

Mom's Joy Room

Where Obsolescence Ends and Wonder Begins

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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY

"Clementine" — House of Nisbet Wax Portrait Doll

Model #4000, "Clementine Nisbet Wilson" | Issued February 1985 | 13" Tall

ESTIMATED WORTH

\$350–\$550



Clementine, shown in her original presentation box, wearing her one-of-a-kind hand-made lace christening gown

Presenting Clementine — a genuine 13-inch House of Nisbet poured wax portrait doll with rooted hair, Model #4000, issued in February 1985 as the second doll in one of the rarest and shortest-lived series the House of Nisbet ever produced: a trio of poured wax dolls made in the finest traditions of antique English wax dollmaking. Clementine is in perfect, complete original condition — original christening gown, original presentation box, and all accompanying paperwork intact — a remarkable survival for a doll now over forty years old.

"She was never meant to be just a doll on a shelf — she was a real baby girl, poured in wax and lace, so that a family's smallest member might be remembered forever."

History

The House of Nisbet was founded in 1953 in Winscombe, England, by Peggy Nisbet, who began the company after making her first portrait doll — reportedly inspired by a desire to create a keepsake doll for her own daughter. Nisbet built the business into one of England's most celebrated doll manufacturers, renowned for historical and royal portrait dolls dressed in exquisitely researched costumes. In the early 1980s, Peggy Nisbet handed control of the company to her daughter, Alison, and son-in-law, Jack Wilson, who took over as Chairman while Peggy remained an active presence in the business she had built.

In 1985, the House of Nisbet undertook a special and ambitious project: reviving the nearly vanished art of English poured wax dollmaking. As the company's own 1985 catalogue explained, doll historians regarded the English as the originators of poured wax dolls — a craft that, by the mid-20th century, had all but disappeared. To do the project justice, the House of Nisbet retained noted doll historian, author, and antique wax doll restorer Faith Eaton as a consultant, along with Caroline Goodfellow, Doll Curator of the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood (an affiliate of London's Victoria and Albert Museum), who provided additional expert guidance. Together, they oversaw the creation of poured wax doll components made in the authentic traditions of antique wax dolls — not simply modern dolls dressed to look old, but genuine poured wax construction using historically accurate methods.

Remarkably, only three wax dolls were ever produced under this project, making it one of the shortest and rarest series in House of Nisbet's history. Clementine, Model #4000, was the second doll introduced in the series — following Model #4001, an eighteen-inch portrait doll of Mrs. Peggy Nisbet herself, dressed in one of her own formal gowns from the early 1950s when she founded the company, also issued in 1985. The series concluded less than a year later, in January 1986, with Model #4002, a ten-inch poured wax portrait of Queen Victoria based on a portrait held in the National Gallery — the third and, sadly, the last poured wax doll the House of Nisbet would ever make.

Clementine holds a uniquely personal place within this small, historic series. She is not a portrait of a historical figure or royal personage, but of a real baby: Clementine Nisbet Wilson, the actual infant daughter of Alison and Jack Wilson — meaning she is the granddaughter of Peggy Nisbet herself, portrayed as a baby by the very company her grandmother founded. The doll was dressed in christening robes made of pure silks and cottons, finished with genuine old hand-made lace and trimmings sourced specifically for the project. Because suitable antique lace was difficult to source in sufficient quantity, the House of Nisbet's own records note that no two Clementine costumes were made identically — meaning every surviving example of this doll wears a truly one-of-a-kind christening gown, unrepeated in any other example of the doll ever produced. Clementine was issued in February 1985 and originally sold for £98.00.

Today, this small trilogy of House of Nisbet wax dolls is recognized by collectors as one of the company's most historically significant and hardest-to-find releases — prized not for mass appeal, but for the rare intersection of genuine antique-method craftsmanship, museum-level historical consultation, and true family provenance that Clementine in particular represents. Complete surviving examples with their original box and paperwork, such as this one, are especially scarce.

Notable Features

- ◆ House of Nisbet Model #4000, "Clementine Nisbet Wilson," issued February 1985
- ◆ Approximately 13" tall (measured — height not specified in original Nisbet catalogue records)
- ◆ Rooted hair — a delicate, lifelike detail consistent with the portrait-quality construction of the Nisbet wax series
- ◆ Second of only three poured wax dolls ever made by the House of Nisbet
- ◆ Genuine poured wax construction made in authentic antique wax dollmaking tradition
- ◆ Project consulted by antique wax doll historian Faith Eaton and Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood curator Caroline Goodfellow
- ◆ Portrays a real person — the infant daughter of Alison and Jack Wilson, granddaughter of company founder Peggy Nisbet
- ◆ Christening gown made of pure silk and cotton, finished in genuine antique hand-made lace — no two examples of this costume were made identically, making this gown one-of-a-kind
- ◆ Perfect original condition — original christening gown, original presentation box, and all accompanying paperwork complete
- ◆ Companion series pieces: Model #4001 (Mrs. Peggy Nisbet, first in series) and Model #4002 (Queen Victoria, third and final in series, issued January 1986)

COLLECTOR NOTES

Clementine's identity and production history are documented directly by the House of Nisbet's own 1985 catalogue records, not stylistic attribution — this is a mark- and record-confirmed piece. Her rarity is twofold: she belongs to a poured wax series of only three dolls ever made by the House of Nisbet, discontinued after less than a year, and her individual christening gown is documented as unique, with no two examples of the costume made alike due to limited antique lace availability. Combined with her genuine family provenance — portraying the founder's own granddaughter — and her complete, perfect original condition with box and paperwork intact, Clementine represents a standout piece within House of Nisbet's collectible history. Given her rarity and documentation, this valuation leans toward the fuller end of the realistic collector market; final sale price will depend on reaching the right specialist Nisbet or antique wax doll collector.

Sandy Wade

Proprietor, Mom's Joy Room

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