

Mom's Joy Room

2964 Fairmont Road • Morgantown, West Virginia 26501 • (304) 282-3671

"Willie & Lillie" — Carved Wood Cowboy Pair

Hand-Carved Western Folk Art • Articulated Figures • 11 Inches Each • Mid-20th Century

ESTIMATED WORTH

\$150 – \$275



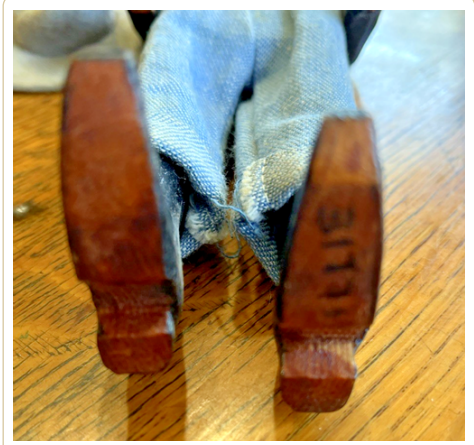
Willie & Lillie together, in their felt hats, black shirts, and cuffed denim



Willie, with his Greek-key print neckerchief



Lillie, with her plain frayed-edge neckerchief



Lillie's name stamped on her boot sole

History

The American whittled cowboy is a folk art tradition of its own. From the Depression era through the postwar decades,

carvers — ranch hands, shopkeepers, hobbyists working from porch steps and basement benches — produced small western figures for the sheer pleasure of it, and for the tourist and gift trade that grew up around dude ranches, roadside stands, and western-themed shops. The figures were carved, not turned: knife cuts shaping each face, painted features applied by hand, and bodies dressed in real stitched fabric so the little cowboys looked dressed for the range. Unlike factory-made toys, no two of these figures ever came out identical, and that individuality is precisely what collectors prize today.

This pair is a particularly personable example of the tradition. Each figure stands 11 inches tall, with a carved wooden head and painted face, carved wooden hands, black-painted western boots, a grey felt hat, black button-down shirt, thin belt with a square silver-toned buckle, and cuffed denim trousers. The carver gave each his own character: Willie wears a neckerchief printed with a Greek-key border pattern, fastened with a metal pin, and has dark brown carved hair; Lillie wears a plain cream neckerchief with a frayed edge, and lighter, honey-toned carved hair beneath her tilted hat. The tailoring of the tiny shirts, trousers, and scarves represents hours of hand sewing, all of it original and intact.

Two features raise this pair above the ordinary. First, the arms are **articulated** — jointed so they move up and down, allowing the figures to be posed, a construction step most carvers skipped and one that is a recognized mark of finer folk art work. Second, the figures carry their own names: "WILLIE" and "LILLIE" are stamped in dark ink on the soles of their respective boots. Named folk art figures are rare; the marking tells us these were made as a specific pair of characters, identified from the day they were carved, and that identity has followed them for the better part of a century. They joined the Mom's Joy Room collection in October 2026.

"Somebody carved them, named them, dressed them, and posed their little arms — and then kept them together for all these years. They ride as a pair."

Features & Description

- Pair of hand-carved western folk art figures, 11 inches tall each, mid-20th century
- Carved wooden heads with painted faces; carved wooden hands with visible grain
- Articulated arms — jointed to move up and down for posing
- Original hand-sewn clothing: grey felt hats, black button-down shirts, cuffed denim trousers, thin belts with square silver-toned buckles
- Willie: Greek-key print neckerchief with metal pin; dark brown carved hair
- Lillie: plain cream frayed-edge neckerchief; honey-toned carved hair, hat worn at a tilt
- Black-painted carved western boots; soles stamped "WILLIE" and "LILLIE" in dark ink
- Age-consistent wear to fabric edges and paint; all original, never separated

Collector's Notes

Attribution is stylistic: no maker's signature accompanies the name stamps, and the pair is consistent with American hobbyist or small-workshop western carving of the mid-20th century. The boot-sole name stamps function as original identification and give the pair documented character provenance — a genuine value advantage over anonymous figures. The articulated arms add further premium. Value assumes the pair sold together, as they have always been. Display out of direct sunlight to preserve the painted faces and felt hats, and handle the jointed arms gently; the fabric clothing can be dusted with a soft brush but never washed.

Mom's Joy Room — *Where Obsolescence Ends and Wonder Begins*

Sandy Wade, Proprietor