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THEIR BUSINESS STARTED BY ACCIDENT

Farm Toy Business Thrives

By Darlene Polachic

You might say Allan and Betty Holland got into the miniature farm toy business completely by accident.

In the mid 1980's, the Rocanville, Sask., farm couple's seed and retail farm products business was wiped out by a fire. After working day and night to rebuild, the Hollands decided to take a break by going to a North Dakota farm toy auction and the rest is history.

They've since established a thriving toy business and Betty even publishes "Canadian Toy Menia", a monthly magazine that brings the latest in toy and collectible news to more than 2,000 subscribers in North America, the Netherlands, England, and New Zealand.

The magazine started as a newsletter distributed to 10 collector friends and grew from there.

In response to interest in the newsletter, the Hollands organized Saskatchewan's first Farm Toy and Collector Show in Regina, then added a second show the next year. Today, both are annual events, offering over 100 display and sales tables, and attracting up to 3,000 people per show.

"Along the way, Allan got into restoring broken toys and needed replacement parts," Betty says. "On one trip to the U.S., he purchased \$200 worth of tires, rims, mufflers and so on. On the way home, we stopped at a show in Manitoba where he mentioned he had all these parts in the motel room. Within an hour he'd sold them all."

This demand prompted the Hollands to start a farm toy parts depot. They recently sold this end of the business, but continue to stock a full line of miniature farm toys. Their store is located in a Quonset hut on the

Holland's farm and is open to customers by what Betty calls "appointment or chance - if you drop in without an appointment you take the chance we won't be home."

The Hollands specialize in Deere toys, with a special emphasis on Allan's favorite 1/3-scale 4-WD models, and carry a full line of toys of all descriptions from 1/16th scale to 1/64th scale models. They also have a mail order service with parcels mailed out daily.

Their business became so successful, the Hollands host an annual three-day jamboree the first weekend in August where collectors meet. As many as 500 people attend the toy and antique shows, which is capped off by a Saturday afternoon toy auction.

"Collectors come from all over the country," says Betty. "We have a licensed auctioneer doing the selling and bidding gets very active. We turn over as much as \$8,000 worth of business. Our highest selling items so far were an 1850 Cockshutt and a Versatile combine, which each sold for \$490, and an industrial Deere 440 made in the 1950's which went for \$710."

The Hollands say collecting farm toys not only preserves the history of the land, but is a good investment as well.

"Farm toys are not a quick investment, but they can be a sound investment if you keep abreast of the market and move in the right circles," Betty says, "You should be able to sell a collectible for a profit equivalent to savings bond interest."

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Octagonal shape of school lets more light inside and withstands high winds better than conventional square buildings, according to the architect who designed it.

ONE OF ONLY A FEW REMAINING

8-Sided School House Still Standing Strong

Charter Oak School, near Schulline, Ill., is one of the few remaining octagonal one-room schools still standing in America. School was conducted in the building from 1873 until 1953.

When built, the school represented the latest in architectural design.

Daniel Ling, a Michigan architect who designed the building, felt that an eight-cornered building with windows all around would offer better lighting since light would

come in from all sides. It would also offer better wind resistance during storms, he felt.

After closing in 1953, the school was vandalized. A former teacher purchased the building and began a local effort to restore it. The school is now under the care of the Randolph County Historical Society and is on the National Register of Historic Places in the U.S. It's open to visitors daily.

Model "A" Car-Tractor Built From Car Conversion Kit

Bud Morrell, Williston, Fla., says some people think he's trying to pull a fast one on them when he exhibits his Ford Model A "car-tractor" at antique tractor shows.

The rare rig looks like something dreamed up in a farm shop. But it was actually put together using a kit offered by Montgomery Ward that allowed any Model "T" or "A" Ford or an old Chevrolet Plus car to be turned into a tractor.

At a recent show, Morrell showed copies of Ward's advertising literature. "It does the work of three horses on about 6 gal. of gas a day," says the literature. "Has the

power you'll need for plowing, cultivating, and mowing on 80 to 100 acres. So economical to build and operate that even 5-acre farms will find it a worthwhile investment."

The "car tractor" could be used to pull such Ward accessories as a single bottom 16-in. plow, 7-ft. disk harrow, and 8-ft. binder. Also available was a 2-row, 12-shovel cultivator attachment, with shovels controlled from the seat. The kit could be ordered with or without front wheels, and the rear wheels could be ordered with traction cleats or with 48-spade lugs. Wheel tread was adjustable for greater cultivating clearance. An extra draw-

bar assembly could be used to pull the load from in front of the rear axle. Gas tank brackets were available for mounting the gas tank under the driver's seat when installing the plow.

The car-tractor could be quickly converted back into a car when it wasn't needed in the field.

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Kit allowed any Model "T" or "A" to be turned into tractor.