

# Member Spotlight

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Written by Tess Erickson Cain

## Tara Holt (Lover of North Dakota Pottery)



Tara lives in Bismarck, North Dakota with her husband. She currently serves as a board member and on the 2025 annual convention committee for NDPCS.

### **Why do you collect North Dakota pottery?**

*"In 1981 my dad retired and convinced me to work with him at Royal Heritage Antiques in downtown Bismarck. Believe me, there wasn't anything "royal" about our cluttered shop. I thought we should specialize, get organized, but I found out that in North Dakota you had to take what you could get! We had some of everything, but a lot of stuff sat in boxes under tables, in corners, and in the basement. Dad focused on sterling silver, coins, Indian artifacts, and historical items. Anything else was left up to me whether or not I knew anything about it. That meant I oversaw dishes, jewelry, furniture, books, paintings, and everything else he didn't find interesting. Every day presented a steep learning curve!*

*Even though those days were stressful, eventually patience paid off! In mid-April 1989, the mailman brought us a beautiful catalog of Bob and Jan Barr's upcoming pottery auction in Mandan on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, at the Mandan Community Center. I had no idea I could fall in love with North Dakota pottery, but I was head over heels!"*

### **Do you remember your first pottery purchase? What are your current pottery passions?**

*"I had given myself what I thought was a big \$600 pottery budget [for the Barr auction in Mandan]. But when many of the first 30 pottery items sold for several hundred dollars, I forgot about my spending limits. I was out of my league as the bids came in split-second intervals. There was no way I could keep up with the absentee bidders and the people who'd traveled 1200 miles to buy salt and pepper shakers. I had to quickly decide whether I was buying for the shop or myself.*

*I obviously bought for myself, because I still have some of the pieces from my first big pottery auction, and they have become some of my best investments. Focus has helped me add to my collections over the years. I prefer matte glaze, and I love the basic monochromatic pieces without designs. Everything just seems to go together. It's the shape and the flow of the pieces that makes them interesting. When we collect as regular people and not dealers it's easier to simply buy what you like and not worry about making a profit. Always buy what you admire!*

*[Every year] I look forward to our annual NDPCS convention and enjoy having my daughter as a fellow member. She is learning about the things she didn't pay a lot of attention to as she was growing up, but she has gained a new perspective knowing she will inherit what I've collected. Room sales are my favorite convention activity. We go from room to room and visit, have a plastic cup of boxed wine, and add to our collections. I have to say I learn something at every convention."*