

# Wishing Upon The Stars: Dolls Inspired By Disney

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Photos by D.M. Seidenberg

All dolls and ephemera are from the author's collection

Sometimes movie stars are not people. Often, we are star stricken by animated characters, particularly those made by Walt Disney.

As children, we were entertained by Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Pinocchio, and Cinderella to name a few. The original tales were bleak, bordering on horror. The Disney versions are sanitized and pleasant. Moments of danger lead to a "happily ever after" ending. Each of these stories has a special meaning for us that goes beyond their fairy tale setting. The dolls and toys made in their image allowed their stories to be told over again in the realm of childhood.

## SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS

The story of about a princess disowned by her stepmother and nearly destroyed by her is well known and has been repeated in several folk tales including the Brothers Grimm. In 1937, the tale of Snow White was produced as Walt Disney's first full-length animated feature film. The Disney version that we are familiar with underwent many transformations. The European Snow White was not always a brunette. Some German books depict her with blonde hair. The Dwarfs were not given defined character traits like the Disney version. The Disney team created their storyline with the brunette princess and the loveable seven little men.



Cover of 1938 Program of Radio City Music Hall featuring Snow White.



The movie premiered on December 21, 1937, at the Carthay Circle in Los Angeles. Guests to the movie were treated to a cottage like the one in the movie and costumed Seven Dwarfs characters as greeters. Walt Disney did not expect the movie to be received well, but it made more money than he imagined. The Snow-White movie made more than \$8 million worldwide. The profits were used to expand Walt Disney Production studios. Certainly, by the time the movie won a special Academy Award with one regular-sized Oscar and seven miniature ones, Disney's star was on the rise.

Princess Snow White was the first of the now-familiar Disney princesses. She was marketed to young girls. Stores were stocked with Snow White dolls made by Richard Krueger, Knickerbocker, and Ideal. The doll featured here is not marked but resembles one made by Ideal. An ad from N. Shure Co., Chicago shows this doll and her unit price of \$3.92 per dozen. She has blue eyes while the other dolls have brown. She has jointed arms and legs, but the head and torso are one piece. She is redressed in a costume that is usually worn by Ideal dolls. The dress is decorated with her companions: The Seven Dwarfs.



**Above:** Photo from 1937 premiere at the Carthay Circle Theater in Los Angeles. The seven Dwarfs greeted celebrities at the premiere.

**Left and Below:** This unmarked composition Snow White was featured in an advertisement for N. Shure's toy catalog.

**VALUES** **WORLD'S LARGEST NOVELTY HOUSE** **SERVICE**  
N. SHURE CO. CHICAGO 949

**Snow-White, Dwarfs, Muff and Other Attractive Dolls**

**Snow-White Doll.** 13 1/2 inches tall, composition head, painted features. Composition body with moving arms and legs. Dressed in orange bodice with blue collar. White skirt. Each in box.  
No. 36N112. Per dozen..... 3.92

**Dwarfs.** Composition head, 14 inches high. Nicely made.  
No. 36N113. Per dozen..... 7.84

**Muff Doll.** 18 inches high. Mask face doll with rolling eyes. Ribbons a bow around neck. Muff silk lined, and made of curled plush. Has silk cord for hanging muff around neck. Assorted bright colors.  
No. 36N23. Per dozen... 8.00

**20-Inch Doll.** Composition head, arms and legs. Stuffed body. Painted wig and moving eyes. Dressed in flowered dress with contrasting bonnet. Shoes and stockings. Packed 1 dozen in box.  
No. 36N44. Per dozen... 8.00

**20-Inch Soft Body Girl Doll.** With painted eyes and mohair wig. Dressed in assorted color organdies and prints. Packed one dozen to the carton.  
No. 36N43. Per dozen... 8.00

**15-Inch Sleeping Eye Doll.** Full composition, movable head and jointed arms and legs. Has hair wig with ribbon, pleated organdy dress, shoes and stockings. Packed each in box.  
No. 36N41. Per dozen..... 8.00

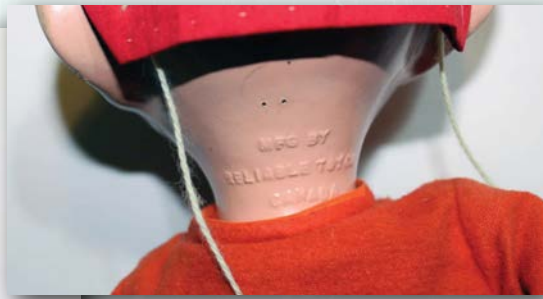
**15-Inch Mama Doll.** Composition arms and legs. Ringlet mohair wig. Moving eyes and voice. Dressed in print and organdy combination outfit. Shoes and socks. Packed each to the box.  
No. 36N42. Per dozen.... 8.00

**14-Inch Baby Doll.** Composition head, arms and legs. Soft stuffed body. Painted wig and eyes. Has voice. Dressed in diaper, dress and flannel coat and hood. Packed each in box.  
No. 36N47. Per dozen..... 8.00

**11-Inch Drinking and Wetting Doll Outfit.** Full composition body, arms and legs. Painted wig and eyes. Complete with bottle, diapers, stockings, clothes rack, clothespins, etc. Packed each in box.  
No. 36N46. Per dozen..... 8.00







Reliable Toy Company made this jolly Dopey doll for the Canadian market.



This Knickerbocker Dopey has a mischievous toothy grin.



Crown Toy Company created these black and white versions of Dopey. Note that the black puppet is just a brown version of the other one. Both have blue eyes.



This super rare black Snow White must have been created with black versions of the Dwarfs.



The Seven Dwarfs offered many merchandising opportunities. They were rendered as dolls, rubber figurines, featured on toothpaste, and toothbrushes. One of the most reproduced dwarf is Dopey. He is the youngest, shy, and a mute dwarf with a bald head and loose-fitting clothing. Dopey is not so dumb either. He comes back for a second kiss from Snow White! The Dwarfs were also popular in Canada. This rendition of Dopey was made by the Reliable Toy Company, which according to the History Museum of Canada website, was the largest toy company in the British Empire. This Dopey was probably made during the late 1930s to early 1940s. The doll has a composition head on a stuffed cloth body. He wears a red cotton flannel coat over a satin shirt and blue cotton pants. His boots are black felt. His neck is marked MFG//BY//Reliable Toy Co.//CANADA.

Well-known to Americans are the Dwarf dolls are those made by Knickerbocker. These dolls are highly prized by doll collectors and Disneyana collectors. This Knickerbocker Dopey portrays the smiling dwarf with a toothy grin and wide smiling eyes. He has a potbelly and wears composition shoes.

While researching this article, I discovered a rare black Dopey puppet made by Crown Toy Company also in the late 1930s. He has a composition head painted dark brown and happy blue eyes. I could not find out more about this rarity but did come across a black Snow White! Can we assume that these dolls were marketed to the black community?

Another popular dwarf is Doc. He was the sensible and leveled-headed one. He is distinguished by his pince-nez style eyeglasses, which also reinforces his intelligence. This unmarked doll features Doc wearing a velvet yellow outfit from head to toe. The red-trimmed bottom is attached to his waist by a belt. Doc's face is a cotton mask face with painted features. The pince-nez glasses are attached to his cheeks and plush beard. Ideal Toys created this 1937 version of Doc. His signature eyeglasses are part of his cloth mask face. The Dwarfs were diamond miners. This doll comes with a metal rake and lantern. Chad Valley from England also created a line of Snow White and Dwarfs dolls. Examples of Doc, Dopey, and Happy are usually found on the secondary market. They are usually marked with a label sewn onto their abdomen as seen in Happy pictured herein.



Even though these Doc dolls wear different clothing, each wears his signature glasses. This Chad Valley Happy wears a replacement hat but bears the Chad Valley label on his abdomen.

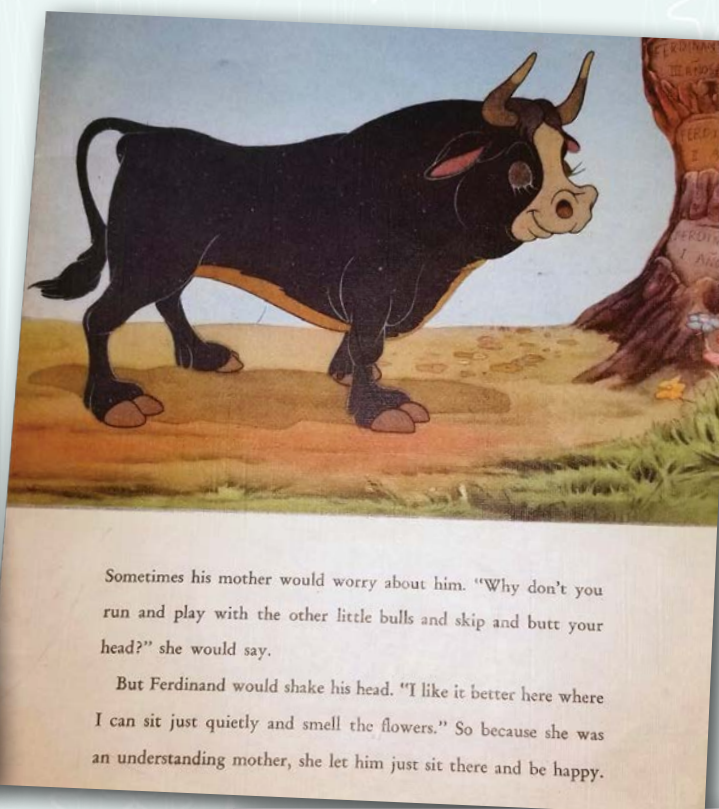
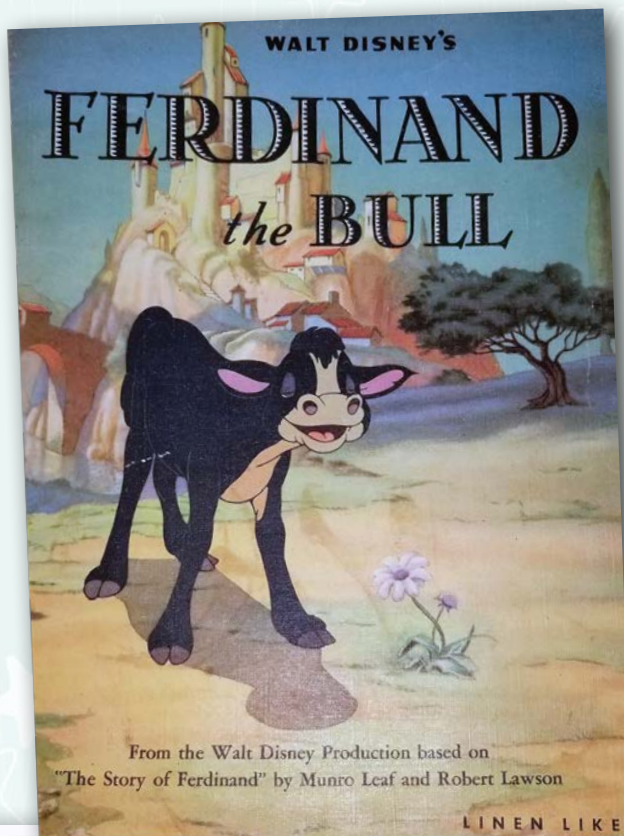


## FERDINAND THE BULL

The children's story written by Munro Leaf and illustrated by Robert Lawson, was the inspiration for the Oscar-winning animated short, *Ferdinand the Bull*. The movie is about a gentle bull, who preferred flowers to the bull ring. It was a hit with American audiences, but a disgrace to Spaniards. We must remember that bullfighting is considered the Spanish national past-time,

much like baseball is to us. A film that shows a matador dishonored by a bull was not well received.

In addition to books published with art from the Disney movie, Ferdinand was rendered as soap, porcelain, chalk ware, and rubber figurines. Seiberling Rubber Company made a rubber figure of the bull. It is posed to look like he smells a pleasant aroma. Ideal and Knickerbocker made composition figures and were made to accompany a doll of the matador from the film.



**Above:** An Early edition of Munro Leaf's *Ferdinand the Bull*. Published by Whitman in 1937

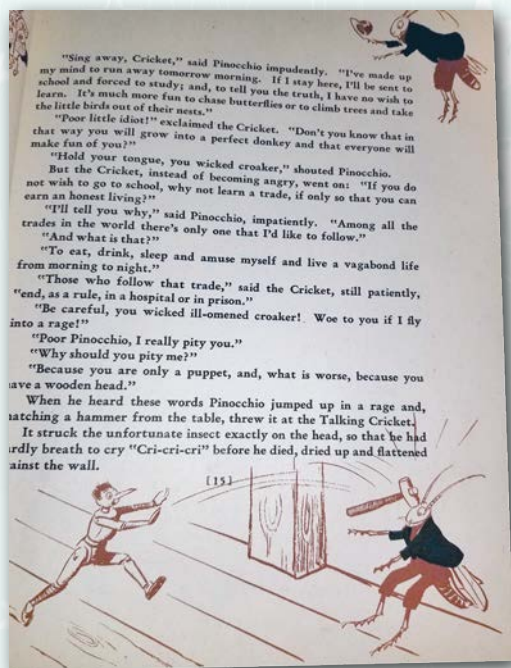
**Left and Right:** Before Seiberling Rubber Company became Firestone Tires, they made several Disney characters like Ferdinand. Pictured on the right, Ferdinand as a Crown hand puppet.





## PINOCCHIO

When Carlo Lorenzini, also known as Collodi, wrote *The Adventures of Pinocchio* in 1883, he would not have imagined or even recognized his main character depicted in the Disney movie, which premiered in 1940. Collodi's puppet was obnoxious, wild, even mean-spirited. He causes Geppetto to be imprisoned and kills the Talking Cricket character, better known as Jiminy Cricket in the Disney film. Both renditions retain the moral story of how children need to have respect for their elders and not get into trouble.



This edition of Carlo Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio* featured the illustrations of Tony Sarg.

Pinocchio as a wood puppet with human traits is a complicated character. He is born as the result of the carpentry skills of Geppetto and the magic wand of the Blue Fairy. He is thrust into human reality with little life experience. In the Disney movie, his conscience is a cricket; his mates are rogue animals and truant boys. All through this, Pinocchio seeks to escape punishment by lying, which causes his nose to grow. Eventually, he reunites with his father and becomes a real boy.

The doll world enjoys Pinocchio as a doll and a puppet. There are several versions of this iconic puppet that differ from classic Disney figure. Ralph A. Freundlich produced this doll around 1930/40. The composition-and-wood doll resembles Pinocchio as rendered by puppet master and illustrator, Tony Sarg in the Munk and Platt edition of *Pinocchio*. The Freundlich doll has a bright face with wide blue eyes and a long red nose. The hands are rendered as nubs; the legs are jointed like a marionette. The tag pinned to the shirt reads: Original/Pinocchio/ As Portrayed by/C. Collodi / Manufactured by/Ralph A. Freundlich, Inc./200 Fifth Avenue/New York City.

Another version comes from Spain and was made by Muñecas Gros in Madrid. Pedro Gros was a doll company that created dolls from the golden age of movies from the 1930s and 40s. Muñecas Gros presented dolls of comic stars like Laurel and Hardy, as well as fairy tale characters. Most dolls featured beady or bulging glass eyes. This Pinocchio doll is a masterpiece of felt and wood and was possibly produced in the late 1930s. The arms and legs are jointed like a marionette. The costume is alpine. Though the setting for the story is not firmly established, it was probably set in northern Italy near the Alps.



Ralph A. Freundlich produced this unique rendering of Pinocchio that resembled Tony Sarg's drawing.



Spanish doll maker, Muñecas Pedro Gros, produced many dolls based on comic film stars and children's literature like Pinocchio. This doll features a felt head and marionette jointed wood body.



Pelham Puppet version of Pinocchio.





Pelham Puppets from England would be an obvious manufacturer of a Pinocchio figure. This marionette figure resembles the Disney version, except the face, is more mature than childlike. His face is composition, but the limbs are plastic.

The most endearing and enduring version is the wooden boy presented by Walt Disney. Disney not only sanitized the story but also the appearance of all the characters including the star. Instead of the thin obnoxious wooden boy, the studio created a soft, innocent, and wistful child exploring his world and encountering adventures. Disney's Pinocchio has a cherubic face with wide blue eyes and wooden carrot-shaped nose. He wears a white shirt with red weskit and black shorts. Ideal and Knickerbocker faithfully recreated this image. The Ideal doll has a wood body and composition head. The hands are nubs like the Freundlich doll.

**Left:** This Ideal Pinocchio is faithful to the one in the film. It has a composition head, wood body, cloth collar, and felt tie.

Jiminy Cricket, also known as the Talking Cricket Collodi's book, was a popular figure from the film. He acts as Pinocchio's conscious. His character differs greatly from the one in the book. In the first place, the book's character is killed by Pinocchio early in the story. Secondly, he is not well dressed like Jiminy! Knickerbocker, Ideal, and Gund created dolls and hand puppets of Jiminy. Some feature the cricket with a green face, while others depict him with pale pink skin. This Gund puppet depicts Jiminy with a green face. My sister

and fellow doll collector bought this unusual Lenci-Type cricket in England. She suggested that this doll might be the Talking Cricket as found in the Collodi/Sarg edition. He wears a cutaway jacket and spats on his hind legs.

Another major character is the villainous, mute cat named Gideon, who is the "silent" partner of John Foulfellow, the fox. This felt doll was probably made in Italy by Cresba. He is meant to resemble Gideon from the film. He wears a ragged green outfit and hears a large green top hat.



Jiminy Cricket is unique to Disney's productions as the Talking Cricket in Collodi was a peripheral character, not the conscious of Pinocchio. This Gund hand puppet features Jiminy with a green face.



**Above:** The Talking Cricket in the original story was an insect wearing minimal clothing, not the dashing outfit worn by Jiminy. This mystery felt doll was probably made in Italy.



**Right:** The Italian toy/doll market embraced many Disney characters. Several firms such as Lenci, Cresba, and Lars made versions of these characters. Pinocchio merchandise was a natural progression. Villainous Gideon, the silent partner of John Foulfellow, was probably made by Cresba di Firenze.



## CINDERELLA

Cinderella was the second Disney princess. The movie premiered in 1950—a time when Disney Studios and most of this country survived the aftermath of World War II. Ella, who was orphaned daughter of a wealthy man, falls prey to her evil stepmother. Like Snow White, she is forced to become a servant in her own house. Because of the ashes from the fireplace, she becomes known as Cinderella. In the Disney film, she receives plenty of magical intervention. Talking mice rush to help her, and a fairy godmother transforms her from a servant-waif into a princess with a fancy gown and glass slippers.

A lot of the merchandising for Cinderella was in the works before the untimely death of Kay Kamen, who was the leading marketing executive for Disney Studios. The marketing efforts were not as strong as those used for Snow White, but Cinderella's image can be found on aprons, dolls, and wall art.

Madame Alexander is one of the lucky merchants to win a merchandising license from Disney in the 1950s. Her versions of Cinderella represent some of the most enduring and beautiful of this endearing Disney princess. Madame produced several face and heights for Cinderella. There were "Poor" Cinderella and Princess Cinderella. One of the more popular dolls is the Margaret face. This face was used for child actress, Margaret O'Brien, but changes of hair color and costume resulted in an adult-looking doll. The doll featured here is Cinderella at the ball. She wears a woven gold tiara on top of her blonde mohair wig. The dress is a pale blue with glued-on glitter stars. This doll even has "glass slippers", which are clear plastic mules. Madame even produced a rare Prince Charming with the Margaret face to accompany Cinderella.



Cinderella is still one of the most popular Disney Princess. Even in the 1950s, the rag to riches princess was a popular doll. Madame Alexander made Cinderella with the Margaret face in several sizes. This 21-inch doll features a mohair wig and translucent "glass" slippers.



The poor /rich Cinderella was an excellent opportunity to produce a topsy-turvy doll. The Gund Toy company, which made stuffed toys and puppets, made this super rare Cinderella topsy-turvy in the 1950s. She looks exactly like the heroine from the Disney film. The poor side features the plain dress and patched apron, while the princess side features the exact blue gown and upturn hairdo from the film. This 1992 Wendy Ann doll is super sweet. Regrettably, the artists didn't change the expression on the poor doll's face.



**Clockwise from Left:** The concept of a topsy-turvy doll is perfect for Cinderella, who is transformed from a waif to a glamorous princess. The Gund Company, known for puppets and soft toys, made this rare Cinderella topsy-turvy doll. Both sides of the doll resemble the Disney version including the updo hairstyle. The facial expression on the servant side is more appropriate than the Madame Alexander Wendykin doll.



One of the most comical figures in the film were the mice, Gus and Jaq. Gus is chubby and loves eating cheese. Jaq is the serious one, who must keep Gus inline. Both are the nemesis of Lucifer, the evil Stepmother's fat cat. This amusing doll made by Cresba shows Gus eating a sandwich with Lucifer as the meat!

Once upon a time, stories were created to possibly serve as moral tales with important lessons. Wicked stepmothers, truant boys, and animal rights would send today's public into a PC frenzy, but Walt Disney sanitized the stories, leaving us with warm sentiments, wishing on stars, and happily ever after.



The talking mice were the scene stealers in Disney's Cinderella, especially the always hungry Gus. Cresba di Firenze produced this humorous Gus about to eat a Lucifer-cat sandwich. This must have a dream scenario because a collectible card depicts Jaq asking Gus if he ate the cat!