

Imagine 12,000 Dolls Under Single Roof and You've Got An Idea of Horsman's Plant

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More Dolls Than She Ever Had As A Child

If you can imagine 12,000 dolls all crying "mama" at one time, you'll have a pretty good idea of what it would going on in the Horsman Doll factory in the course of a single day of operations.

The assembly line idea of manufacturing a medium-priced doll has given Horsman Dolls, Inc., the record of being the oldest and largest doll manufacturer in the United States.

The workshop of Santa Claus at the North Pole was never like this. Under one roof in a three-story building, covering a block, is about everything that goes into the making of a doll.

Everything is at first-hand for putting together a doll that is rated tops in the field. There is a dressmaking shop where all the beautiful clothes are spun together in the matter of minutes. There is a wig factory where the hair is curled, washed and waved. One department is given over to the manufacture of heads, another concentrates on the body, another on the legs and arms.

Sent All Over the World

And the dolls have an international reputation. They are sent off to many foreign countries – to places like Hong Kong, South America, Mexico, Africa.

Raymond R. Fisch, vice president in charge of operations, can back up this statement. While on a visit to South America, he spotted Horsman dolls in the arms of youngsters in Cartagena, Columbia. When he went to Mexico, he saw little natives with dolls that first opened their eyes in Trenton.

Last year, the Horsman company made over a million dolls of all kinds, ranging in size from 12 to 26 inches. That is the only thing the firm manufacturers. It doesn't go in for trick equipment. It is cold to the idea of walking, talking, singing, whistling or dancing dolls. Its objective is to make a fine doll at a moderate price, a doll which officials like to refer to as a "people's doll."

This reputation for making fine dolls comes back to them in the form of some interesting letters of which the officials are justly proud.

Some dolls have been in the possession of families for 60 years. Sometimes a woman will write in and ask the firm to make a Horsman doll similar to the one she has had as a child. One woman wanted the firm to recondition a doll that she had been given as a child so that she could pass it on to her own children.

"Sad Notes," Too

And then there are the letters that Fisch refers to as the "sad notes." They are from anyone and everyone in all parts of the country and as far off as Hawaii. In these notes they ask for free dolls to pass on to some worthy child whose parents cannot afford them. Broadway stars write in for free dolls, various organizations want free dolls. Tears seem to spill from the notes.

The firm tries to check up these requests so that the schemer does not make a racket out of it. But as Fisch put it: "I'd rather make sure that some deserving organization gets a doll than to overlook anyone. If ten percent of the requests are not exactly what they pretend to be, perhaps the remainder are bona-fide cases."

Fisch refers to the free-doll department as the “cuffo dolls” – dolls that are obtained on the cuff, for nothing.

“It’s an odd thing about this business,” he said. “The average person wouldn’t dream of going to a clothing factory and asking for a free suit for some worthy person, or going to a shoe factory and requesting a pair of shoes for a poor child, but these persons have no hesitancy in making their requests to us. I guess they just don’t figure out that perhaps we are in business to sell dolls, not to give them away.”

And the making of dolls is really big business. At the height of the season, the Horseman Company employs 800 persons and throughout the year it tries to maintain a staff so that there will be no seasonal layoffs.

While other doll factories run on a seasonal basis, which means that operations are shut down a number of months, the Horsman Company tries to keep up operation for 12 months a year.

The peak of the doll manufacturing season is in August and September when the factory is preparing for the Christmas rush. George Zurlo, production manager, figures that between 80 and 85 percent of all dolls are sold at Christmas. And about 85 percent of the dolls manufactured in the United States are baby dolls. The remaining 15 percent include the trick doll, the talking doll or the walking doll.

Three Days for One Doll

It usually takes about three days to make the complete doll and package it. This is considered little short of sensational in the doll industry because all the procedures are housed under one room.

Many doll factories, it was explained are simply assembling plants. The head is obtained from one manufacturer, the body from another, the wig and dresses from others.

In the Horseman research laboratory where some remarkable innovations have been developed, the technicians found that vinylite more closely approaches the human skin texture than other ingredients.

The substance was found to be highly suitable in making heads, arms and legs with the result that many doll manufacturers are now using this procedure. The firm also uses Butyrate, a hard plastic, for the manufacture of girl dolls. Both types are durable and usually defy the hardest kind of rough treatment by the youngsters.

As a result, dolls last longer than they formerly did a generation ago when most dolls heads were made out of some form of china.



They Are Waiting For Heads



Wigmakers At Work On A Doll’s Crowning Glory

The wigs are made out of saran, a sort of plastic filament, not unlike nylon. This substance makes a startling human-like hair that may be combed, curled or washed. In the Horsman wig factory there are 60 or 70 wigmakers and this department is the only one of its kind in the country. To become a proficient wig-maker, an apprentice must put in a long period of time before she is proficient. The company conducts its own training school.

Making the Faces

The same is true in the art department where young artists are taught to paint doll heads. This unit, which includes 35 young ladies, places the finishing touches on the heads in a remarkably short time. It usually takes the artist about two or three minutes to paint a doll's face.

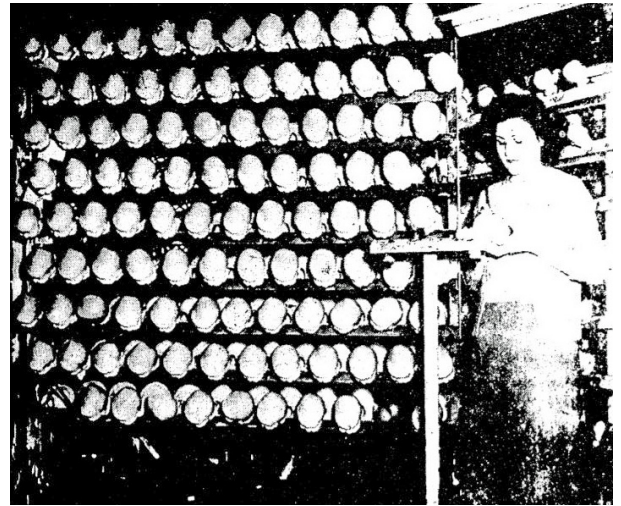
The dressmaking department is really the big thing at Horsman's. From 250 to 300 women operate the sewing machines and turn out doll dresses and other clothing in less time than it takes to tell.

To keep the sewing machine operators busy, the men who operate the electric cutting devices have to keep moving steadily, even though they can cut at a single operation 18 dozen pieces of cloth.

Still another innovation is the operation of a box factory in the building. Containers of all sizes are turned out to keep up with the assembly line production of dolls.

The company has on its staff a dress designer who for the past 25 years has devoted herself exclusively to designing new costumes for the dolls.

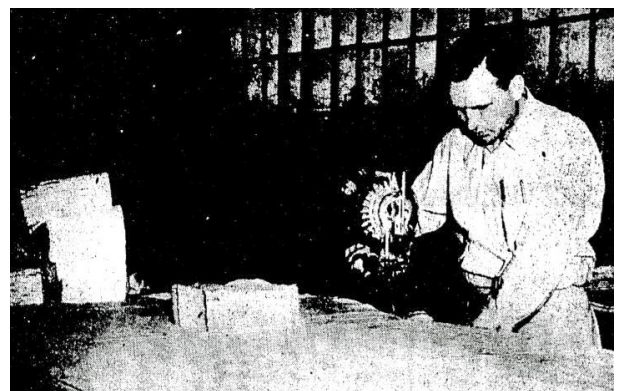
All the employees, whether member of the art or wig making departments, are members of Amalgamated Metal, Machine and Novelty Workers Union, Local 225, CIO.



Many Heads But A Single Thought – Painted Eyes



A Million Dresses Are Turned Out Here Each Year



Dozens of Doll Dresses Are Cut In Single Operation