

# The Pleasant Company Oak

## Middleton

There is something about an ancient oak standing alone in a grassy field that speaks to strength, perseverance, creative inspiration, generosity and grace. It was around such an oak in Middleton, Wisconsin, that Pleasant T. Rowland chose to build the corporate headquarters of Pleasant Company. Pleasant, a former educator, had an idea for creating products that would foster pride in the rich traditions of growing up female in America. Between the time that she founded the company in 1986 and sold it to Mattel, Inc., the world's leading toy maker, in 1998, Pleasant Company sold more than 61 million books and 5 million American Girl dolls. They were received by a generation of young girls, whose lives were forever enriched. The Pleasant Company Oak, just outside Pleasant's office window, was an anchor to this enterprise, witnessing remarkable business growth and providing inspiration to the creative staff. Its silhouette was seen on company stationery and marketing literature. During the many phases of building expansion on the site Pleasant hired Allison Tree Care, Inc., to care for the tree, making it quite clear that it was an integral part of the company and she would tolerate no harm to it. The tree remained healthy and continued to grow from year to year along with Pleasant's dream. Pleasant used the oak as a symbol of the company's mission in the following words addressed to her employees:

*In the middle of the field in front of Pleasant Company stands an enormous, near-perfect oak tree with beautiful, leafy branches reaching to the sky. That magnificent tree began from a single seed long, long ago. I am glad that tree is in our front yard, for as time-worn as the metaphor may be, it is a reminder of the constant truth that "mighty oaks from tiny acorns grow," that dreams planted deep and nourished well will flourish in goodness for years to come.*



Pleasant Company Oak

Photo courtesy of American Girl

*So, too, with Pleasant Company. What was a tiny seed of an idea in my mind years ago, an acorn of inspiration, has grown into all that surrounds us today. What we have built together is not yet a mighty oak, but it is certainly a sturdy sapling surging with energy and promise. With our continued hard work and unyielding commitment to quality, Pleasant Company will grow to be a mighty force—an example to the toy industry, perhaps to many American businesses, that serving the needs of children is a more powerful mission than serving the bottom line.*

It was under the oak that Pleasant gathered her entire staff to announce the transfer of the company to Mattel and to award remarkably generous bonuses to her employees. That gracious sense of giving and generosity continued with profits from the Pleasant Company sale contributed to the Madison Children's Museum, the Overture Center in downtown Madison, the Great Performance Fund for the Arts and many other organizations devoted to the advancement of the human spirit. The Pleasant Company Oak stands today as solid and graceful as ever, an inspiration to all who see it as a symbol of the company's accomplishments and a tribute to the power of dreams—the tiny acorns from which mighty oaks grow.