

Story of Toys: 'A Life in Miniature, Scaled to a Child's Hands and Mind'

While dictionaries are indisputably useful books, they sometimes fall a little short on imagination. Consider, for example, what Mr. Webster has to say of a toy: "... An ornament; sport; trinket; pastime; sport; antic; a paltry concern; a trifle." Paltry concern and trifle, indeed! The most serious business of a youngster's life is wrapped up in it, and even for the hard-shelled adult an old toy may conjure up sunken worlds of delight. The magic of toys is spun from the same bright stuff as childhood itself, and may well be as old as man—despite the fact that archeological finds of identifiable toys go back only some 3000 or 4000 years.

Nor is the industry that satisfies these ancient wants paltry in any way. This year, some \$1,300,000,000 worth of playthings were sold in the United States, a sizable proportion around Christmas time. Most of this formidable output is American-made, moreover; Japan, now the leading toy exporter to the U.S., shipped some \$22,000,000 worth in 1956; Germany, which

once dominated the market, \$5,000,000, and other countries a total of about \$3,000,000.

Behind such statistics lies the incalculable measure of childish joy and wonder of a kind that has scarcely changed since cavewelling toddlers played with the knuckle bones of wild animals.

FAITHFUL MIRROR

This Christmas finds toyland, as always, the faithful mirror of the adult world, even to the point of reflecting its disquiet; there are more play miniatures of military equipment than the trade has seen in a decade: jet fighters and rocket launchers, Navy pom-pom guns that turn and fire automatically, combat teams, vehicles of every description, all made with accurate attention to detail.

Among the latest junior-size mechanical marvels is a fifteen-inch airplane whose four engines start up in a paroxysm of ignition, the propellers coming on at precise four-second intervals.

Of course there is also the unending cavalcade of fashionable dolls, toy animals, games — and six-shooters.

There's an electronic T-robot that picks up metal and deposits it on a moving conveyor belt. There are easy-to-assemble radio sets, a polar bear which repairs shoes and a rabbit that knits.

And one leading New York store offers a \$595 playhouse, a ranch-type model weighing 1,400 pounds with a toy car garage off the living room. A six-foot-tall adult can stand inside.

New? Only in a superficial sense. The president of a famous New York toy store says: "There's nothing new under the sun. Toys are life in miniature, scaled to a child's hands and mind. Show me what is new in life and I'll show you what is new in toys."

CHILD'S HORIZON

And Karl Groeber, the authoritative German toy historian, years ago made the same point: "The patterns from which toys derive include all phenomena within the child's horizon; they always vary more or less according to period and country, but

fundamentally they remain always the same."

A brief survey of the fascinating history of toys confirms such assertions. That \$595 giant doll house, for instance, is of illustrious lineage. Doll houses started in Germany in the late sixteenth century and the passion for them swept Europe, affecting adults as much as youngsters.

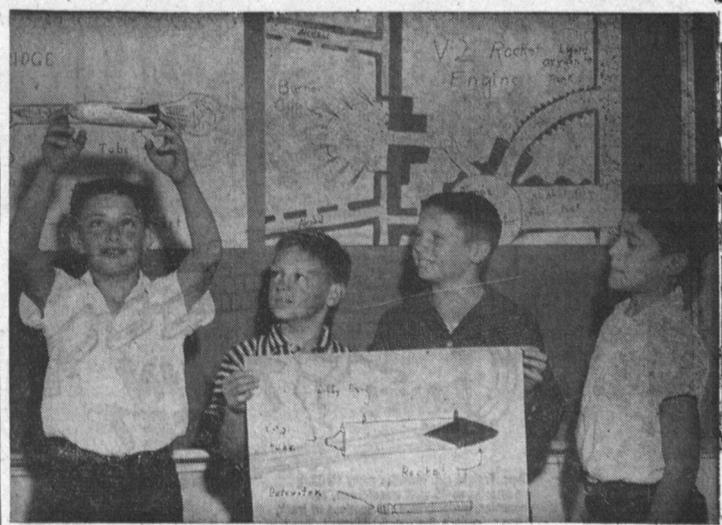
GOLD DOLLHOUSE

In 1588, Albrecht V., Duke of Bavaria, gave his daughter a gorgeous, four-story doll house complete with a ballroom fitted with gold tapestry—and a doll duke and duchess with six servants. The Duke was so enamored of the house that he put it in his own art collection. His offspring's reaction is not recorded, but presumably resembled junior's when Dad monopolizes the electric train.

Even more sumptuous, crammed with diminutive paintings, carpets, utensils and furnishings in precious metals and woods, were the Dutch doll houses of the seventeenth century. They were so costly that Peter the Great, Czar of Russia, blanched at the price tag on one he had commissioned and declined to accept it.

The first American doll house known was built in 1744 and now resides at the Van Cortlandt Museum in New York. The Essex Institute at Salem, Mass., treasures a particularly elegant nine-room house; its elaborate furnishings accurately reflect an aristocratic Boston residence of 1851.

But perhaps the most famous in the group of doll mansions is the "million-dollar doll house" presented in 1924 to Queen Mary by her loyal English subjects. The nation's leading artists and craftsmen produced an enormous variety of dainty miniatures for it, including a micro-



UP AND COMING SPACEMEN of Mrs. Christina Murley's sixth grade science class in the Carr Elementary school, display their growing knowledge of the mysteries of space flying. From left to right, they are: Mike Kolb, Steve Thomas; Bill Cumerly, and Ronnie Gastelum. Dan Janoski, another sixth grader who worked on the special science class project, was absent when this Press Photo was taken.

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FASHION DOLLS

Dolls have a longer past than their houses; though many archeological finds that have passed for dolls are actually religious objects rather than toys. Unmistakably intended for children, some experts say, are the jointed dolls of burnt clay found in ancient Greece.

In the Middle Ages, dolls were employed to show off fashions; the Queen of England had some sent from Paris in 1391. Eventually, such puppets probably wound up in children's hands.

French dolls of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and those of Victorian England, were world-famous, but simple ones were made from hemp, flax, and straw in humble homes long before the fancier types were manufactured.

In colonial America, children played with dolls made from corn cobs, pine cones, and other handy materials. William Penn brought a doll from England in 1699 for a friend of his daughter Letitia; this pioneer puppet, christened "Letitia Penn," is still extant, though somewhat mutilated and dour-looking.

Oddly, dolls were always dressed as adults until the 1830's; only then did the baby doll assert its claims. The first really successful American designed doll was the Billiken, an art student's fancy in 1906, later came the plump, smiling Kewpie doll invented by an artist, Rose O'Neill.

TOY ANIMALS

The movies inspired the Shirley Temple dolls, which are now enjoying something of a revival.

Like dolls of truly international character, but of far greater antiquity, is the amiable kingdom of toy animals. Near Susa in Persia, archeologists have unearthed a little pig and a lion of chalk stone which could be pulled by a string threaded through the base. These are dated around 1100 B.C.

From the Egypt of 4000 years ago have come down toy crocodiles and tigers of wood, with movable jaws. Small clay animals occupied kids in ancient Rome and Greece. In the Middle Ages, the hobby-horse — precursor of the proud rocking horse — gained sway.

The stuffed animal is of more recent vintage. Among the most notable are the ingratiating Steiff bears — produced by the firm that gave the Teddy Bear to the world.

TEDDY BEAR

It started in the tiny German village of Giengen, where Margaret Steiff was born a hundred years ago. Hopelessly crippled by polio in childhood, she began devising the Steiff fauna for her own amusement, but the animals became a commercial hit and the vogue continues; today you can even buy life-sized lions and tigers at \$250 the head.

The Teddy Bear was designed by Margaret's artist-brother, Richard, in 1903. In 1906 there was a wedding breakfast at the White House for Theodore Roosevelt's daughter Alice.

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