

Women and Dolls

Part Played In Revolutionizing Doll Industry Of Nation By Salem Women As Told In The Everybody's Magazine For November.

The following account of "Women and Dolls" written by Stella Burke May in Everybody's Magazine for November is interesting to Salemites for the fact that two of the three doll originators and designers are well known in Salem, and have relatives here. One's family lives here and the other is a Salem girl.

Grace Storey Putnam, creator of the Bye-lo-baby doll is mother of Miss Bruce Putnam, Salem musician, and sister-in-law of George Putnam, editor of The Capital Journal. Her dolls are carried in stock by U. G. Shibley.

"Madame Georgene" Averill was formerly Georgene Hoff, a Salem girl, who lived here for many years with her brothers, Al and Rudy Hoff, who were well known in Salem. Al and Rudy were employed for years with the old dry-goods firm of J. J. Dairymop, Rudy as a sign writer, and he later went into business as Corvallis. Georgene Hoff married James Paul Averill, the manager of the doll department of Meier & Frank's store in Portland and they contrived the idea of the doll which has made them wealthy and famous. The entire family went to Seattle about 15 years ago where they engaged in the doll manufacturing business, later going to New York. Al Hoff visits Salem about every six months, being on the road for the doll business. Many of the dolls manufactured by that firm are carried in stock in Salem stores.

The article from Everybody's Magazine reads in part as follows: Three American women dominate the doll market. Coming from different parts of the country, converging in New York, these three women have opened the eyes of doll manufacturers and doll merchandisers. They have stimulated the toy trade to a degree unprecedented and today head the list of American doll-makers dominating the market.

I refer to the three American women whose three babies of doll-dom are at the present time numbered among the "best sellers": Mrs. Grace Storey Putnam, originator of the Bye-lo-baby doll, the life-imitation of a three-day-old baby that has met the doll trade by the ears; Mrs. James Paul Averill, inventor of the Wonder Doll that walked and talked its way into juvenile favor and has held high place in the catalogs of the merchandisers for more than five years; and Rose O'Neill, creator of the famous little Kewpie doll, one of the most popular dolls ever produced.

Rose O'Neill's doll made a neat little fortune for the woman-artist whose brush first gave it life in the juvenile pages of a woman's magazine. Mrs. Averill's walking doll is the biggest selling high-priced doll ever marketed; with Grace Storey Putnam's three-day-old baby doll in moving so fast that at this writing it may not be too optimistic to estimate that she may realize fifty thousand dollars in royalties from this year sale of dolls.

The doll trade has been completely reactivated since the fall of 1924 when Mrs. Putnam first offered her infant doll, only to be frowned upon by manufacturers and salaried alike, who threw up their hands and exclaimed with fierce unanimity: "The thing won't go. It looks too much like a live baby."

It went and is still going. All of which only proves that this is an age of realism and that women who bring children into the world are pretty good judges of what those children and all children like to play with.

I tried to classify the three women who created the three popular dolls. Mrs. Putnam would be the sculptress, of course, since that is what she is, having modeled her doll between classes, so to speak, while teaching modeling in the art department of Mills College, Oakland, California.

Mrs. Averill would be the clear-headed business woman, for not only did she originate the first walking doll, but entered into the production business for the wholesale manufacture of it and opened up a shop on Fifth Avenue for its retail distribution.

Rose O'Neill is the painter whose skillful brush realized the wide-eyed elf with the curly top-knot and the fat little tummy of a Chinese idol that won the art of childhood.

Yet that rigid classification into sculptress, business woman and painter would not be fair, either. For the sculptress and the painter had sufficient business acumen to



Grace Storey Putnam putting finishing touches on the Bye-lo-baby model doll that has proved the biggest seller on record.

make financial successes out of their art; the business woman had the necessary talent to make an artistic success out of her doll and her doll shop. No, they cannot be classified. They are just women who make dolls.

Because—and rightfully so, since it is eternally but three days old—Grace Storey Putnam's doll is the youngest addition to this circle of toys, I sought her first. Mrs. Putnam is the wife of Arthur Putnam, a sculptor of fame, and the mother of a twenty-three-year-old daughter and a fourteen-year-old son. Her studio home is on Staten Island, that rocky guide-post to ships that enter and depart hourly from the New York harbor.

"Twenty years ago, when my husband and I were living in San Francisco and my little girl was three years old, I made my first doll for her. It was rather crude. First I made a wire frame and covered that with stockinet. Then I stuffed the stockinet to give it form. Head, body, arms, legs, all were made of the pliable stockinet. I pulled out its cheeks, stuffed and tinted them. Pulled out its little nose and stuffed that. Pressed in its eyes and painted them. Then I darned hair on it and, behold, a doll! I was not so proud of it that I would let my daughter take it out of doors when she went to play, but I liked it and she adored it and my husband and I both saw commercial possibilities in it. But I was not yet ready for doll-making."

Toy Men Hard to Convince "Later, when my husband's illness made bread-winning a necessity for me, I entered the art department of Mills College. I had taught and studied every branch of art except modeling, having held that in reserve so that modeling might surround everything. Yet through Arthur Putnam's influence modeling seemed to have become a part of me, and when I entered the art department of Mills College as a teacher I was given two classes in modeling along with the other branches I taught. But the doll idea kept growing within me. I must make a doll that had a universal appeal. And what appeal so general as that of the newborn infant? So, everywhere I went I studied babies. In maternity

(the drowsy eyes, wrinkled neck and bottom mouth appealed to the mother urge in childhood. And the way he was seized upon by youthful femininity made a decided bit with the masculine adults in the doll trade everywhere.) The business woman came next. It was in her shop working with her dolls that I found Mrs. James Paul Averill, who invented the wonder doll that walks and talks. I think it must have been Mrs. Averill's desire for perpetual motherhood that, combined with her business acumen, made a financial success out of her doll, for she admitted that the doll of her invention is just a small copy of the little girl her daughter was at the age of three. Maxine, the daughter, is now eighteen years old, but in the walking and talking Mrs. Averill made, she has immortalized her as she was fifteen years ago.

Mrs. Averill is a native of Denver and was at one time a resident of Salem, Oregon. It was while she was a patient in a Portland hospital that she made her first dolls. This was natural for not only was she a mother with a mother's love for children, but she was the wife of a professional toy salesman as well. While confined to the hospital as a patient, she spent her days of convalescence making rag dolls for the juvenile patients. This work gave her an idea. The idea was to produce what she calls "character" dolls.

Living in the Northwest, these dolls naturally took the form of cowboys, cowgirls and Indians. After she returned home she made and sold some of the dolls. The readiness with which they sold stimulated her to greater activity. She dyed feathers, strung beads, cut and sewed and stuffed and painted the dolls with her own hands and sold them all. It being that the Indian dolls met with the greatest favor, she made a small replica of an Indian woman famous in the Northwest, Princess Angeline, they called her, "the Pocahontas of the Northwest."

The Inventor of the Walking Doll Mrs. Averill's first venture in doll manufacture on any important scale was the creation of the Princess Angeline doll. During the first six weeks of 1914 she made \$2,700 from the sale of this doll. Then she and her husband moved to San Francisco and later to Los Angeles where she opened a doll factory to make Indian dolls, paper dolls, cowboys and cowgirls. These dolls were dressed in pastel felts. The felts were purchased in

"I wanted to reproduce the baby that all mothers would recognize as their new-born infant. And I found it—three days old in an Oakland hospital. I knew the minute I saw the babe that he was simply adorable. For two hours I worked feverishly modeling the infant's face. I returned to work all day, the two following days on the head—working directly from life on the tiny thing, awake or asleep, lay before me on the hospital pillow. The face of the live baby changed even in those two days. But my Bye-lo-baby is as he was when three days old. I made no change in the face. From that model I perfected one in wax and with the wax model and many letters to toy manufacturers I came East."

Most people in the toy trade know the story of Grace Storey Putnam's struggle to convince the doll world that a three-day-old infant was children wanted. At last she found one big toy-maker who agreed to give her doll a trial, and the Bye-lo-baby was born. There had been baby dolls on the market for years yet they had not been sensational sellers. But there had never been a three-day-old baby doll until Grace Storey Putnam's doll appeared upon the scene.

From the moment the tiny little fellow with his life-like bluish head was put on the market, he became an instantaneous and overwhelming success. Parents and prospective parents seized upon him. Children cried for him and got him. His wide, flat nose, his funny little high forehead with its scanty hair,

New York. When the war came on and she had difficulty in obtaining felts she came to New York to find a substitute. By this time Mrs. Averill knew that her future lay in doll-making. It was about this time also that the urge, undeterred of all mothers, to keep her child eternally by her side, began to influence her.

"I had no thought, then, of inventing a walking doll—just a talking doll. But after working for months and developing just the kind of doll I wanted—an adorable little being with baby face and curls, chubby hands and legs and dimpled, elbow and knees—a doll that could say 'Oh, Mamma' with just the proper voice, I had a sudden inspiration. One day I picked the talking doll up and said: 'Time you were learning to walk, young lady.' As I said that I put the doll down on the floor as if she were about to walk. I noticed that by giving the feet a certain pressure, the body seemed to move automatically. So I went to work again and invented a doll whose feet and legs were heavy enough to give the requisite poise and motion. By a practical use of the law of gravitation and the trick of holding the doll's hands and slightly lifting them alternately, the feet moved and the doll toddled along with her youthful mother."

As Mrs. Averill explained it to me it all sounded very simple. Yet the fact that the walking and talking doll has been a sensational seller for five years, that it is known all over the world, that it is the biggest-selling high-priced doll on

the market, and the further fact that the crowd around her Fifth Avenue shop at Christmas time often requires the direction of a traffic policeman, proves to me at least, that Mrs. Averill's success has been gained by hard work and practical knowledge of human nature. She knew what the children wanted.

"It's because my doll is pretty and cuddly," she says. "Before my doll was brought out, most of the dolls on the market were stiff-bodied things that no stretch of childish imagination could convert into a real baby. I made a soft-bodied doll that a child could cuddle. That was what made it popular at first. Then I added a voice and taught it to walk. What I had done was to hark back to my own childhood and remember what I would have liked then. Children may grow more sophisticated as the world moves ahead, but the maternal instinct remains the same."



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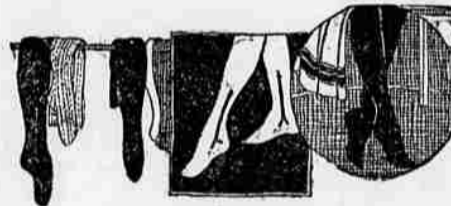


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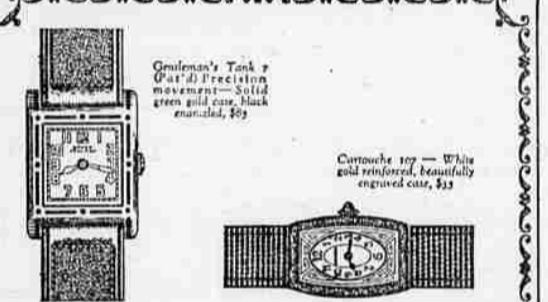
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