

Collector displays warmth provided in yesteryears

By SHERRY KAHAN

The shiny, nickel-plated antique stoves at Bob Sanders' home in Westland have a gleam similar to the proud gleam in the eyes of their owner.

Sanders may have started his stove collection as an antidote to job stress, but since then the hobby has taken on a life of its own. It draws him to his basement night after night to clean and polish new additions. It sends him off on buying trips to Albany and Troy, N.Y., once the stove capitals of the country. And it causes him to carry home in the back of his van several of the black cast iron treasures from that part of the world.

On Saturday and Sunday Oct. 27 and 28 Sanders will haul six of the heavy

items into the Glen Oaks Golf and Country Club in Farmington for an antique show.

Among the exhibitors at the sale will be three area dealers, Carol Miller and John Bordnick of Livonia and Cathy Bosker of Plymouth. Mrs. Miller will show her collection of Moriaga china, vases, cups, saucers, serving dishes and trays.

Mrs. Bosker will feature clocks, including an 1880 walnut shelf clock with turned spindles made by H. S. Daves of New York. Bordnick will display a Royal Doulton figurine of Queen Elizabeth, one of only 750 in the world. He will also show primitives, such as an apple butter kettle.

The show will be open from noon to 9 p.m. on Saturday and from noon to 6

p.m. Sunday. The club is on 13 Mile, east of Orchard Lake Road.

SANDERS MIGHT NEVER have become the avid collector and researcher he is were it not for the scarcity of information on old-fashioned stoves. He found libraries full of information on old glass and furniture, but not on old stoves. It was the dearth of facts that piqued his interest. Unearthing data became a challenge to the Ford Motor Co. engineer.

We know what love and attention some people lavish on their cars, regarding them as symbols of status, youth or ability to know good craftsmanship. Sanders has found that there was a similar kind of interest was centered around the stove at the turn of the century. Like the car, the stove had a utilitarian purpose, but it also became the object of artistic interest.

The results can be seen in Sanders' collection. The coal stove that supplied heat to turn-of-the-century homes, developed all kinds of artistic scrolls, handsome name plates, shiny nickel tops, as well as sometimes capped by the kind of artistic figures that, at a later time, adorned automobile hoods.

Stove making in those times was not only the work of iron casters. Also involved were designers who planned the project, wood carvers who made the dyes, pattern makers, machinists and nickelplaters.

Stove making was a big business in Detroit, outstripped only when auto making roared into first place, according to Sanders. The Detroit Stove Works which began in 1864, the Michigan Stove Co., the Peninsular Stove Co. and the Art Stove Co. were the big four at that time.

THESE COMPANIES made coal and wood burning stoves for cooking and heating. Artistic work was particularly evident on the wood burning stoves that had a place of honor in the family parlor. This was the room shut off from family use most of the time, but opened for company.

The stoves often had artistically-shaped iron columns rising above the area that held the burning

wood. This was to spread more heat into the room. Wood was put in at a side door. Doors in front could be opened for romantic viewing of the fire.

Sanders pointed out that the antique wood stoves are not as efficient as the modern alight wood stoves that have become popular lately. He regards them, however, as both romantic and functional. He often has one burning as he works in his basement.

Sanders became a collector the day he discovered an old stove in a snow bank at the home of a dealer. He paid \$15 for it. He took it home, removed its rust, cleaned it and added a shine with stove polish. Black, beautiful and full of ornate designs, Sanders found it a satisfying sight and a new pastime was launched.

Sanders was reluctant to discuss the value of stoves, but he did observe that it was based on quality, condition, desirability and rarity.

"There is so much beauty in these stoves," he said. "Some are decorated with tile, windows or soapstone. One has a full-figure Victorian woman cast into the body of the stove. They are art form in themselves."



Figurines decorating the top of this coal-burning room-heating stove were very in during Victorian times. Note the nickel-plating at the top that added extra class to the stove, according to its owner Bob Sanders of Westland. (Staff photo by Art Emanuele).



This ornate, black, wood-burning stove displayed by Bob Sanders of Westland, once warmed the parlor of an American home at the turn of the century. (Staff photo by Art Emanuele)

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Renner is a 1971 graduate of Farmington High School.

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