

DOLL RESTORATION PROJECT

FOR MANSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY, MANSFIELD MA

BY LIISA E. NIEMI OCTOBER 2020



PROJECT

1. Obtain 12 antique dolls that are property of the Historical Society
2. Evaluate condition of each
3. Stabilize, curate and restore as needed
4. Return for display at Fisher Richardson House

SUMMARY OF CONDITION : HEADS AND BODIES

- All dolls were dirty and dusty
- Many dolls had broken porcelain or china
- Some eyes had fallen out or were loose
- Doll wigs had rotted and disintegrated
- Cloth doll bodies had heads coming off or limbs separated from body
- Leather doll bodies were leaking sawdust primarily at joints
- Composition doll bodies were loose and flopping

SUMMARY OF CONDITION : CLOTHING



Underclothing

Yellowed, wrinkled and filthy

Missing buttons or sewn on poorly

Lace and fabric was torn



Footwear

Absent altogether

Disintegrated and falling off



Dresses

Fabric shredded and unsightly

Held together with rusted common pins

Missing

Dusty, wrinkled and filthy

CURATION STRATEGY

- Do minimal harm to any original materials
- Repair / mend where possible with historically same thread, fabric
- When saving original was not possible, remove and preserve, then replace as follows:
 - Replace with like from stash
 - Design and build new pieces from historically accurate material using same construction techniques
- No repainting of body parts, filler or replacement
- Do nothing that cannot be undone
- Save and preserve any replaced pieces
- No synthetic materials or thread
- Summary : Conservation, restoration, replication

DOLL I – SONNEBERG GIRL



- Owner – Jennie Copeland
- Size : 12” Year: 1880’s
- Maker – unknown German maker. Doll made to resemble and compete with expensive French dolls like Jumeau
- Head and body – perfect bisque dome head with two holes at top for stringing. Closed mouth, blue glass inset fixed eyes. Fully jointed ball jointed wood body with painted shoes.
- Clothing – original simple cotton frock
- Work done:
 1. Replaced wig with antique mohair wig from Germany
 2. Restrung body
 3. Cleaned and ironed clothing, adding missing buttons
 4. Preserved old wig

DOLL I - BEFORE





DOLL I - AFTER

DOLL 2 – WAX GIRL



- Owner – Jennie Copeland
- Size : 11" Year: 1880's
- Maker – unknown German maker.
- Head and body – Wax over dome papier mâché head, hands and feet. Tiny inset dark glass eyes. Cloth body stuffed with straw. Remains of wig glue on head.
- Clothing – underclothes and gauze sewn-on gown
- Work done:
 1. Cleaned face and rubbed wax cracks
 2. Replaced wig with antique mohair suitable wig in simple braided style
 3. Sewed limbs back on after filling in with antique sawdust
 4. Cleaned and ironed clothing, adding missing bows of antique ribbon

DOLL 2 - BEFORE





DOLL 2 - AFTER

DOLL 3 – KESTNER WRESTLER



- Owner – Jennie Copeland
- Size : 7” Year: 1880’s
- Maker – J.D. Kestner
- Head and body – All bisque body jointed at shoulders and hips. Closed mouth, blue inset glass eyes, swivel bisque head with preexisting breaks and reglue. Rotted straw wig. Painted shoes.
- Clothing – original simple cotton frock and matching underwear
- Work done:
 1. Replaced wig with antique braided mohair wig from Germany
 2. Cleaned around cracks in face
 3. Cleaned and ironed clothing, adding missing buttons

DOLL 3 - BEFORE





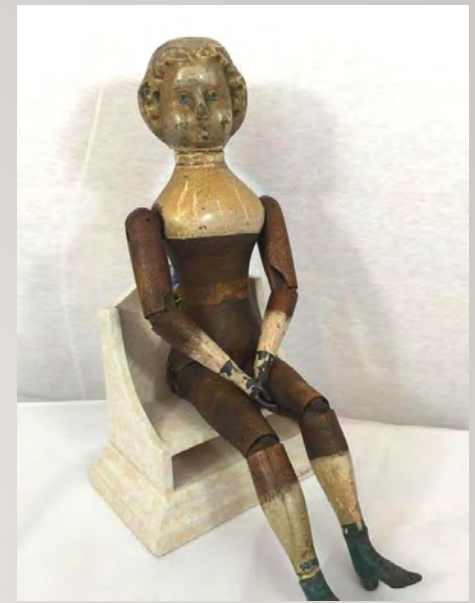
DOLL 3 - AFTER

DOLL 4 – JOEL ELLIS DOLL WITH REPLACED HEAD



- Owner – Jennie Copeland
- Size : 12” Year: 1873
- Maker – Joel Ellis from Vermont
- Head and body – Carved maple tenon jointed body with painted pewter hands and feet. Originally doll had carved wood head. It was replaced with German bisque lady doll shoulder head with closed mouth and blue glass eyes. Shoulder plate is broken and glued onto wood body. Had old straw wig (disintegrating)
- Clothing – original underwear, navy pleated silk skirt and striped jacket (shredding)
- Work done:
 1. Replaced wig with appropriate antique mohair wig from Germany
 2. Cleaned and ironed underclothing, adding missing buttons
 3. Added antique black lace as shawl to hide jacket damage

DOLL 4 - BEFORE





DOLL 4 - AFTER

DOLL 5 – FLAT TOP CHINA LADY



- Owner – Alger
- Size : 18” Year: 1870’s
- Maker – unknown German maker. There were many German makers of Chinas so they are known primarily by their hairstyle.
- Head and body – Broken and repaired china shoulderplate head with painted hair and eyes. Original cloth body was replaced with later German leather child doll body that has bisque lower arms. Lower legs glued on with glue gun. Could not be removed without destroying legs.
- Clothing – White cotton frock and underclothing
- Work done:
 1. Stabilized shoulderplate on body
 2. Made boots
 3. Cleaned and ironed clothing, adding missing buttons



DOLL 5 - BEFORE



DOLL 5 - AFTER

DOLL 6 – FLAT TOP CHINA LADY



- Owner – Jennie Copeland
- Size : 15” Year: 1870’s
- Maker – unknown German maker. There were many German makers of Chinas so they are known primarily by their hairstyle.
- Head and body – China shoulderplate head with painted hair and eyes. Original cloth body.
- Clothing – Underclothing and frail brown wool dress
- Work done:
 - Installed hooks and eyes on dress
 - Made boots
 - Cleaned and ironed under clothing, adding missing buttons

DOLL 6 - BEFORE





DOLL 6 - AFTER

DOLL 7 – PARIAN LADY



- Owner – Unknown
- Size : 16” Year: 1890’s
- Maker – unknown German maker. There were many German makers of Parians so they are known primarily by their hairstyle. Non shiny Parian heads made later than the Chinas.
- Head and body – broken shoulderplate held together with twine and ace bandage. Cloth body has replaced arms.
- Clothing – original underclothing and brown cotton dress shredding. Original velvet boots.
- Work done:
 1. Cleaned and reglued 8 pieces of head and shoulderplate, reattached to body.
 2. Made new dress of 1800’s fabric from Marie Strese’s stash.
 3. Cleaned and ironed under clothing, adding missing buttons.
 4. Put aside and saved original dress.

DOLL 7 - BEFORE





DOLL 7 - AFTER

DOLL 8 – BLONDE CHINA



- Owner – Unknown
- Size : 17” Year: 1880’s
- Maker – unknown German maker. There were many German makers of Chinas so they are known primarily by their hairstyle. Blonde made later than black haired heads.
- Head and body – No shoulderplate – broken off head only. Shoved onto a rag doll body.
- Clothing – original simple cotton frock and underclothes
- Work done:
 1. Glued head securely into body
 2. Redistributed stuffing
 3. Cleaned and ironed clothing, adding missing buttons
 4. Made shoes

DOLL 8 - BEFORE





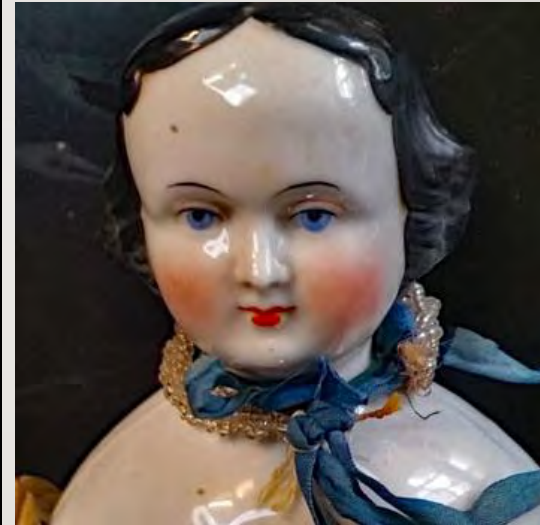
DOLL 8 -AFTER

DOLL 9 – HIGHBROW CHINA



- Owner – Andrea Winslow
- Size : 17” Year: 1870’s
- Maker – unknown German maker. There were many German makers of Chinas so they are known primarily by their hairstyle.
- Head and body – Intact head. Original cloth body with china lower arms and lower legs.
- Clothing – Underclothes and shoes only.
- Work done:
 1. Added 1870’s batiste blouse and green wool skirt
 2. Cleaned and ironed clothing, adding missing buttons

DOLL 9 - BEFORE





DOLL 9 - AFTER

DOLL 10 – HIGHBROW DOLLHOUSE CHINA



- Owner – Jennie Copeland
- Size : 8” Year: 1870’s
- Maker - unknown German maker. There were many German makers of Chinas so they are known primarily by their hairstyle.
- Head and body – perfect china head and shoulderplate. China lower arms and painted china feet. Cloth body.
- Clothing – original underclothes and dark silk two-piece walking suit
- Work done:
 1. Added closures and gold buttons to jacket
 2. Cleaned and ironed clothing, adding missing buttons

DOLL 10 - BEFORE



DOLL 10 - AFTER



DOLL II – HEINRICH HANDWERCK GIRL



- Owner – Jennie Copeland
- Size : 23” Year: 1890’s
- Maker – Heinrich Handwerck – famous German dollmaker of dolly face dolls (marked on head)
- Head and body – perfect bisque head with blue glass eyes and open mouth with teeth. Socket head on ball jointed composition body.
- Clothing – original simple cotton frock and underclothing
- Work done:
 1. Cleaned and added mohair to antique wig from an antique wig of same color
 2. Restrung body
 3. Reset eyes
 4. Cleaned and ironed clothing, adding missing buttons
 5. Added antique matching bonnet

DOLL II- BEFORE





DOLL II - AFTER

DOLL 12 – LARGE FLAT TOP CHINA



- Owner – Mrs. Phillip Walker
- Size : 24” Year: 1870’s
- Maker – unknown German maker. There were many German makers of Chinas so they are known primarily by their hairstyle.
- Head and body – perfect china head. Cloth body with cloth arms and legs.
- Clothing – original underclothes, shredding silk dress, shredding cape and matching hat, socks and disintegrated shoes.
- Work done:
 1. Stabilized silk on cape
 2. Stabilized and reinforced silk and ruffles on dress
 3. Made boots
 4. Cleaned and ironed clothing, adding missing buttons
 5. Preserved old shoes

DOLL 12 - BEFORE





DOLL 12 - AFTER

THANK YOU

- Dolls can be viewed at the Fisher Richardson House in Mansfield Mass. Contact the Historical Society for appointments and hours of operation. www.mhsma.org
- Contact me at LiisaNiemi@verizon.net for more information on the curation performed, or if you need doll curation, costuming, wigs, evaluation or minor repairs.
- Photos courtesy of Lou Andrews and Liisa Niemi