

MOM'S JOY ROOM

2964 Fairmont Road, Morgantown, WV 26501 | (304) 282-3671

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY & VALUATION

Antique Wax-Over-Papier-Mâché Shoulder Head Doll

WILHELMINA

Germany — Circa 1860s–1880s — Unmarked, Attribution Stylistic



MARKET VALUE

\$300–600

Realistic quick-sale price, private/shop market

ESTIMATED WORTH

\$650–1,000

Ceiling value, specialty collector/auction



"Wilhelmina" — Circa 1860s–1880s

Kid Leather Body, Bisque Lower Arms, Stitched Toes, No Cracks

"Wilhelmina" — Antique Wax-Over-Papier-Mâché Shoulder Head Doll — 17"
Kid Leather Body — Bisque Lower Arms — Glass Eyes

HISTORY

Wilhelmina is a 19th-century German "wax-over-papier-mâché" doll — a technique in which a lightweight, molded papier-mâché shoulder head was carefully dipped or coated in a thin layer of wax, giving the surface a soft, translucent, lifelike glow that plain painted papier-mâché could never achieve. This method flourished roughly from the 1850s through the 1880s as German doll workshops sought a way to capture some of the beauty of costly poured wax dolls (an English specialty) at a fraction of the price and weight, making wax-over dolls hugely popular export items to America, Britain, and across continental Europe during the mid-to-late Victorian era.

Her body is built from kid leather over a sawdust-

stuffed frame — the standard higher-quality body construction of the period, offering a softer, more huggable feel than the cruder cloth-and-sawdust bodies used on cheaper dolls. Notably, Wilhelmina's lower arms and hands are bisque rather than the more common wax-over composition or cloth seen on lesser examples — bisque hands held their painted detail and finish far better over time and were considered an upgrade feature. Her feet carry individually hand-stitched toes, a labor-intensive detail that better workshops used to distinguish their dolls from mass-market competitors, and her eyes are original blown glass, set with the kind of subtle depth and shine that only hand-blown glass eyes of this era can produce.

What makes Wilhelmina especially remarkable today is her condition: wax-over-papier-mâché dolls are notoriously prone to fine surface cracking ("crazing") as the wax ages, shrinks, and reacts to temperature swings over a century and a half — most surviving examples show at least some hairline cracking around the face or forehead. Wilhelmina, by contrast, shows no hairlines or cracks anywhere on her wax surface, a genuinely uncommon state of preservation that speaks to careful, stable storage across many decades and generations of ownership.

◆ *Stitched toes, bisque arms, and a crack-free wax surface after 150+ years mark her as a well-preserved, better-quality example of the type — most survivors her age show at least some crazing.*



NOTABLE INFORMATION

- ◆ Name: "Wilhelmina" · Type: Wax-over-papier-mâché shoulder head doll
- ◆ Origin: Germany, circa 1860s–1880s (stylistic, unmarked)
- ◆ Body: Kid leather, sawdust-stuffed · Arms/hands: Bisque
- ◆ Feet: Individually hand-stitched toes · Eyes: Original blown glass
- ◆ Height: ~17" · Condition: No hairlines or cracks in the wax surface

COLLECTOR NOTES

Attribution note: Wilhelmina carries no maker's mark or stamp, so her German origin and 1860s–1880s dating are based on construction style, body type, and wax-over technique rather than a confirmed manufacturer. Bisque lower arms and hand-stitched toes both point to a better-tier workshop's output. Market Value reflects a realistic private-sale/shop price; Estimated Worth reflects the ceiling a specialty wax-doll collector or auction house might pay, particularly given her exceptional crack-free surface condition.

"Time forgot to touch her — not a single crack in that soft wax glow after all these years. Meet Wilhelmina."

Mom's Joy Room | Morgantown, WV
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Sandy Wade, Proprietor

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(304) 282-3671