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PRESS RELEASE

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY TEDDY: 100 YEARS WITH THE TEDDY BEAR *AT THE LIBRARY*



Did you know that President Teddy Roosevelt was the inspiration for the first official teddy bear? In November 1902, the 26th President of the United States took a four-day break from politics to attend a bear hunt in Mississippi. The President's only chance of a kill was a bear cub cornered and tied to a tree, but he refused to shoot it. The incident was illustrated in the *Washington Post* by political cartoonist Clifford K. Berryman on November 16, 1902. Through Berryman, the little bear

came to symbolize the President and was featured in many of the artist's subsequent cartoons. Within a year, the cartoon bear had been transformed into a toy for children—the teddy bear.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the teddy bear, the Art & Music Department of the Main Library, 800 Vine Street, is featuring an historic exhibit through January 31 tracing how the teddy bear evolved, including many examples of teddy bears through the ages. The *Washington Post* cartoon from 1902 sparked the

imagination of the country and of a shopkeeper in Brooklyn, New York when Morris Michtom asked his wife Rose to make two plush stuffed bears for display in his shop's window. The popularity of the plush bears stuffed with excelsior and adorned with black shoe buttons for eyes quickly captivated the nation.

To combine the stuffed bear phenomenon with Teddy Roosevelt, Morris asked the president for permission to call these stuffed bears "Teddy's Bear." Roosevelt said yes, and the Teddy Bear was born.

When you imagine the perfect teddy bear, you may remember the friend and companion of your childhood whose fur was worn thin by hugs, or you may think of a pristine Steiff bear, a teddy dressed as your favorite nursery-rhyme character, or even cuddly Snuggly bouncing across your TV screen. Teddy bears are so much a part of childhood in America that few of us can imagine growing up without a bear.

Teddy bears have come a long way since a political cartoon satirizing the president's bear hunt inspired the first American teddy-bear makers to begin making stuffed bears and encouraged the importing of German-made teddy bears.

STEIFF BEARS

At the same time, jointed plush bears were being developed in Germany by a family business headed by Margarete Steiff. Confined to a wheelchair after a childhood bout with polio, she had become an expert seamstress, making children's clothes. In 1880 she formed a mail order company making stuffed toys and other items. At first, the Steiff bears were unsuccessful, until the Leipzig Fair in March 1903, when Hermann Berg, a toy buyer for the New York department store George Borgfeldt and Co., bought 3,000 teddy bears. In 1905, the famous "button in ear" trademark legally protected the Steiff bear. They are now among the most collected bears.

COLLECTING BEARS

The hobby of collecting bears is called arctophily. Every model bear in a collection tells a story, and by association has links with people, places or things;

especially a teddy bear. That is how a collection of bears grows. The bears are souvenirs as well as symbols of love, friendship, happiness and security.

HANDMADE AND ARTIST BEARS

Not very long after the first commercially manufactured teddy bears were adopted by American boys and girls, mothers and grandmothers in all parts of the United States began to make teddies at home. Patterns for bears and their clothes were sold through ladies' magazines and in dry-goods stores. Some people crafted bears because they couldn't afford store-bought toys; other people crafted bears because they wanted to find a child or a friend a very special gift that was made with love.

While many people make traditional teddies, many others now make teddy bears that are storybook characters, fairies, lawyers, doctors, pandas, or grizzlies. Almost any teddy bear imaginable is currently being produced by bearmakers, working alone or in small shops, in every part of the United States.

Teddy bears are more than toys or collectible objects; they are symbols of love and affection, and companions for hard times. Teddy bears share our secrets and encourage our dreams. Bearmakers know teddy bears are important to people, and they include a little bit of themselves in every bear they make.

NOVELTY AND BEAR PRODUCTS

Ever since teddy bears were first made, manufactures have produced novelties. The earliest bears often had a growler or squeaking mechanism but it was not long before designers conjured up more exciting things for their bears to do. Musical bears were made in Germany, and Steiff and Bing are particularly famous for their mechanical bears that walked, danced or tumbled. Bears were also incorporated in to other products. There were bear bags, purses, nightdress cases, and hand muffs. A lot of these items were made for young children, and many, such as a children's gas mask, were produced during the Second World War to take away some of the terror of war.

- ✓ **Information about programs and events at the Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County can be found on our web site: www.CincinnatiLibrary.org**