

Wenzel's roses bloom at antique markets



Jean Day

You could say everything's coming up roses for Bobbie Wenzel. The Allegan, Michigan resident's white-painted furniture decorated with delicate ribbon and rosebuds is garnering applause wherever she sets up her booth at antique markets and shows.

Bobbie and her husband, Ron, seek out beds, dressing tables, chairs and other pieces of the 1910-20 period and carefully strip off old finishes before hand-applying base coats and then a white satin finish ready for Bobbie to decorate with dainty festoons of intertwined rosebuds and ribbons.

While Ron, who is retired, works on the refinishing, he leaves all the decorating to his wife, who began decorating furniture about five years ago.

"We had been dealers in primitive furniture for a long time when I started featuring the painted furniture in a corner of our shop. It became so popular that we now feature it exclusively, with such accessories as glass lamps with floral shades,

perfume bottles and boxes," explains Bobbie.

While the Wenzels have their shop, The Sparrow's Nest, in the carriage house at their Allegan home at 426 Trowbridge Street, they often are on the road at shows. (If you are going to their shop, it's advisable to call first: 616-673-4727.) They were at the Chelsea Antiques Market in April and plan to return for the July 3-4 market.

"It's different and very popular," says Chelsea show promoter Nick Easton of the Wenzels' furniture. He adds that the period of furniture they decorate fits in well with his show guidelines that use 1970 as the cut-off date for merchandise.

"People want things they remember their parents having," he says, explaining the nostalgic appeal of the wares of his 300 dealers at the Chelsea market.

Bobbie Wenzel remarks that the show was good for them as they returned home with only a dresser unsold. At Scorpio's Novi Expo May 21-23, the 70 degree weather most of the weekend kept people in their gardens rather than at the show.

However, the Wenzels consider such shows as good exposure with Bobbie noting that many visitors take their cards and look them up later. "We've had people say they were just waiting for their children to grow out



OLD FURNITURE, NEW FINISH—Bobbie Wenzel's antique show booth is filled with vintage furniture newly resplendent with white paint and delicate patterns.

of the crib before buying a bed," Bobbie adds.

A decorated wraparound-style bed decorated by Bobbie did go home with one show goer, but a simple bed for which Bobbie had fashioned a candy stripe pink- and -white pler canopy did not have a purchaser. The headboard was embellished with matching pink roses and bows while the foot had the same tiny garlands as appeared on a

nearby dressing table.

"It's the vanities that usually sell first," she says.

She had an interesting story to relate about a small piece with double drawers on the sides that had been purchased on a trip to Massachusetts recently.

"I had decorated the drawers, but one was sticking" she recalled "so Ron said he would look at it. When he did, he found five \$20 bills rolled up and tucked into a ledge behind the drawer. It was such fun to find a surprise like that!"

Because she has family in the East, the Wenzels try to combine their buying trips with visits. "It's a great excuse to see my sister in Massachusetts," Bobbie says, adding that her family and friends always are looking for pieces for her to decorate with her trademark rosebuds with delicate green leaves and stems.

On special order, she has done violets, she recalls, but it is her roses that have sold the furniture.

Two years ago a Chicago architect, Anthony Michael, gave the business a big boost by buying a complete bedroom set to feature in a model home of his in Naperville. "It was nice to have another professional

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