

GALLERY GUIDE

20th Century Pedal Cars from the Guenther Collection

Children's toys are found amongst the most ancient artifacts. Toys typically mirror the adult world children aspire to and teach children how to look forward to life as a grown-up.

The pedal car holds a unique position in the history of toys. A product of the industrial age, it took the idea of the "hobby horse" which itself saw a transition to pedal power in the late 19th century, to a new level. The earliest recorded pedal-powered vehicle was the "Quadracycle" exhibited in 1853 at the "Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations World's Fair" held in New York City at the time two-wheeled bicycles began to become popular.

Pedal cars mirror automotive design trends of the Machine Age and reflect advancements in mass production as applied to toy manufacturing. As art objects, they have become nearly as popular with collectors as the actual automobiles themselves.

The evolution of the pedal car mirrored the evolution of the automobile. These toys range from the simplest, inexpensive cars without fenders to the most elaborate of luxury cars, with gears that can actually be shifted, wind up motor noises, rear view mirrors, windshield wipers, hand brakes that work and toolboxes with real tools. The Alemite Packard 6 included a can of Alemite lubricant and a grease gun. Most pedal car designs were produced multiple years, often adapted for a refreshed look in catalogs by changing paint schemes and other cosmetic appointments. The years 1941 to 1948 called a halt to most non-war related manufacturing. After WWII, pedal cars appeared in the form of new models, such as station wagons, and as the years progressed pedal cars decreased in size as did the automobiles of the era.

4th Floor Lobby – Exhibit Entrance

Reo, Sidway-Topliff Company, circa 1929. Sidway-Topliff was a small company with limited production.

Steelcraft Junior Service Truck, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1941.

Slawson Gallery

1. Marmon Gendron Iron Wheel Company, circa 1928. A pedal car featuring "luxury" functional appointments such as rearview mirror, windshield wiper, and brake.
2. Dodge Bros., Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1929. Sold under the Steelcraft brand and made entirely of steel, departing from wooden frame construction.
3. Case, American National Company, circa 1926. With no fenders, this was typical of the lowest priced pedal cars made throughout the 1920s.
4. Mack dump truck, American National Company, circa 1927.

5. Packard 6-wheel, Gendron Iron Wheel Company, circa 1929. A luxury car with spare wheels, spotlight, “ahooga” horn, gearshift and spring all-wheel suspension.
6. Lincoln Zephyr, Garton Toy Company, circa 1937. This toy interpretation of the actual automobile exaggerates its notable features.
7. Steelcraft Mercury Zephyr, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1939. An unusually realistic representation of Mercury’s Zephyr.
8. Graham “Shark-nose”, Gendron Iron Wheel Company, circa 1938. Sold under the “Skippy” brand name.
9. Steelcraft Plymouth, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1935. Steelcraft’s catalog listed this car as a Plymouth though it is often referred to as a “Pierce Arrow” because of its resemblance to that automobile.
10. Steelcraft Oldsmobile, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1938
11. Steelcraft M-10 Dodge, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1937
12. Murray Pontiac Army Field Ambulance, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company circa 1941 and later, circa 1948.
13. Steelcraft Buick, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1935. Special features include the fold down luggage rack, running board mounted spotlight, hand brake, and battery powered headlights.
14. Lincoln tandem, American National Company, circa 1935. Weighing 110 pounds, it required pedals for both seats and was very expensive. Subsequent lack of sales left many to be bought by amusement companies for use on carousel rides.
15. Steelcraft Dodge, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1939
16. Steelcraft Auburn Supercharger, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1937. Designed by Count Alexis de Sakhnoffsky, international engineering stylist. Featuring chrome-plated exhaust pipes.
17. Garton Chrysler Airflow, Garton Toy Company, circa 1934
18. Steelcraft Chrysler Airflow, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1935

19. Toledo Chrysler Airflow, Toledo Iron Wheel Company, circa 1936
20. Steelcraft Chrysler, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1941
21. "Woody" station wagon, Garton Toy Company, circa 1949
22. BMC Race Car, Binghampton Manufacturing Company, circa 1954. Restored in honor of the lender's father, the Director of Safety at the Mobil refinery at Augusta, Kansas, based on the racers competing on the dirt tracks across America of the period.
23. Kidillac, Garton Toy Company, 1957. Glamorized luxury based on the Cadillac automobile, featuring optional accessories: the spare tire, battery-powered headlights and horn.
24. Capri, American Machine and Foundry, circa 1956. Produced only one year, featuring a low and high gear.
25. AMF Department of Public Works dump truck, American Machine and Foundry, circa 1958
26. AMF Ford Mustang, American Machine and Foundry, circa 1967. Created for Ford dealers to promote the actual automobile. Its popularity sustained production into the 1970s.
27. Buick 5-in-1 Combination truck, American National Company, circa 1934. Unique in that it converts into several different vehicles: a wrecker, a fire truck, a steak bed ice delivery truck, a dump truck and a U.S. Army field ambulance.
28. Alemite Packard 6, American National Company, circa 1927. This elaborate toy possesses a wide array of educational functional features allowing the operator to perform maintenance. This pedal car is widely considered the only surviving example in original condition.
29. Steelcraft U.S. Air Mail plane, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1932
30. Casey Jones locomotive, Garton Toy Company, circa 1962.
31. Jolly Roger boat, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1966. Pedal boats, like pedal cars, offered different "trim levels" such as a motor, windshield, bow light and chrome rail.
32. Steelcraft Army pursuit plane, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1941. Also sold in British air force colors.

33. Pioneer Flyer locomotive, Gendron Iron Wheel Company, circa 1934.
34. Buick Two-speed, American National Company, circa 1926. Featuring a uniquely complex geared and shift-able driving and braking mechanism based on the design of actual automobiles.
35. Garton Hook and Ladder fire truck, Garton Company. Circa 1949
36. Steelcraft Hudson fire chief, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1928
37. AMF hook and ladder fire truck, American Machine and Foundry, circa 1954.
38. American National Hose reel fire truck, American National Company, circa 1935.
39. American National boiler fire truck, American National Company, circa 1924.
40. Steelcraft Mack One Ton hook and ladder fire truck, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1937.
41. Murray Champion fire truck, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1952.
42. Murray Pontiac hook and ladder fire truck, Murray Ohio Manufacturing Company, circa 1948.
43. Gendron hose cart fire truck, Gendron Iron Wheel Company, circa 1939.

During the Summer of 1996, the Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum featured “Tot Rods”, an exhibition of pedal cars from the collection of Bob Guenther. Nearly a quarter century later, the expanded Guenther Collection reappears. The collection, assembled over 30 years with the dispensation and assistance of his wife Sue, includes cars and other pedal vehicles from the mid-1920s to the mid-1960s and continues to grow in quality and quantity.