

VAILLANCOURT FOLK ART

Molding Tradition *Vaillancourt Folk Art designs OSV figurines from antique chocolate molds*



The Vaillancourt OSV Collection – A portion of the proceeds from these special handpainted figurines goes to support the Village. ABOVE: Santa carrying an early clay pipe and tin mug; snowman with reeware mug. AT RIGHT ON FACING PAGE: Santa with tin lantern and Center Meetinghouse motif on his coat. For details and information: 800-SEE-1830; www.shoposv.org.

Christmas collectors around the world have long prized artist Judi Vaillancourt's hand-painted chalkware figurines made from rare antique chocolate molds. Now, fans of Old Sturbridge Village can enjoy a limited-edition collection created especially for the Village by Vaillancourt Folk Art (VFA). The OSV collection

features two custom pieces: a Father Christmas carrying an OSV tin lantern with a candlelit Center Meeting House depicted on his coat, and another Santa carrying a signature Village tin mug. In addition to these two special pieces, the OSV Gift Shop also carries a whimsical Vaillancourt snowman sporting a tri-corner hat.

Vaillancourt Folk Art founders Gary and Judi Vaillancourt are longtime Members and supporters of the Village, and Gary is an Overseer. The couple has long shared a passion for 17th- and 18th-century houses and visited the Village often in their early years of marriage to study architecture and restoration techniques, bringing their sons along for cookies.

"Judi met wonderful people with like interests at OSV antiques forums over the years, and these contacts have been a major part of our lives as we've grown our business," Gary recalls. "Old Sturbridge Village has been part of our married life for over 40 years, so we were happy to design special pieces for the Village."

The Vaillancourt Folk Art story began when Gary gave Judi a gift of three vintage chocolate molds in 1984. She experimented by filling them

with chocolate and then beeswax before settling on chalkware as the perfect artistic medium -- with amazing results. Judi's hand-painted figurines reveal the true artistry of the original mold-makers. Unlike the chocolates first made in the molds, which were limited to just one color — brown — Judi's colorful figurines highlight even the tiniest artistic details crafted into the molds, bringing to life each wink, smile, and detail of decoration.

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Today, Judi's collection of 3,000 vintage confectionery and ice cream molds is one of the largest in the world, and Vaillancourt Folk Art uses them to make chalkware figures for all major holidays, especially Christmas. The company, housed in a historic mill in Sutton, Massachusetts, now sells to tens of thousands of customers worldwide, including prestigious venues like Colonial Williamsburg, Monticello, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as well as to high-end

department stores like Nordstrom's, Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Lord & Taylor.

One of the charms of visiting the factory studio is the chance to watch the Vaillancourt artists at work. By the time a piece is finished, 16 people have worked for a total of three weeks on each figure. To protect



The Vaillancourt Folk Art family: Judi handles the artistic side, Gary directs retail and wholesale operations, and their son Luke (left) handles digital marketing and e-commerce.



Vaillancourt chalkware figurines are made from rare 19th-century chocolate molds that are filled with a plaster-like substance and then meticulously hand-painted, revealing the wonderful details of the mold-makers' art that went unnoticed when the molds were used only for chocolate.



their value and collectability, production is extremely limited, with no more than 300–400 pieces of each design produced before a mold is retired.

The Vaillancourts anticipate a continued close relationship with the Village. As Gary observes, "We have a lot in common with Old Sturbridge Village — a commitment to high-quality craftsmanship and a passion for preserving history and sharing it with the public."

Vaillancourt Folk Art's Old Sturbridge Village Collection is available at the OSV Gift Shop or online at www.shoposv.org. For details, call 800-SEE-1830. To learn more about Vaillancourt Folk Art, visit www.valfa.com.