

Hoproco Tin Toys (1920s)

Rev. 4/14/2022 - D. Dixon

Hoproco, the Hopewell Products Company, operated from 1923 to 1929 at 18 Burton Avenue in Hopewell, manufacturing metal and wooden mechanical toys and novelties. The company was founded by Dr. Theodore A. Pierson, with his son, Theodore A. Pierson, Jr. as president and general manager.

While not much is known about the range of products created by the company, this brief describes the five known colorful tin toys that were manufactured by Hoproco from circa 1925 to 1928.

See also the associated brief on **18 Burton Avenue - Stair / Toy Factory (1897)**.

Buddy Sand Sled



Hoproco Logo and Trademark



Hopewell Flyer



Indoor Golf - Board Game



Hopewell Twin Flyer



Hopewell E-Z-Go-Round



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Hoproco Tin Toys (c 1925 - 1928)

There are five known colorful tin toys that were manufactured by Hoproco, circa 1925 to 1928, some intriguingly numbered on the product literature:

- "Indoor Golf" board game - Five spinners on board, 10 x 20 in.
- "Buddy Sand Sled" - Rectangular tin sled / flat boat beach toy, 12 x 4 in. - 25¢
- "Hopewell Flyer" (#22) - 9" Dirigible - Wind-up motor with propeller, 8 ft. string - 25¢
- "Hopewell Twin Flyer" (#24) - Spin a pair of dirigibles on a pedestal - \$1.00
- "E-Z-Go-Round" (#33) - Spinning carousel - Six horses with child riders, 8 in. diameter - \$1.00

The toys are nicely designed, in terms of the graphical design and build quality. They can be ranked in terms of mechanical complexity and sophistication (which probably also relates to the order in which they were introduced):

- The Golf product is a board game. Mechanically, it just has a set of spinners on the board. The game itself is carefully designed, with two pages of rules and a carefully-designed simulation of the choices and hazards of playing an 18-hole course.
- The Sled has no moving parts - it is just an open rectangular tin box. Multiple versions were produced, adding more attractive coloring and artwork.
- The single Flyer has a wind-up mechanical motor to drive the propeller.
- The Twin Flyer and E-Z-Go-Round use a self-retracting pull-string to power the spinning action.

The company itself only operated from 1923 to 1928. The Pierson family reports that "[Theodore A. Pierson, Jr.] said that they were fairly successful and approached large toy stores in NYC to sell their toys, but could not meet the magnitude of the orders that those stores would require to carry those items. He had said that the problem was that they were too big of an operation for the smaller markets and too small for the large markets, and they were not willing to invest to expand to the level needed to supply the large orders."

Hoproco Logo

The products are typically marked with the Hoproco logo and trademark. The oval (football-shaped) Hoproco logo has the Hoproco name merged into the oval, with "Trade Mark" above and below. Along with the logo typically are some variants of the text "Made in Hopewell, N. J., U.S.A." and "Patent Applied For."

Buddy Sand Sled - Side [Larry & Cindi Kianka]



E-Z-Go-Round - Box



Hoproco Advertising

The Hoproco products are difficult to search for because they were not branded with the "Hoproco" company name (as was typical of toys of the time), although some of the more distinctive product names can be found in a limited set of newspaper advertisements. However, toy collectors still have some of these products, plus the original boxes and promotional product sheets.

A handful of newspapers ads around the country can be found from 1925 through 1928 that mention several of the products by name, including papers from Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, North Carolina, and even Hawaii:

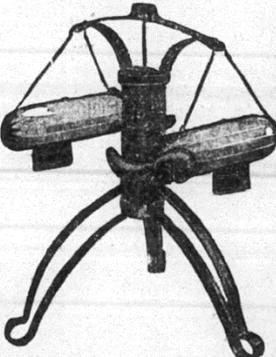
- The Buddy Sand Sled appeared in 1925 department store summer seashore ads ("for the shore" / "which floats") at 25¢. [e.g. Brooklyn NY Daily Eagle 6/22/1925]
- The single Hopewell Flyer appeared in department store Christmas ads in 1926 through 1928 ("fly in a 6-foot circle on a thread 8 feet long") at 35¢, or down from 25¢ to 19¢. [e.g., Murphysboro IL Daily Independent, 12/17/1928]
- The Twin Hopewell Flyer (with tower) also appeared in ads in 1926 and 1927, from 48¢ to 59¢ to 89¢.
- The E-Z-Go-Round carousel appeared in ads in 1928 from 69¢ to \$1.00.

[Evening Herald, Pottsville, PA, 12/2/1927]

"HOPEWELL" FLYER
Just As Here Shown

59c

Plenty of sport with this whirling flyer mechanical toy for youngsters. Sturdily built to last—runs for a long time when set in motion—the tots will love to operate it.



[Grand Rapids MI Press 1/31/1928]

E-Z-Go-Round whirls
when you pull string

69c

A 16y Merry-go-round that the youngsters will love! With toy boys and girls on toy horses galloping around under a gaily colored tent when you pull the string in the side!

—sturdily built . . .

The toy is well-constructed of metal and lithographed in bright colors. The speed may be regulated by the force or lightness of the pull on the string!

A great favorite!



Toys—Sixth Floor—Herzopolshelmer's

[Gastonia Daily Gazette, NC, 12/16/1927]

Dear Santa: I want to tell you what I want for Christmas. Please bring me a target ball, and please bring me a steam boat, and a Hopewell Flyer airship, and a loop the loop car.

LAN HARRILL CALDWELL

[Murphysboro Daily Independent., IL, 12/17/1928]

HOPEWELL FLYER
Hopewell mechanical flyer. Flies in 6 foot circle on thread 8 feet long. Worth 25c.

TUESDAY
ONLY

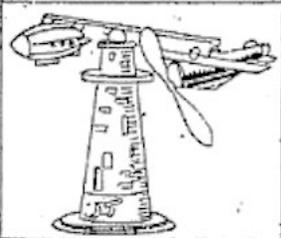
19c

Competing flyer product [Oregonian 12/19/1926]

Airship Toy

Two mechanical airships fly around a supporting tower. An interesting toy for the little chap.

\$1



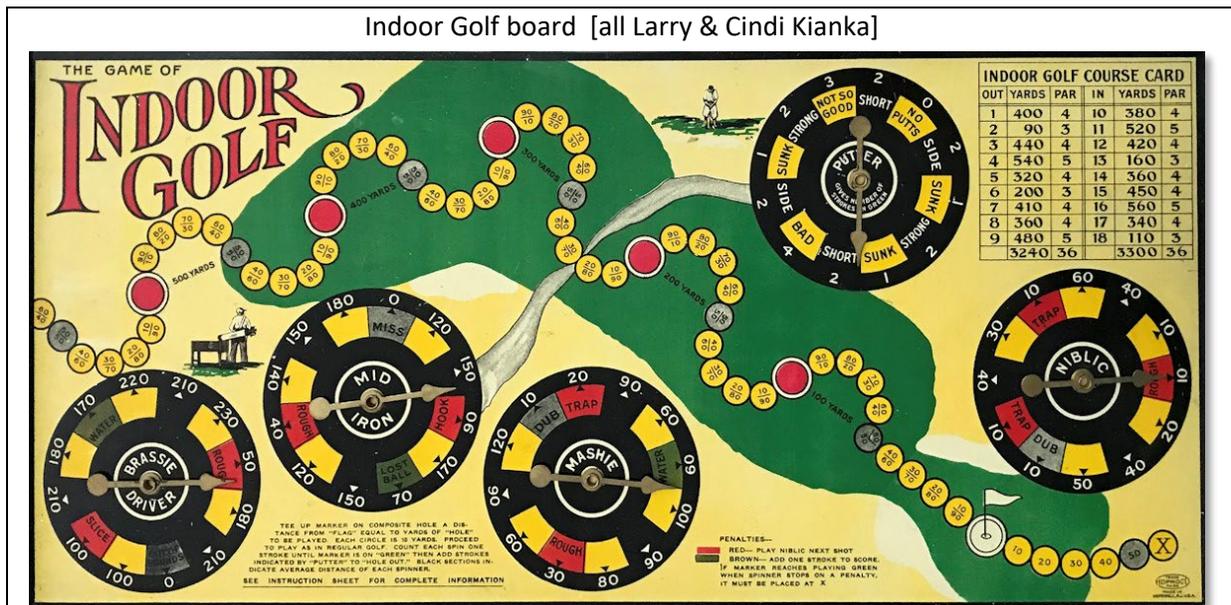
"Indoor Golf" - Board Game

"Teaches the rudiments of Outdoor Golf play"
 "One composite hole is made to suit all requirements"

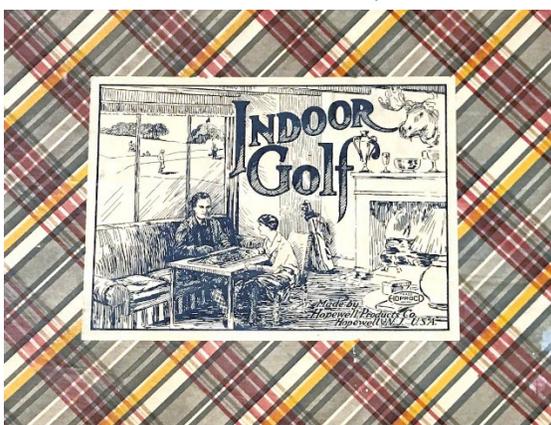
The Indoor Golf game board has a heavy wooden frame with a printed golf course scene showing one composite hole, which is played eighteen times from different distances for each "hole" on the course. The player selects one of the five spinners on the board that represent different clubs, and then spins to discover the result of that stroke - the distance hit, plus penalties and hazards including a slice, hook, rough, or water.

The box has a tartan design on the top with the product label, and also includes scoring pads and four "golf ball" playing pieces. The board is 10 by 20 inches.

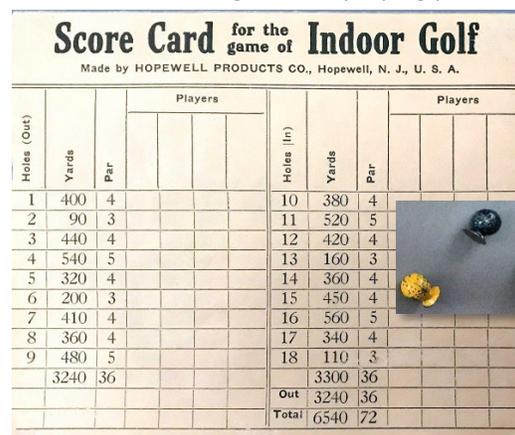
As a prize for tournaments, the instructions also offer "a miniature, gold-lined, silver-plated loving cup 3 inches high," available by mail for \$2.50, postage prepaid.



Center of box top



Score card and "golf ball" playing pieces



"Buddy Sand Sled" - 12" Sled / Boat

"Carries Water and Sand - and Floats"

The Buddy Sand Sled is a rectangular tin sled / flat boat with an upcurved front, and "no sharp corners." It is designed as a beach toy for small tots, to drag on water or sand, or to float as a boat. It is "brightly decorated in attractive colors and packed individually with an 8-inch shovel and a Tow-line" (to attach to the hole in front).

The Sled is 12 by 4 inches, and 1 1/2 inches deep.

It retailed at 25¢, and was listed in ads at the same price [June 1925].

There are four known versions of the Sled: Two variants each of a plain design with a single color, and two variants of a lithographed design with scenes of children playing on the beach.

The plain color designs are in green with dark red letters or mustard yellow with red letters.



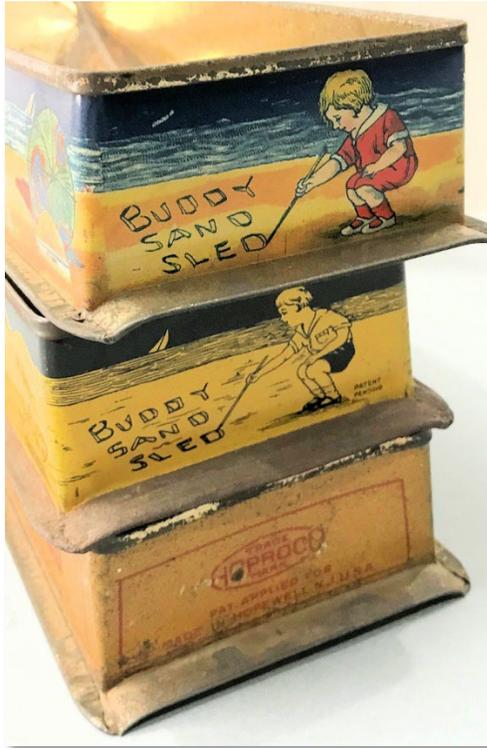
The lithographed designs are in yellow with dark below line drawings, or in full color. Both sides show the same scene of children building a sand castle and playing with balls and pails (and the Sled toy).



The plain color designs have the "Buddy Sand Sled" lettering on the sides, and the Hoproco logo and trademark on the back.

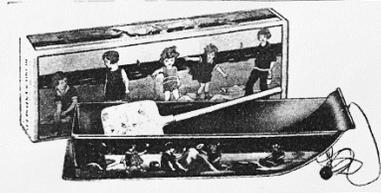
The lithographed designs have the beach scene drawings on the sides (same on both sides), and the back has a drawing of a child writing "Buddy Sand Sled" in the sand. The side also has a small Hoproco logo and trademark near the bow on the starboard side.

Sled backs - with branding



Product sheet [all Larry & Cindi Kianka]

Buddy Sand Sled



Carries Water and Sand— and Floats

- * The Ideal Toy for small tots on the beach, at the sand pile, or in the house.
- * No sharp corners.
- * Brightly decorated in attractive colors and packed individually with an 8-inch Shovel and a Tow-line, in suitably designed box.
- * Sleds are 12 inches long, 4 inches wide and 2½ inches deep. Shipping carton contains 3 dozen sleds and weighs 20 pounds.

RETAILS AT 25c.

MADE BY
HOPEWELL PRODUCTS COMPANY
 Hopewell, - - - - - New Jersey

"Hopewell Flyer" - 9" Dirigible

"Flies in a 6 Foot Circle"

The Hopewell Flyer (No. 22) is a 9 inch tin toy dirigible / airship. It has a wind-up spring motor in the gondola underneath to turn the 4 1/2 inch rear propeller (which makes "nearly 500 turns with one winding").

It is hung from the ceiling on a 8 foot thread (attached to the hole on top) and then flies in a 6 foot circle.

The dirigible is light green with red trim (for the lettering, rear fins, gondola, and red starburst on the front). There is a blue star in a red circle near the rear, and the starboard side has a small Hoproco label / trademark on the top fin and "Made in U.S.A." on the bottom fin.

It retailed at 25¢, and was listed in ads for 35¢ [Christmas 1926] and for 25¢ / special 19¢ [Christmas 1928].

Hopewell Flyer [all Larry & Cindi Kianka]



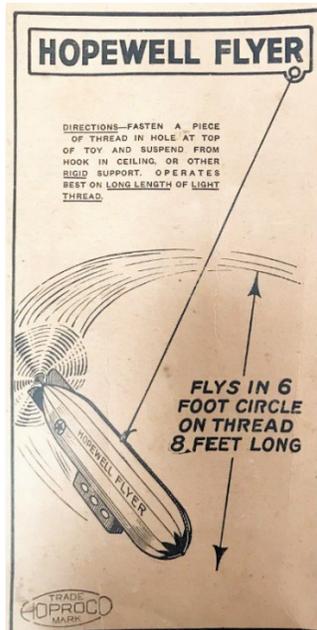
Gondola with motor



Labelling on end



Box front



Product sheet

HOPEWELL FLYER

TOY DIRIGIBLE—FLIES IN 6-FOOT CIRCLE ON THREAD 8 FEET LONG

- A well made, high-grade toy attractively decorated in red, gray and blue. Compares favorably with higher priced items.
- Equipped with powerful spring motor that will start dirigible flying from stand still and of type that improves with use. Large 4 1/2-inch propeller makes nearly 500 turns with one winding.
- HOPEWELL FLYERS are 9 inches in overall length, and boxed individually. Shipping carton contains 6 dozen Flyers and weighs approximately 30 pounds.

RETAILS AT 25c.

Sold by
Owens, Kreiser Co.,
31 East 17th Street
NEW YORK CITY

Made by
Hopewell Products Co.,
HOPEWELL, N. J.

"Hopewell Twin Flyer" - Spinning Dirigibles

"Two Air-Ships Circle Mooring Mast"

The Hopewell Twin Flyer (No. 24) is a whirling mechanical toy that spins a pair of dirigibles around a tower.

The same Hopewell Flyer dirigibles are suspended at opposite ends of a crossbar mounted on a three-legged pedestal. (Unlike the single Hopewell Flyer, there is no winding mechanism for the propeller, so the gondolas are empty.)

Pull the cord on the base to spin; the pull-string is self-retracting (no key to lose or winding required).

It is approximately 12 inches wide by 11 inches high, with two 9 inch dirigibles. The center central cylinder is yellow, and the arms and tripod legs are red.

The Hopewell Twin Flyer retailed at \$1.00, and was listed in ads at the same price [Christmas 1926], and for 89¢ [Christmas 1927].

Twin Flyer [Larry & Cindi Kianka]



Product sheet [David McCandless]

THE HOPEWELL
TWIN FLYER—No. 24

Approximate Dimensions—12" wide x 11" high; dirigibles 9" long.

Two Giant Air-Ships Circle Mooring Mast. Arranged with pull cord wind, easy for small child to operate.

- ¶ Big over-size number and value—brightly lithographed—rigid metal construction.
- ¶ Long life toy—no key to wind—a mere pull of the cord sends the ships on a long flight.
- ¶ Compactly boxed one to a carton. Shipping carton contains one dozen toys and weighs 16½ pounds.

RETAILS AT \$1.00

MADE BY
HOPEWELL PRODUCTS COMPANY, Inc.
Hopewell, - - - - - New Jersey

Hopewell "E-Z-Go-Round" - Carousel

The Hopewell "E-Z-Go-Round" (No. 33) is a merry-go-round / carousel, with "six brightly colored horses and riders in carnival colors," topped with a metal "Hopewell" pennant with gold lettering. There is a small Hoproco label / trademark on the bottom base.

Like the Twin Flyers, pull the cord on the base to spin; the pull-string is self-retracting (no key to lose or winding required).

The carousel is made from "light gauge sheet iron gayly lithographed," with the outline of the figures cut from the base floor and bent up.

It is 8 inches in diameter, and 7 inches high (10 inches to the top of the pennant).

The E-Z-Go-Round retailed for \$1.00, and was listed in ads at the same price [Christmas 1928], and for 69¢ [January 1928].

<p>E-Z-Go-Round [David McCandless]</p> 	<p>Product sheet [Larry & Cindi Kianka]</p> <p>THE HOPEWELL E-Z-GO-ROUND—No. 33</p>  <p>Approximate Dimensions—$8\frac{1}{4}$" in diameter—7" high. (10" to top of pennant)</p> <p>Toy Merry-Go-Round—Arranged with pull cord wind, easy for small child to operate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☛ Big over-size number and value—made of light gauge sheet iron gayly lithographed—metal pennant. ☛ Six brightly colored horses and riders in carnival colors. ☛ Long life toy—no key to wind—a mere pull of the cord sends the riders on a "merry whirl." ☛ Individually boxed in colored carton. Shipping carton contains one dozen toys and weighs 22 pounds. <p>RETAILS AT \$1.00</p> <hr/> <p>MADE BY HOPEWELL PRODUCTS COMPANY, Inc. Hopewell, - - - - - New Jersey</p>
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References

Information extracted and summarized from sources including books, reports, maps, deeds, newspapers, and photos.

Many of the original materials (i.e., documents, maps, aerials, and photos) come from the many contributors to the Hopewell Valley History Project and are shared on the site - see the Acknowledgements page (HopewellHistoryProject.org).

Comments, additions, and corrections are welcome.

See the companion Hopewell History Brief for more information and additional references on the Hoproco company and the factory property - **18 Burton Avenue - Stair / Toy Factory (1897)**

Thanks to the contributors who kindly provided information and materials, including:

- Families: Jim Pierson
- Neighbors: Ken & Connie McIndoe, Lois Grieves
- Collectors: Larry & Cindi Kianka, David McCandless, Craig Thompson