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Weiss fall auctions pack a 'Punch'

OCEANSIDE, N.Y. – Philip Weiss Auctions scheduled for Sept. 8-9 and Oct. 20-21 will feature a rare, turn-of-the-century cigar store Punch figure expected to fetch \$100,000 or more, plus single-owner collections of coins and stamps and at least eight original Charles Schulz Peanuts cartoons.

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Jamestown Revisited

Barbara Andrews

Sometimes postcards reveal attitudes that the original makers didn't intend. Consider this postcard issued for the Jamestown Exposition in 1907 that celebrated the 300th anniversary of the settlement. The entire message area on the back has a long explanation of the portrait on the front. [read more...](#)

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Children's Books: Making their way into grown-up collections

Judy Penz Sheluk

Perhaps it's a way of reconnecting with our childhood, or a reminiscence of the nights when someone would tuck us into bed and read us a favorite story. Whatever the reason, a search of [Abebooks.com](#) (the world's largest online marketplace for used, rare or out-of-print books) will reveal hundreds of listings for vintage children's books, from Whitman's Little Golden Books to Rand McNally's Elf Series.

The good news for collectors is that this is one area where there truly is something for every budget. Prices start at as little as a dollar, and can find their way upwards to \$250 or more. But in general, even First Editions in mint condition, some dating as far back as the 1940s, can be purchased for less than \$60. And if the 1960s or 70s spark your particular interest, you'll be hard pressed to spend more than \$10.

It's important to note that we aren't talking about full-length novels written for children, i.e. *The Lion, the Witch and The Wardrobe*, although certainly there were versions based on popular titles such as *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Wizard of Oz*. Rather, these are children's storybooks,



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ranging from 24 to 42 pages, with the occasional full-length novel collection of stories, poems, fairy tales and the like.

The storybook genre as we know it started with the launch of Little Golden Books in 1942, which, priced at 25 cents each, were made to be affordable to the masses. They were also durable; meant to be read, loved and handled by sticky jam-covered fingers. It was a revolutionary concept at the time, the brainchild of George Duplaix, president of the Artists and Writers Guild, Inc., a joint interest of Simon & Schuster Publishing and Western Printing. In 1941, children's books sold from \$2-3 each.



The first 12 titles, each with 50,000 copies printed, included *Three Little Kittens*, *Bedtime Stories*, *The Alphabet A-Z*, *Mother Goose*, *Prayers for Children*, *The Little Red Hen*, *Nursery Songs*, *The Poky Little Puppy*, *The Golden Book of Fairy Tales*, *Baby's Book*, *The Animals of Farmer Jones* and *This Little Piggy*. Each book had 42 pages, 28 printed in two-color and 14 printed in four-color. Today, these first editions, in mint condition, can be found from \$50-\$60 – about 200 times the original selling price.

The books were an immediate success – at least with parents and children. Five months after the first printing, Little Golden Books were in their third printing, with 1.5 million copies in print. By 1945, most titles were in their

seventh printing.

However, not everyone was sold on the idea. "At the time, librarians did not feel these books contained the quality of literature children should be reading," said Steve Santi, author of *Warman's Little Golden Books*. "They did not consider that a book a child could handle was better than one stored out of reach on a bookshelf, or that an affordable book was better than not owning a book at all."

The success of Little Golden Books prompted the launch of several other series, including: Big Golden Books, Giant Golden Books, Deluxe Golden Books, Golden Books, and even sets of Tiny Golden Libraries. In 1951, Little Golden Books and Johnson & Johnson® Band-Aids ventured into one of the first joint ventures of book and product. *Doctor Dan*, *The Bandage Man* was released with Band-Aids glued to the right side of the title page. The first printing of 1.75 million is the largest first printing of any Little Golden Book to date. A search on Abebooks.com lists a first edition in fine condition, with all six original Band-Aids, at \$440; a copy in lesser condition, and missing two Band-Aids, can be had for \$282. Ouch!

Following the successful product merger of Doctor Dan and Band-Aids was the release



of *Little Lulu and Her Magic Tricks*, which included a small package of Kleenex® tissues attached to its front cover and directions for how to make toys from the tissues. To justify the 2.25 million first printing, the companies launched an extensive advertising and promotional campaign. A search on Abebooks.com shows the current value of an intact set in fine condition as \$200-\$300.

As can be expected, other publishers, buoyed by the success of Little Golden Books, soon launched their own series of children's books. Whitman Publishing Company published a Tell-A-Tale series from 1945-1984. The first title, *Poor Kitty*, can be found for about \$16. Prices for other titles range from \$2 to \$20.

Whitman also produced a line called A Cozy Corner Book from 1947-1958. Measuring 7½ by 8¼ inches, the books were 48 pages, and the first six titles included dust jackets. The most expensive of these, *Pie Face*, published in 1947, is today worth \$25. Other series under the Whitman name are Story Tiny Tales (1950-1960), Top Ten Tales (1960-1965) and Tiny-Tot Tales (1966-1969). Judging by their fairly limited number of titles, none were wildly successful. Today, Tiny Tales are valued in the \$5 range; Tiny-Tot Tales are similarly priced. Fuzzy Wuzzy Story Books (which contain about a dozen flocked pages) holds more collector interest. The 14 volumes published from 1945-1949 start at \$27 for *The Golden Circus*, and average \$40, although you can expect to pay \$50 for *Miss Snuff the Fuzzy Cat*.

Other children's series published during the same time as Little Golden Books include Rand McNally Elf Books and Rand McNally Jr. Elf Books (1949-1986), Grosset & Dunlap's Wonder Books (1947-1977) with 'Durasheen' covers, and Treasure Books (1952-1956). While still of interest to some collectors, none of these series have the apparent cachet of Little Golden Books. Still, who can resist a title like *Hector Crosses the River with George Washington* (Wonder Books, 1961, \$18), *Bobby Takes a Walk* (Rand McNally Jr. Elf, 1947, \$15) or *Help Mr. Willy Nilly* (Treasure Books, 1954, \$13)? Even your librarian would approve.

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