

19th Century Pewter Vessels

by Liselotte Lopez
(Photos by Victor L. Lopez from the
Lopez Collection)

Call it Zinn, tin, etain, plumbum argentarium, stannum or Britannia metal—pewter is an alloy that's been around since antiquity. Earliest mining of tin-rich ore and its main trading areas were in the Orient. The Romans used it extensively; Caesar writes about it in his reports from Brittain in 55/54 A.D.

Pewter experienced its most artistic expression in Germany in the 16th and 17th centuries, with the imperial City of Nuernberg taking the lead in being the first to formulate guild rules and regulations for the pewterers.



Relief pewter tankard, conical form. Depicts German Imperial Eagle with shield (tankard used as model for the 1979 SCI pewter convention tankard). Twin domes of Munich's Frauenkirche under the handle. Domed relief lid reads "Münchner Buerger Brau since 1654" with entwined hops and malt decor. Made by Ludwig Lichtinger of Munich ca. 1880. Size 17 cm.

These rules were followed to a greater or lesser extent in all cities of the German states. The marking of pewter vessels was of great importance, not for posterity's sake, but for safety. Anyone getting caught mixing too much lead or other additives to the pure tin faced expulsion and other punishments from the self-regulating pewterer's guilds. The countless

Prosit

Page 671
June 1980

touchmarks, marking systems and city inspection seals are gathered in the seven volume set by Erwin Hintze, "Die Deutschen Zinggiesser und ihre Marken"—a not inexpensive pewter library on its own. American stein collectors generally have little use for such an extensive reference work because it is rather rare for pewter tankards of the 16th and 17th centuries to come on the market in the U.S. today; when they do, representatives of German museums with seemingly unlimited financial means and matching knowledge snap up the better specimens in a hurry. To be sure, some well-rounded stein collections will have pewter tankards of rare beauty and ancient age, but they are not in the majority. It is more common to find original pewter vessels from the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Most likely, however, one will encounter in the average stein collection pewter tankards made after 1850, from an age which is called "Historismus" in Europe and lasted roughly until 1900. The popular taste of these 50 years demanded things such as furniture, stoneware, pewter and



Bacchanalian scene over entire body of large tankard—1-liter capacity. Men and women in Greek dress drinking and dancing. Falstaff in lid relief. Twin-horned mythical rams head thumbliift. No marks. Size 29 cm.

silver, to name a few, to be made in the image of bygone epochs. It was the fashion to furnish one's living room or study with neo-gothic or neo-renaissance style furnishings and decorative objects. To display a pewter tankard or charger resembling the work of Nuernberg's famed master craftsman Caspar Enderlein, who is credited with re-creating the Mars Jug, Temperantia Plate I and II and the Adam and Eve Plate among many others, would give witness to the fact that their owner, though unable to afford the originals, was nevertheless well versed in history and a gentle-

ond half of the 19th century saw a prolific number of pewter tankards being made which borrowed ornaments from the renaissance or baroque, combining them with modern additions, changes and few touchmarks. Consumer demand was at its highest in the years 1870 to 1895. Since it seems to have been the general rule not to mark pewter in the last third of the 19th century, relatively few pewter shops are known to us by name. Some which we do know are: Felsenstein & Mainzer of Nuernberg with the [F&M] touchmark; the firm of Weygang in Oehringen, still in business; Ludwig Lichtinger and later his son-in-law, W. Roeder of Munich; Ludwig and Fritz Mory, Josef M. Mayer and Martin Pauson, all of Munich. The firm of Fleischmann,

pewter is a favorite subject and much time is spent learning about it, this writer is very hesitant to make judgments of pewter tankards in others' collections. The most knowledgeable people in this field are found in Europe with its splendid museums, where the originals can be viewed and understood. Steinologists too often believe that one can tell the tankard's age by its form and shape and distinguishing period characteristics. They are unaware or hate to believe that, although their tankard closely resembles one that is pictured in a museum publication or catalog, it is not necessarily a period original. Dealers are even harder to convince that the price they want for the reproduction/copy or downright fake, although 100 years old or more, is not



Pewter tankard on ornamental foot. Body with 4 separate relief scenes taken from Defregger paintings. Lid with finial of man waving hat. This tankard does not lean on previous art styles, is typical of the 1870-1890's. Only the thumb lift is in rocaille form. No marks. Size 25.5 cm.



"Roerken" type conical tankard with large footrim once popular in the 17th and 18th century in Northern Germany as guild vessels for the trades. This one made ca. 1880-1890 with heartshaped cutout on tang. Escutcheon and profiled bands on body plus fine wriggled work near upper rim and on lid. Size 29 cm.



"Walzenkrug"—cylindrical tankard on enlarged footrim. Flat ribbon handle with Nuernberg city touch mark. Ball lift sits on lid. Dedication and crests engraved on body. Given as a wedding gift to president of a shooting Verein. Size 25.5 cm.

man of knowledge and refined taste. The pewter shops and small manufacturers were more than glad to oblige their customers. Since the early 1800's pewter had been increasingly replaced by porcelain and glass in everyday use; only peasants and country people still ate from pewter plates and drank their wine or beer from pewter mugs. It was a golden opportunity to keep the ancient trade alive for a few more years. The sec-

Nuernberg, deserves mention as the leader in reproductions, not only of pewter but also of Creussen, Altenburg, Annaberg and Westerwald stoneware steins. It does take a real expert to distinguish these reproductions, which have now been around 100 years or better, from the real thing of the renaissance or baroque age. It cannot be done from photographs and even well-qualified steinologists are occasionally fooled. Though

commensurate with the original. Engraved dates or wriggled decor was often added to cylindrical tankards as an afterthought or to supposedly enhance its value. Owners of such tankards with dates from the 1700's or 1800's will insist that their piece is at least that old when chances are good that it might have been made 80-100 years ago. One must watch for many telltale signs on old flagons, such as worn and loose

three-part hinges; flattened and worn spots on the upper handle where a fully opened lid touched it; linen marks on the inside where the handle was cast on, etc. It really helps to have a little background in art history where one learns to tell apart such periods as the gothic, renaissance, baroque and rococo age, Empire, *Biedermeier* and *Historismus*, then neo-gothic, renaissance and baroque again, according to the years and dates in which they flourished. At the turn of the century an entirely new movement was born, *Jugendstil* or *Art Nouveau*. This beautiful and entirely new art form used pewter in abundance, creating new and pleasing forms. Best known Art Nouveau pewter was made by P. K. Kayser, a firm founded in 1885 and whose co-founder, Engelbert Kayser, designed the first modern *Bierkrug* in Art Nouveau in 1894. They had workshops in Krefeld and Cologne and made many singularly artistic pieces, besides everyday ware, in their 20-year history, all highly collectable now under the name of *Kayserzinn*. Starting with the number 4000, all their pieces were numbered, enabling us to date them accurately.

Regardless of age, be it 300 or 100 years, pewter vessels are a thing of



Relief Lids

beauty to this collector. Who can understand the non-collector's surprised and incredulous comment, "you paid *this* much for a pound of tin?" And though some relief tankards have a little too much decoration on them, I nevertheless appreciate the care taken in their making to remove any mold lines, to give sharp, needle-fine details to their relief work, their good, solid weight and the way it feels in your hand. I especially like the good quality metal used in most cases, containing no less than 90% pure tin with 10% copper, bismuth or antimony and very little, if any, lead. Some vessels designed for food or drink carry the Angel touchmark, a quality symbol that went into oblivion and misuse after 1920. The higher the tin proportion, the brighter the silvery

glow.

It is said that one should avoid discussing two topics with one's friends: religion and politics. Add a third one with stein collectors: care and appearance of pewter. The majority of stein collectors prefer theirs a dark and dirty-looking gray, which is supposed to convey age. To me, it speaks of neglect. Pewter requires a periodical cleaning to protect it from air pollutants, especially today. It must be said, however, that this view is being held by a transplanted German who actually enjoys cleaning the vessels and is thrilled to discover under grime and oxidation some fine details or dates not visible before the grime and dirt were removed. Before and after appearances can be startling and some of my collector friends have been known to claim that "I ruined the thing," a view I do not hold because pewter looks alone do not signify age to me. Some well cared-for pewter, lovingly cleaned by traditional German *Hausfrauen* on a regular basis, may have an almost silvery look



Relief hunting tankard showing successful Bavarian hunter with deer. Stag duels on either side with roccaille decor outlining forest scenes. Dogs head thumb-lift. Angel touchmark on bottom. Size 18.5 cm.



Pierced pewter and cranberry glass combination serving set. Another art form of the early 1870's combined colored glass such as cranberry, amber and rhine green, with pierced pewter which encircles the glass body. Shown is a large plate (49 cm diameter) and matching serving stein (46 cm) with 2 drinking vessels (20 cm), all with cranberry glass.



Relief scene depicting Falstaff and Bardolph. Lid showing medieval horseman and esquire at tavern gate, demanding more beer at 3:30 am. Innkeeper with flagon in finest detail represented in thumb-lift. Size 17.5 cm.

to it—as do those vessels that were kept behind glass. Some modern pewter, to accommodate the instant antique look, can be positively black. Patina is a natural process and also an artificial one (done with iron chloride solution), that many collectors value highly. One must not destroy the soft patina 200-300 years of time have laid upon the surface by scrubbing the metal with harsh abrasives or steel wool. Your pewter tankard's appearance, however, can be enhanced considerably by cleaning it with a soft brush in soapy water and later applying a wadding-type metal cleaner to be dry polished to a soft sheen.



Art Nouveau/Historicism are combined in this unique pewter tankard. Lid, lift and side decor are in the best Art Nouveau manner while the frontis view depicts historic *Germania* with wreath and shield. Embedded between the stylized flower decor on either side are medallions of the German Imperial Eagle on one and a medley of city crests on the other side, harking back to historical times. Size 26 cm.

Europeans treasure pewter in any shape and form much more than American collectors and pay high prices for it! All steinologists are familiar with the metal since most steins have pewter lids of varying quality. For good representation, most stein buffs include at least one pewter tankard, flagon or mug in their collection. The 1979 Minneapolis Convention tankard is a prime example of the excellent workmanship and quality in pewter today.

The old forms, such as the *Walzenkrug* (straight sided, cylindrical tan-



Pedestalled pewter tankard with partially gadrooned foot and Gambrinus finial on lid. Sides show single and double headed eagles with shields (designed to hold your initials or crest). On front and lid are male and female mascarons. Entire body covered by mauresque, volutes and acanthus leaf decoration, a throwback to the 17th century. Ornamental handle and thumblift. No marks. Size 28 cm.



Relief presentation tankard with cartouches and allegories which were depicted in figure form in baroque and renaissance ages (allegories often found on relief pewter of the 16th and 17th century). Tankard has engraved rim dedication and names of donors on band below the mouthrim. Given as a wedding gift in Munich in 1897. Three allegorical winged angels form the legs—this was not done on the originals of the 16th and 17th centuries, nor the eagle finial on lid. Thumblift in form of a grotesque. Size 32.5 cm.

kard) the relief decorated, conical and pedestalled tankards, *Roerken* types from northern Germany, pearshaped tankards and Swiss *Stitzen*, in short, the whole plethora of shapes and designs is experiencing yet another revival in the last half of the 20th century, at least in Europe. This will make it as difficult for future generations to tell the reproductions or copied form from the original as it is for ours.

But don't let that stop you—if you value pewter tankards, whether they be brownish-gray or silvery, if the price is right and you still have room on your shelf—buy them!

Bibliography

"Zinn" by Hanns-Ulrich Haedecke
 "Schönes Zinn" by Ludwig Mory
 "Zinn-Lexikon" by Bruckmann Verlag, Munich
 "Zinn" by Frieder Aichele.
 . . . see also the note about a "Pewter Bibliography" at the end of Jack Lowenstein's article, *Pewter*.

Angel touchmark



Ludwig Mory
München

Favorite Designs

Grotesque



Acanthus Leaf



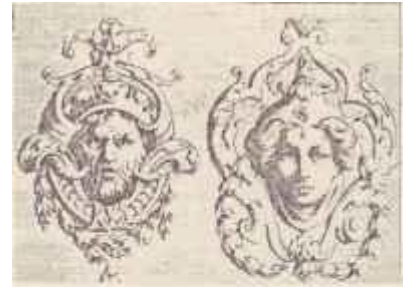
Acanthus in style of a palmette



Decorations on Silver and Pewter Vessels—Germany

Style Epoch	Form of Ornamentation
Renaissance 1500-1550	Acanthus leaf, arabesque, baluster, grotesque, pearlstaff, volute, mauresque
Manierism 1550-1600	Scrollwork, curved ornaments
Baroque 1600-1735	Scrollwork, volute, conch style, baroque flowers. "Bandelwerk" from 1710-1735—a synopsis of arabesque, grotesque, acanthus and scrollwork.
Rococo 1735-1770	Rocaille, (1735-1760) flowers
Transition 1755-1760	Transition from Louis XIV to Louis XVI, flutes/grooves, garlands, straight legs on furniture
Louis XVI 1774-1792	Austere structural arrangements, smooth forms, garlands
Directoire to end of 18th century	Austere classical forms, palm frieze
Empire 1800-1830	Art of the Napoleon Empire, strongly intersperced with Egyptian motifs
Louis Philippe 1820-1850	Freely repeats the styles of Louis XV motifs
Biedermeier 1820-1850	Middle class or bourgeois art in Germany and Austria
Historism 1840-1900	Return to past historical styles. It was the goal to imitate the honorable handwork and to do it on an industrial scale Sub-styles to H. were neo-baroque, neo-rococo and Old German styles. In pewter, one of the genuine inventions of this age is the <i>niche tankard</i> in which a figure reposes in an indented place in the body of the tankard (i.e., guild tankards)
Jugenstil or Art Nouveau—1896-1920	Curvilinear, flowing designs, flowers, graceful figures, geometric designs

Baroque



Rocaille



Grotesque



Leaf and Scrollwork



Volute and acanthus ornament



Varoque Flowers



Green glass—pierced pewter combination wine server. Allegories and mascarons, some of them winged, on front, sides and top of handle in high relief. Stopper of green blown glass mounted on pewter. Ca 1870. Size 32.5 cm.



Conical pewter tankard with relief band around the center containing rocaille and leaf and scrollwork. "W. Roeder" appears under the handle. (He was L. Lichtinger's son-in-law who continued the Munich pewter shop after his father-in-law's early death in 1900. The shop made pewter in the "Historism" and neo-renaissance "Makart" style till 1895 and later Art Nouveau. Many well known artists made designs for the Lichtinger shop.) Size 22 cm.

Arabesques

