

Bob Watrous and a few of his Bell Toys

Bob came to the NECABA (New England) Chapter meeting on April 25, 2026. He brought along a few of his many bell toys to show us. Bob is a frequent author of articles for *The Bell Tower* and if you look at one (or more) you will see that he has done extensive research on bell toys and the companies that produced them. One reason for his passion – his last name is Watrous. The Watrous Mfg Co was known for its bell making.



Early SeeSaw and Swing Bell Toys

by Robert Watrous

Starting in the 1880s, some bell toys emulated seesaws or swings. There weren't many playground equipment-based bell toys in the 1800s, probably because there were very few playgrounds as we would know them today. According to an article by Hart, "The first American playground opened in 1887 at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. It featured swings, slides, and even a carousel. Despite its popularity, this early model was regarded as a 'quoddy.'" In the 1880s, play, for the benefits of child development, was considered by many radical

THE BELL TOWER - March/April 2025

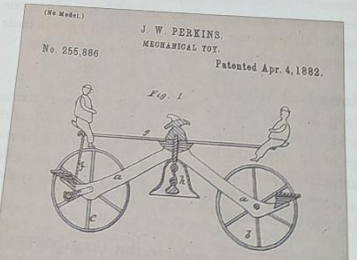
I finally was able to get one rare seesaw bell toy I had been hoping to add to my collection for a long time. I knew of the patent for this toy, and I had an association with John L. Watrous, and I was an association with John L. Watrous, a founder of Watrous Mfg. Co. Most auction sites list this toy to the work of Gong Bell. It is like a toy they might have made. It turns out a good reason for that assumption, even if it was wrong.

Watrous Partnership

Perkins, of East Hampton Connecticut, "Mechanical Toy" that resembles a seesaw wheel pull toy. (Figure 2) This may be a bell toy to emulate a now common playground equipment. The patent date is close to Perkins left the firm of Gong Bell to pursue his dreams. According to the firm of Gong Bell in 1884



Figure 1. Perkins patented bell toy, collection of Robert Watrous
7 1/2" Height x 5" Length x 3 1/4" Width



See the article about this bell toy - Early See-Saw Bell Toys in *The Bell Tower* – March/April 2025,

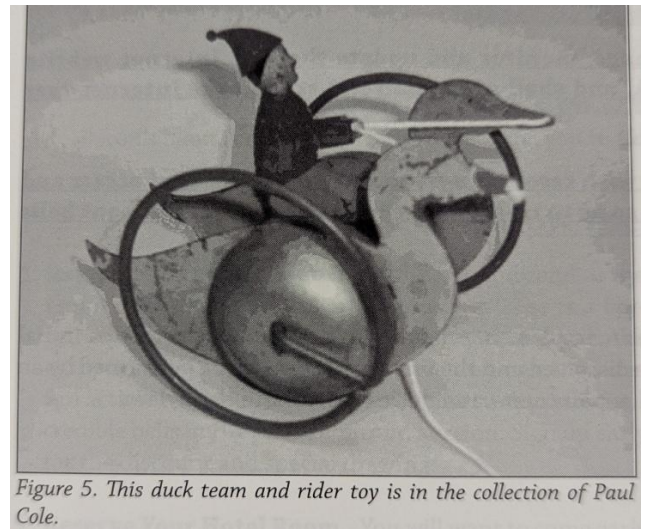


Figure 5. This duck team and rider toy is in the collection of Paul Cole.

Wells – Ducks and Boy. Pat'd 1904
March/April 2008

See the article about this bell toy - Bell toys of John C. Wells – *The Bell Tower* –



Drummer Boy - Patented by Charles A. Bailey, Mfg. by W. H. Chapman & Co, Middletown, CT, 1887
See the article about this bell – The Drummer Boy Toy - *The Bell Tower* – May/June - April 2021



See the article about this bell - Early See-Saw Bell Toys - *The Bell Tower* - March-April 2025

One of only two known



Possibly Ulysses S. Grant and soldiers
Watrous Mfg Co. or J.L. Watrous Co., East Hampton, CT, Early 1800s

Teddy Roosevelt, Watrous Mfg Co. 1908

See the article about these bell toys in **Teddy Roosevelt and the Mystery Rider Bell Toy** - *The Bell Tower* – Nov/Dec 2025