

History of The M. J. Chase Company Inc.

An idea conceived prior to 1880, by the wife of a Pawtucket R.I. physician, years later developed into an important training aid in nursing education.

Mrs. Martha J. Chase desired to give her five children a toy doll that would be an improvement over the dolls then available, delicate, mostly bisque head, imported dolls. The immediate result was a play doll satisfactory to herself and her children.

For awhile Mrs. Chase made toy dolls for her children and friends and for charitable fairs. One day, a few years later (exact date unknown), a buyer from a Boston Department store saw one and asked Mrs. Chase to make some to sell. That day she turned a hobby into a career. By 1900 Chase dolls were internationally known, and sold in better department stores throughout the country. The early Chase stockinette dolls are now valuable collectors items.

The Chase stockinette dolls were in many sizes, from eight inches to three feet. The earlier dolls had painted heads, arms and legs, and a sateen covering on the body. Later, models were made that were painted overall, making them washable and watertight. There were few changes in the hair and face styles of the Chase stockinette doll. A Dutch cut hair style was made about 1920.

As Mrs. Chase's hobby grew into a business, she built a small shop in her back yard. This building, with later additions, served M. J. Chase Co., for years. It was locally known as the "Doll House".

About 1905 Mrs. Chase developed a group of character dolls. There was Alice-in-wonderland series, including Alice-tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum, The mad-hatter, The Dutchess and Frog-footman. There was also a darkie series, of Mammy and two pickannies, and, there was a Dickens series of Little Nelle and Mr. Gamp.

→ The Chase hospital doll (adult size) were developed in 1911 from a request by an instructor of nursing, Miss Lauder Sutherland of the Hartford Hospital in Hartford Connecticut, made an inquiry if a life size doll could be made like the Chase stockinette doll. Mrs. Chase with the help of her husband, made patterns, worked out the methods and developed an adult size figure. The Hartford Hospital still possesses the first doll, although it has since been modified, particularly the hair style, through later renovations.

As the years passed additional facilities were added and improved on to make the Chase Hospital doll more effective as a teaching aid. At present, the adult size Chase hospital dolls include a female model, a male model, and a simple sexless lay figure.

The Chase hospital baby also developed from the original toy doll. The hospital baby was introduced in 1913. It was weighted and had passages or openings, such as the otic and nasal passages, to make it distinct from a toy doll. Through the years the Chase hospital baby has also been improved and other features incorporated to make it suitable for teaching of pediatrics.

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Box 1 FF#1 - "Mrs Chase" - Doll