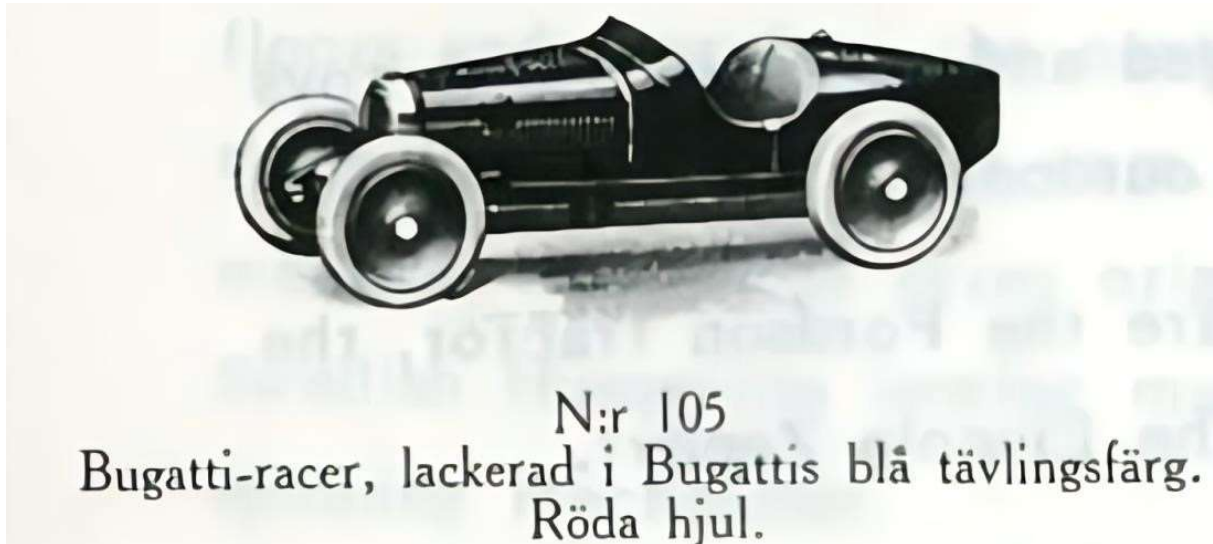


The Skoglund & Olson Bugatti toy car.

Possibly the oldest and rarest scale model of a type 35, almost as old as the original.
A study and compilation of available information by Bart Oosterling (Januari 2025)



Detail from the Skoglund & Olson 1931-1932 Christmas catalog (Swedish Toy museum, Stockholm)

Introduction

Where in the USA they were quite common, cast iron toys were rarely made in Europe. For a period, the Swedish iron foundry Skoglund & Olson was an exception to that. For a period, they included cast iron toys in their product range, next to their normal cast iron products such as pans, wood stoves, waffle irons, lamp posts, stoves and garden furniture. It was not strange to use this material for toys too, as Sweden was rich in high quality iron ore.

Skoglund & Olson

The foundry and factory was opened by Erik Gustav Skoglund and Axel Olson around 1874 in Gefle (nowadays: Gävle). Apparently they were initially inexperienced and experimented in making several different types of products. In 1889 Skoglund struggled with his health and retired. Olson stayed and continued the business with success. He increased production considerably in 1890, until he sold the company in 1902. The company developed further and in 1914 it became a public limited company (A.B. = Aktie Bolag). In the 1930s it had approximately 260 employees in production and approximately 30 in the office. In advertising materials of the firm, the abbreviation "S&O" was also written phonetically as "SetO".

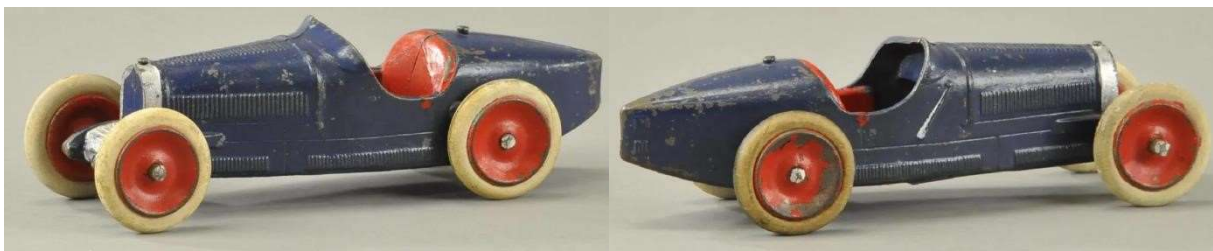
Toys like cars and trucks, a farm tractor and an aeroplane were produced by Skoglund & Olson from ca. 1927-1938. It is said that director Emil Söderström's son Uno, who later himself became head of the company for a few years, had brought a toy motorcycle when he came home from a study trip in the United States. This gave rise to the idea that the company would produce toys. Using photographs and original drawings from Volvo, Scania Vabis and Chevrolet, the workshop's skilled model carpenters built scale models of buses and fire engines, tow trucks and timber trucks. From the wood models, castings moulds were made. The vehicles were then cast in two halves (lengthwise) which were riveted together, painted and fitted with axles and wheels with rubber tyres, and sometimes

additional cast parts. Later there was also a model of a Lincoln Zephyr that was cast in 1 piece. There was also a fantasy model of an airplane .

Only few customers probably bought the toys due to the depression from 1929 to 1939. Only the wealthier could afford to buy these toys for their children. Although “toys”... they can hardly be called toys for children; large cast iron models are quite heavy as a toy. Dropping a heavy toy on a child’s foot or on a wooden floor will certainly cause some injury or damage.

There is no information about production numbers available. As in a foundry one can quite easily make products to order, it is expected there was a limited stock that was supplemented when there was demand from incoming orders. Apparently the production moulds for the toys were destroyed in 1939.

Skoglund & Olson was sold in 1956 to AB Ekstöms Maskineaffär (=AB Ektröms Engine Business). This company was taken over in 1966 by the Huskvarna Group (sewing machines, garden tools, lawn mowers). Skoglund & Olson's last casting products were manufactured on November 10, 1967, and the foundry was sold in 1968. The factory ceased all production in 1970. The factory complex still exists, but has now been made suitable for small-scale businesses, such as a printing plant, and divided into homes. Toys from Skoglund & Olson are now considered quite rare and are in demand by specialised collectors. In the same time when Skoglund & Olson made toys, there was one other foundry in Sweden that also made some cast toy cars, but in aluminium: this was the EBÖ Gjuteri in Eskilstuna.



Photos from the Bertoia Auctions catalog (June 2017)

The Skoglund & Olson Bugatti model toy

The Swedish word for a model toy car is a “Leksaksbil”. A cast iron model a “gjutjärnsmodell”. The length of the Bugatti model is ca. 18.5 cm, which makes it about 1:20 scale. It has a mid to dark blue painted body “in Bugatti’s blue racing colour” (“lackerad i Bugattis blå tävlingsfärg”), red painted wheels (“Röda hjul”) and seats, with some painted silver accents: radiator shell and front apron, handbrake lever and fuel cap. There was no steering wheel, no window or exhaust. The product number is cast on the inside: N^o 105 and on the other side the makers’ name: S&O Gefle. The overall body shape is a simplified but good visual match with the original. The radiator shape is an approximation of reality: there is no tapering of the horseshoe shape on the bottom: the sides are parallel. One could say it corresponds more with the wider type 35(B) rather than the narrower radiators. On both bonnet halves there are 2 rows of louvres: one on the side and one on the top, like the earlier type 35’s. There is no supercharger hole. Louvres are also present along the chassis rails and on the pointed tail.

The body consists of 2 cast Iron parts: the left and right halves of the car. The halves are not fully symmetrical; possibly they have an interlocking function or it made assembly easier. On the underside the model is hollow where possible, without compromising the shape of the model when in normal upright position. The halves are held together by a single rivet horizontally across, behind the backrest of the seat: the rivet ends are hidden from direct view behind the rear wheels. The seam between the two parts remained clearly visible. The model is completed with 2 axles that further

connect the body halves, 4 metal wheels with white rubber tyres. The axle ends are hammered to lock the wheels. It is unknown if the car had some kind of packaging or that it was sold as-is. Considering that this cast model predates the very common but much smaller (1:48) diecast Matchbox Yesteryear Bugatti 35 by some 30 years, it is a quality toy with good details.

Rarity and value

From searching the www I have concluded that there are at least 9 models in existence. These have rarely been seen on the toy collectors market 2003-2025. All have age related wear; two are in what I would call good condition in relation to their age. On the other end of the scale there are two fully repainted models and a completely paintless model. In between there are four "patinated" models with missing or age-damaged rubber tires, and/or small chips of the iron missing.

Of the nine models found on the www, sale prices of seven were found. These ranged from about €500,- to about €3.500,- including auction premiums. The most recent Bugatti model sold at auction (January 26, 2025) reached €1.750,- including auction premiums.

If anybody has more or better information, or photos of other existing models, or one for sale at a reasonable price: please contact the author.

On the next page there is a collage made of photos of the other 8 models found on the www.

Sources used:

Photos:

- Bertoia Auctions
- Auktionshuset Kolonn
- Pook & Pook, Inc. with Noel Barrett
- Auktionshuset Thelin & Johansson
- Auktionisten i Södertälje
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Information and advert:

- Wikipedia
- Gamlaleksaker.se/gjutjarnsmodeller/skoglund-olsson
- Toymuseum.se
- Arbetsblad.se
- Europeana.eu





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