

Anonymous (The Magic House) by Robert Bishop



Magic House is the work of a cabinetmaker productive during the 1830-1850 period. It is two stories high, topped by a charming bell tower with bell ringers, and a four-sided clock guarded by soldiers. The internal construction on one side is devoted to women performing household duties; the other side portrays men at the manual crafts of the day.

The whole house is set into motion when a crank is turned, and each figures, connected by wire or string to a central shaft, performs some duty

as it resolves. Within the wonderful mechanism women feed corn into a masher, rock babies in a cradle, kneed dough for bread, pump water, do laundry, make butter in a dash churn, and portray other similar duties.

When the house is completely turned about, one sees the men at their daily labours, too. A blacksmith pounds with his hammer while others near him saw, file, plane, and hollow out logs and pieces of metal. On the second floor, other men manipulate a whetstone and bucksaws. The craftsmanship is particularly intriguing in that the carved figures are rather crude and rough while each tool in use is very precise and accurate. That the figures are static only enhances the charm of this endearing piece of Folk Art.

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