

Armand Marseille Dolls 1865 - 1928

By Sheila Folk



Here is Sheila and Her Armand Marseille Dolls

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The period of the late 19th Century through the early 20th Century is often called the “**Golden Age**” of dolls. For a span of approximately 30 years, Germany was the doll-making capital. Up until World War I, Thuringia, Kopplesdorf (an area in East Germany) supplied nearly 80% of the world production of dolls. Another factor contributing to the growth of doll making in Germany was that it was subsidized by the government. Also, the industry grew out of a work-at-home base so that anyone could get involved. **Armand Marseille of Kopplesdorf at one time had the largest output of dolls of any company.**

Early records indicate Armand Marseille left his native Riga, Russia, around 1865 and established a porcelain factory in Kopplesdorf, Germany. Some accounts suggest his French-sounding name was probably created after the family moved from Russia to Germany. Armand Jr. (known as Herman) married Solveigh Heubach, sister of Ernest Heubach of Koppelsdorf, another doll maker family in 1891. This Heubach connection would tend to explain why some fine AM dolls have a horseshoe mark on them a

mark which had historically been more commonly associated with the older Heubach firm. Herman actually visited the USA and spent eight months studying business methods and won the **Grand Prize at the St. Louis Exposition in 1904 with the C.M. Bergmann doll, Miss Columbia.**

Perhaps the most famous work by **Armand Marseille** was **My Dream Baby** of the 1920's which rivalled the famous Grace Putnam's Bye-Lo Baby dolls of the same era.



Marseille made the famous **Queen Louise** doll which was registered in the US in **1910 for Louis Wolf and Co.** The bisque of the Queen Louise was extremely fine with pale coloring and sleep brown eyes. Various versions had either painted or mohair lashes while some eyebrows were glossy.

28 "AM Queen Louise Doll
owner Rebecca D.



Here are 370 Shoulder Plate &
3200 AM



The infrequently produced Character **Dolls** of Armand Marseille are Rare and have always remained in demand. A perfect example is the AM lady doll with closed mouth, sleeping eyes, graceful head and a slim composition body.

Many advanced collectors consider AM's finest doll to be the one which was marked "1894" and produced around the same time.

AM Character Baby Called
"Happy Tot" Circa 1910 mould
No. 990 Mint is it Original Box
owner Rebecca D.



Dickie by AM all Original
Owner Rebecca



Another star in the AM crown is the collection of Floradora dolls. Floradora was the AM trademark registered in Germany for dolls with bisque heads and **kid bodies which were produced from 1901 to around 1910.**

**Rosebud AM 1902 for Max
Illfedler owner Rebecca**



The clothing was usually just a common chemise, but the dolls' gentle expressions and large, pretty eyes made them very popular.

The most common numbers on the early 20th century dolls are "370" for shoulder heads and "390" for socket heads.



During the early part of the 20th century, Marseille was among a group of leading doll manufacturers that produced the Googly cartoon dolls. These novelty dolls had composition mask faces, painted features and the very profound blue glass googly eyes based on the trademark of the comic strip "Barney Google" were produced from 1915 to 1920.

Other popular dolls were the "**Just Me**" and the **Marottes - musical dolls** with music boxes.

The gifted doll maker died in the early 1920's and while the distinguished firm was producing up to 1,000 heads a week as late as 1926, production had all but ceased by the end of 1928. Dolls from warehouses were sold for many years afterwards.

Many of **the AM heads**, but not all, show the initials **D.E.P.** which means “**Registered**” or **D.R.G.M.** which means “**Incorporated German Company**”. This means they were patented or registered in Germany. **After March 1, 1891**, all articles imported to North America had to be plainly marked to indicate the country of origin (in English).

Between **1911 and 1913 alone**, AM registered #147 mould numbers for the character babies (pictured for this article). These babies were produced with amazingly realistic features and bodies to match. It was the beginning of the real evolution of the baby doll - taking it from the stiff, solemn looking “dolly” faced doll dressed in baby clothing to those that resembled actual character babies. They are as significant for their bodies as well as their heads. The bent-limb composition bodies were designed to represent real baby torsos. Arms and legs were produced as a real baby’s body would be with folds and chubby limbs. This was a vast improvement over the old kid bodies with their strange proportions. The faces on these dolls show us doll making at a time which was exciting and innovative. In 1915, Armand Marseille’s daughter, Beatrice, was

married to the son of Ernest Heubach, again linking the two doll-producing families. **In 1919, Armand retired** from the business after suffering a heart attack and handed the leadership of the company to his son, Herman. **Herman and Ernest Heubach Jr.** joined forces merging their companies into one which was titled, “**United Kingdom Porcelain Manufactories**” (though they continued to make **doll heads separately.**) These character baby dolls were produced for George Borgfeldt and Company which was formed in 1881 and was the largest doll importer in the USA.

AM produced bisque heads for a variety of doll makers so that the “A.M” mark is found on work marketed by firms such as **Bergmann, Cuno & Otto Dressel, Borgfeldt, Steiner, Max Illfelder and Wolf.** These co-productions are not of any greater value than the heads marked only AM and have to be assessed, like all the firm’s products, on basic quality and the rarity of the model.

Something I learned from this research was that AM also produced “Baderkinder” - those stiff, white figures of children with black or blonde hair, also known as Frozen Charlottes. **No marked**

examples of these porcelain figures are known.

How many times have we heard - **“Just an AM”**!! This comment is too often made for these beautiful dolls which provided children of all social classes with well-made dolls for over half a century. There was a never-ending variety from nicely tinted Oriental babies, 1920's girls with moulded, bobbed hair, sulky faced, almost tearful boys, character infants and softly colored black babies. There are dolls with open and closed mouths, sad and smiling faces, flirting or intaglio eyes, walking and crying mechanisms, painted or hair brows, composition, fabric or leather bodies. In the work of this ONE factory can be seen all the changes of style and construction from the traditional 19th century doll to the more strident, unbreakable figures of the 1920's and 30's.

Generally speaking, **Armand Marseille dolls** are the most commonly found and probably the least expensive of most antique bisque dolls. I think they have **Sweet Faces** and I am happy to have them in **My Collection**



**Sheila admires her Dream Baby.
!! Thank you.**