

## Toys tell of Christmas past — antique collection recalls simple pleasures



Peasant clothing reflecting a Normandy or Brittany ancestry drapes the straw-stuffed body of this Grandpère doll. Quebec, circa 1880.

An exhibition of antique toys, which opened at the Royal Ontario Museum on December 5, reflects the simpler pleasures of Christmas past in Canada. It includes home-made sleighs and rocking chairs from Quebec; a wicker doll carriage; a hand-carved Noah's Ark filled with crudely-shaped wooden animals — a very popular item before the turn of the century; magic lanterns with paraffin lamps and glass slides of fairy tales; a home-made doll's house; miniature furniture for some little girl's nursery — table, bed, chest of drawers, a toy cradle; and, to encourage thrift in the young, a cast-iron bank for pennies.

One hundred years ago in Ontario,



By pressing the right foot of this cast-iron soldier, the thrifty child of the late nineteenth century could fire his money into the tree for safe-keeping.

gifts for children were almost always made by hand, by the settlers who carved, whittled and painted in their own workshops. They were resourceful and economical, using everyday objects, but the product always had charm.

Toys were carefully made to suit each sex. Little girls were given toys that emphasized the domestic skills such as rolling pins, tea-sets, miniature cooking pots, baby-doll bedding and cradles, layettes, doll carriages and, of course, dolls. Little boys were given useful toys that taught them farm work, repairing, constructing and gardening. Boys also received "serious" toys like wheelbarrows, puzzle blocks, plus miniature tools, sleighs, toy



A walking doll with a china head guards a porcelain tea-set placed on a Canadian oak drop-leaf table. The doll's walking mechanism is hidden by the underskirt.

tug boats, wooden animals.

As life in Canada became less rigorous, toys reflected the changing society. Dolls with wax, china or bisque heads began to be imported from Europe. Mechanical and cast-iron factory-made toys came from the United States. Toy-making, as an industry, got under way in Canada about the time of the First World War.

The antique toy collection of the ROM's Sigmund Samuel Canadiana Galleries creates a nostalgia for an earlier and gentler time and reminds us of our history. The toys from Quebec have a particular and special style exemplified by a ventriloquist doll of hand-carved and painted pine.

ROM photos

### U.S. Vice President to visit

The Prime Minister's office has announced the visit of Vice-President Walter F. Mondale of the United States on January 18 and 19. Mr. Trudeau, who invited Mr. Mondale to Canada, welcomes this opportunity to continue the high level consultation with the United States' administration which began with his visit to Washington last February.

Mr. Mondale will also meet with other federal ministers and will travel to Edmonton as the guest of the government of Alberta.

### Aid for French developing countries

Canada will contribute up to \$2 million towards a "special development program" to assist some developing *francophone* countries.

The grants from the Canadian International Development Agency will be turned over to the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation (ACTC).

The ACTC was founded in 1970 to establish multilateral co-operation among its 24 members in the fields of education, culture, science and technology.

The program, initiated by Canada at

ACTC's general conference in Mauritius in 1975, was devised by experts from 18 member countries at a meeting in Lomé, Togo last May.

So far 12 countries, including some of the world's poorest, have participated in the financing of the program, which is concerned with priority requirements of the member states and with complementing their respective national development programs.

Preference is given to projects that make maximum use of local resources and which are able to attract resources from multilateral or bilateral institutions.