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What is a billiken and where are they from

Finding Billiken's Roots – People behind the Throne How does a newly patented God inspire a global cult in a few short months? On the surface anyway, Billiken's story reads like a tale of success and success. Designed by a Kansas City art teacher and illustrator named Florence Pretz, Billiken quickly became a worldwide phenomenon. Long before the Internet, Billen was a viral memm, his smiling face appeared on everything from dolls to postcards to jewelry. Within weeks, billiken statue screens lined the windows of bookstores and stations, closely tracking billiken banks and dolls in toy stores and department stores across the country, and soon and around the world. Of course, the reason for his popularity was not his appearance alone; it was also his philosophy and what he represented. He was and continues to win God, God of Good luck, god of things as they should be. But exactly how Billiken achieved this amazing popularity, and who was responsible for it, has never been explained before. The facts published so far are sketchy and mainly derived from the arthphses themselves. It is known that billiken's first appearance was a figure of plaster or chalk. Gypsum figurines have a small metal medallion or coin inset in the plaster, which gives a few clues about the early days of the Billy's craze. The earliest versions read by the Craftsman's Guild, Highland Park, Ill. The later versions were a very similar design, labeled by the Billiken Company of Chicago. Both of these designs are indicated by copyright and trademark, but do not mention the patent. There is also a third version of the medallion; a more ornate design that credits both the Craftsman's Guild and the Biliken company. This design also shows that billiken patent was granted, indicating Reg. U. Pat. Off and granting a patent date. Questions Remain: Who was Florence Pretz? What was the Craftsman Guild? And what were the people in the Billiken Company? This article finally reveals for the first time, an inside look at the people behind the Throne - Billiken Mother, his Father and his Dutch uncles. Billiken's mother - Florence Pretz and Billiken birth. Is Billiken really Canadian? It is known that Billiken was first given the life of his mother, Florence Pretz of Kansas City, as she had a design patent granted october 6, 1908, that shows Billiken's drawing (though it's simply called a statue). The patent was granted on June 12, 1908, but Billiken was already well known then in the US and even before it in Canada. Billiken's first known public appearances were in a Canadian magazine called Canada West, Sunset Provinces magazine in 1907. This magazine was published in Winnipeg, edited by Herbert Vanderhoof and by Vanderhoof-Gunn. It succeeded in 1910 in another Vanderhoof publication called Canada Monthly. Between May 1907 and January 1908, Billiken appeared in five historys of canada's West. All this was written by Sarah Hamilton Birchall and illustrated by Florence Pretz. The two were friends, both of whom hailed from Kansas City as they moved to Chicago, and may be roommates around this time. The text of these stories can be seen on the Billiken Stories page and includes titles such as While Billiken Slept[1], Billiken's Umbrella[2] and Billiken in the Nasturtium Vine[3]. Birchall takes his inspiration for these stories from the canadian poet Bliss Carman's poem Mr. Moon, a little human song that appears in the 1896 book More Songs from Vagabondia. In fact, one of the 1907 Billiken stories, mr. Cricket and His Flute[4] are about another character from Carman's poem and even cites Mr. Moon's abstention. Together with Miss Pretz's statements, this leaves no doubt as to the origin of Billiken's name. Whether it was first given by Florence Pretz or the title appeared on the illustrative of Birchall's stories, the source of the title was a poem by Bliss Carman. You can see these stories on the original Bilken page. Billiken was about losing his wings, however, and metamorphosis from young children like Canada's tale to a mighty God - things God like they should be. In this process, he acquired a US patent, financial sponsors and a throne; but he never lost his impish grin. Billiken's dramatic US debut was a full-page chicago daily tribune on May 3, 1908. The article contained two pictures of Ms. Pretz, one in a remarkable portrait, and the other showing her dressed in kimono burning incense in front of her idol Billiken: A quarter of the page is taken in a large drawing by Billiken, who was soon taking the city by storm. Other illustrations of the Japanese theme are accompanied by an article and cement billiken asian heritage concept. These illustrations have the copyright of Atkinson, Mentzer & Grover (remember this name). The article begins: Someday you'll see a queer idol whose photo appears on this page, grinning you from the top of an office table, or from the altar of some of your friend's den, or from the window of an art and crafts store. You may or may not see its creator, Ms. Florence Pretz, a young Chicago artist, but her story is tied to the god Billiken in a way that proves her claim to be a mascot. And who is stranger when Miss Pretz's friends look at it and then look at her they declare that there is a hint of the family's resemblance to a smile and they wonder if there is any strange, distant sibling among them, spirit at least. He is the god of things as they should be said Miss Pretz She set him up for her best girl friend to look at him after casting him out of clay and having him throw plasterboard. There, smiling ponies, Billy. Then two friends began burning incense against him and worshipping him, and it wasn't long before he began to prove his credentials as a mascot to bring them success. First, a friend came to Chicago as a shorthand, bringing a plaster pass to Billy with her and setting him up in the apartment of his little bachelor girl. The next thing she knew, her little book of poems, which she wrote and dreamed of in girls' fashion, found a publisher - perhaps you know it - it's called The Book of Singing Winds. Then, seeing her success, she had the courage to take a copy of her friend's little god Billiken forward to publishers, artists and other formidable people- anyone who would launch it in Chicago. The article continues about how Ms. Pretz has been dreaming about things in Japanese and drawing Japanese sketches since she was a young girl, even speculating that she must be Japanese in a former life. All this helps to make it clear that Billiken's inspiration was taken from the mysterious Orient. The article goes on to describe how plasterboard Billikens was now produced in hundreds and sold in an art and crafts store, candy store and art shop, and how it allowed Tinker Bell (as she was supposedly nicknamed) Pretz the opportunity to come to Chicago and work with her friend in a little studio in Highland Park. The article ends with saying two friends burned incense before The Night of Bilken, never skipping the process, and the results of that orders began to come to their drawings. He was the original official success-maker for all of us, said a friend who first started god going to Chicago. [5] The friend mentioned in the article was, of course, Sarah Hamilton Birchall, the author of billiken stories in The Canada West magazine. Birchall was not only a poet but a lyricist and later one of the first women in the advertising industry with Kenyon & Eckhardt. It is likely that some of the early Billiken lines were drawn by Birchall. As a great piece of public relations, tribune's launch of the article has really reinforced the link between Billiken and sales and marketing from the beginning. In the July 1908 issue of Canada West, an editorial by Herbert Vanderhoof noted the instant popularity Billiken was enjoying in the States. He wrote: Billiken and Canadian Western readers are old friends. For more than a year a small gnome with his infectious smile was a welcome guest at thousands of Canadian homes. It was in this magazine and for Canadian readers that he made his first public appearance, but he existed even before it was a little Throw in the artist of its creator, Florence Pretz. Now in the States, he's become an idol of the hour. Newspapers have taken it, and the public usually buys it to the right and left... our gnome has become a public property, a madness these days. But we have a sense of ownership, because first we knew him. Sarah Hamilton Birchall, a poet and author, told us all about him, and explained her queer capers. With Ms. Birchall as a guide, we didn't peer down his hollow log, and peep under grass knives to find him in his native haunts long before Americans ever heard of him? Really. And we also smiled with Billiken because we couldn't help it. [6] Several Canadian Western stories about Ms. Pretz can be seen on Florence Pretz's page. A later article in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch provides more insight into the thoughts behind Billiken's creation, as well as confirming the source of his name. Ms. Pretz says her intention was to make the image of hope and happiness sort of live up. She claims that she even wrote a line from Rubiyat lobster Khayam on paper, folded it and put it in the belly of the first clay statue she made. She says that the poem was this: Ah, Love, could you and I conspire with fate, realize this sorry scheme of things in its entirety, Do we not break it down bits – and then again mold it closer to the heart desire. Then she continued to say that she got the name Billiken from a poem called Mr. Moon by Bliss Carman. [7] Billican's other creative account appeared in an article in the Chicago Daily Tribune, which in 1912. On Valentine's Day, Florence Pretz's wedding to Robert A. Smalley, a Lincoln NE car dealer, was announced. According to the article, Ms. Pretz was previously an art teacher at hand-teaching high school in Kansas City, who received the inspiration for Billiken in 1896 while looking at a collection of grouchy looking gods owned by Ms. Floy Campbell's Art Department school. They brought Miss Pretz's mind to a fashion god who would smile and bring her prayers to cheer rather than fame. [8] Billiken's Father and Family - Edwin Osgood Grover and The Craftsman's Guild of Course, in order to become the main commercial product of Billiken need marketing muscle and sales know-how. The early days of that were presented by Edwin O. Grover, who had an excellent career as a salesman, editor, publisher and professor. He was also the founder of the Crafts Guild of Highland Park and Boston, a free cooperative of artists, writers and craftsmen. The guild was part of the American art and crafts movement and produced educational children's toys, beautiful limited-edition books, furniture and other items, including Billiken. Edwin O. Grover began his career with Ginn & Co., a textbook publisher, as sales representative in the Midwest. There is no documentation to support this concept, but perhaps he met a young Florence Pretz who taught in Kansas City that year. After spending several years learning the art of selling, Grover was promoted to editorial assistant at Ginn's office in Boston. After that, it was a move to Rand McNally in Chicago, where Grover quickly worked his way up to the editor-in-chief of the books. 1906 Grover tied himself to the publishing form of Atkinson and Mentzer, which became Atkinson, Mentzer & Grover, with offices in Chicago and Boston. This company has published text books, an industrial arts yearbook and even invaded art supplies, creating a pencil to compete with Crayola. He went on to become the president of Prang Company, a printing, publishing and educational arts supply company, (remember those black cans of watercolors?) a few years before entering the academic community as Rollins College's first professor of books. He served at the Rollins Faculty in Winter Park, Florida, for more than 20 years. Undoubtedly, he was familiar with patron and collector of arts and crafts charles hosmer morse. Morse was a Chicago industrialist who built the Fairbanks-Morse Company and was the founder of Winter Park, as well as Rollins College. Mr. Morse's collection forms the basis for the Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art in the Winter Park, where you can view several copper pieces produced by the Craftsmen's Guild and donated to the Museum by Frances Grover, Edwin's daughter. [10] Grover had the reputation of the best kind of enablers. It has provided encouragement, inspiration, direction and leadership for many partners and students over the years. For example, while rand monally he published Sunbonnet Babies, successfully read primer author his sister and artisan guild member Euallie Osgood Grover. This has become a standard text for US reading training. Or once, while having dinner at the home of her friend and guild member Lucy Fitch Perkins. Grover noticed several of her drawings. With his encouragement and publishing connections, Perkins continued to create the beloved Twins of the World Series, whose twenty-six volumes introduced children to cultures and customs from around the world in the early 20th century. Of course, much of Billiken's charm has always been Billiken's philosophy. The poems and expressions that accompanied Billiken distinguished him from other charm puppets and talismans of the era. If there is any doubt grover's role on Billiken will only consider the book titles he authored and edited during the Billiken years ago. Sheer names are enough for his fatherhood, father's sign on son set: I Wish You Joy (1908), Just Being Happy - A Little Book of Happy Thoughts (1912), The Book Good Cheer- A Little Book of Cheery Thoughts (1909), The Book of Courage - Little Book of Brave Thoughts (1916), From Friend to Friend - Friendship Partnership (1916), and much more. In May 1908, the Chicago Daily Tribune began appearing in billiken's first ads. The launch advertisement noted that Billiken was the guild's mascot, available in two guild stores: the Artisan Guild Store on Wabash Ave. and the Crafts guild kitchen on Michigan Ave., as well as Marshall Field & Co. in the Artware section. The price was 75 cents, [11] In the second advertisement there were several billy philosophies and this combination turned out to be a winning ticket. The Billiken phenomenon was born. It was likely Grover who added copyright notices everywhere Billiken appeared, and perhaps it prompted Ms. Pretz to apply for her first and only patent. But Grover had a full responsibility to publishing without encouraging young artists like Florence Pretz to produce and sell novelty items, and Billiken grew too fast to be a part-time company. So in the fall of 1908, just a few months after Billiken arrived in Chicago, Billiken found himself at the center of a new corporation, Dutch Uncles - Billiken Company Billiken Company was founded with \$60,000 worth of capital in illinois on September 24, 1908,[12] three men: Charles P. Monash, Toby Rubovits and James Rosenthal. [13] Their purpose was to maximise the commercial exploitation of the image of Billican, the mission they diligently carry out. In its short, impressively successful history, the company has also been involved in several lawsuits and may have even exploited the creator of Billiken itself. The first of the three owners, Charles Pincus Monash, was a local businessman who had a company that made steam valves as a sort of device used in the radiator at the end. The company he founded, Monash-Younker Company, is still operating in Elburn, IL.. Carol Monash knew not only the knowledge of capital provision and production, but also the value of patents. In fact, it is credited with the inventive design support statue, the subject of U.S. patent 39,769, applied for on October 21, 1908 and granted on January 12, 1909. This design became the throne of Biliken. The throne was one of the main accessories that helped popularize the plaster statuette. In the end, Billy had a place to sit in the way the believers worshiped him. The image of the Billiken Throne patent is pictured here: The second investor, Toby Rubovits, was one of the largest printing companies in Chicago in the early 1900s. He himself has also published several books. Rubovitz had a high level of social ties as well as business relationships in publishing, printing, retail and He was

probably responsible for a huge range of goods that were blessed with the image of Biliken. With wide connections in New York, the sales office was opened there. The announcement of the new offices shows a unique Billiken combination feel good philosophy and hard sell. It's from Publishers Weekly in November, 1908: Billiken Good Luck God finally reached the East, and promises to add to the nation's gay, if not help-along business. Billiken, a grinning little Japanese image, is an hour's craze. His cult is spreading across America. His worshippers increase every minute. He is the creator of happiness, a frowns chaser. You have to smile at him. When you smile, you must feel good to settle down. When you are in good humor, everything looks brighter; you work with a better vim; you see hopeful sides of things, not the worst. It throws a spell over you that has the same effect as mental healing. You think you can do everything – and back all the achievements lies in confidence. That's why Billiken brings success. Billiken is not for sale. It lent you a hundred years, a rate of one cent per year, paid in advance. Billiken is made of different sizes that may or may not sit on the throne. A few months ago, a girl created it in Chicago, the Craftsman's Guild. Since then it has been reproduced and made thousands smile. A leading book and stationary home found him a marketing bringer and many exploited it in windows to show his superiority. It will attract custom and increase profits simply because that smile is contagious. Anyone who sees it will want to buy more or less goods. Billiken will therefore be a factor in the development of wealth. The image can be ordered from the Billiken Company's old colony building in Chicago, or from their Eastern agents, Billiken Sales Co. 90 Centre Street, New York. [14] James Rosenthal, the company's third ceo, was a partner at Rosenthal, Kurz & Hirschl, a leading law firm of the day. He likely led some controversy in that entangled Billiken first year. One of the most successful Billiken products was the 1909 E.I. Horsman doll that had a soft teddy bear body and a composite Billiken head. At one point, the Billiken Company sought a ban against a competitor who was selling a similar doll called Killiblues that came in full inspiring poetry like Billiken. [15] Otherwise, Billiken was refused the registered trademark of the word Billiken because the designs had already been granted a patent and the name Billiken was already copyrighted. The trade mark would therefore, in principle, provide protection for an object in principle, seven years of design patent. [16] Thus, perhaps in the long run, the patent was not the best possible protection, as it only lasted until 1915, when the Design of Biliken officially entered the public domain. It is not known how much money Billiken generates for its owners over the years, but given its popularity it has to be high. Unfortunately, Florence Pretz felt deceived. She agreed to license the rights to billiken patent for a pallor \$30 per month. Just eighteen months after Billiken's first appearance in the newspaper, the Chicago Daily Tribune headline reads: Creator casts Off Billiken. Ms. Florence Pretz Says Idol no longer brings its happiness to seeking to profit dollars chicago producers answer royalties are paid as the term licensing agreement described in the article is not very clear. The company's lawyer, James Rosenthal, alleges that the Billiken Company secured its rights from the Craftsman Guild and Edwin O. Grover, its head. He also said that his company quickly paid any considerations, and that it was up to the Guild and Grover to pay Ms. Pretz royalty, which she admits was \$30 a month. Obviously, seeing such success in Billiken and getting such a small amount led Florence Pretz to become so bitter that according to the article, she would rather get out of her way than see Billiken Throne, Billiken pin, cuff buttons or anything else that is based on the Billiken model. The article goes on to raise the question of Would Smash Billiken if you had a chance? - to which Miss Pretz replied: I would really like to. [17] However, as one might expect from the woman who created Billiken, Ms. Pretz is described in this same article as a hard work that would have originated another innovative product that aims to touch public fancy as well as Billiken did. While she never accomplished that, at least we can expect that she had fun trying. To close the discussion rather than quote the canon of Billiken's hard-selling philosophy of happiness, perhaps it would be more appropriate to present a poem where Florence Pretz first met Billiken, as if in a dream. Perhaps the next great God is still here somewhere, among the Little People, just waiting to be patented. From the book More Songs from Vagabondia, here is Bliss Carman's poem: Mr. Moon, a small-man song O Moon, Mr. Moon, When comin' down? Down on the top of the hill, down to the glen, Out in the clearin', Play with small men? Moon, Mr. Moon, when you comin' down? O, Moon, hurry up your stumps! Don't you hear Bullfrog Callin for his wife, and old black cricketer A-wheezin his life? Hurry up your stumps, and get your pumps! Moon, Mr. Moon, when you comin' down? O Mr. Moon, hurry up! The current needejos there is a whisper slow; Rivers a-wimplin'To and Or you'll miss the song! Moon, Mr. Moon, when you comin' down? Oh, Mr. Moon, we're all here! Honey Bug, Thistledrift, White-imp, Weird, Wryface, Billiken, Quidnunc, Queered; We're all here, and the coast is clear! Moon, Mr. Moon, when you comin' down? Oh, Mr. Moon, we're little men! Dewlap, Pussymouse, Ferntip, Freak, Drink-again, Shambler, Talkytalk, Squeak; Three times ten of our little men! Moon, Mr. Moon, when you comin' down? Oh, Mr. Moon, we're all ready! Tallenough, Squaretoes, Amble, Tip, Buddybud, Heigho, Little Black Pip; We're all ready, and the wind walks steady! Moon, Mr. Moon, when you comin' down? And Mr. Moon, we're thirty points; Yellowbeard, Piper, Lieabed, Toots, Meadowbee, Moonboy, Bully-in-boots; Three times more than thirty points. Moon, Mr. Moon, when you comin' down? O Mr. Moon, keep your eyes peeled; Beware of windward, Or you will miss the fun, down the acre where wheat waves run; Keep your eyes peeled open. Moon, Mr. Moon, when you comin' down? Oh, Mr. Moon, there's not much time! Hurry up, if you're a comedian, you're lazy old bones! You can sleep in-morrow while Buzbuz drones; There's not much time before church bells chime. Moon, Mr. Moon, when you comin' down? O Mr. Moon, just see the clover! Soon we go Where grey goose went When all her money was spent, spent, spent! Down through the clover when the revelation ended! Moon, Mr. Moon, when you comin' down? Oh moon, Mr. Moon, when you're comin' down? Down Where's the Good Folk Dance Ring, Down, Where's Little Folk Sing? Moon, Mr. Moon, when you comin' down? Links: [1] Canadian West; Volume 2 No 1, May 1907. Volume 2 No 3, July 1907. of 2 August 1907 No 4 [4] West Canada; of 2 October 1907 No. 6 [5] Chicago Daily Tribune; 3 May 1908 [6] The West of Canada; of 4 July 1908 No. 3 [7] St. Louis Post-Dispatch; November 1909 [8] Chicago Daily Tribune; February 14, 1912 [9] [10] American arts and crafts from the Morse collection. Object Guide Winter Park, FL 2009 [11] Chicago Daily Tribune; 15 May 1908 [12] Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of State of State of Illinois [13] American Station; 3 October 1908 [14] Publishers Weekly; (1908-11-23) 23 November 1908 [15] Federal Reporter Vol. 174; p. 830. 1910 [16] Official Journal of the United States Patent Office; 143 vol. 1 June 1909

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