



# THE HISTORY GALLERY: OUR LEGOLAND MUSEUM ACQUISITIONS

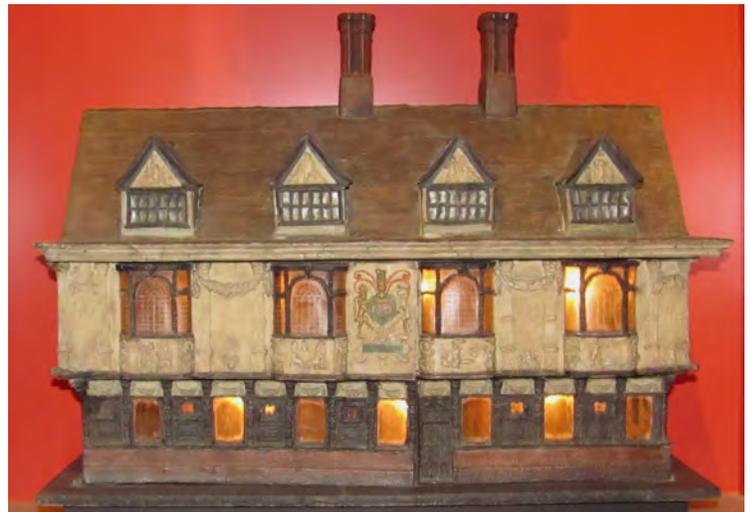
Issue No. 49

Thursday, July 10, 2014 The Mini Time Machine Museum of Miniatures

Tucson, Arizona

Our museum's History Gallery is filled with remarkable historical miniatures, dating as far back as 1742. While many of our visitors are caught whispering excitedly to one another as they wind through the gallery's walls, others remain silent, reflective and humble. The faded paint, peeling wallpapers, and well-worn fabrics of these pieces resonate within one's deepest memories, at once familiar and unfamiliar. Objects are worn smooth by now long forgotten hands; the old wood is cracked by time's unforgiving march. Although the origins of each piece are varied, together these cabinet houses, dollhouses and roomboxes capture elements of our shared childhood experience: the playful imitation of the adult world. Stories of how life once was can be read in these tiny rooms, the everyday objects of normal life – made smaller for smaller hands – now rest here as objects of great beauty.

All of these historical pieces were acquired by our Museum Founders, Patricia and Walter Arnell, collected over the years through various dealers, auctions, and fellow enthusiasts. There are a handful of pieces, however, that came from another museum entirely: The Legoland Museum of Antique Dolls, Toys, and Dollhouses. Located in Billund, Denmark, the Legoland Museum was part of the larger Legoland Park, which opened in 1967. The Legoland Park and Museum were the realized dream of the Christiansen family, the creators of the internationally famous plastic building blocks, Legos. It is a significant testament to the Christiansen family's vision for childhood creativity that the Danish word lego translates to "play well." It was this love of play which inspired their antique collection, the heart of which was built around the acquired private collections of Estrid Faurholt and Helge Hess. Although the Park still remains, the Museum closed its doors in 2005. The prestigious auction house, Theriault's, held a three-day auction in Las Vegas, Nevada, from May 19 – 21 in 2006, comprised of nearly 1,300 lots from the Lego Foundation collection. Collectors from all over the world were in attendance, including the Arnells. Our



*The Sparrowe's House of Ipswich* (F. Tibbenham, ca. 1930). Photo by Emily Wolverton.

museum has nine pieces on display in our History Gallery acquired at this auction: *The Sparrowe's House of Ipswich* (F. Tibbenham, ca. 1930); *Tin Kitchen With Built-In Oven* (ca. 1865); *Danish Antique Shop* (ca. 1900); *German Dollhouse* (ca. 1885); *German Dollhouse With Roof Garden* (ca. 1890); *Clevendon Court* (ca. 1800s); *Koppel House* (ca. 1878); *19th Century Cabinet House* (ca. 1885); and *Tordis Hus* (ca. 1875).

*The Sparrowe's House of Ipswich* (pictured above) is a wooden miniature replica of the actual public house which was built in 1597 in Ipswich, England. The artisan Tibbenham was a craftsman in Ipswich who specialized in reproduction of 16th century furniture. Our piece is one of 20 made by him, another is at the Sparrowe's House Museum, located in the original building, which still stands to this day – in Ipswich, it is referred to as The Ancient House. When looking at our piece, take note of the incredible details: the painted coat of arms of King Charles II displayed prominently on the building front, the handcarved tiles of the roof, and both of the six-stack chimneys. Tibbenham recreated the numerous sculpted murals on the outcropped second level of the house. Gazing into the interior rooms, which can be seen through the many windows, are finely paneled walls and

four fireplaces. Tibbenham's real artistic touch was in capturing the aged feel of building itself, which seems to sag with the weight of the passing centuries.



*Tin Kitchen With Built-In Oven* (ca. 1865). Photo by Amy Haskell.

Antique kitchens such as *Tin Kitchen With Built-In Oven* (pictured above) were common teaching tools for young girls of the time period. This particular piece was made in Germany and features dozens of delightful elements including miniature cake tins in the shape of a fish and heart, handmade drip candles, and a plethora of pots and pans made of copper, pewter or clay. The scale of the kitchen is a charming mix of oversized pieces (the shoes beside the oven would swallow the poor cook's feet!) and many of the plates would be too heavy to lift if filled with food. The oven itself is the real star of the scene, including an open hearth and warming rack. In such a would-be busy kitchen, it is interesting to note that the only chair in the room looks very uncomfortable to sit in!



*Danish Antique Shop* (ca. 1900). Photo by Amy Haskell.

Our *Danish Antique Shop* (pictured above) has the proprietor's name, Leif Kobmand, displayed proudly above the store, perhaps the name of the original owner or builder. One appealing element of the piece is how remarkably similar it is to any antique shop one might visit today. The store is filled with dolls, bowls, tea sets, candlesticks, furniture and art. Of note is a tin

lithographed lunch pail, a handpainted Asian tapestry, a pedestal with a dashing military bust, and a sewing desk. There are two dolls in the piece, a blond woman made of china and a bisque well-dressed fellow. One can only assume that the gentleman is dropping in to make a last moment purchase for a special occasion.



*German Dollhouse* (ca. 1885). This picture shows the piece decorated for a Traditional German Christmas when featured in our annual Wee Winter Wonderland celebration. Photo by Amy Haskell.

The two-room scene of our *German Dollhouse* (pictured above) features a dining area with an adjoining sitting room or perhaps small garden room. The three large windows make the piece feel more spacious, each with lace curtains and a flower pot on the sill. The chandelier in the dining room has real candles to provide light. The walls are wallpapered and the floors are lithographed with wood-patterned paper. There are many lovely details featured throughout including a desk with two cupboards and two niches, a sewing stand, a hand-embroidered tapestry, and woven carpet. The little white table in the sitting room is quite unique: the table top is actually a tin lithographed tray which can be lifted out to serve guests.



*German Dollhouse With Roof Garden* (ca. 1890). Photo by Amy Haskell.

One of our most gorgeous antique pieces, the *German Dollhouse With Roof Garden* (pictured above) is

immediately striking thanks largely to the maroon velvet furniture, including three armchairs and two day beds. The furnishings sit inside a large parlor with an alcove in the rear, which can also be closed off with the matching velvet curtains. The door leading to the small bedroom can actually open by turning the knob thanks to a clever hook and latch system. The rooftop is quite unique in that it features a garden with a balustrade, although the garden is a bit vacant at the moment with only one tree holding court. The home's accessories are very interesting, such as the telephone with bells and a painted cardboard stove.



*Clevendon Court* (ca. 1800s). Seen photographed with a mother and child on tour. Photo by Amy Haskell.

*Clevendon Court* (pictured above) is an unassuming building which is too often overlooked by our visitors, yet it offers enchanting surprises to those who are curious – and armed with one of our complimentary flashlights. With its simple pink exterior (intended to mimic rose stone work) and its flat shingled roof, *Clevendon Court* appears to be a dull, empty box. However, looking through the windows and shining light into the rooms reveals an elaborate staircase and banisters, Chinese earthenware figures on the fireplace mantel, gesso decorations, and architectural arches with bronze and silver details.

The *Koppel House* (pictured top right) is a cabinet house featuring six rooms on four floors and it is one of our most commanding antique doll's houses. The scale is not uniform, as is common in pieces of this time period, and this is most noticeable in the kitchen (it would take two grown men to lift the tea kettle on the stove). Upstairs, the proportions are more dignified and the rooms feature beautiful standout pieces such as the brass and copper parlor stove and thirteen pieces of



*Koppel House* (ca. 1878) . Photo by Amy Haskell.

highly sought-after Biedermeier furniture. There is a magical personal element to this piece as well: in the living room one can see a small newspaper which when opened reveals a handwritten birthday message from Aunt Henriette Ree to Doritha Koppel on her 4th birthday in 1878.



*19th Century Cabinet House* (1885). Photo by Amy Haskell.

Our *19th Century Cabinet House* (pictured above) is smaller than the *Koppel House* but similar in style and function. Proportion once again is skewed – the kitchen table is at head height! There are five rooms, including the large lower level kitchen, a parlor, the dining room, a sitting room and single bedroom. There are beautiful examples of Biedermeier furniture throughout such as the

cherrywood buffet, but the dolls are truly the loveliest element of this piece. Each of the five dolls has such personality, with their costumed bodies and painted faces. There are three ladies of the house and two maids; one of them is a giantess compared to the others in the household. All of them appear to have been dearly loved by a child from long ago. Elements of the cabinet were restored in 2008 prior to museum display by one of our conservators, Laurie Slenning.



*Tordis Hus* (ca. 1875). Detail. This picture shows the piece decorated for a Traditional Danish Christmas when featured in our annual Wee Winter Wonderland celebration. Photo by Amy Haskell.

The *Tordis Hus* (the dining room is pictured above) is a pleasant mix of bare simplicity and eclectic objects. Upstairs, one can find Greek busts of Dionysus and Aphrodite, and a Biedermeier rainbow-striped velvet furniture set with a recamier, footstool and two chairs. There is a music stand with an unusual stringed instrument next to a piano. Although not visible in our display, the second floor doors have their own circular balcony with a metal balustrade. Unusual objects are scattered about, including wooden plates and a copper bed warmer.

Each of these pieces has found a new life here at our museum, where both children and adults can come to learn more about the rich history of dollhouses and fine scale miniatures. The Arnells, just like the Christiansen family, have had a lifelong love of play and creativity. The Lego Foundation's hope for a safe harbor for their collection has found one in our museum, for generations to come.

Emily Wolverton