

MOM'S JOY ROOM

Where Obsolescence Ends and Wonder Begins

2964 Fairmont Road • Morgantown, West Virginia 26501 • (304) 282-3671

PROVISIONAL TRIAL CERTIFICATE — SUBJECT TO PHYSICAL
INSPECTION & FINAL ATTRIBUTION

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY & APPRAISAL — TRIAL DRAFT

The Mystery Mammy... or Nancy Green?

American Black Americana Mammy Doll, c. 1920s–1930s • Maker As Yet Unidentified

ESTIMATED WORTH (PROVISIONAL)

\$350 – \$650

Pending physical inspection and final attribution — range to be confirmed upon completion of research.



As acquired — original mobair wig and costume



Red bandana kerchief — a later addition by a previous caretaker



Scalp detail, wig removed — hand-worked textured surface

History & Background

In the decades between the two World Wars, the American toy industry — and countless home workshops alongside it — produced a rich tradition of cloth-bodied Black Americana dolls, of which the "mammy" figure, with her kerchief, print dress, and white apron, was the most beloved and most

widely made archetype. Some of these dolls came from documented commercial lines, distributed through department stores and catalog houses; many thousands more were made one at a time, by hand, in homes and small cottage workshops, stitched from muslin and dressed in flour-sack calico. Because so many of these dolls were never marked by their makers, they arrive to us today as quiet mysteries — each one a genuine artifact of its era, even when its maker's name has been lost.

This doll is a superb example of that tradition. She stands approximately 22 inches tall, with a hardened, glossy-painted head, a firmly stuffed and fully bendable muslin body that allows her to be posed sitting or standing, and painted hands and shoes of a contrasting hardened material. Her face is one of the most expressive we have encountered: wide amber-yellow eyes ringed in red, finely painted brows, and a broad, warm, open smile. Beneath her mohair wig, her scalp shows a hand-worked, textured surface rather than a smooth factory finish — a detail of great importance to her identification, and one that will be carefully examined and documented upon her physical inspection.

Her costume is original to her: a gingham dress with white apron, the classic uniform of the mammy archetype as it appeared in American homes of the 1920s and 1930s. (The red bandana kerchief shown in one photograph is a later addition by a previous caretaker.) She displays the gentle, honest wear of a doll that was genuinely loved in childhood — the very best provenance any doll can carry.

Notable Features

- ◆ Approximately 22 inches tall; firmly stuffed, fully bendable muslin body (poseable)
- ◆ Expressive hand-painted face — amber-yellow eyes with red-rimmed lids, painted brows, broad open smile
- ◆ Mohair wig; scalp beneath shows hand-worked texture (molded or sculpted appearance — under examination)
- ◆ Head, hands, and feet of carved wood or a wood-like resin material (as reported by a prior owner; material verification pending)
- ◆ Original gingham dress and white apron costume (surface-cleaned, lightly starched, and pressed by a prior caretaker)
- ◆ No maker's mark, label, or date discovered — consistent with both cottage-industry and unmarked commercial production of the era
- ◆ Approximate weight of 3 pounds — consistent with wood or resin rather than dense ceramic
- ◆ Gentle stabilization by a prior caretaker: body surface-cleaned and re sewn where needed; painted teeth and eye whites carefully cleaned, no repainting

Attribution Status — Ongoing Research

This doll is presented on a provisional basis while research continues. No maker's mark has been

found, and attribution at this time is stylistic rather than mark-confirmed. Three avenues of identification were opened at the start of this investigation; new evidence from a prior owner has now reordered them:

Avenue	Evidence Under Review
B. Hand-carved or hand-cast folk-art original — <i>current lead</i>	A prior owner who handled the doll extensively reports the head, hands, and feet are wood or a wood-like resin material — not factory composition. The hand-worked scalp texture, the absence of any mark, and an exhaustive search of period mammy doll advertising (by that prior owner) turning up no match all point toward a one-of-a-kind piece of American folk art.
A. 1930s commercial "Mammy Doll" line	Era, costume, and bendable muslin body all fit c. 1930–1937 commercial lines, but documented commercial "mammy" dolls used factory-molded composition heads — which conflicts with the reported wood/resin material. Retained pending physical verification.
C. Earlier ceramic head on remade body	Essentially set aside: the prior owner's hands-on assessment of wood or resin, together with the doll's light weight, argues against a fired-ceramic (bisque or china) head. A definitive tap test at inspection will close this avenue.

A note on the name "Nancy Green": modern listings for dolls of this type occasionally attach the name of Nancy Green (1834–1923), the real woman who portrayed "Aunt Jemima" for the R. T. Davis Milling Company from 1893. No maker's tag, catalog, or documented record yet connects this doll to that name, and the association should be treated as an open question rather than established fact — a question this investigation intends to settle conclusively.

A physical inspection — including a material tap test, seam examination, wig lift, and measurements — will determine which avenue applies. This certificate will be amended and finalized upon completion of that inspection.

Collector's Notes

This doll was acquired in September 2026 and joined the Mom's Joy Room collection the same month. Her exact maker has not been identified; the attribution in this certificate is stylistic, based on construction, materials, and era, and is subject to revision upon physical inspection. Unmarked cloth-bodied Black Americana dolls of the 1920s–1930s are a well-documented and warmly collected category, and examples with this degree of character, paint detail, and honest playwear are increasingly sought after. The provisional valuation above reflects her present, unidentified status; a confirmed attribution to a documented maker or

line would be expected to raise her estimated worth accordingly.

*"She carried children's secrets for ninety years — and kept every single one.
Now she's ready to be somebody's treasure again."*

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Sandy Wade
PROPRIETOR
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