

Mrs. Albee FIGURINES



The 1996/1997 Mrs. Albee figurine is displayed in front of the 1986, 1988, and 1989 models.

When 50-year-old Victorian widow Mrs. P.F.E. Albee loaded her wagon with five-fragrance, “Little Dot Perfume” sample

sets for sales to friends, neighbors, and strangers, she wasn’t horsing around; as the first representative for what would later be known as the Avon Co., Albee

recruited a team of like-minded women, and developed a door-to-door sales model which would carry the cosmetics giant through the 20th century and beyond.

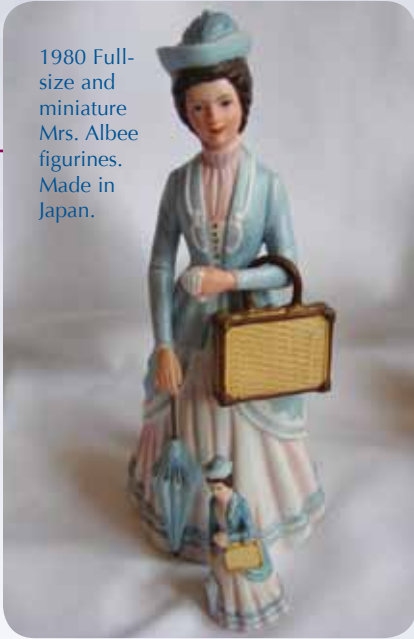
The perfume sets, which Mrs. Albee pedaled in the mid 1880s, were the brainchild of David H. McConnell, a New York bookseller who brewed the white rose, violet, lily of the valley, heliotrope, and hyacinth fragrances himself in his pantry, and offered them as incentives in order to boost his sales. Customers preferred perfume to the books, and the California Perfume Company — which later became Avon Cosmetics — was born.

Mrs. Persus Foster Eames Albee was hired by McConnell to further develop a direct sales customer base. She was so successful as the corporation’s first General Traveling Agent that by 1903, she had boosted the number of trained field agents to a team of over 10,000 women. Albee understood the economic needs of women since there were occasions when her own property taxes went unpaid, and she risked the loss of her beautifully landscaped Colonial home, despite the fact that she was married to a state senator and the couple owned a general store. In assisting other Victorian housewives to develop their own earning potential, there is no telling how far-reaching her contribution to American society became.

Credited as the *Mother of Avon*, this enterprising Winchester, N.H. woman has been immortalized by the cosmetics company annually for over three decades in the form of Limited Edition porcelain figurines for year-end presentations to all top Avon sales representatives. Since 1969, agents in 143 countries have been rewarded with the 10-inch figurine, with countless others earning the matching miniature.

In the world of Avon collectibles, Mrs. Albee figurines are unique in that they have had to be earned rather than

1980 Full-size and miniature Mrs. Albee figurines. Made in Japan.



purchased; but, with the retirement or demise of “Avon ladies” who began their careers in the 1970s, large numbers of vintage Mrs. Albees are appearing in the marketplace. “These coveted incentives could not be replaced if broken,” says collector Donna Young, who was pleased to discover a good condition vintage example at her local thrift shop for only \$5.99. Auction prices on eBay® start considerably higher, ranging from \$35 – \$90 for boxed pieces.)

Avon Lady Adele Hussey displayed over two dozen of her own Mrs. Albees at a recent doll show held at the Preserve Co. in Prince Edward Island. Many of the pieces were exhibited alongside matching miniatures the former top sales agent acquired at annual banquets. Each of the three-inch presentation pieces is as detailed as its full-sized Presidents Club Award and is representative of the Avon Lady mystique. The colorful statuettes are attired in elegant Victorian period dress — winter and summer — and accessorized with the iconic Avon satchel or sample case. Some are further accessorized with such period props as a baby carriage, grandfather clock, chairs, umbrella stand, screen door, garden gate, or birdbath.

Although many of the figurines were produced in Japan, Taiwan, China, and Malaysia, Avon commissioned the Spanish company Bondia to create a



2002 Mrs. Albee figurine.

number of their awards, and in 1973, 6,500 hand-painted Mrs. Albee statuettes were produced for Avon by Goebel — the famous former makers of Hummel figurines— of West Germany. These fetch the highest prices on the collectibles market.

In 2008, the National Special Events Registry officially designated December 7th (Albee’s birthday) as *The First Avon Lady Day*. Albee’s contribution to American history and commerce is also honored by the New Hampshire Historical Society, which has created a Mrs. P. F. E. Albee room at the Sheridan House Museum in Winchester, N.H. The room of Avon memorabilia was dedicated June 1st, 2008. ♦



2001 Mrs. Albee figurine with box.