



Bob Fey's 1/16 scale wood-carved toys not only look right but have working parts.

MODELS INCLUDE AUTHENTIC DETAIL

Hand-Carved Farm Toys Patterned After The 1930's

By Alice and Robert Tupper

"They bring back lots of memories and remind me of the old days when I was a kid," says Nebraska farmer and rancher Bob Fey about his collection of wood-carved models patterned after old-time equipment.

The toys are 1/16 scale, detailed replicas of 1930's era farm equipment. Fey has more than 100 pieces in his collection including animals, horse-drawn implements, a Farmall tractor, a windmill, rocking chairs, and tools from his grandfather's farm shop. All of the models are carved with authentic detail so they not only look right, but have working parts. Wheels turn, levers move, tools open up, and the manure spreader beaters rotate. The draft horses come complete with poles, eveners, and neck yokes.

"I've always enjoyed looking at old machinery and carving lets me do that every day without the hassle of collecting and restoring the real thing," says Fey, who has been carving toys for 20 years. "Old timers often stop to visit with me about the way things used to work. Every time people look they see something they hadn't seen before."

Machinery in the collection includes a single row cultivator, sickle mower, dump rake with curved teeth, hay rake, hay rack, wagon, buggy, manure spreader, 8-ft. disk, gas engine for pumping water, and a 1935 Farmall F-30 tractor pulling a 2-bottom plow.

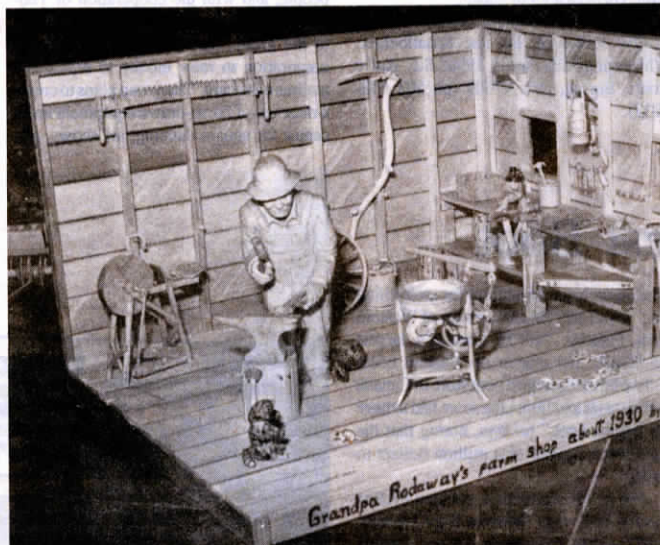
Fey carved a complete welding shop scene based on memories of his grandfather's shop. The 9 by 11-in. wood board floor is complete with a mouse hole, mouse, and cat ready to pounce. Granddad is using a pair of tongs (they can actually be opened and closed) on an anvil to pound out a horseshoe heated in a nearby hand-powered forge. The handle can be pumped up and down to turn a wheel that powers the blower. There are coal embers on the floor made to look like they fell out of the pan. Tools on the bench include a pinchers and vise, kerosene bucket, broken single tree, 5-ft. mower sicklebar with broken-off sickle sections in need of repair, wrench, hammer, hacksaw, hatchet, hand drill, nail keg, and bolt box. A chicken sits on the edge of the bolt box and another roosts above the window. "Their droppings were often a nuisance," remembers Fey. There's a chain on the floor, as well as a grindstone with pedals that work and a wheel

that turns, a sawhorse, spade, and sledge hammer. On the walls are a scythe, cross-cut saw, hand saw, axe, hand drill, corn knife, and hatchet. A kerosene lantern hangs above the bench.

Fey studies and measures each piece of equipment so he can carve exact scale models. If he can't find an actual piece of equipment he works from parts books and photographs. To make the animals he first makes paper drawings and then copies them onto the wood before carving. His favorite wood for carving is hard maple. "It's close grain, hard and strong, and lets me make pieces that can be handled with reasonable care without breaking."

Mrs. Fey keeps the carvings in two large curved glass china cabinets in the living room. Fey shows the carvings once a year at an exhibition in Lincoln, Neb. "We had been showing the collection more frequently, but packing, unpacking and handling resulted in more repair work than the trip was worth," he notes.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bob Fey, RR 1, Box 194, Palmyra, Neb. 68418 (ph 402 780-5816).



Grandpa's farm shop as Fey remembered it from the early 1930's. The entire shop is small enough to fit in your hand.



An old concrete block silo was transformed into this three-bedroom facility for overnight guests at a Dominican retreat center for spiritual growth near Denmark, Wis.

UNIQUE GUEST HOUSE HAS 3 BEDROOMS

New Life For Old Silo

An old concrete block silo has been transformed into a three-bedroom facility for overnight guests at the Bridge-Between, a Dominican retreat center for spiritual growth near Denmark, Wis.

The 32-ft. tall, 12-ft. dia. silo contains three bedrooms with 8-ft. high ceilings. Access to the first floor bedroom is through the silo's remodeled feedroom. It contains a hallway, bathroom, and shower. Second and third floor bedrooms are accessed from a pair of stairways outside the silo. The stairways, equipped with Shaker-style spindle railings, are separated by a large treated wood deck. Each of the second and third floor bedrooms has a portable toilet that's installed inside the silo chute. The silo is topped by a new fiberglass and wood roof.

"People come from all over the country to see it. They appreciate its uncluttered simplicity," says Sister Caroline Sullivan,

coordinator of the retreat center. "As soon as you walk into any of the bedrooms you forget you're inside a silo because each bedroom is equipped with modern furniture and accessories. Overnight guests can use a toaster, crock pot, and hot plate in the hallway inside the feed room or use a kitchen in a nearby farm house. We call the third floor bedroom the 'tree tops' because it has a marvelous view of willow trees in a nearby marsh. The view at sunrise and sunset is often gorgeous. Guests can see in almost every direction from the second and third floor decks which overlook a barn, llamas grazing in a pasture, and a stream. Glass doors leading into the second and third floor bedrooms let light in during the winter.

"The silo and buildings were built in 1924. When we were given the property some people said it would be less expensive to tear all of the buildings down and start over from scratch. But the value of our retreat center is in restoring people, and to go along with that theme we also wanted to restore the land and buildings."

Sister Caroline has lived at the retreat since September, 1987 after the farm was given to the religious order by an anonymous donor to provide guests of all faiths with a place "to be contemplative in action, bridging inner life and outer service." The silo project was paid for through monetary donations and some donated labor. Jerry DeMeuse of Green Bay, who builds homes, commercial and office buildings, was the general contractor.

DeMeuse put a layer of gravel in the base of the silo covered by a 1-in. layer of styrofoam and a moisture barrier. He then poured 4 in. of concrete over the top. A cable was wrapped around the silo and tightened to help hold the structure together. Walls of the silo were studded with 2 by 4's to add insulation and then covered by wire mesh and white plaster.

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