

Collecting Tips From a Collector

If you want to start a folk art collection, Sandi Wickersham Resnick advises you to buy the best you can afford.

"That's especially important in textiles because they deteriorate so rapidly when they are in bad shape," she explains.

A collector of all types of folk art and a former antiques dealer, Sandi and her husband, Ron, now own a folk art shop and gallery in Middleburg, Va., which they call Wickersham.

"I'd really rather have one special something than a whole bunch," Sandi says. "Each item should have its own character and personality."

On the other hand, she counters, don't talk yourself out of having a collection by trying to be too nearly perfect.

"Some people are so fussy about the quality of every piece that they never have a collection," she says. "You don't have to go into debt over it."

Follow your instincts and collect what you like, she suggests, not what is trendy.

Often she has begun a collection of an item no one else seemed interested in, only to have the same article become popular with collectors years later.

Sampler Suggestions From Sandi

Sandi has about 30 antique sam-



plers throughout her home, the oldest of which was made in 1816. During that era, these cherished pieces of needlework art were embroidered by young girls required to learn stitchery skills.

"Children did the objects that they liked the best, bigger," Sandi says. "It's interesting that the mothers in the children's samplers tower over the men."

For her sampler collection, Sandi makes sure the wool or linen background material and the colors of the embroidery thread are in relatively good condition.

"Usually, the [themes of the] old samplers are very serious and about subjects like dying and death," Sandi says. But she prefers samplers with a whimsical tone matching her own joyful sense of humor.

"In this one, for instance," she gleefully points to a sampler on the wall, "the goat is eating the decoration. I just love it because usually whimsy wasn't allowed."

Playing Checkers by Mail?

Most of the game boards Sandi



has in her collection were made around the turn of the century. Dates are hard to pin down, however, because all the boards were handmade.

"You have to look at the surface," the collector advises. "I look to see if [the game board] has its original paint and what the colors are like. And I look at the design and shape."

Many of the games are double-

sided. Sandi contends that this was a practical choice by frugal people concerned about using a perfectly good piece of lumber on a frivolous pastime.

"The people at that time said, 'If we're going to have to use a board, we're going to use both sides,'" Sandi believes.

Some of the games also have numbers written on each of the segments. "People would write each other back and forth on penny postcards and play checkers by mail," the collector says. She laughs and adds, "They were pretty desperate for entertainment, I guess."

Bowled Over by This Collection

The 18th century wooden bowls Sandi collects boast wonderful colors that have descriptive names like robin's egg blue, mustard, teal, and sage.

"[The bowls] started out as round, but the wood stretched with age, so now they're oval," she explains. "They're more valuable if they are lightweight and have their original paint."

Sandi's bowl collection is complemented by an antique plate rack, which also retains its original paint. The large birdhouse resting beneath the bowls is one of many in yet another of her collections.

The upside-down version of a vintage oak-leaf stencil that Sandi painted repeats some of the colors found in the eye-catching bowl collection.

