

Cast Iron Farm Toys Grow In Value

If you've got any cast iron farm toys tucked away in the garage or attic, it might be worth digging them out, because cast iron farm toys made in the early 1900's can bring big prices at auctions. That much is clear from a story in a recent issue of *Kovels*, a publication that calls itself the "go-to source" for antiques and collectibles (www.kovels.com).

An auction conducted last fall included a large selection of farm toys from the 1920's and 1930's. Two of the biggest cast iron farm toy makers were Arcade Mfg. Co. and Vindex. An Arcade Caterpillar tractor with a removable nickel-plated driver sold for \$671, while a Ford 9N tractor with a non removable cast driver sold for \$275. A Case tractor by Vindex with a removable driver sold for \$610.

According to *Kovels*, toy tractors can usually be dated by the material used to make them. Cast iron was typically used during the early 1900's, lithographed tin from the end of the 1930's until World War II, and after that plastic and aluminum. When they were first made, cast iron toys were not only for kids

but also for farmers and other adults.

But according to *Kovels*, what really caught the attention of all the bidders were the farm accessories made by Vindex, which had an agreement with John Deere to make toy replicas of their machinery. A Vindex John Deere hayloader sold for \$5,124, and a John Deere Van Brunt seed drill for \$3,172.

Other Vindex accessories at the auction included a John Deere farm wagon that sold for \$793, a 3-bottom John Deere plow that sold for \$915, and a horse-drawn John Deere manure spreader that sold for \$1,830. A Wallis tractor made by Freidag with a painted non removable driver, brought \$1,037.

All the toys mentioned above had the original paint. Repainting cast iron toys will lower their value, says *Kovels*.

Pook & Pook sells an Antique Toy auction catalog that can be purchased on their website.

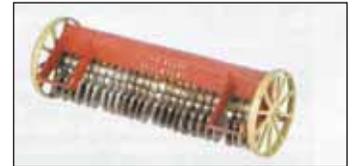
Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Pook & Pook, Inc., with Noel Barrett, 463 East Lancaster Ave., Downingtown, Penn. 19335 (ph 610 269-4040; www.PookandPook.com).



Cast iron John Deere hay loader sold for \$5,124.



Horse-drawn John Deere manure spreader sold for \$1,830.



John Deere Van Brunt seed drill sold for \$3,172.



Cast iron Caterpillar tractor with removable nickel-plated driver sold for \$671.



Cast iron Ford 9N tractor with non-removable painted cast iron driver sold for \$275.

Photos courtesy Pook & Pook, Inc.

Custom-Made Barns Built To Scale

John Kauffman is a one-man barn builder who creates customized scale-model toy barns and other farm buildings. When the former crop consultant first built a toy barn for a nephew, he had no idea he was laying the foundation for a new barn building business.

"My nephew collects Schleich farm animals, but didn't have a barn for them," explains Kauffman. "I remembered my grandfather building a toy barn and machine shed for me, and as I was between jobs, I decided to build one."

Before he knew it, he was getting requests from friends and relatives for similar barns. Since 2009, Kauffman's Wood Kreations has been building and shipping scale model barns to customers from Seattle to Washington, D.C., and from Florida to Ontario.

"Most are done at about 1/16 scale," says Kauffman. "A single barn with hinged doors, windows, stain, shingles, etc., can take 2 weeks to build."

He notes that a smaller scale barn, like 1/64 scale, takes even longer to build, as do unique buildings like his drive-through granary. The granary has ear corn crib slats on the sides and ends. The crib portion is lined with Plexiglas to actually hold shelled corn.

Most of the barns he builds are gambrel roofs with stock designs. Features include sliding doors in tracks, Dutch style walk-in doors, lift-off roofs and more. They vary from toy box designs to open sides for easy access to the inside. These are often made in multiples of a single style at a time, assembly-line fashion.

"I lay them out on 4 by 8-ft. sheets of 1/4-in. plywood and cut them out with a jigsaw," he says.

Kauffman also builds custom designs upon request. Currently he is working on a barn for an interior designer in Montana, but he also does memory barns.

"I can recreate the barn on your farm or where you grew up," says Kauffman. "I need to know what you are willing to spend. I charge carpenter rates of \$35 to \$38 per hour. The more complex it is, the more it will cost."

He advises taking pictures on a sunny day, getting images of all four corners and each side. If an interior is desired, take pictures of it as well, again on a bright, sunny day.

If toy animals are to be used inside the barn, their size is also important. There may be room for only 3 stalls, instead of 4.

While many of his barns and sheds may end



John Kauffman creates customized, scale-model toy barns and other farm buildings. Features include sliding doors in tracks, Dutch style walk-in doors, and lift-off roofs.

up as part of a collection of toys, he doesn't mean for them to be set on a shelf.

"I make stuff for kids to play with," says Kauffman. "If you're thinking of getting one, don't wait too long, or you may not catch their interest."

Kauffman's barns are priced according to complexity and size. A small open-sided shed with stalls starts at \$145, while a 1/64 scale, Deere green and yellow machine shed sells for \$80. One of his more expensive builds is the large horse barn that's 31 1/2 in. wide by 33 in. long and 26 1/2 in. tall. It sells for \$555. It has six, 10 by 10-in. stalls, functioning gates and doors, adjustable feeders in the

stalls, and a haymow with doors. The roofs open on both sides and in the middle for easy access and play. However, the most expensive item yet on his list is the stick-built, 24 by 28-in. corn crib. It is priced at \$1,850.

Kauffman also makes and sells separate accessories, such as a fence gate (\$15), feed bunk (\$8) and barn fence (\$23).

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Kauffman's Wood Kreations, 612 S.E. 2nd St., Eagle Grove, Iowa 50533 (ph 515 603-6730 or 515 851-2437; jkauff@goldfieldaccess.net; www.woodentoybarns.com).

He Built A "Yard Art" Steam Engine Tractor

Dale Osborn bought a 125-gal. horizontal fuel tank mounted on 8-ft. legs and came up with the idea to convert it into a steam engine tractor "yard ornament". He started collecting parts and built it in total secrecy in his farm shop.

After making many trips to the scrap pile and doing a lot of fitting, he finally got the tractor to come together. He painted it black and burgundy "because in the old days a lot of steam engines were painted those colors." Then he made a list of all the parts that he had used to build the tractor and brought it to the show.

"Everyone was surprised to see what I had built. People really look the tractor over as they try to find all the parts on my list," says Osborn. "The tractor doesn't operate but some people say it looks real enough to run, which I consider a compliment. The belt pulley is free to rotate and the piston rod and the crank turn, and the tractor's steering

assembly really works. I looked at photos of several different steam engines to get the tractor proportioned correctly.

He started out by welding two 55-gal. barrels onto one end of the 125-gal. fuel tank to form the body. The dual rear steel wheels are off a manure spreader. "One set of wheels is larger than the other, which makes the tractor look wider and beefier," says Osborn.

The front wheels are off an old Deere 999 horse drawn steel-wheeled corn planter. Most of the rest of the steering system is also off the planter, with half of an old push mower wheel serving as a pivot point for the front wheels. The belt wheel off an old Singer sewing machine serves as the steering wheel.

The tractor's original belt pulley came off an old horsedrawn road grader, but was later changed to a wider line shaft pulley to make it look more like a steam engine pulley. The shaft is "piston-driven" by the grass catcher chute off an old riding mower. The piston



Dale Osborn made a list of all the parts he used to build this "yard ornament" steam engine tractor. He brings it to local antique tractor shows. "People really look the tractor over as they try to find all the parts on my list," says Osborn.

leads to a tank that came off the top of the water pressure tank on Osborn's well system. "Real steam tractors heated water to create steam and used a steam cylinder to drive the piston, which turned the belt pulley," explains Osborn.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dale and Mary Osborn, 102 Park Circle Drive, Dickson, Tenn. 37055 (cell ph 260 413-1814; grandmaryos@aol.com).