



LOAD OF MISCHIEF PUB Pam Throop, 1987-1988 Location: Exploring the World

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The Mini Time Machine Museum of Miniatures

Tucson, Arizona

Miniatures delight people for a variety of reasons. Perhaps they trigger a sense of nostalgia for one's childhood. Or, maybe the craftsmanship and artistry of the builder becomes the most intriguing aspect. But for many visitors at our museum, the miniatures within the collection act together as a global express ticket, providing a veritable world tour on the small scale. This capacity to capture the very large within a small dimension becomes a precious learning tool, allowing the viewer to study any number of cultural and historical aspects from architecture, to fashion to food. Those interested in human history can revel in the miniature's ability to create a time capsule; a well-made roombox or dollhouse can convey not only period furniture and accessories, but also the social hierarchy and customs of a group of people.

Pam Throop's *Load of Mischief Pub* (1987-88), located in our Exploring the World Gallery, is exactly such a piece: a delicious slice of history frozen in time. The pub's structure is based upon the framework of an inn named Sign of the Angel, a 15th century building which has gone through a few changes of operation over the centuries although never has it actually been a pub. This lovely inn can be found in the picturesque village of Lacock, located in the Cotswold region of England and, like a few of the other buildings there, it reflects the Tudor style of architecture. Admiring this miniature pub quickly becomes a lesson in history: easily recognized by its black and white, half-timbered look, the Tudor style is a direct result of the medieval misuse of timber. According to Doreen Yarwood, author of *English Houses*, "Timber was becoming more costly as a result of centuries of felling without replanting. A number of houses were built in a combination," using wood, stone and brick.¹ Other significant Tudor changes included a decline in defensive needs: "The moat, defensive gatehouse, battlements and machicolations disappeared."² Windows also became more plentiful and larger in size, reflecting the same societal shift. Very little of the Angel's structure has changed over the last 532 years, although a once-grand horse passage leading from the street to the interior courtyard was eventually boarded-up to provide more interior space – once the threat of horse thievery was no longer a significant traveler concern. Fortunately for all of us, Sign of the Angel, along with nearly the entire village of Lacock, was protected by a National Trust in 1944.

The choice to use Sign of the Angel as the basis for *Load of*



Load of Mischief Pub (front). Pam Throop, 1987-1988.
Photo by Amy Haskell.

Mischief Pub came from none other than our museum founder, Pat Arnell. To start the story properly, Pat had recently purchased a different piece by Throop, the stunning *Alderly Manor* (acq. 1985), which is also on display in our Exploring the World Gallery. When the piece was delivered to the Arnell's home, Walter Arnell – Pat's husband – admired the craftsmanship so much so that he couldn't resist asking Throop for a very special request. Eve Throop, Pam's daughter and author of the *Nutshell News* article "In Search of the Perfect Pub," tells it best: "As we were setting down my mother's latest miniature English cottage, *Alderly*, on its new base in Tucson, Arizona, one of the owners, homesick, native-born Englishman Walter J. Arnell, enquired, 'Do you do pubs?'"³ As it turns out, Walter's own father had been a licensed victualler of a country pub, and he has many fond memories of helping his father and mother as a young lad, doing various tasks around the establishment. Giving the residents of *Alderly Manor* a proper English pub seemed the right thing to do and Throop, always looking for a challenge, needed very little coaxing. Walter did have some specific requirements, however:

"It definitely had to be a real country pub – not an urban gin palace, but an establishment with character. It should provide facilities within which the village menfolk would convene, but there must also be a 'lounge bar' where the ladies might socialize and share 'pub grub.' It also had to be a 'free' house, pumping its own ales, instead of being part of a large brewery chain. And, since the best pubs are those in which the publican lived and entertained,

there must be some living quarters above.”⁴

With the task set-forth, Pam Throop accompanied Pat Arnell on a trip to England where, amidst a formal Cavanaugh miniature tour, the two of them searched for the perfect structure, which was quickly recognized by Pat: it was love at first sight, the Sign of the Angel.

The interior of *Load of Mischief* is reflective of a later time, the Edwardian period of the early 20th century. Throop made some minor changes to the framework of the inn in order to transform it into an Edwardian pub, although much of what she sought was already in place: there were two rooms downstairs to serve as the required separate areas for gentleman and ladies, living quarters above and “a third room across the horse passage to serve as Pat’s baileywick, the tea room.”⁵ (Well, certainly, Pat wanted to have her own little area of the pub to serve tea!) Throop returned to England in June, accompanied by her husband and daughter, to take measurements and do research. Incidentally, the Throops found the current owners of the inn, the Levis, to be a terrific pair: “They grew all of the fruit and vegetables they served, along with truckles of Chilton and cheddar and local roasts, did all of the work around the inn themselves and were still very friendly and jovial.”⁶ It was no doubt much easier to imagine it as a lived-in pub with two such wonderful folks at the helm.

The research required to recreate Edwardian lifestyles and Tudor buildings might seem a daunting task to most, but it is an experiment in patience at which Pam Throop excels. Throop is a well-respected IGMA* artisan who takes great pride in her historically accurate miniature masterpieces. Her degree in English literature, along with a Masters degree and Ph.D. work in history and anthropology from Stanford University, has bolstered her work far and away from the casual hobby miniaturist and into the realm of historic reproductions. She thrills at a good challenge, seeking out opportunities to develop new techniques. But it is not simply the hard, cold facts that she recreates. In her biography found in *A Reference Guide to Miniature Makers Marks*, Lee and Alice Frank write that “While authentic reality is her goal in every



Load of Mischief Pub (detail).
Men’s area (top), women’s area (bottom).
Pam Throop, 1987-1988. Photo by Amy Haskell.

piece, it is the warmth, a patina of love, often a little imperfect and worn and embellished with landscaping, which she works to build into her creations.”⁷ To put it shortly, a house may have walls but a home has love, and Throop always manages to generate genuine hospitality in her works, as though her viewers could be invited in at any moment for a cup of tea. (Considering the extravagant display of traditional English pastries to be found in *Mischief’s* tea room, that is certainly one invitation which would not be refused!)

When all was said and done, it took Throop just over two years to complete the pub which, excluding the pieces which were made exclusively to fit the architecture, remained largely unfurnished, allowing Pat the real fun of accessorizing. Pat purchased nearly all of the interior accessories in England, carefully selecting only items which would have been appropriate to the period. The authenticity is quite remarkable: although visitors are unable to appreciate the labels on the tiny bottles, one can rest assured that they are all actual Edwardian labels, provided by the British Brewery research division of the International Society of Label Collectors, miniaturized to fit glass bottles shaped in those of the period. The list of artisans whose pieces comprise the stellar work of the interior trimmings is an all-star cast: figures by Jill Bennett, James Carrington and the late Joy Parker;



Load of Mischief Pub (detail, Ladies Tea Room).
Pam Throop, 1987-1988. Photo by Amy Haskell.

miniature pottery by Muriel Hopwood and Janice Crawley; gorgeous furniture reproductions by the likes of John Davenport , Zach Fox, and the late Warren Dick; the fine silver of Pete Acquisto and Gordon Blacklock; and the stunning paintings of Paul Saltarelli and George Schlosser, who also created the beautiful interior pub signs. From the lion's head doorknocker to the jars of pickled onions, the genuine creaky charm of *Load of Mischief* is as thick as fig jam.

It's easy to admire the miniatures at our museum for how beautiful they might be, or how time-consuming their creative process might have been. Appreciating them for their historical value is perhaps only a secondary thought, if thought at all. However, as with our *Japanese Family Farmhouse* (Uchiyama, 1992), which meticulously depicts a nearly-extinct form of architecture, *Load of Mischief* makes us acutely aware of how important the realm of miniatures can become. Much more than a mere dollhouse, miniatures have the power to become resources for design preservation and visual tools for educators. Although they may be small, their scope and influence can be larger than life – an achievement quite deserving of a hearty pub toast – *cheers!*



Load of Mischief Pub (detail, Kitchen).
Pam Throop, 1987-1988. Photo by Amy Haskell.

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The Mini Time Machine Museum

◆ The name “Sign of the Angel” (built in 1480 by a wealthy wool merchant) is a reference to a gold coin called an *angel*, minted in the 15th century.

♥ Glenda Cavanaugh hosted a miniature enthusiast trip to London in May of 1986.

*International Guild of Miniature Artisans

1. Yarwood, Doreen. *English Houses*. 1966. p 10.
2. Ibid, p.10
3. Throop, Eve. “In Search of the Perfect Pub.” *Nutshell News*. Volume 18, No 9. September, 1988. p 39.
4. Ibid, p 38
5. Ibid, p 39
6. Ibid, p 40
7. Frank, Lee S. and Alice Hanaw. *A Reference Guide to Miniature Makers Marks*. 1996. p 443.