

# Notes and Comments

## Notes et commentaires

### Help Wanted

The Editors of *Material History Review* are considering the preparation of a reader in material history suitable for use by university students or museum professionals who require an introduction to the field.

The objective of this volume will be the compilation of the major contributions to material history which have appeared in *Material History Review* since its inception. Articles will be distinguished by their informational content, interpretive approach or methodology. An introduction to the field of study, briefer introductions to topical sections, and suggestions for further reading will be included.

Our readers can help us. **We need advice on which topics in material history are of most interest and which articles published by *Material History Review* are the most important.** Please write to the Editor in Chief, care of the National Museum of Science and Technology, P.O. Box 9724, Ottawa Terminal, Ottawa, Ontario, K1G 5A3 or telephone him at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec, at 819 776-8365.

### Soyez juges...

La rédaction de la *Revue d'histoire de la culture matérielle* songe à préparer un recueil de textes sur l'histoire de la culture matérielle, qui s'adresserait à des étudiants ou à des muséologues en quête d'une introduction à ce domaine. Cet ouvrage serait une compilation des écrits fondamentaux en histoire de la culture matérielle publiés dans la *Revue* depuis le début, regroupés en fonction de leur contenu informatif, leur démarche d'interprétation et leur méthodologie. Le recueil comprendrait une introduction d'application générale, de courtes introductions au début de chaque section et des suggestions d'ouvrages de référence.

C'est ici que vous entrez en scène. **Nous aimerions que vous nous disiez quels sont les sujets qui présentent le plus d'intérêt pour l'histoire de la culture matérielle, selon vous, et quels sont les articles les plus importants parus dans la *Revue*.** Veuillez écrire au rédacteur en chef aux soins du Musée national des sciences et de la technologie, C.P. 9724, Ottawa (Ontario) K1G 5A3, ou lui téléphoner au Musée canadien des civilisations, à Hull (Québec), au (819) 776-8365.

### CHIP Is Coming!

No, it's not the return of the Canadian Home Insulation Program but the arrival of the Curatorial and Historical Index of Periodicals. This is a new reference database soon to be available via the Canadian Heritage Information Network, and it brings to our readers and others an online index to *Material History Bulletin* and *Material History Review*. The project is a result of work by Hilary Perrott, Chief Librarian at the National Museum of Science and Technology. As part of her degree requirements in a graduate program at Carleton University, Hilary undertook to index the contents of *MHR* since

its beginning. An analysis of our contents based on that index is found in the *Research Reports* section of this issue. To serve the readers of *MHR* better her advisor, Peter Rider, suggested that CHIN be approached to see if the index could be developed as a reference database for network clients and other users. Out of that contact, CHIP has emerged. Not only will *MHR* be there and indexed to the current issue, but other historical and curatorial journals will be included as well. As soon as they are indexed to project standards, two Ontario journals are scheduled to be added to CHIP. Others are

expected to follow. Eventually, the database's creators hope, an extensive reference tool for use by anyone interested in Canada's culture and heritage will be widely available. As a bonus for readers of *Material History Review*, a printed version of this index up to the end of

issue number 34 should be available sometime in 1992. CHIP itself is expected to be released for use in the first half of next year. For more information, contact Merridy Bradley at CHIN, tel.: 613 992-3333, fax: 613 952-2318.

## The Art and History of Canadian Toys

DAVID R. GRAY

As a collector of toy boats in the days before Malcolm Forbes sent the prices of toys to the far horizon, I became aware of the scarcity of Canadian-made toy boats. This was surprising, given our marine heritage, but I soon realized that the scarcity was not just in the world of toy boats but applied to all Canadian toys. Even more surprising was the lack of information on even the few well-known Canadian toy manufacturers. In the many books on toys produced in the United States or in Europe, there was barely a word on things Canadian. Looking into the situation I found that apart from articles written by Janet Holmes, a curator at the Royal Ontario Museum, and Evelyn Strahlendorf's book on Canadian dolls, there has been virtually nothing written about Canadian toys. At the moment, there appears to be no one researching the history of Canadian toys. For the last few years I have been trying to fill that gap.

My broad objectives are to research the history of all Canadian companies that manufactured toys, to write articles on Canadian toys and toymakers, and at some point, to compile these histories into a publishable form, perhaps as a book. I also hope to produce the material necessary for an exhibit of Canadian toys that could perhaps travel throughout Canada.

For the moment, because this project (especially as a purely avocational activity) is really too much for one person, I am concentrating my efforts on the companies that made transportation toys: cars, trucks, airplanes, and boats. Within that restriction I am also concentrating on the design of the toy in relation to demand, art, "real" objects and history. Since there is no way I can devote enough time to this project to cover all of the Canadian manufacturers at once, I have started my investigation with a few companies that were active from just before World War II. For these companies it is still possible to interview people who were directly

involved, though unfortunately several key people have died recently, before I was able to interview them.

The first company on my list is the well known line of mainly toy trucks called "Lincoln Toys," of Windsor, Ontario. From telephone contacts based on research in the National Archives, in particular the old city directories, I was able to contact one of the founding owners of Windsor Steel and Lincoln Specialties, the makers and distributors of Lincoln Toys, from who I received a great deal of useful and fascinating information.

In February 1990 I received the \$500 Brian O'Brien Bursary from the Canadian Toy Collectors Society to continue my research on these Canadian toys. In May I visited Leamington, Windsor and Tilbury and interviewed several former employees of both Windsor Steel and Ellwood Toys, the two manufacturers of toys distributed by Lincoln Specialties. I spent some time in the Windsor City Hall, Library, and Archives and in one of the former homes of Lincoln Toys. In Tilbury I visited the site of the Toy Factory (which burned down in 1986) with the members of the Ellwood family and interviewed several people connected with the production of Lil' Beaver Trucks (a division of Irwin Toys) after Lincoln Toys went out of business. These interviews and research in the Tilbury Library produced a new lead on the later history of the Lincoln-Lil' Beaver toy line and its final demise in the 1960s.

I have also begun interviewing people involved with the Reliable Toy Company of Toronto, once the largest toy factory in the British Empire. Reliable is an important target because of its size and range of production as well as having been in the forefront of the Canadian plastics industry.

The purpose of this note is to provide information on my research for those with similar interests and to seek out others who might be