

Williamsburg[®]

COLLECTIBLES

MADAME ALEXANDER[®]

For more than 80 years, Madame Alexander dolls have infused a sense of wonder and excitement—in both children and adults alike. The Alexander Doll Company was founded by “Madame” Beatrice Alexander Behrman, the daughter of Russian immigrants. She was raised over her father’s doll hospital—the first in America—and often played with the dolls waiting to be mended. While working in her father’s shop, she saw many broken-hearted girls coming in to have their beloved dolls repaired. She vowed to one day create an unbreakable doll that children could have forever. Starting with inexpensive cloth dolls (during World War I, when times were hard), she eventually worked her way up to innovative hard-plastic ones that to this day do not break. By the 1930s, she had a doll factory and storefront, and major department stores were selling her creations.

The company is credited with a plethora of toy-industry firsts, including creating composition dolls with painted features and sleep eyes, using distinctive face molds, creating dolls in honor of living people (Queen Elizabeth, the Dionne Quints), and issuing dolls based on licensed characters (the first: Scarlett O’Hara). There are even Madame Alexander dolls in the Smithsonian.

These fine-quality, hand-crafted creations proved the perfect showcase for 18th-century fashion and culture. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation began working with the Alexander Doll Company in 2000 to offer collectible dolls with both beauty and history. Product developers examine period illustrations in the Colonial Williamsburg collections for inspiration on costumes, hairstyles, and accessories. They also consider special occasions, pastimes, and activities experienced in 18th-century Williamsburg to determine a theme for each doll, such as tea drinking or traveling. Each doll is a WILLIAMSBURG exclusive, and many are limited editions. All come with a certificate of authenticity. Together, WILLIAMSBURG and Madame Alexander bring to the market exquisitely detailed dolls that can be passed down through generations.