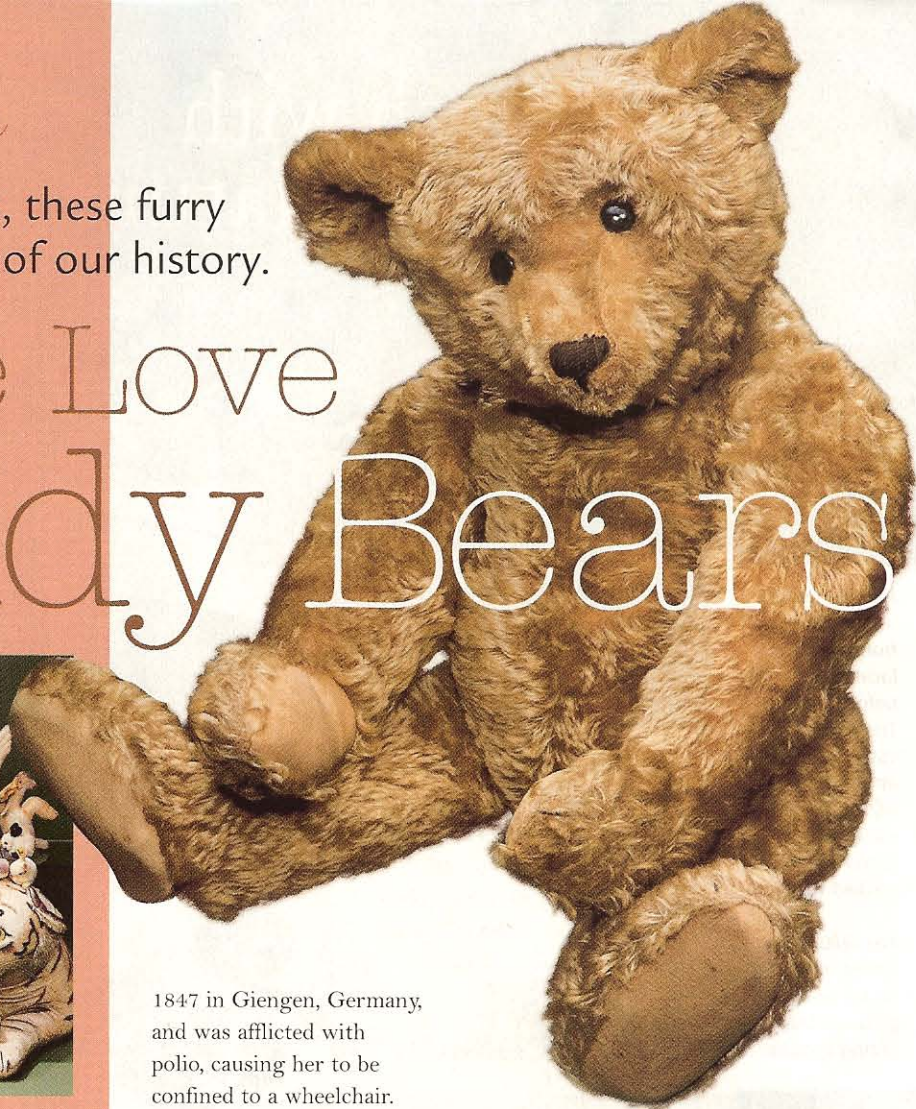


Collector's Corner

For more than 100 years, these furry friends have been a part of our history.

Why We Love Teddy Bears



1847 in Giengen, Germany, and was afflicted with polio, causing her to be confined to a wheelchair. Her illness never dampened her industrious spirit,

When it comes to collecting teddy bears, miniature animals or even felt dolls, collectors inevitably seek items manufactured by the German company Steiff. This is evident by the record-breaking price set in 1994 for an apricot-colored mohair 1904 Steiff bear named "Teddy Girl." With a center facial seam and measuring 18", she sold for \$171,600. The reason is a combination of excellent condition and fine background. Originally, she had belonged to a British Army officer, Colonel T.R. Henderson. The story goes that from a very young age, he became inseparable from the bear, traveling everywhere with it. He later became instrumental in promoting the organization Good Bears of the World.

To better understand the desirability of Steiff products, we must first examine the background of the company's founder, Margarete Steiff. Margarete was born in

though. She became an accomplished seamstress with her own dressmaking company; she would collect remnant pieces of felt from the dresses and turn them into animals for the neighborhood children.

The Margarete Steiff Toy Company was established with the help of her brother Fritz. In the early 1900s, Margarete's nephew, Richard, an accomplished artist and longtime lover of bears, convinced his aunt to produce a jointed mohair bear he designed. Margarete agreed, and the toy was introduced at the Leipzig Spring Fair in 1903. An American buyer from George Borgfeldt & Co. noticed the bear and ordered 3,000 on the spot. That order put Steiff bears into mass production and made the bear the best

seller in the Steiff toy line.

Today, Steiff continues to manufacture a myriad of animals and teddy bears on its original grounds in Germany, and it still adheres to its founding motto: "For our children only the best is good enough."

To Start Collecting Steiff

1. Be sure to educate yourself by reading books, going to flea markets and antiques shows, and talking to other collectors and dealers.

2. In today's market, early Steiff teddy bears from 1905-1910 are the most sought-after by collectors, and prices often



The author, Tim Luke, can be seen on HGTV's *Cash in the Attic*, is co-owner of TreasureQuest Auction Galleries, Inc. in Stuart, Florida, and is an accredited member of the International Society of Appraisers.