

Civil War Era Fundraiser



We recently caught up with Miss Rose Percy, arguably the most important doll in American history. Next year marks her 150th birthday and to mark this momentous event a very special birthday celebration has been planned, one that continues her mission of service to veterans of wars.

Good morning Miss Percy. May we call you Rose?

Certainly, I do not stand on ceremony and Donna, I feel like we are old friends. Your publication has always been very kind to me.



Comes out of Retirement



You were the talk of the 1864 Metropolitan Sanitary Fair. What did it feel like to raise so much money for those suffering from injuries inflicted during the Civil War?

There are so many people to thank for my success. When I think of the generosity lavished upon this humble person by so many distinguished gentlemen – Mr. Charles Tiffany and the furriers Messrs. C.G. Gunther come to mind. And then the painstaking labor by the lovely young women of Mrs. Hoffman's finishing school – what an amazing trousseau they created for me! Is it any wonder that Mrs. John Jacob Astor could not resist paying dearly for me?

We understand Mrs. Astor generously donated you back to the fair and you were raffled again.

That's correct. My lucky winner kindly returned me to the finishing school and I was given to the school's doctor, who in turn gave me his daughter Bertha. We became terribly close. For over sixty years, Bertha took care of me and I continued my mission – to raise funds for worthy causes. I miss her terribly, but I know she watches over me and simply loves what I am doing know.



Tell us about your years with the Red Cross.

In 1920 at the end of her life's journey, my beloved Bertha donated me to the American Red Cross in Washington, D.C. You can imagine what a change that was for me! For eighty years, people visited from around the world and heard my story, but I felt rather out of sorts. After all, I was used to being on the go, but being the official mascot for the Junior Red Cross for over eighty years was one of the honors of my life.

And then a big change came.

Yes, the Red Cross suffered a shortfall following Hurricane Katrina and they were forced to sell some of their treasures. I was packed up and sent off to an auction house. It was wonderful to be on the move again, but I was very nervous. Who would buy me and where would I end up? It would be dreadful if I were forced to leave the country that I love.



Photos Courtesy
Carmel Doll Shop.

Fortunately your buyer was a prominent U.S. citizen.

A lovely woman of means was easily convinced of my importance and she gave the job of bidding to her friends Michael Canadas and David Robinson. Such lovely young men – we became quite good friends on the drive back from Dallas. They told me there was no way they would entrust a shipper to deliver me, my wardrobe and all my accessories! My things nearly filled up their van, which henceforth has been known as the Rose-mobile!

We've heard you are quite the clotheshorse.

(Giggle) I have over 100 pieces of clothing and so many exquisite accessories. Careful conservation has kept everything looking like the day they were made. I am lucky to have recently been gifted some new things. A few admirers have created some lovely pieces, to keep me up to date on the latest fashions. One thing I never owned was a proper quilt. When I was young, quilts were needed for our young men in service. Although I was lavished with all kinds of things, then it would have been frivolous for me to have a quilt, but now I have one of my very own.

Are you looking forward to your coming out party on May 14?

The Carmel Doll and Toy Study Group has planned

a marvelous birthday party at the lovely Hayes Mansion in Santa Clara, California. It has been organized much like the 1864 Metropolitan Sanitary Fair where I was first purchased by Mrs. Astor. I am thrilled to once again be showing off all my lovely things for a cause near and dear to my heart, war veterans who have suffered brain injuries and mental health problems. Sadly, so many years later, I find the world has not changed all that much.

A special souvenir – a book containing my life story and all my remarkable possessions will be given to those in attendance. I plan to wear my favorite dress, the very same dress that I wore when I made my public debut at the fair.

Rose, we are delighted that you have granted us this interview. May I say you are looking quite amazing for your age!

Well thank you. I believe in aging gracefully but I do not feel a day over 14! I have enjoyed a privileged life, and I am glad to be back in public service. I hope to see you all at my party!

Readers may want to refer to our May 2005 issue for the article, "Rose Percy and Her Remarkable Wardrobe" by Ann Coleman and our January 2010 issue for the auction announcing the sale of Rose. For details on attending Rose's 150th Birthday Celebration, turn to page 27.