

# The SFBJ Eden Bébé

by Martha Nichols



An example of the 1890-1899 Eden Bébé whose head was made by François Gaultier company.



The well-marked head of the Fleischmann & Bloedel Eden Bébé.

The doll known as Eden Bébé was originally the product of the German doll and toy company founded in 1873 by Fleischmann & Bloedel, and was registered in France on March 31, 1890. The company's 1891 advertisement suggests that the Eden Bébé was a specialty item made for the French doll market under the auspices of *la Société Fleischmann et Bloedel fabricants de jouets à Paris* (the Fleischmann and Bloedel company, toy makers of Paris). They advertised a Paris address.

This early Eden Bébé (above) had a porcelain head made by the François Gaultier company (FG), with blown glass paperweight eyes also by French makers, including Danel and Guépratte. The 1890-1899 Eden Bébé had a very French appearance with heavy eyebrows, pursed

lips (open and closed mouths, some with lip accents), pierced-through-the-lobe ears, and a narrow rimmed, deeply slanted head-cut with cork pate. The bodies were either an inexpensive pasteboard and composition 5-piece body, which was nicely dressed in sewn-on clothing, shoes, and stockings, or a high quality fully-articulated body made in France, probably by Jumeau. Many of these were sold dressed in a lace-trimmed chemise, black lace stockings, and black shoes. The dolls had wavy shoulder-length mohair wigs. The FG head Eden Bébés are well-known because they are well-marked. The incised mark says: "Eden Bébé, Paris, [size number], Depose (registered)." These dolls were sold mainly to Paris department stores such as *Bon Marché*, *La Ville St. Denis*, *Au Printemps*, or *Grand Bazar Magenta*.



The redesigned SFBJ Edén Béb , size 0 (38 cm, or 15 inches). The body of size 0. The head and body marks of the SFBJ Edén Béb  size 4/0.



The author recently purchased this SFBJ Edén B be, a size 1 with brown sleep eyes.

In 1898, Salomon Fleischmann of Fleischmann & Bloedel, was living in Paris and had recently married a French woman. In 1899 he began negotiations to form a "joint stock company" with French doll and toy makers. The *Soci t  Francaise de fabrication de B b s et Jouets*, now known as the SFBJ, was formed with the creation of a set of by-laws on March 6, 1899, and included Jumeau, Bru (via the Girard family), Steiner, Danel, Pintel & Godchau, Gaultier Brothers, Bouchet, Genty, and of course, Fleischmann & Bloedel – 42 shareholders in all.

The registered name, Edén B b , was transferred to the new company, and its registration was renewed by the SFBJ in 1905, 1938, and 1953. In 1905, Bloedel died, and Fleischmann was the executor of his French holdings. The Edén B b  was now redesigned to be less costly to produce by the simple expedient of out-sourcing the heads to German porcelain factories where the bisque could be fired at lower temperatures resulting in a large savings in fuel. Also, in 1905, Fleischmann imported a German body-making press for the SFBJ's Paris factory so many more bodies could be produced in less time and at less expense.

In about 1905 the SFBJ began selling the new Edén B b  (above). Her head was marked only with a size number, and she no longer had pierced ears. She had the red-orange German paint color for her lips and dots in the nostrils and eye corners. She continued to have a chin dimple, blown-glass eyes, a molded eyelid line, brown French-style eyebrows, and very fine, dark grey, slanted eyelashes painted on top and bottom. She now also exhibited a small indent under her lower lip (except in the smallest heads), four set-in teeth, and a less-slanted head cut, with a wide rim at the head opening, and a cardboard pate under a wavy mohair wig. The Edén B b  fully-articulated body, now made by the SFBJ themselves, had a size number on the back and on the soles of the

feet, and the hands had a slightly raised index and little finger; most had red fingernail outlines. The fully-articulated-body Eden Bébés were made in a wide range of sizes from 12/0 to 6, and possibly even smaller and larger. The even-numbered sizes are more prevalent than the odd-numbered. The Eden Bébé heads were also used for specialty articulated dolls: walkers, talkers, and kiss-throwing bébés.

A pasteboard and composition (right) 5-piece body was also used for the SFBJ Eden Bébé, with a similar head. However, the heads on these bodies seem all to have had threaded set glass eyes and two wig-attachment holes in the head, and had a different size numbering than the heads on articulated bodies. Some of the 5-piece bodies may have had jointed elbows. The best versions of this body are entirely painted, while others have only painted arms (right).

Pressed pasteboard head Eden Bébés were also part of the SFBJ's doll line. Little is known about them except that they were sold as washable and unbreakable. It is likely that the heads were made in France with the same type of steam press molds Jumeau perfected for making bodies, which were now the SFBJ's property. The SFBJ made an *incassable* (unbreakable) pasteboard head version of many of its bisque doll molds.

Some evidence points to the Theodor Recknagel company as the maker of the bisque heads used for the SFBJ's Eden Bébés. Fleischmann & Bloedel had a factory in Fürth, in Sonneberg, while Recknagel was nearby in Alexandriental in Sonneberg. Both were operating there in the late 1880s and 1890s. Dolls with Recknagel-marked heads have been found wearing original chemises (right) under their costumes which are marked "Eden Bébé." Recknagel dolls and Eden Bébés are both known to have raised marks (right) on the back of the head: a V or sideways L, a branched mark, a slash, or



The painted pasteboard and composition body of the 2/0 Eden Bébé is strung like an all-bisque doll.



Here is an example of the crude unpainted pasteboard body and composition legs that some SFBJ Eden Bébés had, covered by stockings and sewn-on clothing.



"Eden Bébé, Brevete SGD G" is stamped on the factory chemises of some dolls with the Recknagel mark.



This raised "squiggle" mark is found on both SFBJ Eden Bébés and on Recknagel-marked dolls. This is the mark of a 6/0 Bleurette.



Recknagel's 1907 mold is nearly identical to the SFBJ Eden Béb . This example is 28 cm or 11 inches. Her eyes are replaced.



The profile of the Recknagel 1907 mold compared to...



The profile of an SFBJ Eden B b . Notice the ears, especially.



Here is the engraved image of Henri Gautier's free-with-subscription doll.

This is the so-called "Jumeau mold" Bleuette.

a squiggle. There is a marked similarity, also, between the Eden B b  mold and Recknagel's (above) 1907 mold: the ears, chin dimple, mouth formation, eye shape and eye molding are very much alike. The 1907 mold also has head-holes like the Eden B b  heads on 5-piece bodies. Perhaps the molds for the Eden B b  were, like Recknagel's doll molds, sculpted by designers from the Sonneberg School of Industry.

In 1905 Paris magazine and book publisher Henri Gautier kicked off a girls' weekly magazine with the offer of a free small bisque doll with every paid subscription (left). He ordered the dolls for this promotion from the SFBJ, and initially advertised them as size 2 Jumeau dolls. Although there is some disagreement about it, most experts believe that the free dolls' heads were made from Jumeau molds now owned by the



SFBJ and placed on SFBJ-made bodies (perhaps made with the new press). Demand for the little 27 cm (10 -5/8") doll by the readers of *La Semaine de Suzette* exceeded supplies, and there was a delay while more *Bleuettes* were made and /or assembled by the SFBJ. Some experts believe that the head used on the next shipment of dolls sent



In size 6/0, this is the Eden Bébé mold *Bleuette* supplied by Fleischmann. She also measured 27 cm or 10 & 5/8 inches. Neither the 8/0 or the 6/0 Eden Bébés on articulated bodies had red nostril marks, yet the smaller heads on 5-piece bodies did have them.



The 6/0 size mark of the same *Bleuette*, with a raised mark above it.



This is *Friquette*, the doll of *Fillette* magazine as shown in one of her sewing patterns. You can clearly see her French-style articulated arms.

to Gaultier was the one known to *Bleuette* collectors as “the 6/0” or “Fleischmann mold” (above). This was clearly the newly remodeled SFBJ Eden Bébé in size 6/0. Even if the 6/0 head was not sent to Gaultier in 1905, it was definitely in use by 1907, according to recent *Bleuette* research. The first known photo of *Bleuette*, in a 1915 advertisement for her wardrobe, shows the 6/0 mold doll. At the very least, this mold was in use from 1907 to 1915.

The 6/0 Eden Bébé mold was supplanted by the SFBJ 60 mold in size 8/0 in about 1915. It is still unknown who made the 60 mold heads. Some are marked R, some D, some PR suggesting the Paul Rauschert factory in Sonneberg, who made heads and eyes. The painting and bisque quality varies greatly; perhaps several different factories were employed. Some experts speculate that the SFBJ continued to have Gaultier’s *Bleuette* heads made in Sonneberg until the advent of the 301-1 *Bleuette*, who is thought to be an entirely French-made doll.

In 1909 in Paris another girls’ weekly magazine *Fillette* (Little Girl), was begun. *Fillette* featured sewing patterns for *Friquette*, their doll mannequin (center). Although no photo exists of *Friquette*, and her identity has not yet been confirmed, experts now believe that the doll used by *Fillette* to model their doll clothing patterns was probably an SFBJ Eden Bébé bisque articulated doll of 38 cm, which is (right) size 0. The 38 cm doll was sold by the magazine in its early years, but like the 6/0

A size 0 SFBJ Eden Bébé models *Fillette* pattern *Robe Yvette* of May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1911. It fits her perfectly.





The Béb  Mulatre was also an Eden B b  mold doll, here with fully-articulated body.



The mark of the B b  Mulatre shows her size, 6/0, and a raised mark above it.



The face of the unusual size 6 Eden B b  (57 cm or 22-1/2 inches) found in the USA.



The 6 mark and SFBJ sticker on the back of the USA size 6 Eden B b .



A group of Edén Bébés ranging in size from 9 to 15 inches.

Bleurette, disappeared in 1915. Other sizes and models of dolls were used as the magazine's mannequin after that.

In 1914, when WWI began, the SFBJ's director, Fleischmann, was still a German citizen. He left France for the safety of neutral Spain, and in March of 1915 his property was sequestered by the French government. For a short time, Fleischmann was able to continue importing German-made bisque doll heads through the French/Spanish border. Fleischmann died during the war in a Spanish hospital, and after the war his shares of the SFBJ were returned to his wife. The SFBJ's directorship passed to Bru heir, Paul Girard. Fleischmann's son-in-law later became an SFBJ director.

In the 1910s the Edén Bébé mold was used for several specialty dolls. One was the Bébé Mulatre, advertised in the 1912 SFBJ catalog. The SFBJ 1907 mold was also used for Bébé Mulatre. The 5-piece and fully-articulated Edén Bébés figure prominently in the 1912 catalog as *Bébés en Chemise* (Dolls in Chemises) and as *Bébés Habillés* (Dressed Dolls).

Sometime in the WWI era the SFBJ produced a size 6 Edén Bébé, 57 cm tall (22-1/2") with exceptional paperweight eyes, lovely bisque, and a somewhat dissimilar mold to the smaller Edén Bébés, yet marked

only with a size number. She has the four teeth, chin dimple, and unpierced ears of the Edén Bébé. Her body is an SFBJ body, and one example carries the round SFBJ sticker that was used during the WWI era. Two of the size 6 dolls are shown here, one found in the USA, the other in Australia, where she is a treasured family doll with known provenance.

In Coleman's "The Collector's Book of Doll Clothes," a 34 cm (13-1/2") doll on a 5-piece body is shown in her original box, dressed in factory original clothes of the 1920s. The Colemans call this doll an Edén Bébé, but do not explain why – perhaps the box was marked this way. The doll in the box can be clearly identified as an SFBJ 60 mold doll. Her tag, visible in the photo, saying "Je Feis Dodo," (I Sleep) was one used for the Edén Bébé of the 1910s. Perhaps the SFBJ continued to use the name Edén Bébé into the 1920s and beyond, but not the original mold.

In the future we may be able to discover more about Fleischmann's SFBJ Edén Bébé. She was his creation, and a mainstay mold for the company from 1905 to 1915. Although she lacks the quality of many other of the early SFBJ dolls, still, she has a certain charm, and she played a significant role in the history of the company.