WHAT IS AN AMERICAN GIRL DOLL?

- The first dolls were created in 1986 by Pleasant Company, which is now a part of Mattel.
- All the dolls are approximately 18 inches in height and portray girls ages eight to eleven from various time periods in American history.
- Each doll is unique and diverse.
- This product line aims to teach aspects of American history through a six-book series from the perspective of an 8- to 11-year-old girl living in that time period. Significant, but often sensitive topics, such as child labor, child abuse, poverty, racism, slavery, animal abuse and war are covered in an appropriate manner for the intended young audience.
- The company has been awarded the Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Award 8 times.
Dolls available in the CLPL Collection include:

- Kaya, 1764
- Caroline Abbott*, 1812
- Josefina Montoya, 1824
- Cécile Rey*, 1854
- Marie Grace Gardner*, 1854
- Addy Walker, 1864
- Samantha Parkington, 1904
- Rebecca Rubin, 1914
- Kit Kittredge, 1934
- Julie Albright, 1974
- Mary Ellen Larkin, 1954
- Melody Ellison, 1964**

* Dolls not available anymore – Currently in Archived Collection
** Newest Doll in BeForever Collection, Released 2016
DOLLS IN THE LIBRARY

- In 2014, Amy Bloodworth donated the first set of dolls in memory of her mother, Rhonda Cribbs Junkin
- Staff worked to create a check out policy tailored specifically to these dolls
  - Can only be checked out on an adult library user’s card
  - Adult library user must read and sign the American Girl Doll Family Contract prior to checking out the AG Doll
  - This contract outlines check out periods (14 days), over due fines (50¢ per day), replacement costs (up to $165.00), and general information regarding small pieces and supervision while the child interacts with the doll.
  - One doll per family
- Dolls are stored in a locked case at all times, staff member must pull the doll for a family if requested
- Dolls circulate between 4 branch library locations
- Within 6 months four more dolls were ordered and added to the collection after the library requested additional funding from the Columbus-Lowndes Friends of the Library
- Since 2014 we have acquired all of the current dolls in the BeForever collection, including three that have been moved to the Doll Archives
THE EXPERIENCE

Each kit comes with the following items:

- Carrying case
- Doll
- Bed
- Hairbrush
- Original book “Meet ____”
- A journal for the child or user to write down their shared experiences with the doll
- Historical fact sheet that outlines events, people, and places specific to the Columbus and Lowndes County area during the doll's time period
NOT JUST PLAYING WITH DOLLS

- Project allowed for collaboration across two departments that rarely get to collaborate - Children’s Services Department and the Local History Department (Archives)

- One page sheets, often front and back, with text and photographs created by the archivist

- Each historical fact sheet describes what life would have been like each doll if she had lived in Columbus and Lowndes County during her specific time period

- Idea was taken from the Bull Run Regional Library in Manassas, Virginia

- While we are not the only library offering these dolls as a part of our check out services, we are one of just a few that provide a localized historical journey through each doll’s time period
What if Cécile lived in Columbus, MS?

If Cécile Rey lived in Louisiana instead of France she would have grown up hearing the stories of the people who fought against slavery. Mississippi, a slave state, was a major player in the transatlantic slave trade, and the state is home to many historic sites related to the civil rights movement. If Cécile had lived in Mississippi, she might have been inspired by the bravery of people like Medgar Evers, who was assassinated in 1963 in Jackson, Mississippi.

What if Josephina lived in Columbus, MS?

The town of Columbus was once the site of the town of Josephina Montoya lived in 1824 with her family. Their home was a small adobe house on the edge of town. The town was founded in 1821 by Josephina’s father, general of the Mexican army, who established the town as a military post.

Learning history through play

Cécile Rey, 1854

Josephina Montoya, 1824

Front
DISCOVERING OUR PAST WITH AMERICAN GIRL DOLLS

- CLPL received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Gilder Lehrman Institute to present public programming on Civil Rights in 2015.

- Four dolls were chosen to represent three very distinct time periods in the past:
  - Kaya (1764), Marie-Grace Gardner (1854), Cécile Ray (1854), and Julie Albright (1974)

- This program included a short historical presentation followed by exploration of three activity booths.

- Activity booths were tailored specifically to each time period and included a hands-on craft from that time.
KAYA, 1764
CÉCILE REY & MARIE-GRACE GARDNER, 1854
Kaya loved beading with her friends. They would sit for hours and bead jewelry just like the necklace she has on in the picture. Choose your own ten beads and string them with your favorite color of stretchy string. Then let an adult tie them for you.
TIE DYING WITH JULIE!

Julie and her friends would tie dye all kinds of fabrics for skirts, like the one she’s wearing, backpacks, and headbands in the 60’s and 70’s! Take your t-shirt or one of the fabric squares, push it up in the middle with your finger and pull it straight down. Now take it and section it off with rubber bands to look like a caterpillar. Spray each section with the color of your choice, put it in a plastic bag, and dry it for 15 minutes in your dryer at home.
Tie Dying with Julie!

Write a poem or draw a picture of the tie dye designs, pick it up, put it in the middle with your fingers and start painting. Keep going until it is full. Take off with water and let it dry for 15 minutes in your wet clothes. Put it in a sealed bag, and dry for a day or two.
Kids loved playing with marbles in the 1800’s! Marie Grace and Cécile Rey did too!
First, decorate your fabric circle with markers.
Then pull a piece of string through its holes.
After this you can cut three circles out of clay and roll them into marbles for your bag.
Let them dry for 24 hours.
CHALLENGES AND GROWTH

- Involves writing complex historical themes on a third grade reading level
- While the subjects are educational, they can also be very sensitive
  - Slavery
  - Native American Life
  - Civil Rights
- Allows for collaboration among departments
- Provides new, forward thinking programming that ties in elements of free play and imagination along with historical facts and learning
- Collection and programming will be continually expanded
NOT JUST PLAYING WITH DOLLS: TEACHING LOCAL HISTORY WITH AMERICAN GIRL DOLLS

For more information please contact
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Read more about the American Girl Doll program at the Columbus-Lowndes Public Library System at http://www.cdispatch.com/lifestyles/article.asp?aid=39405

Thank you!