

Williamsburg®

COLLECTIBLES

VAILLANCOURT



When Gary Vaillancourt gave his wife, Judi, a gift of three antique chocolate molds in 1984, neither of them knew it would signal the start of a new family business. Fascinated by the exquisite workmanship in her antique molds, Judi, an artist by training, filled them with a plaster-like substance and hand-painted the resulting "chalkware." The finished products were stunning. By painting the figurines, Judi had unlocked the mold-makers' intricate artistry. While the mold-makers' palette had been limited—quite literally—to chocolate brown, Judi's colors brought the figures to life. Particularly compelling are the hand-painted eyes on the faces of each figure, which display a richness of emotion completely

hidden when the pieces were molded in chocolate. In the years since, Judi's collection has grown to more than 3,000 vintage molds—one of the largest collections in the world.

She uses her molds to make hand-painted collectible chalkware figures for all major holidays, including distinctive Santas and bunnies created exclusively for WILLIAMSBURG. Colonial Williamsburg also maintains a collection of antique chocolate molds, so Judi was enthusiastic at the opportunity to bring to life our examples from the 18th and 19th centuries. Working with our curators and product developers, she now crafts our line of beautiful chalkware with period attire and poses.

Unlike most Christmas collectibles, which are manufactured overseas, Vaillancourt chalkware figures are still made by hand in Sutton, Massachusetts. The most popular of these designs are also available as hand-blown glass ornaments, which stand out from others on the market because they are painted with a matte, or unglazed, finish. Not only does the matte finish better complement the companion chalkware pieces, but it allows the subtlety and richness of even the tiniest hand-painted details to stand out.