

More Than Just a Pretty Face

By Lynn Murray

The year is 1869. Two businessmen, Wilhelm Simon and Carl Halbig joined forces to establish a porcelain factory. The elder partner, Wilhelm Simon, was an established toy maker from Hildburghausen. He would bring experience and financial backing to the partnership. The 30-year-old Carl Halbig was a visionary who would bring a set of high standards for quality and efficient methods of production to the new company.

1869 was a year of significant accomplishments for business and industry around the world. In the United States, Ulysses Grant succeeded Andrew Johnson as the 18th President of the US. The Civil War was over and the first railroad across North America was completed with the driving of the "golden spike" at Promontory, Utah. In Egypt, the Suez Canal was inaugurated, linking the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea. These changes in transportation and shipping would have profound effects on trade.

In the literary world, the work of Louisa May Alcott shared the shelf with that of Mark Twain, Victor Hugo, Horatio Alger and Leo Tolstoy. P.T. Barnum wrote his autobiography "Struggles and Triumphs" and John Stuart Mill wrote the controversial "Subjection of Women."

Two early cloth body dolls with solid dome heads, glass eyes, bisque lower arms and legs. The larger doll is 8 inches tall, the smaller, just 5.5 inches. The 3.5 inch all-bisque is from a modified version of the basic mold, with molded hair.

Dolls are from the Collection of Lynn Murray





Mistakenly referred to as French-type all-bisque prior to the definitive book, "Mignonnette by Mathilde Heritier and Samy Odin," collectors now recognize this 5 inch all-bisque as a Simon & Halbig doll. Though some of the details are missing – the multi stroked eyebrows, the defining lip line, the separate thumb – this example is still a desirable little doll. She is considered more unusual because of her bare feet. Her totally original costume and tiny leather shoes make her a charming package.

Brahms's Requiem and Wagner's Das Rheingold were written in 1869, but the year was not completely a solemn year in music. Such tunes as Little Brown Jug and Shoo Fly, Don't Bother Me, brought political commentary into popular culture. The waltz remained the favorite dance and women's fashion lent romance and grace to every social occasion.

Despite the restrictions of crinoline and corset, women's suffrage was taking hold. In New York, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton formed the National Woman's Suffrage Association. In England the first university-level residential woman's college was founded in Cambridge. The State of Wyoming passed



Above: The body of the 6-inch all-bisque is recognized as a S&H body by the shape of the hands and the torso with the slightly protruding toddler's tummy and derriere. This size is sometimes found with the simple blue boots, as were the smaller versions of the same doll.

Below: The 6-inch all-bisque doll by S&H loses none of the fine details that typifies the lady dolls. Note the multi-stroke eyebrows, the perfect almond eye-cuts and the multitude of eyelashes. The 6-inch size was made with a solid dome head, requiring a steady hand to set those tiny glass eyes through the neck hole.



The Simon & Halbig all-bisque with glazed molded hair is a seldom seen version of the company's early, unmarked head. This doll was made with black hair and with café au lait hair.

The large 8 inch size of this all-bisque makes her even more desirable. Her modeling is crisp and the brush strokes around her forehead are very fine. Her hairband is not tinted. The additional blushing highlighting the body indicates further that her destiny was for a high-end toy shop. Smaller versions of the same doll were made with painted eyes and with joints at the shoulder only. The smaller version had café au lait bisque hair with a painted green headband.



the first law in the world to give women the right to vote and in Iowa Arabella A. Mansfield became the first American woman to have a license to practice law.

The paintings of Degas, Tissot, Manet, Monet and Dore portrayed women with softly rounded shoulders and hair upswept in curls decorated with bands or bows, delicate hands and feet peaking demurely from beneath ruffles of lace. Porcelain manufacturers in turn portrayed women as figurines or dolls with the look that was *au courant*.

The town of Gräfenhain, nestled in a valley in northern Thüringen, has a population of approximately 1400 people, just as it did almost 200 years ago. When the Simon & Halbig porcelain factory was opened, it provided employment for many of the local people and commerce for the local shop owners. Carl Halbig was originally from the industrial

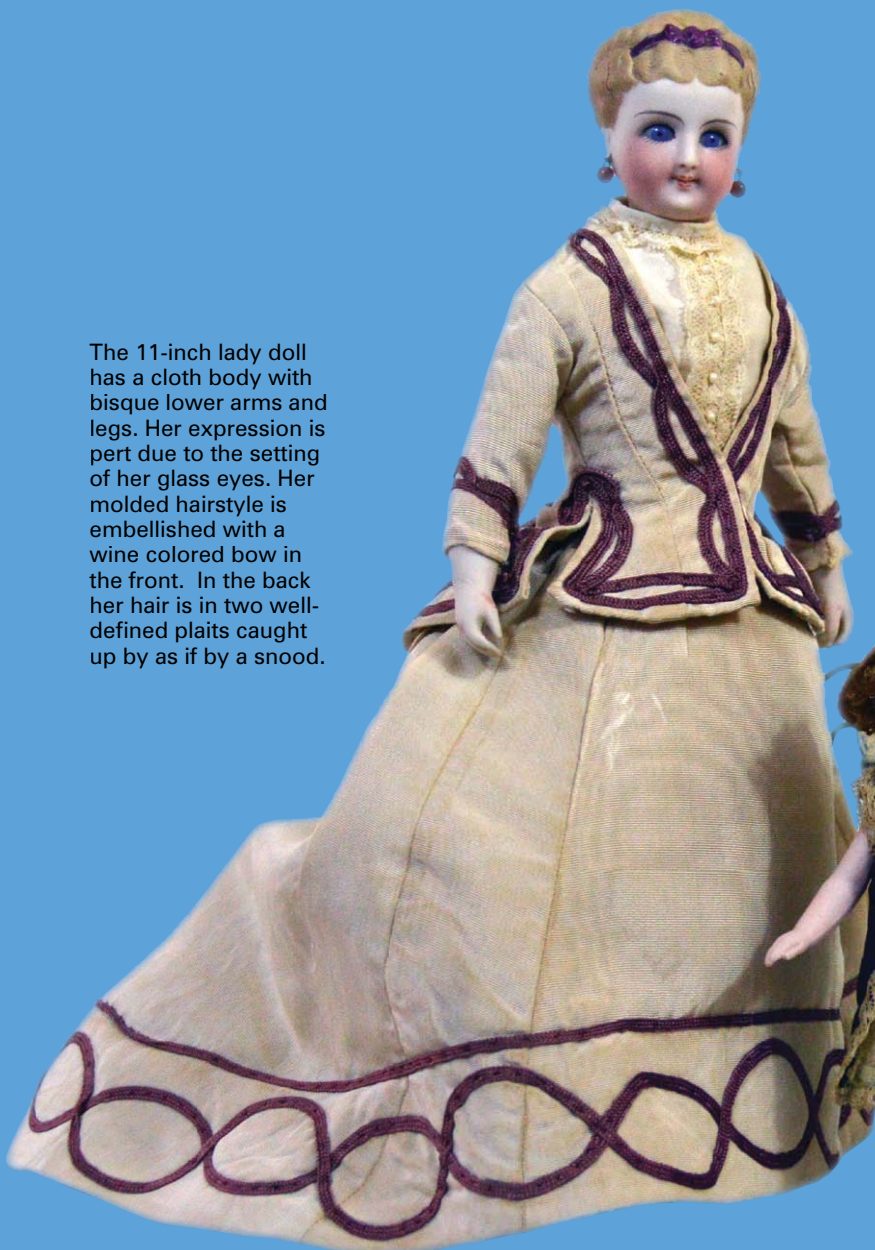


This 10 inch unmarked Simon & Halbig doll is a rarely seen example with painted eyes and molded decorated hair. Her hair is swept back off the face, tied with a bow and rolled into a roll that extends all the way around the back of the doll's head. Her body is cloth with lower limbs of bisque, cupped hands, white molded stockings and four-strap boutines.

The 12-inch unmarked Simon & Halbig child has the same cloth body style and lower bisque limbs as the smaller examples. Her dark curly human hair wig and her brown eyes are unusual, perhaps added to the offering in order to capture a new market or simply add some variety. The quality and style of painting remains faithful to the original sculpt.



The 11-inch lady doll has a cloth body with bisque lower arms and legs. Her expression is pert due to the setting of her glass eyes. Her molded hairstyle is embellished with a wine colored bow in the front. In the back her hair is in two well-defined plaits caught up by as if by a snood.





The 12 inch doll with glass eyes and molded hair clearly shows the distinctive painting style used for the eyebrows of many of the early Simon & Halbig unmarked dolls. Starting in a point, the multi-stroked eyebrow curves gracefully over the eye to the outside edge. The eyelashes are short and plentiful and the lips painted simply with a pale coral and a single fine definition line between lower and upper lip. In this case, the doll's ears are exposed completely and not pierced. Her body is of cloth with lower limbs of bisque, with cupped hands, molded stockings and grey boots with black edging.

The 13 inch doll is perhaps the most unusual in this collection of dolls, for he has a painted moustache. He has a twill-over-wood body with lower bisque arms and legs. His head has been cut to insert glass eyes and a cork pate. His ears are pierced.

area of southern Germany, Frankonia. He understood the needs of his workers very well and he understood the privilege of being the wealthy benefactor. While he built himself a large mansion on the edge of the village, he inspired loyalty from his factory workers by being benevolent: providing toys, ice skates, extra food distributed at school and street lighting in the village to brighten the dark days of winter.

Unlike any of the German doll companies, the porcelain company did not rely on home-workers. The factory workers were well supervised and the standard of work was maintained at a very high level. Halbig was a shrewd businessman who eventually supplied doll heads and porcelain parts to more than twenty doll factories in the local area, in Sonneberg and in France. Much of the key to his success was versatility. This can be seen readily by studying the early doll heads made at the Simon & Halbig Company.

The earliest dolls did not have an S & H mark. They were completely unmarked, shipped in boxes bearing a label with the company's name and trademark. Eventually the heads were marked with S & H and a number indicating size.

The earliest face, which collectors simply refer to simply as "THE Simon & Halbig" face seems designed to adapt infinitely. It was in production within a year of the company's establishment.

The mold with no number was produced as a solid dome head with painted or glass eyes. Sometimes it had the addition of pierced ears. Some of the larger solid dome heads were marked with a line around the circumference of the head, giving a guide for cutting the crown



From the time Carl Halbig and Wilhelm Simon entered into partnership, their plan was to expand trade with international clients. In order to accomplish that, they had to be competitive with the poupées made in Paris. The 1870s was the pinnacle for the French fashion doll, but Carl Halbig set high standards for the company and Wilhelm Simon was an astute businessman. This original fashion lady is an example of their determination and success.



This 16-inch doll has the exquisite clear complexion so desirable in early bisque dolls. She has a shoulderhead on a cloth body with slender bisque arms and cupped hands. Her head has been cut to insert the eyes and a cork pate for under her original mohair wig. Her ears are pierced. Judging from the bisque color and the cloth body style, this doll is contemporary with the shoulderhead with Alice hairstyle. Either doll is equally at home as a child or an adult.



As the development of more articulation in doll bodies progressed, Carl Halbig fought to keep his company on the leading edge. The company produced two types of twill-over-wood bodies as seen here. The larger 16-inch example has eleven points of articulation including the ankles. The 10-inch example has nine points of articulation with bisque lower legs as well as lower arms.

The 16-inch twill-over-wood body fashion doll was thought to have been made in France by early collectors. In fact, she was made to compete with the French *poupées* of the 1870s.



off the head to more easily insert eyes. This head was adapted with the addition of molded hair and molded decorated hair. One example has molded hair with a glazed finish.

The dolls were being made for export, so it was essential that they were competitive with the French-made dolls. Thus, they were presented on leather bodies, or cloth bodies with bisque lower arms and legs or articulated bodies of twill-over-wood.

By using the same face mold and adapting the hairstyles, Carl Halbig was assured that the quality of the fine face painting



The 18-inch lady has yet another molded hairstyle, this time without decoration. Parted in the center and swept away from her face, her hair encircles her head with an elaborate combination of curls, rolls and braids. Her exposed ears are pierced and her facial painting is unmistakably that of Simon & Halbig.



The 18-inch lady doll is on a leather over wood body with eleven points of articulation, including the ankles. Her bisque arms are more graceful than those found on the twill-over-wood bodies.

would be consistent. The bisque limbs were adaptable to several body styles. For a growing company, the investment in training, mold-making and inventory could have been otherwise overwhelming.

For the first five years the company continued to produce children's dishes and bisque novelty figures, for which Wilhelm Simon already had clientele. Their dolls were introduced with the existing line of toys and novelties. As the doll sales expanded, Carl Halbig was able to source and employ sculptors to expand the doll line. In this way, the company was able to produce high quality product and finance development for the future. In less than ten years, they became a major source of competition not only in Germany, but in France. Carl Halbig was a very savvy entrepreneur. He loved to travel the world and he enjoyed a very comfortable lifestyle. He was willing to work very hard to achieve success, yet he was able to maintain an amiable relationship with his partner and his workers. Doubtless his achievements were partially made possible by the fact that the first doll face was more than just a pretty face.



With some changes to the sculpt of the molded hair, another version of the doll could be created. This example is 19-inches tall, a shoulderhead on a cloth body with slender bisque lower arms and pierced ears. With her Alice hairstyle, she could be a lady or a child.

Blackberry Studio

Margaret Gray Kincaid Member NADDA and UFDC
Tel. 410.323.0373 Cell: 646-709-4340 Margaret.kincaid@gmail.com



HAPPY NEW YEAR! Wood Body FG \$6500. FG Nurse with Baby \$2250. Unmarked French Fashion on wooden body \$6500. Pen Wipe Dog \$450. Pair of Chairs \$750. Old Paris Tea Set with violets \$125. China cupboard \$850