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Foreword

Just as healthy food can nourish a child's growing body, healthy play environments and healthy toys can nourish a child's budding soul. Of course, this begs the question – what is a healthy toy for children? In my long-term experience as a children's educator, I would claim that an over-riding principle of a 'healthy' toy is that it allows involvement and activity by the child.

This book is a wonderful example of such creative and active involvement. Each chapter opens a new imaginative window. The book journeys through the four seasons, but also takes time to include a variety of multi-cultural festivals, from Easter to Hanukkah to Japanese Children's Day. The patterns are simple and easy to follow, and the finished peg dolls call out to be held and played with.

A refreshing discovery for the adult reader is that the peg dolls are calling out to us as well as to the children! For those adults who feel they are drowning in the current 'consumer culture' that is so prevalent in our modern times, for those who feel overwhelmed by the excess stimulation of the technological world, this book offers a lifeboat through the very nature of its simplicity.

As a storyteller and storywriter, my delight with each chapter in this book lies in the possibility of new stories created by children and adults through playing with such simple toys or 'props'. The simpler the props the more the children's imaginations are left free to do the work (another principle of a healthy toy for children!).

Simple story props have a magical role to play in our modern life, where constant distractions seem to be pulling us from pillar to post. For those receiving a story, props such as these peg dolls can help arouse curiosity; they can help listening and concentration; they can encourage creative play; they can help carry a therapeutic message. For storytellers, props can help the teller remember the sequence of the story; they can help develop the confidence of a new storyteller; they can add artistic dimensions to the storytelling.

Most importantly, using props like these simple peg dolls can be enjoyable and fun for both the storyteller and the story listeners. In fact, the enjoyment I have had in writing this foreword has helped birth a little story...

Once upon a time there was a family of wooden pegs who were not happy with sitting all day long in a straight row on a washing line. They knew they were born for greater things. This family of wooden pegs lived in a garden where children played all day, and the pegs wanted to play as well...

Thank you Margaret Bloom for helping the peg family to find their creative calling! And thank you for offering us, the readers, whether adult or child or both, a creative journey of our own.

Susan Perrow (M.Ed.)
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Introduction

If you visit my home, you might notice a wee sprite (or two) peeking out from behind my teapot. If you look carefully among my books, it's possible to observe the tiny family of gnomes which has taken up residence. And all along my window sills are perched flutters of fairies, chirpy little bluebirds and two diminutive owls hooting softly.

In December 2010 I painted my first peg doll and was so delighted with the result that I wanted to paint more. My son and I painted handfuls of them to play with, and I continued to paint yet more little dolls to give away as gifts. I encouraged my friends

to try this new favorite craft and the results were enchanting. Now I invite you to open yourself to the inspiration these tiny dolls can bring.

Within this book you will find over 60 different designs and patterns for peg dolls. I hope you enjoy creating them as much as I have enjoyed dreaming them up for you! And please do not limit yourself to my designs. Give a handful of blank dolls (along with some pencils and paint) to your eager children and see what they come up with. Hold a few dolls in your own hands. Let them whisper into your ear their own stories. Each little doll has a story to tell...

Margaret Bloom





Introducing the Craft of Peg Dolls

A friend was recently telling me that, when she sees peg dolls, she imagines a child in prehistoric times picking up a stick, wrapping it in a leaf or a bit of fur and gently cradling it. Perhaps, way back in those prehistoric times, an adult saw the nurturing instinct and carved a face on the stick for the child to love. Even now, when we watch children immersed in imaginative play, and one child presents us with a bit of wood saying, 'This is

my baby,' these imaginings of children at play cross the expanses of history and cultures to connect us in a universal way.

Akin to a child's instinct to cradle simple sticks wrapped in leaves, peg dolls were first created from utilitarian laundry pegs. Many countries, too, have, in their unique traditions, doll designs which closely relate to peg dolls. In Japan, for example, beautiful Kokeshi dolls are distinctly peg doll-like.



In the handcraft tradition of Waldorf education from Germany, the legs of clothes pegs were removed to create small wooden bases on which dolls could be designed. These little dolls have traditionally been crafted into seasonal figures for nature table displays and imaginative play within home and classroom. A distinctive aspect of Waldorf peg doll design is the custom of leaving the faces of dolls unpainted. The idea behind this is to offer children an opportunity to project features and emotions onto the dolls. This, in turn, may create further possibility for imaginative and emotional development.

I've chosen to paint small, neutral faces on my dolls, and in designing your own dolls this is one of many design choices you can make. It might be

your wish to leave the faces of your dolls unpainted, to paint simple, neutral features or to create faces which appear more animated.

Another distinctive aspect of traditional peg dolls is that they usually lack arms and hands. Again, the feeling behind this is that, whether the doll actually has hands or not, a child playing with the doll will imagine them there. One can find examples of peg dolls with a bit of pipe-cleaner or chenille wire secured around the body to create arms. However, in creating play-things for children, I appreciate the simplicity and durability of plain peg dolls. Another solution, however, for adding hands is to paint them onto the body of your doll. You can see a lovely example in the photo below.



Although the dolls in this book appear to be fragile and made for display, they are actually of sturdy construction. Everything is sewn or glued securely and the dolls are made to be played with – even my toddler has his own peg doll ‘babies’ (I was ever so pleased when I found 9 cm (3½ in) doll-bases – they make marvellous baby toys).



Chapter One

Spring



Spring Flowers

I love clustering these little spring flower-folk together like garden bouquets. I've created a grouping of snowdrops, buttercups and forget-me-nots...

And a nosegay of primroses and wild violets, too...

SUPPLIES

- 5 cm (2 in) angel-pegs
- 4 cm (1⁵/₈ in) boy-pegs
- 3 cm (1³/₁₆ in) tot-pegs
- Watercolor paint and brushes
- Wool felt: white, pink, lavender, yellow, blue and green
- Thin-gauge, fabric-wrapped floral wire
- Matching embroidery floss and needles
- Tracing paper or a photocopy of patterns
- Fabric scissors
- A pencil
- Glue

*Spring is coming, Spring is coming
Birdies build your nest.
Weave together straw and feather
Doing each your best,
Doing each your best.*

*Spring is coming, Spring is coming
Flowers are waking too,
Daisies, lilies, daffodillies,
All are coming through,
All are coming through.*

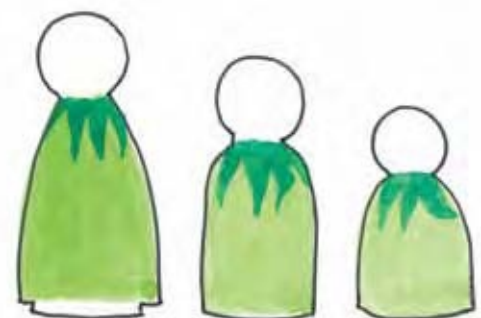
*Spring is coming, Spring is coming
All around is fair,
Shimmer, glimmer on the meadow,
Joy is everywhere,
Joy is everywhere!*

Traditional



What flowers will you find growing in your garden this spring?

Painting the dolls



1. Using 5 cm (2 in) angel-
pegs for the snow drops and
primroses, 4 cm (1⁵/₈ in) boy-
pegs for violets and buttercups
and 3 cm (1³/₁₆ in) tot-pegs for
forget-me-nots, paint bodies of
the dolls light green.

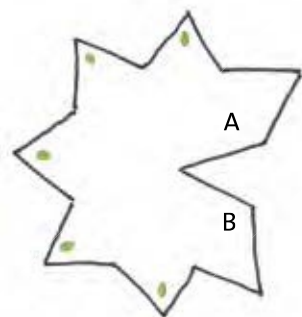
2. Paint the calyx-collars of
the flowers in a darker green
around the necks.

3. Add hair and faces.

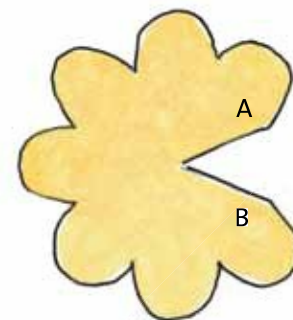
Making the hats

4. Cut out the flower hat pieces.
Overlap points A and B and stitch
or glue in place.

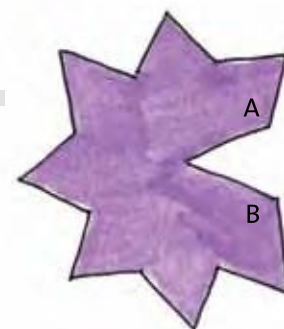
5. Add embroidery and then glue
hats in place on the doll heads.



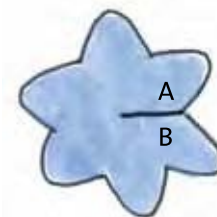
WHITE SNOWDROPS
Add a small stitch of green at the
tip of each petal.



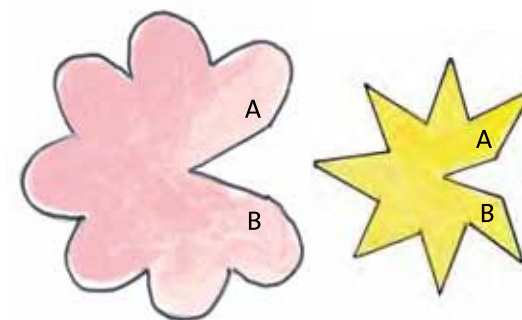
YELLOW BUTTERCUPS
In a slightly darker shade of yellow,
add a circle of daisy stitches at the
crown.



WILD VIOLETS
If you do a bit of research, you will
find there are many types of wild
violets. I like the ones with just a
bit of yellow in the center, so when
I created my violets, I simply added
one stitch of yellow to the front.



BLUE FORGET-ME-NOTS
Add a small circle of yellow stitch-
ing around the center of the crown
at the top.



PRIMROSES
Glue additional felt piece together,
point A to point B, and then glue
this piece to the top of the hat.



LEAVES
Though I could have added leaves to
all these flower-fairies, I decided to
only add them to the violets. If you
choose to add leaves, you can simply
glue the leaves directly to the bod-
ies of your dolls. In the case of the
violets, I made the leaves quite small
and so thought they might look nice
attached to stems. For the stems,

PATTERN TEMPLATES

*All patterns for cutting felt
pieces are represented in this
book in their actual size. For the
purposes of your own projects
you may trace them or scan
them and then print them out.*

I bent short pieces of floral wire
(6 cm (2³/₈ in) into a 'V' shape, glued
the leaves onto the ends and then
secured the 'V' of the floral wire to
the backs of the dolls by gluing bits
of felt over the wires.