

ANTIQUE TOY WORLD



The personal collection of
John and Adrienne Haley
Saturday | May 18th 2024



Bertoia's to host May 18 Signature Auction exclusively featuring the John and Adrienne Haley antique toy and bank collection



Yorkshire couple widely known in the antique toy hobby amassed a world-class collection of mechanical and still banks, early German autos and clockwork boats; trains and more



VINELAND, N.J. – Month after month for the past 53 years, Antique Toy World has chronicled the headline-making events and activities of a global community of people who are bonded by a single interest: collecting old toys. This month, ATW shines a light on one of Britain's most influential toy-collecting couples: John and Adrienne Haley. Within our hobby, the Haley name is both significant and respected. Few of us would be unaware of the immense contribution this quietly spoken Yorkshire couple has made over the past half-century, supplying grateful US buyers with rare, high-quality European toys sourced through their networking efforts around Britain and on the Continent.

As collectors, we spend hours trading tales about past acquisitions and discussing the visionaries, like the Haleys, whose names are now part of toy-collecting history. We see one of those names whenever a truly superlative collection is offered for public sale, on the distinctive custom hangtags Bertoia Auctions affix to each toy. A tag from a prior sale displaying the name Kaufman, Claus, Berry, or Schroeder for example, adds a 24-karat gilt edge to any toy's provenance. No collector would ever dream of removing such a tag. It is destined to remain with its respective toy through subsequent generations of ownership for as long as collectors exist.

Soon it will be time for the John and Adrienne Haley to join the elite list of collectors just mentioned. Each of the pieces in their exquisite private collection of toys and banks will be accompanied by a prestigious "Haley" hangtag when they are sold on May 18, 2024 at Bertoia's. The single-consignor Signature Auction will be held at Bertoia's Vineland, New Jersey gallery, with live attendance and all forms of bidding available.

Antique Toy World recently had the pleasure of speaking with John – and vicariously with Adrienne, who added important comments from the background – about their 50+ years in the toy business and their personal collection, which is being auctioned in its entirety. Here's how it went:



ATW:

In a 1982 Antique Toy World interview with Jack Tempest, the two of you reminisced about what 'the good old days' were like. It's hard to imagine there were any 'good old days' in the toy hobby to reflect upon that long ago. What was it like to be a toy collector and dealer back when you got your start?

JH:

I started in the business, really, in the late 1960s and early '70s. There was no Internet, of course, and few auctions or shows, so a lot of advertising and searching was involved.

It was amazing how many American banks could be found in Europe. Of course, at that time England, in particular, was a great export market for the USA, including some of their clockwork toys. Things were cheap, but it took a lot of time and effort.

ATW:

Were there any collectors or dealers who preceded you in the hobby whom you would regard as having influenced you?

JH:

I was impressed with the collections of Ed Mosler, Leon Perelman, Wally Tudor, Max Berry and others. I visited those people and tried to find them things, mainly tin banks. Everyone showed me the greatest kindness and encouragement.

ATW:

How did you and the collectors you just mentioned find each other, being on different continents?

JH:

Through Hobbies magazine. They were advertising in that magazine even before there was an Antique Toy World. They also came here to visit me, Ed Mosler in particular.



ATW:

Did you train for or attend university with any particular profession in mind, or has your entire life's work been in antiques?

JH:

I was a display man and trained in interior design. Adrienne and I would go to auctions to purchase antiques to furnish our cottage. We would buy various things and, before we knew it, we were antique dealers. As a general antique dealer in the late 1960s, I would come across old toys and banks. Some I sold, but some I became fascinated with, and before long I had a collection. As the years went by, I visited the States and helped collectors add mainly banks to their collections. In later years, when our children were grown up, Adrienne joined me on these trips. Prior to that time, she had kept our business running while I was away and also bought toys and banks.

ATW:

Did you grow up around antiques or the antiques business?

JH:

Not really. My first introduction to old toys was after World War II, when very few modern toys were available. My father would take me shopping for secondhand toys. These were added to toys he had as a boy himself, being born in 1910. I was already a toy collector but did not know it.



ATW:

For many years you were known as the Yorkshireman with the toys no one else had in their collections, but you actually started out with banks, or money boxes, as they are called in the UK. What was the first mechanical bank you bought, and what were the circumstances of the purchase?

JH:

It was a poor-condition Jonah and the Whale from a house clearance. Its ingenuity fascinated me. Then I discovered European tin mechanical banks, which my American customers liked. They were difficult to locate, but I found them through perseverance and advertising in local papers. European tin mechanical banks are really what the earliest collectors liked, because they couldn't find them in America.

ATW:

In your opinion, what are some of the rarest and best banks in the May auction? First the cast-iron banks, then the tin banks...

JH:

The mechanical banks are mainly cast iron. I always went for quality, not quantity. Condition was the first priority, so I would upgrade on paint whenever possible. Some of the top mechanical banks would be the Germania Exchange, Jonah on the Pedestal, and a Starkie cast-iron Robot bank, which is the only one known in cast iron – others of its type were made of aluminum; also, a Roller Skating bank, Bowery bank, John Bull's Money Box, and a fantastic Uncle Sam. There are many, many wonderful banks in fine condition with high paint – the Mikado, Chinaman in a Boat, and many others. There's also a group of 'Jolly' banks, including unusual ones, like the African bank, Little High Hat, etc. A composition mechanical bank that is very rare is a post box with a suffragette theme. When a penny is inserted, the figure of a suffragette pops up. It's dated 'Xmas 1913' and also says 'Militant souvenir' and 'Votes for Woman' (imprinted on flag).

Of the tin banks, the German-made World's Banker is my favorite. It's a full-body form, which is really hard to do in a tin bank. It shows John Bull with a globe.



ATW:

Are there any uncommon still banks that collectors can look forward to bidding on?

JH:

There are a few scarce European still banks in cast iron, lead and pottery.

ATW:

You once said that your favorite bank is called the 'Tommy' bank. Tell us about that one.

JH:

It's one of the first of the better banks I found, and I used its image as the logo on my business cards. It's all cast iron, made in England during the World War I period, and depicts a British soldier – known as a 'Tommy' – in a lying position shooting at a tree. Its design was inspired by the Creedmore bank made by the American company Stevens and has a similar action. The Creedmore also inspired a few John Harper (English) banks which are in the collection. All are scarce and in fine condition. They include the Volunteer and Grenadier banks, both with a standing soldier figure; and the Wimbledon bank with a lying-down figure. It was not uncommon for English companies to copy the action of American banks.

ATW:

How did you make the move from banks – which you've never grown tired of – into antique toys?

JH:

In a way, they came to me together, old banks and toys. I advertised a lot and bought privately a lot, so it was just a case of when I would come across them.



ATW:

In the early 1980s, you opened a toy shop in Halifax, Yorkshire. At that point in time, was there much of a walk-in trade in antique toys, or were you hoping the shop's existence would attract people with toys from their attics that you might buy?

JH:

We opened the shop because our son, Simon, had always shown an interest and helped us at antique shows. It was really for him. He was dealing in postwar toys and the more-modern toys, but I also had some space there for my antiques and toys. Simon eventually took it over, and Adrienne would help out when he was away. Unfortunately, Simon passed away suddenly last year.

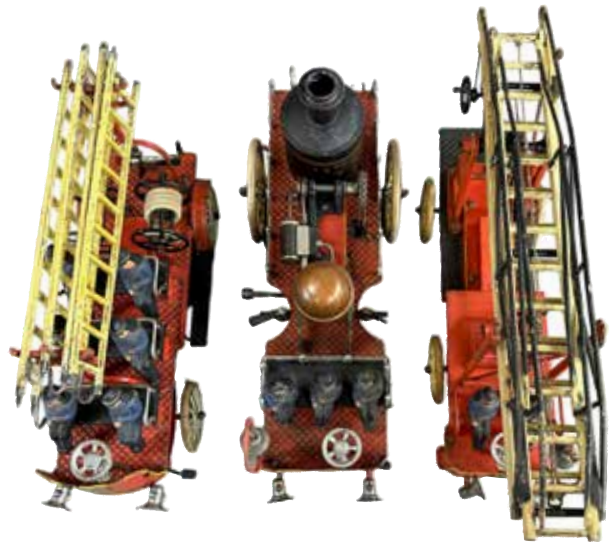
ATW:

Over the years, which shows have been your favorites to attend, and can you share some of the toy or bank discoveries you made?

JH:

I attended the London and Paris shows. They were a good source of banks, but the still and mechanical bank club conventions in the States were my favorites. There were lots of kind and friendly people, and we made many friends. We were also a stop on the tour one year when the ATCA (Antique Toy Collectors of America) came over to England for their convention. During those tours, they visit the collections of fellow members.

Although I've found a few things at shows – primarily a few good banks – most of my things were found privately. I've spent a lot of time on the phone.



ATW:

Let's talk about the toy categories that will be featured in the May 18 auction and go over a few highlights from each:

German Tin Autos and Automotive:

Transport toys are a strength of the toy collection, especially the German tin autos. Many are in remarkable condition. They must have been so popular with children in the early 20th century and were played with very carefully. Most of the automotive toys are pre-1920, and many are much earlier. There are fine examples by Bing, Carette, Marklin and Gunthermann. There's also a rare Marklin firehouse with three early fire engines, and some early double-decker tin buses with advertising on the sides.

Clockwork boats:

Clockwork boats are among my favorite toys. I always went for quality and insisted on unrestored examples. The finest and probably rarest Marklin boats in the collection have their original wooden boxes, including the 'Battleship France' and 'Battleship Terrible' – that's a beautiful boat. There are also some fine examples of Bing boats, including a rare paddlewheeler. I don't have lots of boats, but all are in nice condition.

Trains:

It's a small selection with nice, early German Marklin and Bing representations. There's a rare Marklin O gauge Kaiser train. I always liked 4 gauge, and there are also a few 4 gauge locomotives in the sale.

Other Toys:

It's basically a cross-section of European tin, in particular German tinplate and a few German horse-drawn pieces. Earlier I mentioned a rare mechanical bank designed as a post box with a suffragette that pops up. There's also a rare suffragette toy in the collection. It consists of two composition figures, a suffragette and a policeman who is manhandling her. I found the toy at a show in England and have never seen another one, although there might be one other.



ATW:

Will you and Adrienne be at the May 18 auction or its preview?

JH:

No, we won't be able to attend, but we hope people will get as much enjoyment from the toys as we did. Adrienne and I have made so many friends in the USA over many years and have visited many fine collections which we look back on with very fond memories.

ATW:

With your toys and banks off to new homes, what are your plans for the future?

JH:

We will be doing a bit of fishing.

By Catherine Saunders-Watson



Bertoia's May 18, 2024 Signature Sale exclusively featuring the John and Adrienne Haley antique toy and bank collection will take place at the company's gallery at 2141 DeMarco Drive, Vineland, NJ 08360, starting at 10 a.m. US Eastern Time. Live attendance is welcomed or bid absentee, by phone, or live online through Bertoia Live or LiveAuctioneers. An open preview will be held daily during normal business hours the week prior to the sale. Preview privately by appointment only. For additional information on any item in the auction or to arrange for a private preview, please call +1 856-692-1881, email toys@bertoiiauctions.com or visit Bertoia's online: www.bertoiaauctions.com.



Over 150 Mechanical Banks
Assorted European Still Banks
Boxed Marklin Boats & Ships
Exceptional German Autos
Lead & Composition Figures
Elusive European Trains



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