

Lancaster Farming Antiques Center



During the 1940s, many children received delightful pieces such as these Knickerbocker Plastics. Some people were lucky enough to save these pieces, and those who didn't are often willing to pay \$50 and more for a set of plastic bunnies that bring back warm memories from their childhoods. Today the rabbit with cart manufactured by J. Chein and Company, USA, sells for \$200 or more depending on condition. The single brown rabbit is German-made celluloid. Children removed the head to find the candy stored inside.

Childhood Revisited Through Easter Collectibles

LOU ANN GOOD
Food And Family
Features Editor

LITITZ (Lancaster Co.) — Chocolate candy and marshmallow chicks bring squeals of delight to children, but after the chocolate disappears, little remains except sore tummies — un-

less the candy packaging was saved.

Candy containers made of tin, porcelain, celluloid, paper mache, and even plastic are hot collectibles.

Many Easter-related collectibles that cost only a few pennies when presented as gifts — now

sell for hundreds of dollars.

Cheap plastic chicks and bunnies delighted children who have now reached adulthood and are willing to pay top dollar to retrieve childhood memorabilia.

The tradition of incorporating bunnies, chicks, eggs, and candy into Easter celebrations started long ago. These items were used in festivals that welcomed springtime.

The ancient Persians are thought to have presented eggs, which were scarce at the time, as gifts during the spring to symbolize new life. As eggs became more plentiful, people began to color them with bright colors to signify the end of a long, cold winter.

In 325 A.D., the first Sunday after the full moon appearing on or after March 21 was set aside to celebrate Easter. Over the years, Easter celebrations adapted some of the spring celebration festivities.

The transition seemed natural. Christians regarded the egg as a sign of hope and resurrection. Just as Jesus came forth from the tomb and offers new life, new life breaks forth from the egg.

It is said that Dutch settlers in Pennsylvania and New York were responsible for introducing the custom of coloring eggs for Easter. Easter was a time of great merriment, and Peter Stuyvesant, the popular Dutch governor of New Amsterdam, was a great promoter of Easter festivities. Egg rolls for children were customary on our nation's capitol grounds even before 1809.

In the 19th century, German candy factories began producing chocolate rabbits, eggs, chickens, and other sweet confectioners. Many of these were packaged in tin and celluloid containers.

According to Pamela Wiggins,



To the delight of children and adults, this tin rabbit still cranks out the tune, "Here Comes Peter Cottontail." It was made by Mattel Inc. between 1940-1950, and is highly collectible. Depending on condition, one of these rabbits can fetch hundreds of dollars at auction.

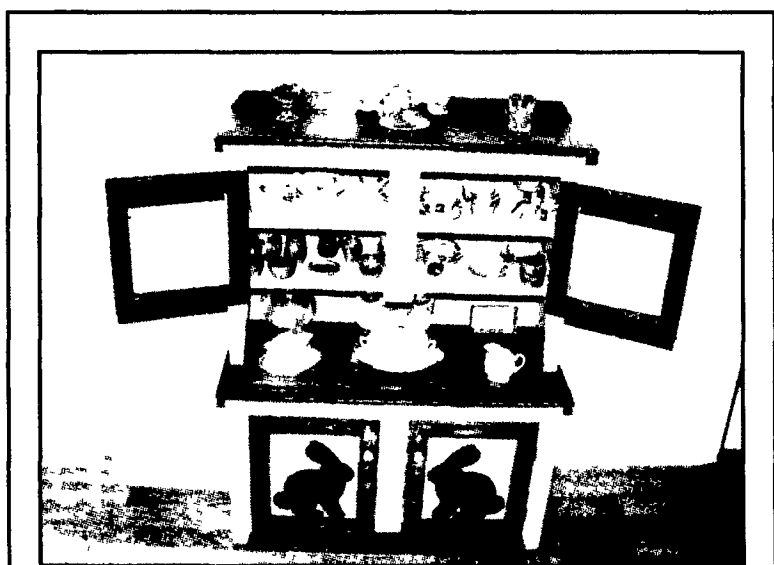
who writes about Easter collectibles, pieces marked "German" were generally produced before 1918. Items with a "German Republic" stamp date were produced between 1918-1933. The most valuable Easter collectibles were probably made in Germany, but toy rabbits, candy containers, and porcelain figurines were also produced by other countries and by Japan after the mid-1930s.

Pieces marked USA were

mainly manufactured after the 1930s. Demand for these are growing, including the plastic market.

If you are looking for an Easter-related collectible, search for a hand-blown glass ornament made by Radko or by individual artists.

And, if your Easter chocolate comes in cute containers — save them. If trends continue, values will surge by the time today's children become adults.



Check out next week's issue of *Lancaster Farming* for tips on displaying childhood collections.

Toy Sale In York April 27

YORK (York Co.) — On Sunday, April 27, more than 200 dealers and collectors will bring some of their finest dolls, toys, teddy bears, beanie babies, Barbies and Star Wars collectibles to the York 34th semi-annual Show and Sale at the York Fairgrounds, Rt. 74 S. off Rt. 30 at the Old Main Building.

To view and buy, admission is \$4 or \$3.50 with this news

article or newspaper coupon.

Children under 14 years of age are free when accompanied with a parent. Show hours are Sunday, April 27, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Early bird admission at 9 a.m. is \$10 if you want to beat the crowd.

Plenty of door prizes will be given away. For information, call Ron Funk (R & S Enterprises) (717) 442-4279.