



# Peapods

Natural Toys & Baby Care

Peapods Natural Toys & Baby Care, 251 Snelling Avenue South, St. Paul, Minnesota

May, 2003

## A note from Millie

A year ago this month, we published our first newsletter, which was supposed to turn into a quarterly endeavor.

But, now that it's May, it seems to be a quarterly newsletter published annually.

The truth is, it's been a very busy year. Our family gives a heartfelt thanks to every one of you, our customers. We appreciate not only your business but also the energy you bring to us each time you stop in. Thank you for all of your support and enthusiasm!

We've been busy re-arranging the store recently. We've expanded our book and cloth diaper sections and have added new products like Imse Vimse wool diaper covers.

We've also created a world map showing where all of our products are made. It's true—not everything comes from Germany! In fact, we have a growing list of local and national suppliers—many of whom are other small business like us.

Recently, we participated in the 2nd annual Living Green Expo at the State Fair Grounds. It was a

lot of fun, with a huge selection environmentally-friendly products for the home. Our daughter Abby came home with a dozen "mystery seeds" potted in Dixie cups which will be added to her own garden in our front yard. If you missed the Expo this year, be sure to catch it next year.

Also be sure to catch our annual Sidewalk Sale, June 13th and 14th. It's a big event!

I hope this letter finds your family well. Thanks and best wishes,

Millie



## New Product:

### Imse Vimse Diaper Covers.



In Swedish, "Imse Vimse" means "Itsy Bitsy", as in the "Itsy Bitsy Spider." In Diapers, Imse Vimse means high quality, breathable, wool felt diaper covers, with velcro and snap closures. They're the best wool covers we've found, with enough elastic to hold either prefolds or fitted diapers like Kissaluv's. They're especially good for nighttime because they let air circulate around the diaper, so your baby will feel more comfortable.

## Product Spotlight: Mossy Creek Woodworks



Mossy Creek's Cherry "Clacker" rattle

If you ask your parents or grandparents what they played with as children, you'll discover that, with the exception of Unit Blocks, their toys aren't available any more.

This is why we were so happy to discover Mossy Creek Woodworks, a very small wooden toy maker in Arkansas that's reviving wonderful centuries-old American Folk Toys.

These toys are simple, but very fun. In the past, they would have been whittled at home and handed down to multiple children.

For example, Mossy Creek's

Climbing Bear is a simple wooden bear hanging from two cords. When you pull the cords, the bear climbs up to the top.

Or, there's the "Buzz Saw" which is also known as a "Spinning Button". It's a leather wheel hung on two strings. When you give it a spin and then pull on the strings, it zips and hums back and forth.

All of Mossy Creek's toys rely on simple physics and natural wood to work their kinetic magic. They're also Earth-friendly—the wood comes from their own woodlot and is dried in a solar kiln.

## *A view from the Juvenile Products industry trade show*

I recently took a day to attend the Juvenile Product Manufacturer's Association (JPMA) conference in Dallas, Texas. Flew down six in the morning, home at midnight—phew!—long day. This is primarily a trade show for traditional "baby stores", so most of what I saw was cribs, changing tables, bedding, etc. But I can usually manage to eek out a few interesting products. I was shocked by two things—how much baby stuff we seem to need in our culture, and how little respect for the child is reflected in most of these products.

According to the companies I saw at JPMA, the modern American layette consists of: a bassinet and crib, special bedding for each, changing table and dresser (or "baby armoire"), diaper genie, wipe warmer, infant carseat with various bases and stroller attachments, bouncy seat, indoor baby holder thingy, outdoor baby holder thingy, small umbrella stroller, bigger baby buggy stroller, possibly a jogging stroller for outdoorsy types, breast pump, bottles, special organizer for bottle parts, bottle heater/cooler things, so many safety devices you can make a quick trip to the next state during naptime, and a video monitor so you can watch them while you're gone. There was even a rich collection of strange bottle feeding gizmos, the oddest of which was a stuffed animal you can stick a bottle into to make the bottle soft and cuddly. For older children, there was an electronic bowl shaped like an animal that went moored or barked every time a spoonful was taken. This was supposedly designed to encourage good eating habits. (!)

As I'm feeling so overwhelmed with all that stuff, I thought I'd make an alternative minimalist list of things that babies actually need.

## *A Minimalist Layette—All you and your baby really need*

A big family bed—the bigger, the better—with 2 waterproof wool mattress pads and plenty of cotton sheets. Also get a few receiving blankets—good for changing pads, an extra layer of protection on the bed, and once in a while you'll even wrap the baby in them.

A baby sling, maybe even two.

A carseat, of course. For anyone with a car.

Clothing—probably about 14 total outfits. One piece knits are great. Used is fine (wash in fragrance-free detergent first), natural fibers are preferable. Also, a couple of little cotton hats, a snowsuit or bunting for winter babies.

Nursing clothing—take it easy. Most moms find separates work fine.

Try a dress or a couple of tops, but don't invest a fortune until you see if you like them. You'll also need three

comfortable nursing bras—you won't want to wear these for more than one day when you're leaking—and 20 or so reusable nursing pads. A list of places you can quickly rent or buy a

breastpump. Wait and see if you need it, but have the names of a lactation center or consultant handy. If you need a pump for engorgement, you'll want it fast. Also, take the time to attend a La Leche League meeting before your baby is born—you'll be glad you did.

A nursing pillow, or some small pillows, or various rolled up blankets, along with bottles of water (easy to grab), good reading material, a comfy rocking chair, and a cordless phone. You'll be spending lots of time sitting nursing. Make it easy on yourself.

Diapers—three dozen, washed twice and ready to use. At least a dozen flat diapers even if you plan on using disposables—great for spit cloths and general baby messes. You'll also need 6-8 diaper covers. Try a few different styles to start with. Also, 40-50 cloth wipes. Using 2 per change 10 times a day, with 2-3 days between wash. You'll also want a diaper pail of some sort—any covered garbage can will work—and a washable diaper bag.

A stroller or wagon can be nice—not essential.

This really isn't meant to be comprehensive. Just trying to plant the seed that maybe babies need a lot less stuff than our consumer culture would lead you to think. Remember, the past 4,000 generations of your family got by with a lot less than this! Above all, consider your family and your lifestyle, and make your buying decisions based on that.



Detail from  
Elsa Beskow's  
"Christopher's  
Harvest Time".

## ***Abby's crafts: how to make dandelion necklaces***

Take a dandelion and use your fingernails to make a slit halfway down the stem. Then, slide another dandelion through the slit to make a chain. When you have enough strung together, tie the stem of the last dandelion to the first one to complete a circle. You can make almost anything like bracelets, crowns, and necklaces, which have to long enough to go around your head. They don't last very long because they wilt and start falling apart. But, they're quite fun while you have them.

—Abby



## ***In the neighborhood: The Wisdom Ways Outdoor Labyrinth***

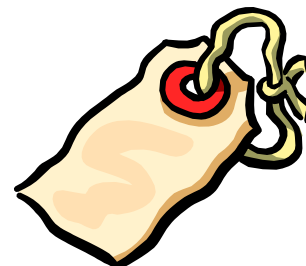


Children are remarkably spiritual, calm, and insightful creatures under the right circumstances. We may not see this aspect of our children too often, especially as we hustle them from one activity to another. On grounds of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet (near St. Kates—north of O'Shaughnessy parking lot just east of Fairview Avenue) is a wonderful earthen labyrinth that beautifully reveals this inner peace. The Wisdom Ways Outdoor Labyrinth is 77 feet in diameter and takes about 10 minutes to walk to the center. Something about following the curving grass path is deeply calming and fun. Even Riley

# Third Annual Sidewalk Sale!

Our Sidewalk Sale is back this summer and bigger than ever! This year, Riley's not to blame—just a busy year's worth of scratch 'n dents, overstocks, slow sellers, and "Why did we order this thing?"—all at discounts from 25-75% off. Let our mistakes be your gain and help us clear a path through our basement!

**June 13th and 14th 10am to 6pm**



Because our sidewalk sale is a busy event next to a busy street, we recommend shopping without small children. Our sale will take place rain or shine (although hopefully we'll have less rain than last year!)



*Our new favorite board book*

## **Alison Jay's "Picture This"**

Like many things in our store, this book was discovered by our son, Riley, who has loved this book since he was 12 months old. A year later, he still thinks it's the bee's knees. It has everything—balls, dogs, trains, airplanes, snails, rabbits—all presented in beautiful pictures where with a clue to what's on the next page. Elements reappear in new contexts on every page—great for building a toddler's vocabulary.

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