



# AMERICAN TOBY JUG MUSEUM

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## THE ORIGIN OF THE AMERICAN TOBY JUG MUSEUM

The American Toby Jug Museum houses over 8000 Toby and Character jugs in ninety-seven cabinets, and is the largest collection of its kind in the world. Tracing the development of the Toby Jug and its derivative the Character Jug from its origin in the mid 18th Century into the present 21st Century, major sub-collections include over 300 antique Toby Jugs, the World's finest collection of French majolica pitchers, a superb collection of Royal Bayreuth German jugs, complete collections of over one hundred fifty 20th Century makers, and the World's largest collection of more than 1500 Royal Doulton Character and Toby Jugs and Derivatives. Included herein are the World's largest Toby (40 inches tall), smallest Toby (3/8ths inch), and certainly one of the oldest (c. 1760)

The Museum receives hundreds of visitors annually from around the World. In addition it serves as a repository for the 250 year history and development of this unique art form, focusing on the individuals and potteries that produced the jugs. It strives to advance the knowledge, history, understanding and appreciation of the art of ceramics to the general public. The Museum's collection is the basis for two definitive books on the subject, co-authored by Curator Steve Mullins (with David Fastenau): Toby and Character Jugs of the 20th Century and A Century of Royal Doulton Character and Toby Jugs. The Museum is considered the authoritative respondent to inquiries world-wide from collectors, dealers, auction houses, and even television shows, and serves as a cultural destination for interested groups and individuals throughout the Chicagoland area.

The origin of the Museum and its collection began in 1947. Fifteen year-old Steve Mullins was attending a boy's camp in the Canadian wilds when his camp counselor enticed him with a Royal Doulton Character jug brochure to spend all of his camp candy money - \$9 - to buy six small size Doulton Character Jugs. Thus began a lifelong passion for collecting Character and Toby jugs that has spanned more than six decades and led to the establishment of the American Toby Jug Museum.

First, dutifully presenting them to his mother as presents for her birthday, mother's day, etc., Steve continued the tradition by purchasing the jugs at significant discounts as he traveled through Canada on his way back and forth to college in New England in the early 1950s. Then, while serving in the Army in Germany, he discovered a hoard in the Post Exchange at \$1 per jug and brought back a steamer trunk full. By then his mother agreed that the collection of nearly 100 was really his, not hers.

Continuing to collect through stores, antique malls, specialist dealers and auctions around the World, he before long ran out of display space at his Evanston home, and in 1980 the collection of over 300 Doulton jugs was moved to several specially built cases in Steve's Chicago downtown office. At this point, Steve began to research the origin of the Toby Jug, from which Character Jugs were derived. A collection of antique 18th and 19th Century Toby Jugs ensued, and the collection expanded to a separate room of its own; then to two rooms as non-Doulton 20th Century jugs were added.

By 1995 the collection numbered over 2000 and demanded its own space. Collaborating with Kevin Pearson, who opened his British Collectibles shop across the street from the current Museum location, Steve set up the now christened American Toby Jug Museum in the rear of the store. Promoted by the shop and the publication of Steve's first book, the nascent Museum enticed enthusiasts in that location for more than ten years.

By 2003, enhanced by the new medium of the Internet, an expanded Royal Doulton collection, burgeoning collections of French majolica and German pitchers, and those of numerous 20th Century makers, the collection of more than 3500 jugs in twenty-six cabinets (and numerous boxes) once again was out-growing its space. Whereupon, Steve and Kevin developed the current property to build and house the Museum. On November 11, 2005, the Mayor of Evanston presided over the Grand Opening of The American Toby Jug Museum's own dedicated space. (See the Mayor's proclamation on the adjoining wall).