

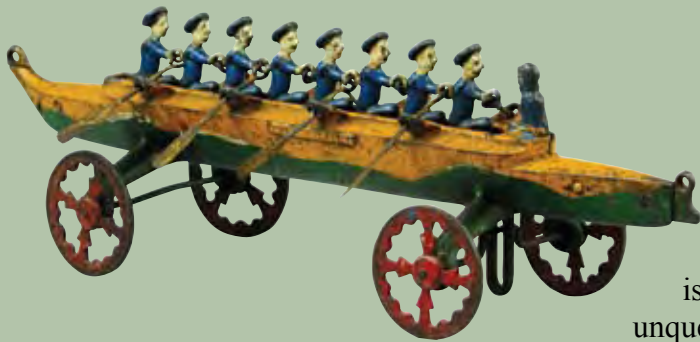
Castan and Tomlinson collections step into the spotlight at Bertoia's Sept. 23-24 antique toy auction



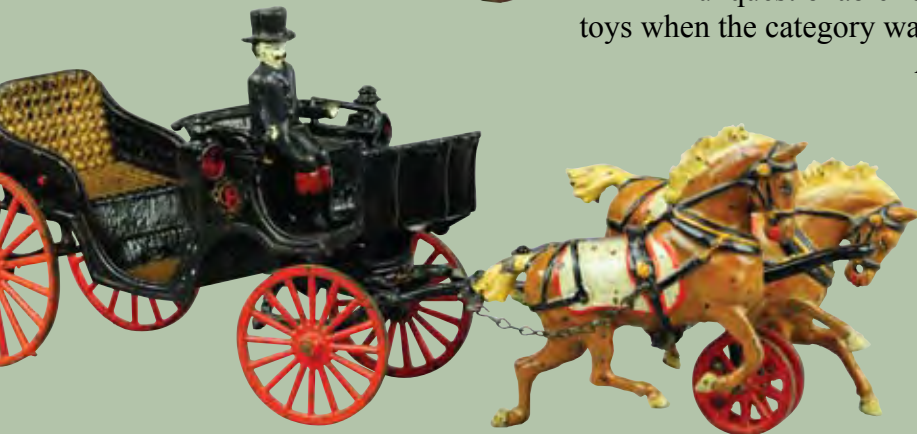
VINELAND, N.J. – A pressed-steel collection with deep provenance and an eclectic West Coast collection whose owner lives by the motto “preserve and protect” have merged to form the heart of Bertoia's big Sept. 23-24 antique toy auction.



“This sale represents the journey of two great collectors – the late Fred Castan of Nebraska and Ralph Tomlinson, who lives in southern California. Together, the collections cover vast territory within the realm of antique toys,” said Bertoia Auctions associate Rich Bertoia.



In terms of desirability and condition, the Castan collection is in a highly rarefied class, Rich said. “The Castan collection is one of the early ones. Fred Castan was a pioneer cast-iron toy collector and a long-time regular at the Chicago Toy Show. One reason why his collection is so superior in comparison to many others is because of his unquestionable foresight. Fred was actively buying pressed-steel toys when the category was just a glimmer in the eyes of a few collectors. And he always bought – never sold,” Rich said.



Castan recognized intuitively that toys of the past were more than just playthings; they were genuine artworks to be displayed on shelves and appreciated. One of his most cherished possessions has an important historical connection. It is a red Buddy ‘L’ flivver given to Fred by none other than Fred Lundahl, founder of the Moline Pressed Steel Co., the producer of Buddy ‘L’ toys.



Another highlight of the Castan collection is a Buddy 'L' outdoor railroad set. "It's exceptional," Rich remarked. "It might be the best surviving example – it's that nice." Yet another Buddy 'L' production expected to stir up the bidding competition is a red tugboat that is documented in a leading reference book on Buddy 'L' as being a salesman's sample.

The Castan collection spans all leading makers of cast-iron automotive toys, including Keystone, Sturditoy and American National. Within the panoply of vehicles are delivery vans, fire trucks, work trucks, police vans and many other desirable forms.

What makes this collection so extraordinary is its consistently fine condition throughout, Rich Bertoia said. "When you think of a pressed-steel toy, with its size and weight and the fact that it has been played with outdoors, you just don't expect to see survivors in this condition. Fred was able to snap them up before kids received them as hand-me-downs, and because of his prudence in keeping them indoors, they retained their beautiful condition. Collectors are really going to be impressed," Rich said.

The second featured collection of Bertoia's approximately 1,000-lot September auction is the widely varied and impeccably maintained assemblage of American and European toys amassed by Ralph Tomlinson.





“Since his earliest days of collecting, Ralph has always made sure that his toys were in excellent working order and looked their very best,” said Bertoia’s owner, Jeanne Bertoia. “Ralph likes for his toys to be shiny and clean, and because he’s mechanically inclined, nothing pleases him more than to retreat to his wonderful workshop to tinker with his toys and restore them to perfect working order. He has always been very particular about the presentation of his toys, and if he has made a repair to any of them – which he does with great expertise and subtlety – he will always point out the repair with pride.”

Rich Bertoia describes Tomlinson as “one of the toy hobby’s best-liked and charismatic collectors.” He recalled his first meeting with Tomlinson, 15 years ago. “My brother Bill and I went to dinner at his house. Ralph is a very modest man, but he has the type of personality that makes you want to keep listening to him. He’s very knowledgeable.”



European transportation toys have always been a focal point in the Tomlinson collection. Autos, trolleys, buses and early horse-drawn coaches shared the gleaming showcase shelves in Tomlinson’s home with distinctive Continental boats, racers and early German and French character toys.





Premier pieces include a Marklin *Jolanda* and several pristine Radiguet boats, elusive steam autos, a Marklin Stanhope coach of substantial size and a large horse-drawn fire pumper handcar. “Ralph likes large-scale toys,” Rich noted.



Tomlinson also favors circus toys and built an enviable sub-collection of Hubley Circus wagons, including the attention-grabbing, 28-inch-long horse-drawn bandwagon. “It’s quite a display piece even on its own, but leading a parade of other Hubley Circus vehicles, it’s unbeatable for eye appeal,” said Rich.

Continuing in the super-size vein, the collection includes an Erector loco and tender that traditionally has been regarded by collectors as a store display, an ever-popular 25-inch Atom Jet tin racecar, and another Japanese-made favorite – a remote-control Super Racer.





Tomlinson's antique toy airplanes run the gamut of European manufacturers, including Gunthermann, Lehmann and Ingap; and also features aircraft by the Argentinian brand Matarazzo.

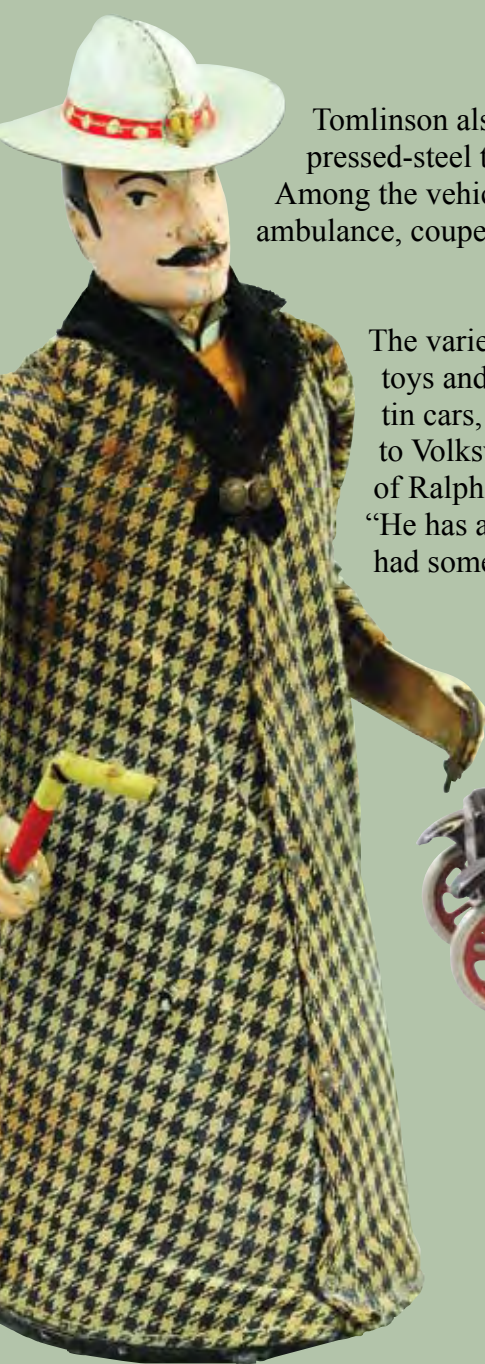


Every imaginable European village character of the early 20th century comes to life in the Tomlinson collection with the turn of a key. Clockwork rarities from the French company Martin include the Merchant of Marron (chestnut vendor), nanny with baby carriage, little chef (slices carrots at table), washerwoman, barber, carpenter, organ grinder, vendor with cart, and a drunkard with original box. German-made Lehmanns include a coveted Ski Rolf, Zig-Zag, Man-Da-Rin, Masuyama, Tut Tut and Heavy Swell.



Other European highlights include two Doll et Cie. steam-driven vehicles – a stake truck and an open tourer – plus a fine JEP Hispano-Suiza, and a Delage.





Tomlinson also assembled an outstanding array of Marx pressed-steel trucks from the sought-after 14-inch series. Among the vehicles represented are an SS staff car, ambulance, coupe and G-Man pursuit car.



The variety continues with comic character toys and a veritable motor pool of Japanese tin cars, ranging from Chevy sedans and T-Birds to Volkswagens and sleek racecars. "In a way, this part of Ralph's toy collection reflects his personal life," said Rich. "He has a fascination for well-designed automobiles and has always had some sort of very fast, very high-end car in his real-life collection."



Postscript: Shortly after this article was written, Jeanne Bertoia and the staff of Bertoia Auctions were deeply saddened to learn that Ralph Tomlinson had passed away. "We were all very fond of Ralph. He lived life to the fullest and was one of the great gentlemen of the hobby," said Jeanne Bertoia. "We will do our utmost to produce an auction whose quality befits the memory of both Ralph Tomlinson and Fred Castan, two of the great toy collectors of their generation."