectors change their interests several times, often entirely abandoning previous collecting interests. Since most of us have limited budgets for our collecting hobby, this often

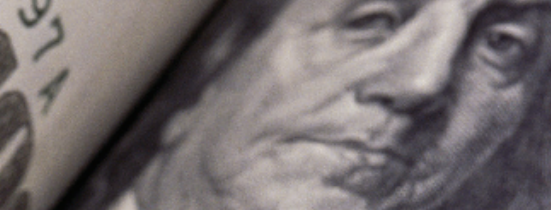
necessitates reselling or trading items when our interests change. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this and, in fact, is one of the things that make collecting American art pottery so much fun. Remember, the most important thing is to collect what you like and have fun.



Roseville Rozane Pattern. Photograph by Mark Bassett, Lakewood, Ohio.



Weller Marvo. Photograph by Mark Bassett, Lakewood, Ohio.



By: Allan Wunsch

What would I buy if I wanted to begin collecting pottery and had \$1000 to spend on anything I wished? A lot has to do with what I like personally...what speaks to me. Also, do I care if it will go up in value or not? If an increase in value is not important then you have many ways to go. First on my list would be West German pottery. Not the shiny, brown, white, gold trimmed, but rather the pieces with the interesting matt and semi-matt glazes, especially those pieces with bright, multicolor, frothy, volcanic, lava-like glazes. West German potteries frequently put loop handles on a huge percentage of their items. These are not as desirable as the pieces without handles, although some are quite spectacular and worth considering. West German Pottery is currently a "sleeper" area of pottery collecting. Pieces can be found ranging in price from \$15 up to \$150+.

Next, I would consider Haeger figurals, often in the form of small planters. Many have a soft matt pastel color glaze and were made from the 1920s through the 1960s. Most are not marked. Therefore, you can often find them for very low prices; usually in the \$10-\$35 range. In addition I would also seriously consider Haeger with unusual, striking glaze especially examples such as Peacock, Stoneart, Black Mistique, Earth Graphic Wrap (especially Brown), and Etruscan.

I would also seriously consider figurals (and many other items) made by Pigeon Forge Pottery and their very interesting glazes. The pottery has closed, so no more pieces are being made. You can often find absolutely charming small figurals, mostly animals, for \$15 and up. A large animal figural (rare) might cost \$100+. Many pieces have the signature or initials of the finisher/glazer/designer scratched into the base.

Rozart Pottery has been in business for more than 30 years and produces primarily underglaze, artist decorated items for very reasonable prices. You can see

examples of their work and what is presently available by going to their website at www.rozartpottery.com.

Another company, I would keep an eye out for is pottery marked SBCD (Santa Barbara Ceramic Design). Consider only their dated, underglaze artist decorated examples. It was made from the late 1960s thru the mid 1980s. The company is still in business, but, now only produces a commercial line of transfer design decorated items. Prices can really vary with SBCD. Many dealers have no idea what it is, so, when they have a piece for sale, they often offer it for a fairly low price. However, there is a growing market among collectors for this usually fine quality pottery. A small piece can sometimes be for \$30 or so while the knowledgeable dealer might ask \$150 or more. Large pieces and those with unusual decoration such as animals, birds, fish will usually bring very strong prices when offered by a knowledgeable dealer.

If I wanted just a few items, I would seriously consider obtaining several examples of Rookwood standard glaze items. This is underglazed artist decorated pottery coated with a high gloss, transparent yellow tint glaze over a usually brown shaded base color. Each piece is unique. You can find nice smaller sized examples from \$250+. Rookwood also made a commercial line of items with a cast/molded design and which is usually covered with a matt glaze. They come in varying colors. You can occasionally find a nice example for \$150 or so. Prices usually average in the \$200+ range, with some special ones going for \$500+++.

The Danish company, Michael Andersen, has many fine quality items that have been produced by them since the 1940s.

The figural items are usually very nice. Many are hand thrown and many have very lovely glazes. Most of the smaller items are usually available for under \$100. Even if the piece does not have Andersens name on it, you can identify a Michael Andersen piece by either a raised or a stamped shield mark, with 3 fish.

If you are looking for something colorful, inexpensive, American made and which just happens to look very nice when set up

in a group, might I suggest that you consider Nemadji pottery.

This pottery which is white and unglazed on the exterior is very recognizable even if you don't look for a makers mark. Its most distinguishing characteristic is that the exterior is decorated with a marbled/swirl pattern usually done in fairly bright colors. No two swirl patterns are ever the same. It is found in many shapes and sizes.

Most are no taller than about 8-9 inches, however, occasionally one may find a much larger example. Nemadji can often be found for under \$25, sometimes much less. One can usually find at least one piece at most shops, malls or shows. So, for \$1,000 you could conceivably put together a collection of 40 or more pieces fairly quickly.

Some other Potteries I would consider would be... certain Red Wing items, Pottery marked Venneman, Indian Hills Pottery, Daga, certain Peters & Reed, especially Shadoware, Chromal and Marbleized, some Hull, Glades Pottery (crystalline) Dade City, Florida, Ephraim Faience, Arts & Clay Company, Door County Pottery, Alamo Pottery, Abingdon, Muncie, Powell Pottery, Camark, North Carolina pottery... made by numerous makers.



Pottery shown above **Ephraim Faience**
#108 Koi Vase. Photograph by Mark Mazzuki.



By: Patti Bourgeois

When we were asked to contribute to an article on starting a collection with \$1,000 our thoughts went in so many directions because there are so many choices! Once you have discovered your passion for pottery, there are several important questions to ponder:

- What do you like?
- Is there a book on the subject?
- What size collection do you want to build?
- Is your pottery 'passion' readily available? What is the competition like? That is, can you find it? How long can you go before you find the next piece? Can you live with not finding a piece every month, or so?
- Is it affordable?
- Is future value a major consideration, or do you care?

Most collectors will tell you that their collecting instincts are based upon what appeals to them personally. One piece presents itself and the rest is history. You do not need to have any background in collecting, it just happens one day. You see it, you touch it and you are hooked. Very simply, you buy what you like.

Once you have purchased a couple of pieces, you will find that you are yearning to learn more. What else did the company produce? When? And many more questions. The best way to approach this is to buy a book. If the book is out of print you may find it through the AAPA's website at www.AmArtPot.org by visiting the 'Book Store' to search Amazon's archives. If you do not have a book, make it the next purchase in your collection, you will be happy you did. You will be able to focus on the areas you like most, learn more about the particular genre of pottery you've chosen to collect, and you will discover glazes and lines you did not know about, enabling you to make more informed decisions. If a book has not been written on the subject, align yourself with other members of the AAPA who might be able to advise you and perhaps introduce you to reputable dealers in pottery.

If you are new to collecting, the AAPA Annual Convention offers the ultimate in 'Pottery Education,' offering lectures, exhibitions, tours and the camaraderie of like-minded individuals, whose interests are similar to your own. In addition, there are many other Pottery Events scheduled throughout the year, which serve as great educators. Many offer seminars,

exhibitions and informal discussions, which may be of interest to you. Check the 'Events' page on the AAPA website for an event near you.

Consider the size and type of collection which suites you best. Oftentimes there are space restrictions, financial constraints, and a myriad of other variables. We've met collectors with seemingly strange collecting interests, but there is always a good reason. We sold several 7" vases to a collector over a period of 3 years, when we finally asked why 7" vases? He told us he had a shelf in the living room that accommodated 7" vases, nothing larger, so he collected 7" vases! Others collect floor vases, wall pockets, candleholders, etc., not a space issue, just a decorating decision. Some collections are based upon pattern or glaze line, color, size, form and function. You will find your focus as your collection begins to grow.

Availability is a very important aspect to consider. Some potteries, such as Roseville, Weller, production Rookwood, Red Wing, Abingdon and many others are readily available, depending on the pattern/line you seek. If you want to collect Weller Jap Birdimal 'Geisha Girls' by Rhead, you might find that your collecting passion is not satisfied more than once a year, or longer. If your goal is one piece a year, you might be happy to wait it out. If you want to collect interesting Red Wing glazes, or production Rookwood matte pieces, you will find that there are more choices. If you are a 'mass' collector, and want to build a large collection in a shorter period of time, there are still many potteries readily available in today's market. The choice is yours.

Affordability, another major factor in collecting. If you collect basic Haeger Pottery, you will find that \$1,000 goes a long way. You could build a nice collection of Haeger on that budget. If you are collecting California Faience Art Tiles on that budget, you can expect to buy only a handful before you break the bank. Will you be satisfied... only you can decide. If you decide to collect artist-signed Rookwood, you are in for a challenge. While it can be done, it means you will probably grow your collection by one piece a year, maybe. Some collectors exhibit tremendous patience and restraint with regard to collecting on a budget, others simply want more.

Future values will be an important consideration if you are collecting for purposes of 'an investment.' Predictions are just that... predictions. There are no guarantees. You will want to research recent trends within the specific category, determine the rate of growth, does it meet your expectations, needs, etc. If you are collecting simply to decorate, and have no concern about future sales, the choices are endless. In our experience, most collectors want to enjoy some

increase in the value of their collections, so you should consider this while building your collection.

The choices of affordable and available collectible pottery are endless. There are vintage and contemporary potteries to consider. While we recognize that the choices are many, we offer a few for your consideration:

- Pfaltzgraff, best known for their dinnerware, this company produced art pottery during the early 1930s for just a few short years. Their forms were great, ranging from small vases to large porch urns. Their glazes, mostly matte colors, were fabulous! While their production was short-lived, this pottery is available and affordable still, making for a good hunt.
- Haeger 'Modern' pieces are a hot item with collectors. Most were mass-produced during the 1970s-1990s. The glazes and forms are great! Artists to focus on include Alrun Osterberg, Sebastiano Maglio, Ben Seibel and Sascha Brastoff. While the price ranges fluctuate, pots by these artists are very desirable and still available.
- Hyalyn Pottery produced some great forms and glazes. Their modern wares are really appealing to collectors. The glazes are bold and complex, real eye-catchers. There are many 'quiet' collectors of Hyalyn who believe their secret is safe...it's not.

Still more....

- West German Pottery, plentiful, fabulous glazes, oftentimes with one glaze drizzled over another, giving their pieces great texture and dimension. Priced affordably most of the time and readily available to the dedicated 'picker.'
- Abingdon, mass-produced art pottery from the 1930s through to the 1960s. Their glazes were as simple and graceful as their forms. They produced Nude sculptures, bookends, vases, cookie jars and much more. It is still one of the most affordable and available vintage potteries.
- Red Wing has a huge following of collectors. However, it is still very much available and affordable. While some of the earlier glaze lines are elusive, there are many other nice ones waiting for you at a great price.
- If you decide to collect by form, the possibilities are truly endless. For instance, if you collect flower frogs, wall pockets, baby dishes, or some other popular vintage form, and you do not discriminate by manufacturer, you will build a collection quickly and easily.

Finally, passion comes from the heart. Some of you will maintain a focus on one area of collecting and be very satisfied. Some of you will find that your 'passion' will eventually diverge along several paths and lure you in many directions. In the end, buy what you like!