

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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History of Dolls on Display

According to the encyclopedia, dolls are of comparatively modern usage. Dolls were not given as presents until the fourteenth century and then not to children. By the sixteenth century they were fairly common, and now most parts of the world produce characteristic, charming puppets, from the corn-husk man of the American Indian to the fine-lady doll of Paris, and the super-realistic doll of American manufacture. Fashion dolls of the fourteenth century played a part in the development of costumes.

At Venice, a French doll dressed in the latest mode was annually exhibited on Ascension Day. The King of France sent to the Queen of England a doll made to her measure, with a full wardrobe made by court tailors. One Paris hairdresser held a show of thirty dolls displaying the latest hair styles, and dolls brought the styles to the American colonies.

By the seventeenth century dolls were sold in Paris for playthings for both boys and girls. By the nineteenth century their manufacture on a large scale had begun, Germany early becoming important, with the industry centered about Lüneburg. Paris was in the lead with the speaking, walking, shut-eye, real-hair type. Wood, china, papier mache, fine porcelain, wax, and bisque were successfully used, and rubber after the vulcanizing process became known.

Homemade dolls have always been important, and the beloved rag doll has now evolved into a commercial product. Paper dolls have great variety and interest.

All the above history of dolls of various kinds, their making, nationality and materials used, leads up to the fact that the Mother's Club of the Carmel Mission are sponsoring a Doll Bazaar on Sunday afternoon, December 3rd, from 2 until 6 o'clock in the Carmel Women's Club building. Afternoon tea will also be served under the chairmanship of Mrs. Kenneth White, with Mrs. Shelburn Robison planning the doll show. Mrs. Roman Newman is present of the club.

Fascinating dolls from the collection of Mrs. Steve Zampatti and her sister, Mrs. Manuel Rose, Mrs. Maria Antonia Bach Thompson, Mrs. C. DuVal Hyde, and others, will be on exhibit.

When we called at the home of Mrs. Zampatti a few days ago, we were greeted in her living room by possibly a couple of hundred dolls – all sizes, nationalities and makes. The oldest, Mrs. Zampatti thought, was about 200 years. It was all handcarved of wood, a native of Rome in Italy, dressed in old brocade and when her hat was examined it was discovered that its frame had been made from a sheet of old music.

Another interesting doll was a large French creation which had once lived in the old Alpine Saloon on lower Alvarado Street, near where the Monterey Theater is now. There had once been a pair but the mate has disappeared.

Mary Todd Lincoln, President Lincoln's wife, is a charming old porcelain doll, standing possibly two feet high. She is dressed in a black beaded gown and a becoming black bonnet of the style of the day.

Two dolls which are bound to attract attention at the Doll Bazaar are the French and Italian make – a city lady, with a Madan Lenel ribbon, is about 45 years old. She is made of felt, with Angora silk hair upon which she wears a perk little hat, the other – a French doll – which even an adult would wish to own.

There is a Parisian doll in the collection. She is at least 85 years old, according to Mrs. Zampatti. She has a wasp waist, a kid body and beautiful blown glass eyes. There is also a grand old lady doll, made by her owner, which represents a "war mother." She has gray hair, a gray gingham dress, a white lace trimmed apron and carries her knitting. There are four dolls representing the Spanish period in California – all ready to attend a Cascarone Ball. There are dolls of all nations, authentically dressed from illustrations in the National Geographic Magazine by Mrs. Zampatti.

There is a small doll in the collection which survived the San Francisco fire and earthquake. There are several of the first celluloid dolls, tintype dolls, papier mache, terra cotta heads with wooden bodies, wax heads, a large baby doll with round blue eyes, sure to captivate any child; a pair of colored dolls from Louisiana, a Jenny Lind head made in Germany, a Grace Story Putnam china doll's head. A Pennington doll with a yellow and blue scarf on her head, whose origin even the doll collectors do not know. There is a family of very old and small dolls – the mother, father, daughter with her doll, and Little Boy Blue.

Most of the dolls were made in Germany, England and some in Italy and France. Most of the dolls have been listed in the doll books which are studied by collectors and all have a certain appeal to even the casual visitor.

Mrs. Maria Antonia Bach Thompson is loaning her dolls for the Doll Bazaar. She will show six little cloth dolls, four and five inches high, which were made and played with by her great, great-grandmother, Isabel Cota de Pico, about 1787. She will also have on display two French dolls which had belonged to her mother, the late Mrs. Henry Bach (Eduviges Sanchez), five Guatemala dolls and a very old doll made by the Indians in Maine over a 100 years ago and given to Harry Downie's mother, the late Mrs. Rose Elizabeth Downie of San Francisco.

Mrs. C. Duval Hyde will also show several very old dolls which have been handed down to her from members of her family.