

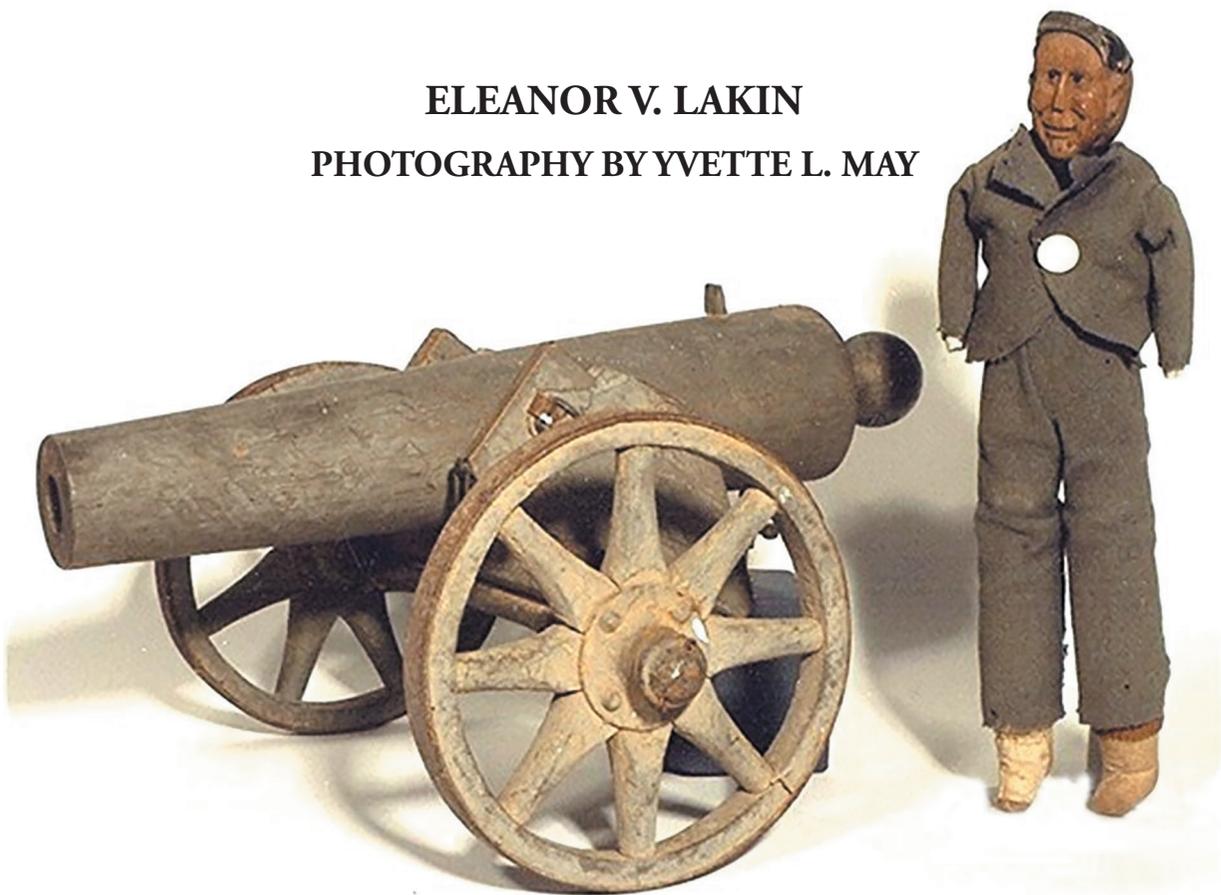
FOLK ART FOR CHILDREN

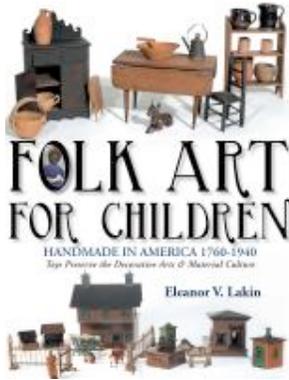
HANDMADE IN AMERICA 1760–1940

Toys Preserve the Decorative Arts & Material Culture

ELEANOR V. LAKIN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY YVETTE L. MAY





Open FOLK ART FOR CHILDREN. You just lifted the lid of an amazing toy box filled with folk art made to entertain children. It is lavishly illustrated with toy barns, farm equipment, animals, dolls, quilts, furniture and domestic articles for dolls, dollhouses, animated toys, soft sculpture and paper dolls. Experience magical artistic exuberance and creative genius. Delve into social and economic issues that influenced toy design concepts. Experience folk art from a unique perspective.

FOLK ART FOR CHILDREN

HANDMADE IN AMERICA 1760-1940

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FOR

My parents, Robert and Marjorie Lakin,

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I especially wish to thank Yvette L. May, the photographer. Yvette has worked as a newspaper photographer for more than twenty years. She is an award winning photographer who has been recognized locally and by the Associated Press. She spent hours arranging objects and adjusting lights to create the aesthetically sensitive photographs that make this book possible. Yvette's striking images capture the artistic qualities displayed in this extraordinary collection of folk toys.

I am indebted to the following: Pat Lemkuhl, my sister, who dedicated hours to edit the book and offer creative suggestions. Trish Herr, who read and critiqued the first manuscript. Rebecca Massey Lane, the Director of the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts, and Jennifer Chapman, who planned and brought together an exhibit of folk toys illustrated in the book. Robert Sweeney my wood worker friend who repaired and made tiny furniture parts. Finally, to Gwen Gades, a talented and patient book designer who brought it all together.

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INTRODUCTION

Do you find old toys fascinating? Do you love folk art? Join me in exploring a collection of wonderful American folk toys. We are about to embark on a journey to discover the kinds of handmade toys that have entertained children for one hundred and eighty years. Perhaps you will recapture a bit of the elusive magic of your own childhood.



F.01 Pair of toy Belgian draft horses, circa 1920-1940.

The inventive genius of the American folk artist is apparent in the toys they made for children, as well as the full scale objects they made for profit and pleasure. Dare to take childish delight in discovery of the unusual, as we investigate American folk toys.

Immerse yourself in the illustrations. Experience the exuberant joy and dynamic simplicity of these captivating childhood treasures. Pack your bags for the land of make believe. Enjoy.

For forty years, I have collected folk toys from every conceivable source. As the number and variety of objects increased, I realized that my acquisitions made up a collection of America's material culture and the decorative arts in small scale. All of the toy household wares and furnishings, red ware, painted and decorated furniture, quilts, rugs, dollhouses, dolls, barns, farm buildings, animals, paper dolls, and board games, are objects made for children, that preserve the decorative arts and our material cultural.

America's cultural heritage is preserved by the realism of these amazing toys. They provide insight into a time, a place, a nation, and the nation's people. The lifestyle, economic and social levels of the toy makers feature prominently in their designs. Seven and one half generations of Americans are mirrored in this kaleidoscope of childhood artifacts.

Evaluate folk toys using the same criteria used to evaluate the artistic qualities of other art forms. Successful folk artists engage the observer by stimulating the aesthetic senses. They please the eye through skillful manipulation of the elements of good design, line, form, color and texture.

Handmade toys created for children are legitimate folk art objects. Makers incorporated America's cultural diversity and vernacular design into the construction of toys. Folk art made for children documents America's material culture from a unique perspective.



F.02 Marionettes, circa 1900-1920.

Unlike academically trained artists whose work is stilted by adherence to traditional techniques and styles, the unschooled folk artist is free-spirited, imaginative and resourceful.

The majority of toys included in this collection originated in the northeast, mid Atlantic and southeast. We will examine cultural origins, regional characteristics, construction techniques, and materials, as well as economic and social influences that affected folk toy design. It is important to understand the historical context from which various toys evolved. Understand artistic considerations and historic background and you will embrace the significance of the folk toy makers' contribution to America's decorative arts and material culture.

There are striking differences between American and European folk toys. Origins of European wooden toys can generally be pinpointed to specific geographic regions. The same cannot be said of most American folk toys. European folk art is secularized into small, well-defined areas. Traditional European folk toys, especially those made by cottage industry workers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, display carving techniques only found in specific villages and geographic regions. A few American pieces exhibit European regional carving styles. When regional European carving techniques are seen in American toys, they were generally made by first generation immigrants.

The industrial revolution took a substantial toll of the quantity of folk toys being made during the last half of the 19th century. Industrialization, factories, and mass production became an integral part of the American economy. Toy factories that produced inexpensive toys sprang up all over New England; and led to the demise of handmade toys in many households. The industrial revolution generated national prosperity and gave birth to an affluent middle class. Middle class purchasing power initiated and empowered the success of the 'Golden Age of Toys'. And what a magical age it was. New manufacturing processes produced bright, colorful, inexpensive tinplate and cast iron toys affordable to Middle American pocketbooks.

Folk toy making survived because artists live to create and they create to satisfy the soul. I am sure that the delight in the eyes of a child at the sight of a new toy prompted toy makers everywhere to make time in a busy day to make a child smile.



F.03 Portrait of Little Boy in Red Dress, William Matthew Prior (1806-1873) painted 1849, courtesy of Austin Miller American Antiques.

CHAPTER 1

THE FARMSTEAD IN PLAY SCALE: Barns, Animals And Equipment



F1.1 The model shows an end bay of a typical barn structural system, with an Amish man, mules and a roller.

THE FARMSTEAD IN PLAYSCALE

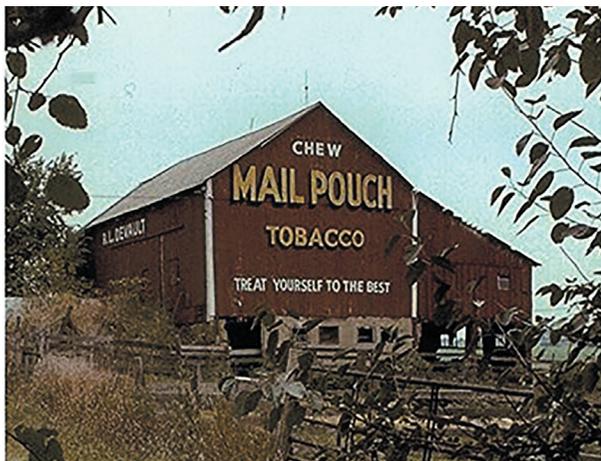


F1.2 Berks County Farmscape c. 1879-1886, John Rasmussen (1828-1895), Berks County, Pennsylvania, Collection American Folk Art Museum New York.



F1.3 Toy farm from Frackville, Pennsylvania, circa 1875-1895.

Mail Pouch Tobacco emblazoned across the end of a barn and Burma Shave signs planted like sentinels along a country road. Sixty years ago that was advertising in rural America. To this day, packs of Mail Pouch Tobacco evoke images of huge hay-filled barns weathered to deep burnt red.

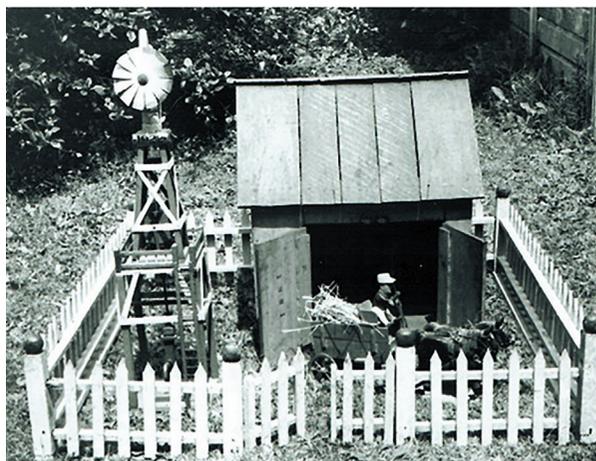


F1.4 Ohio Bank Barn with painted Mail Pouch Tobacco advertisement on the end elevation.

Farming is a way of life. Generations of rural American families were born, raised, worked, and died on the same farm. Farmers and farmhands created toy barns, houses, outbuildings, fences, pumps, windmills, animals, and wagons.

Their keen observation and firsthand experience is evident in historically accurate farm toys made during the 19th and early 20th century. These handmade toys document vernacular architecture, kinds of livestock which inhabited the farm, and the equipment used to work the farm. Toys were originally made to amuse and educate children. The creative efforts of America's rural toy makers inadvertently produced an important folk art legacy in the form of toys.

The dynamics of visual participation project the observer into the artists' world. We swing open the gate to the farm. Laid out before you is a toy barn set into an imaginary landscape, which includes a pump, windmill, animals, wagon and fences. Folk artists and carpenters created these magical toys for children. Today these toys create a different kind of magic. They bring the 19th and early 20th century farm to life.



F1.5 Toy farm scene with barn dated 1901.

America's rural folk painters recorded farm life on canvas and paper. Their canvases and drawings depict tranquil scenes filled with farm buildings, animals, crops, orchards, and people going about daily tasks. Set up a three dimensional scene with Pennsylvania farm toys. Arrange the group of toys in a painterly fashion.

Pretend that you are a child. Use your imagination to fill in pastures, orchards, and people. Voila, you have a southeastern Pennsylvania farmstead, complete with livestock.

A collection of handmade farm toys is a collection of memories. A carved cow or a small hay wagon arouses sensuous memories of childhood pleasures. What it feels like to have a calf's sandpaper tongue lick your hand, or a bumpy ride on an empty hay wagon pulled by a pair of huge draft horses.

If you enjoy folk art, it doesn't get any better than this. These handsome toys fill the collector's soul with warmth and joy.

Rural folk artists made toys that depicted the things most familiar and necessary for survival. They were keen observers and carefully reproduced the farm scene. Farming with horse drawn equipment has changed little in 150 years. Farming as practiced by our forefathers has almost vanished from the agricultural scene. Amish farmers still use draft horses and mules for farm work. It is worth a visit to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania to watch the magnificent draft horse in action. They are colossal animals with blood-

lines to horses that carried armor clad knights to battle during the crusades.



F1.6 Belgian Draft Horses

A team of hand carved draft horses bring to mind warm ‘horsy’ smells, velvet noses, and soft nostrils. You imagine the wooden heads give a frisky shake, then a snort or whinny. These gentle giants have disappeared from the fields, replaced by diesel powered tractors and computer managed farms.

Our ancestors cleared the land to grow crops. They reclaimed timber and stone to construct homes for the family, barns to shelter animals and harvested crops. A natural harmony exists between barns as they are sited on the land, and the building materials from which they are constructed. As a result of climatic conditions and specific functional uses, vernacular barn architecture evolved with distinct regional characteristics. Those same characteristics appear in the construction of toy barns made for children.

Farmers took great pride in their barns. A fine barn was a symbol of success. The men who designed and built America’s great barns made a significant contribution to our architectural heritage. Those same callused hands built wonderful toy barns for children.



F1.7 Weathered Barn Latch Englar Barn built 1873 New Windsor, MD.



F1.8 Hand carved Percheron Draft horses circa 1890-1920.

Early barns and outbuildings became obsolete in the 20th century. Functional obsolescence has hastened the disappearance of old barns from the rural scene.

“... some old barns still remain the only structures that are allowed the dignity of pleasing decay. The beauty of wood in the state of pleasing decay is one of nature’s special masterpieces.”

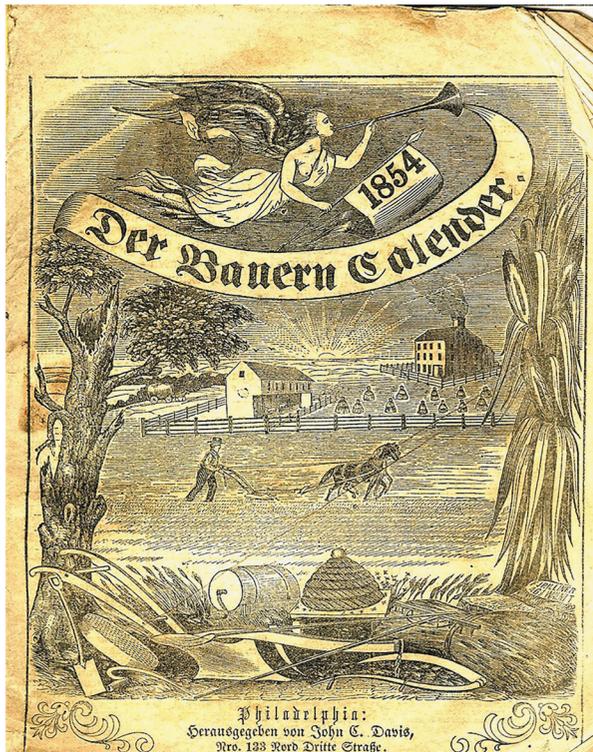
An Age of Barns by Eric Sloan

Fortunately, surviving toy barns and farm outbuildings preserve examples of disappearing regional agrarian architecture.

Picturesque stone bank barns dot southeastern Pennsylvania, the western counties of Maryland, West Virginia and parts of northern Virginia, where natural deposits of limestone are abundant. Swiss as well as

German cultural forces influenced the design of the Pennsylvania style bank barn. German immigrants who settled those regions had origins in the Palatinate area of Germany, where stone was a familiar building material. Immigrant barn builders utilized 'old world' carpentry techniques and masonry skills to adapt designs to suit regional climatic conditions and functional necessity.

Traditionally, Pennsylvania German bank barns are built into the side of a hill. The wagon entrance to the threshing floor level is located at the top of the hill. Animal entrances at the lower ground level generally faced south to take advantage of winter sun. The projecting 'laube', or overhanging upper level, formed the forebay and sheltered the animal entrances from the elements.



F1.9 1854 farmer's almanac printed in German in Philadelphia by John Davis. This early wood block printed cover shows a farmstead and the farmer walking behind a horse drawn plow. The barn is constructed with a projecting laube over the animal doors. Corn shocks stand in the field in front of the barn.

The Holland Dutch and the English introduced brick barns to the American farm. Brick barns were never as plentiful as stone barns. Fine examples of the brick

mason's art can still be found scattered throughout regions of Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia and Virginia. The banked barn design is the same whether constructed of stone or brick. There are differences in stone and brick end wall ventilation patterns. Stone barns have long narrow ventilation slots in gable end walls. Brick end barns have open decorative patterns piercing the end wall brickwork. Decorative as well as functional, masonry openings provided ventilation and release for heat generated by freshly cut hay as it dried.



F1.10 Frackville toy barn cupola ventilator, circa 1875-1895.

Barn builders introduced roof top ventilation during the second half of the 19th century. Rooftop cupolas probably originated in the Connecticut valley. Carpenters and tin smiths created an imaginative variety of elaborately detailed ventilators. Rooftop ventilation was decorative as well as functional and soon appeared on barns everywhere.

To the barn enthusiast, a barn is more than a structure to house animals and storage for livestock feed. A barn is host to memories of childhood and fun times. This is the stuff that collecting is made of, and the reason that I am addicted to farm toys. One can never have too many pairs of toy draft horses.

Every time I look inside a toy barn memories crowd my thoughts. I can smell the sweet green scent of freshly cut hay and alfalfa that fill the mows, ready for winter. I remember sliding down hay stacks and chasing Madam, the cat, to find her new batch of kittens, hidden somewhere in the barn. On sunny days, long shafts of golden sunlight slipped between the cracks of the vertical board siding and fell across the thrashing floor in brilliant patterns of light. Overhead pigeons flew about in the rafters, cooed and fanned their wings. Down on the floor below it was milking time. Metal stanchions clanked back and forth as the cows munched contentedly. The milk made rhythmic sounds when it squirted against the sides of Charlie's metal pail. Like clockwork, two dozen barn cats came running at milking time. They crowded the milk house screen door as Charlie poured milk into their pans. Charlie, the farmer, loved cats. It is these memorable experiences that sustain my enthusiasm for collecting handmade farm toys.

Folk toy makers frequently overlooked or ignored scale. They did not necessarily duplicate or copy exact size or proportion of buildings, animals or other objects, when they made toys. The artist focused on capturing the spirit of his subject. Achievement of perfect scale and proportion was secondary to the overall design effort. Therein lays the charm of folk toys.

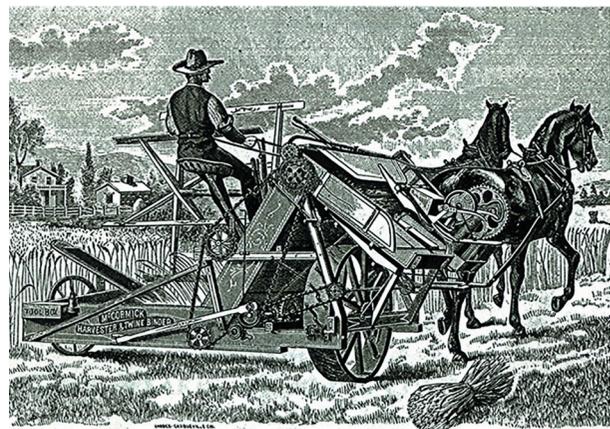
Like real farms, toy farms were not complete until they were stocked with horses. The first type of horse brought to the new world was the saddle horse. It was not until the mid 1850's that specialized draft horses were imported to this country. Draft horses were essential to every farm family. They were used to till the land, plant seed, cultivate, harvest crops, and haul crops to mills and markets.



*F1.11 Percheron Draft Horse,
circa 1890-1920*

Every town had a blacksmith shop and a harness shop to service the farmer's horses. Near the turn of the century and well into the 20th century, Sears, Roebuck catalogues offered readymade harness, shoes, wagons, buggies, farming equipment and other accouterments.

Farm hands scythed hay by hand until the invention of the horse drawn mowing machine. Cyrus McCormick demonstrated a new design for a reaper in 1831. His invention revolutionized harvesting.



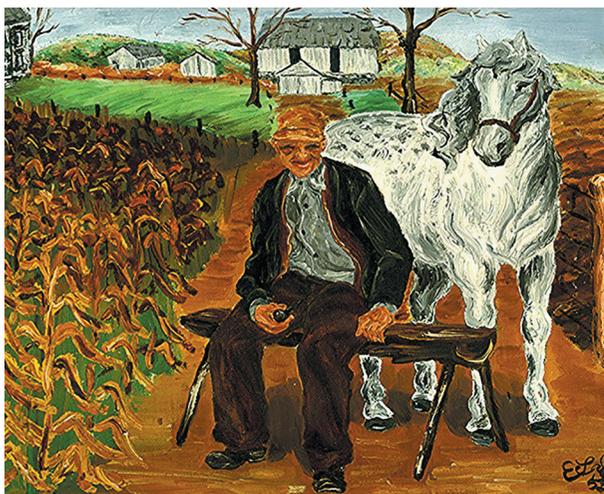
F1.12 McCormick Harvester and Twine Binder



F1.13 McCormick Iron Mower at work.

John Deere introduced a steel mold board plow in 1837. Development of the reaper and the plow reduced the need for hand labor and the draft horse reigned supreme. The self-propelled combine was built in 1886 by George Berry of Visalia, California. Combines greatly reduced the length of time it took to harvest. All of these new inventions initiated major change and substantially improved farming methods.

The farmer and his team worked long hours, some days from sunup to sundown. They spent long days plowing, tilling, planting, cultivating and harvesting. Men and their horses developed close bonds; they knew and understood each other well. Some men were partial to mules instead of horses. Mules are tough, smart and independent. You hear people describe them as stubborn. I believe it's just their independent streak.



F1.14 Mr. Dubel and Flossie, a Percheron Draft Horse, 1953.

By 1940 most farmers used tractors. A few old timers refused to change. I remember Mr. Dubal who lived on Dad's farm. He never learned to drive a tractor and worked the team of Percheron draft horses until he was too old to work. In 1953, he was still plowing with Billy and Flossie. Charlie drove the tractors.

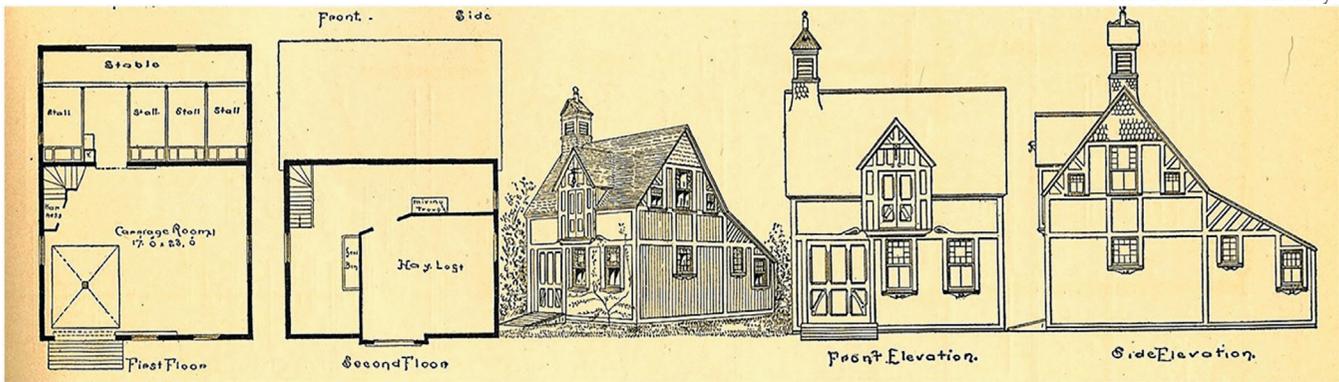
*“Ask any oldtimer—he’ll likely
remember the names of his horses
better than those of his neighbors,”
Horse Power by Lessiter.*

Although farmers had draft horses, many also owned driving horses. Until the motor car was invented, the horse was the main mode of local transportation. People who lived in towns and cities needed transportation. Livery stables were located in most communities of any size. Affluent families had a stable to house a cow and a driving horse or a team of horses. Separate carriage houses with horse stables were popular during the last half of the 19th century. Elegant carriage houses were an upper income luxury. Remaining examples can be seen on the grounds of historic estates.

Palliser's Cottage Homes and Details, published in 1883 by Palliser Palliser & Co., Architects, New York City, is an excellent architectural reference. That volume contains architectural floor plans, elevations and building sections for carriage houses, stables, summer houses and garden seats. The buildings are designed in the Eastlake style, a charming but short-lived architectural style.

The two-story Palliser stable floor plans indicate three horse stalls and one cow stall, carriage room, on the first floor and a hay loft and bedroom on the second floor.

An adequate water supply was essential to farming. Hand dug wells and cisterns were operated by manual pumps. Many wells were protected by a simple roofed structure with a bucket on a rope. As the handle was turned, the bucket on the rope dropped down into the well opening. A reverse wind brought the filled bucket back up. Turn of the century cistern pumps were operated by a chain driven system with cup-like containers that spilled water through the spout into a bucket or trough. Numerous methods and devices



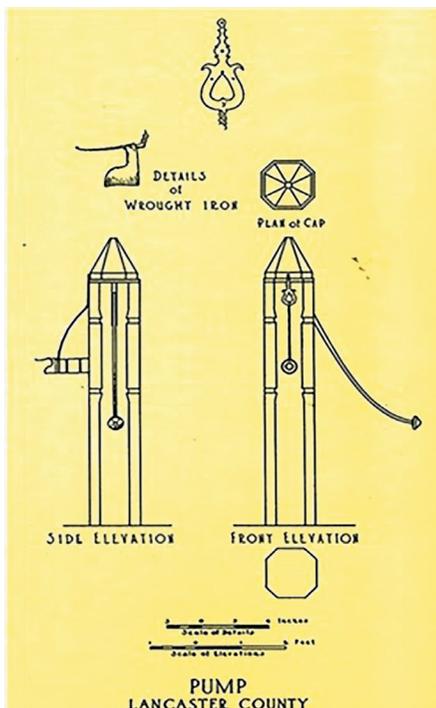
F1.15 Palliser's Cottage Homes and Details, published in 1883 by Palliser Palliser & Co., Architects, New York City

were invented to pump water. The variety of 19th and 20th century toy pump designs that have surfaced is surprising.

Few period examples of early 'cucumber' shaped pumps have survived the elements. It is a wonderful 18th century design. The housing is made entirely from wood. The long iron pump handle and the bracket strap that held the spout were hand forged iron. A measured drawing of a Lancaster County, Pennsylvania pump is illustrated in *Early Domestic Architecture of Pennsylvania* by Eleanor Raymond.



F1.17 Cucumber Pumps and cistern pump housing.

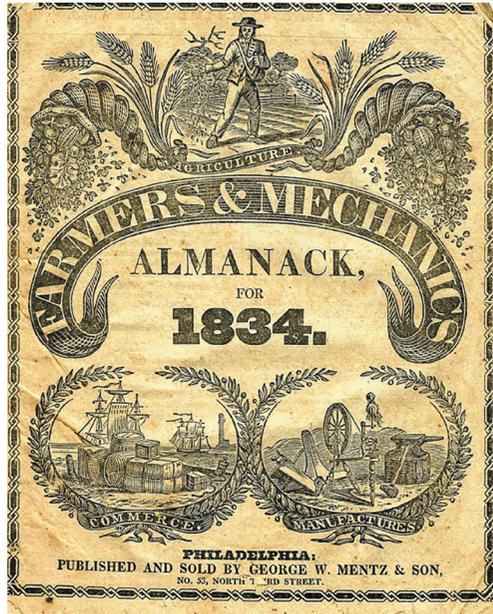


F1.16 *Early Domestic Architecture of Pennsylvania* by Eleanor Raymond

150 years later, almost none exist. Windmills designed to pump water were not in general use until the middle of the 19th century. A tall tapered, metal framework supported the windmill blades that turned under wind power. The rotating blades powered the pump that drew water up from the well. Not so long ago, windmills were a familiar sight everywhere in the country. Today, less than 50 years later, almost none exist.



F1.18 1908 Sears, Roebuck & Co. catalogue.



Analogies are made between the toys and full scale barns, animals, period advertising, and folk paintings. These comparisons place the toys within the proper social and historical context.

F1.19 Farmers depended on the almanack for weather and seasonal planting information. This 1834 Farmer's & mechanics Almanack for 1834 was published in Philadelphia by George W. Mantz & Son

When The Frost Is On The Punkin

*They's something kindo' harty-like about the atmusfere
When the heat of summer's over and the coolin' fall is here-
Of course we miss the flowers, and the blossoms on the trees,
And the mumble of the hummin'-birds and buzzin' of the bees;
But the air's so appetizin; and the landscape
through the haze*

*Of a crisp and sunny morning of the airy autumn days
Is a pictur' that no painter has the colorin' to mock-
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock.*

*The husky, rusty russel of the tassels of the corn,
And the raspn' of the tangled leaves as golden as the morn;
The stubble in the furries-kindo'lonesome-like, but still
A preachin' sermons to us of the barns they grewed to fill;
A strawstack in the medder, and the reaper in the shed;
The hosses in theyr stalls belo-the clover overhead-
O, it sets my hart a clickin' like the tickin' of a clock;
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock.*

When The Frost Is On The Punkin, by James Whitcomb Riley, (1853-1916) verses 2 and 3.



F1.20 Team of Oxen and Sledge circa 1860-1875.

HEAD YOKED OXEN AND SLEDGE

Maker: Unidentified.

Origin: Found in Maine.

Circa: 1860-1875.

Material: Carved wood oxen with painted wood yoke and dredge sled.

Size: 24" L. x 7" W. x 6" H.

Provenance: Made and found in Maine.

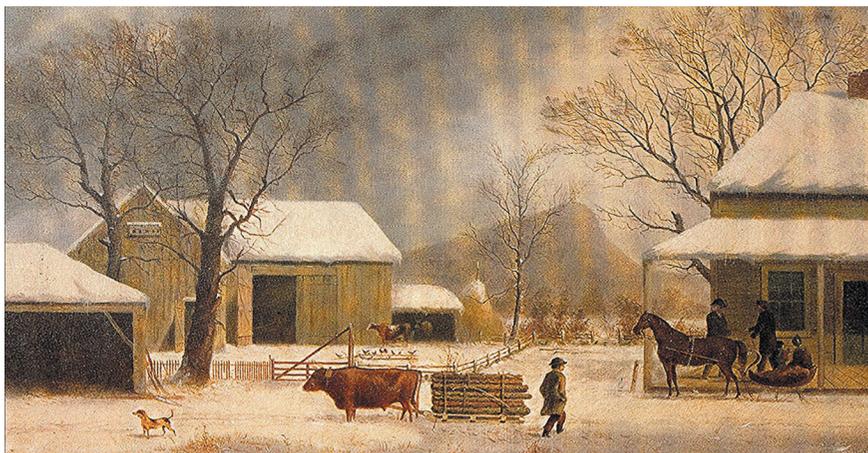
The observer is immediately struck by the power and strength portrayed through the gutsy sculptural forms of this boldly conceived pair of oxen. Though the maker's carving skills were limited, his mastery of simplicity resulted in artistic success. This unknown Maine toy maker's oxen exude spirit and power.

'Strong as an ox,' aptly describes this pair.

The toy oxen are yoked with an unusual type of wooden yoke. They are secured together with a head yoke. Leather bindings secure the yoke around the forelocks and horns of the oxen's heads. Typically yokes have

rounded, 'U' shaped hoops which fit around the oxen's necks. The tops protrude through the top of the yoke at the shoulder piece. Metal hooks on the yoke held a ring, which attached to the sled or a wagon tongue.

Like full scale prototypes, the toy wooden dredge sled is built in two sections. This allows the loaded sled to negotiate turns and curves. When snow covered the ground, large wooden sleds were used to haul lumber, feed to the animals, and to gather maple syrup buckets. The handmade wooden oxen pulling a double sledge sled are toy versions of the oxen pulling a sledge loaded with logs shown in Durries' 1866 painting.



F1.21 Oil painting by George Boice Durrie (1842-1907), Scene near New Haven, Connecticut: Winter, 1866. Godel & Co., Inc. Fine Art.



F1.33 Holstein Bull circa 1870 and Cucumber pump, circa 1885.

HOLSTEIN BULL AND CUCUMBER PUMP

Maker: Unknown.

Origin: (Both) Mid Atlantic region.

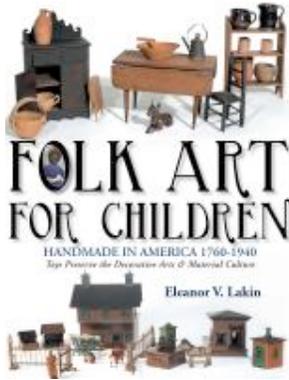
Circa: Holstein Bull 1870, Cucumber Pump 1885.

Materials: Pine wood with painted finish.

Size: Holstein Bull 10" L. x 4 $\frac{5}{8}$ " H. Pump 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ " L. x 9" H.

The Holstein bull is a dynamic piece of folk sculpture. As a piece, it embodies the sculptural essence which empowers folk art expression.

Wood carvers and whittlers filled the small barn yard with other components of the farm, toy animals and farm equipment. The addition of a mule cart, wheelbarrow, cow, draft horse, pump and watering trough, inject realism into the play scene. Imagination brings the toy farm scene to life. Let the work day begin.



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