

# WISCONSIN WOMEN MAKING HISTORY

## THEIR STORIES OUR LEGACY

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### PLEASANT ROWLAND

1941

City: Madison

County: Dane

Pleasant Rowland founded the American Girls Collection, a popular line of books, dolls, and accessories that features girls living during various eras in U.S. history.

Rowland was born in Chicago. After graduating from Wells College in Aurora, New York, she became an elementary-school teacher. “Reading is at the heart of all achievement,” she once said. “Without it, the American dream is out of reach. With it, anything is possible.” Her desire to teach children how to read led her to create language arts programs that were used in schools throughout the country. She is the author of *Beginning to Read, Write, and Listen* and *The Addison-Wesley Reading Program*.

In 1985, Rowland founded the American Girls Collection as a way to inspire children to learn about history through story-telling and play. Each doll in the collection represents a different era, culture, or event in American history. Rowland served president of the Middleton-based company for 15 years, until she sold the company in 2000 and founded the Pleasant T. Rowland Foundation to provide funds for the arts, education, and historic preservation. A few years later, she established the Rowland Reading Foundation to improve reading instruction in the primary grades. Rowland holds honorary degrees from the University of Wisconsin, Edgewood College, and the University of Hartford (Connecticut).

To learn more, visit [womeninwisconsin.org/profile/pleasant-rowland](http://womeninwisconsin.org/profile/pleasant-rowland)