

Contemporary Collectibles: Collectors still sail on the Good Ship Lollipop

by Linda_Rosenkrantz

Yes, Shirley Temple was the most popular child star of all time, but she was much more than that too. Her cheery, dimpled persona is credited with almost single-handedly lifting the spirits of the American public during the Great Depression. She was responsible for almost every little girl across the country taking tap-dancing lessons, mothers putting up their daughters' hair in rags every night to make Shirley curls and doing their best to produce Shirley dimples, and dressing them in Shirley-inspired dresses.

America's dimpled darling also did wonders for the toy industry, with the Ideal Novelty & Toy Company selling an estimated 1.5 million Shirley Temple dolls. Some of the more-rare examples of these are worth up to \$5,000, with the outfits alone going for hundreds of dollars, so their popularity is sustained by collectors.

Although the dolls are the key collectible, there are many other items of considerable interest at more accessible prices. The category of books, coloring books and paper dolls offers a wealth of material in itself.

The first set of Shirley Temple paper dolls, called Shirley Temple: Dolls and Dresses featuring four dolls, was introduced in 1934 by the Saalfield Company. The company went on to produce several other sets in the 1930s, with titles like Shirley Temple Playhouse and Shirley Temple and Her Movie Wardrobe, published in 1938. Saalfield also put out a number of coloring books, some of which only had Shirley on the cover, with unconnected pictures inside, and a number of children's books depicting the real Shirley in her everyday life, including "Shirley Temple Through the Day" and even "How I Raised Shirley Temple," supposedly written by her mother.

In fact, Saalfield rather shamelessly exploited Shirley's image, republishing old books of poems and fairy tales and slapping her portrait on the cover.

There was also sheet music featuring Shirley for most of the songs she sang in her movies, the top hits being "On the Good Ship Lollipop" from the film "Bright Eyes" in 1934, and "Animal Crackers in My Soup" featured in "Curly Top" in 1935, as well as songbooks containing words and music.

In addition to all this printed matter, there was the well-known blue depression glass pitcher, covered bowl and mug set given as a premium by Wheaties cereal, as well as complete wardrobes of little girls' dresses, socks, shoes, hats and purses, playing cards, soap, pocket mirrors, pen and pencil sets, stationery and writing pads, sewing cards, gum and tobacco trading cards, puzzles, jewelry, hankies and PJs, and wood and leather storage trunks and carriages to accommodate the dolls.

Film-related material is another extensive category. This includes movie posters, lobby cards, stills, ads and

articles in movie and other magazines (Photoplay, Movie Mirror, Modern Screen and Screenland magazine covers featuring the popular star are especially desirable). There were also tie-in books published for many of her films, published by - yes - Saalfield.

RECOMMENDED REFERENCE

Hot off the press is the new "The Complete Guide to Shirley Temple Dolls and Collectibles" by Tonya Bervaldi-Camaratta (Collector Books), which is loaded with information about Shirley and the worldwide merchandising deluge created around her. It contains colorful illustrations of hundreds and hundreds of dolls, doll clothing and accessories, trunks and memorabilia, each of them priced, plus such extras as close-ups of doll markings, ads, patents, dress patterns, posters, publicity stills and photos. At the height of her fame, polls showed that Shirley was more recognizable than the president of the United States, not so surprising since in 1934 alone she made 12 features.

Also of interest in the book are process pictures demonstrating the construction of the dolls and their care and repair, and the author is particularly strong in demonstrating the scope of international material.

Linda Rosenkrantz has edited Auction magazine and authored 15 books, including "The Baby Name Bible" (St. Martin's Press; www.babynamebible.com). She cannot answer letters personally.

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