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A Regimental Steins

A Brief History

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On January 18, 1871, Wilhelm I, King of Prussia, became the first Kaiser (emperor) of Germany. Ten days later France signed an armistice and the Franco-Prussian War came to an end. On April 16th of the same year, a constitutional law was passed making every German male liable for military service, the only exceptions being: (1) members of ruling houses; (2) criminals; (3) those deprived of their civil rights by courts of law.

At the age of ninety, Wilhelm I died on March 9, 1888, and his son, Friedrich III, ascended the throne. An ill-fated man who had waited so long to be emperor and king, he was to rule for only 99 days, dying of throat cancer on June 15th of the same year.

Wilhelm II, now Kaiser at the age of 29, came to power and with him came an era conducive to the widespread use of regimental souvenirs in general, and regimental steins in particular. Nationalism, on the upswing since the success of the Franco-Prussian War, found its leading

exponent in Wilhelm, devoted to German nationalism and the expansion of the military system. In the same timeframe came a change in the active duty requirements for reservists, altering the length of service in mounted units from five years to three, and from three to two years for other units. A popular change, it made the military service more attractive for reservists, though it required that more of them would be called to active duty.

Military service obligation extended from the close of a man's 17th year to the completion of the 45th. From 17 to 20 a reservist could volunteer for active service and was eligible to request a particular branch of service and unit, and would be so assigned if a vacancy existed and the unit commander agreed to accept him. Without prior volunteering, a reservist became eligible for active service at the end of the 20th year. If qualified and called up, he could request a branch of service and unit—but was assigned based on the needs of the service, his physical condition, and his civilian occupation. Cavalry and horse-mounted artillery units required three years of active duty while other units required two. Naval reservists were normally called from naval districts and served three years. A one-year volunteer program existed which allowed certain personnel with the requisite educational and character requirements to serve for a single year. His parents, or guardians, had to agree to pay for the man's uniforms, equipment, rations and quarters. These men normally returned to the reserves at the completion of their tour and, in time, became reserve officers. Provisions were made for certain professions, such as doctors and teachers, to participate in this program. The five branches of the army were the infantry, cavalry, artillery, pionier (engineer), and the military train. There were

also technical service units such as Eisenbahn (railway), Telegraphen (telegraph), and Luftschiffer (airship). Volunteers for all units provided men for the Schutztruppen (colonial troops). The navy was a separate department, responsible only to the Kaiser.

Reservists reported to their units in early October and the training was provided by the unit, as opposed to the American concept of using basic training centers. After the duty tour was accomplished, the reservist returned home in late September. This system of reporting as a class and leaving with the same group lent itself to the concept of purchasing active duty remembrances, much as an American boy or girl would obtain a high school or college ring. The list of souvenirs was long and varied, including, but not limited to, steins, pipes, flasks, glasses, individual and group photos, certificates, demitasse cups and saucers, clocks, swords, bayonets, paperweights, and many others. In some cases more than a single memento was purchased. Steins seem to have been the most popular purchases, judging by the number that have been located. The period of popularity extended from the mid 1890's until



20th Ulan—Ludwigsburg, 1897-1900



8th Bavarian Infantry, Metz, 1905-07



Guard Jaeger, Potsdam

the onset of World War I. Examples exist from the 1850's on, but were few in number and individually purchased items. Almost all early examples came from Bavarian units. Steins with wartime dates also exist but the demands of the war in terms of men and material effectively ended the manufacture of regimental steins as we know them. Regimental steins of German manufacture also exist from units of the armies of France, Austria, Italy and Hungary.

Steins were ordered from military shops in the area around the garrison town or through the representatives of stein manufacturers. Normally ordered in the spring, they were delivered in early September, just prior to mustering out. The average cost approximated a month's salary for a German private of that period. Steins could also be purchased on an individual basis, often following discharge from active duty. Steins without rosters are representative of such purchases, although many examples, particularly of early dated pieces, also exist without roster.

Regimental steins were produced from a variety of materials, including porcelain, pottery, stoneware, glass and pewter. Normally found in 1/2-L and 1-L sizes, there are existing examples of 0.3-L, 0.4-L, 0.6-L, and 2-L dimensions. Special character steins in the shape of skulls, sailors, and soldiers also exist and enhance any collection lucky enough to have one.

Decorations on early pieces were hand-painted while later dated steins utilized transfers quite extensively. Pottery steins

required a great deal of hand-painting even on late dated examples. The scenes depicted are usually reflective of military training, although on rare occasions actual combat scenes are displayed. Rosters are usually arranged in the handle area but are also found in front or side panels, especially on steins dated prior to 1903. The list of names may be as few as three or four or as many as 100. The roster represents the reservists of that year group assigned to that unit. Occasionally, particularly on Saxony steins, the roster will include the names of unit officers and non-commissioned officers. A cross behind the name was indicative of death on active duty. An interesting feature sometimes employed was the use of photographic transfers. Pictures of the stein's owner, his unit commander or chief, or members of royalty, were usually featured. A few examples of extensive use of unit training scenes have been seen on Bavarian telegraph steins.



14th Husar, Cassel

Regimentals have ornate pewter lids with as much variety in lid style, finial and thumbflift as do the stein body decoration.

Steeple or spindle lids are usually found on early dated steins although certain units, battalion size or smaller, frequently have such lids on later dated steins as well.

Finial-type lids are the most commonly found and offer the largest range of styles. The finials usually represent the owner's unit. More on finials later.

Fuse lids of various styles are found on steins from Feld (field) and Fuss (foot) artillery units. The lid shapes resemble artillery fuses and are classified as set and non-set types. The set fuse lids are made of two or more pieces and are adjustable, whereas non-set lids are of sin-

gle piece construction and therefore non-adjustable.

Prism lids are an attractive and interesting variation: A wide variety of scenes are fixed to the base of the prism, including training activities, military monuments, buildings (military and civilian), comic relief and others. Prism lids are normally found only on steins from southern Germany, the vast majority from a wide range of Bavarian units.

Flat relief lids are seldom found and then usually on steins from Bavaria and Saxony. The relief scene is usually of the unit's garrison town. Bavarian Eisenbahn steins display relief scenes of locomotives

Crown lids come in several shapes, the most popular being one with a glass dome mounted beneath the crown. The *Bavarian Leib Infantry* Regiment is most frequently the recipient of such a lid. Beneath the glass dome is a three-dimensional grouping of figures, usually including a sentry box and guard and mounted officer. Examples from a Bavarian Train Battalion with a single mounted soldier and a Bavarian Feld Artillery Regiment with field gun and five artillery-men exist but are rare.

Helmet-shaped lids are seldom encountered but have been seen in the shape of infantry and artillery helmets and the tschapka (mortarboard-style helmet) of the Ulan units. Hussar steins occasionally have a Pelzmuetze (busby) cast in the upper section of the lid upon which is mounted the appropriate finial.

Screw-off lids are found on steins from a wide assortment of units, although the majority come from southern German states, most notably, Bavaria. They rarely, if ever, are seen on steins from Prussian



16th Husar, Schleswig

or Saxony units, Jaeger units, or Eisenbahn units. Screw-off lids may unscrew into one or more places and usually do so just beneath the finial and at the mid-point of the lid. Removal of the screw-off portion may reveal any one of several features, including cut or dome-shape glass prisms with scenes, colored cut glass prisms in a variety of colors, porcelain inserts, and relief pewter work displaying singular, and in rare cases, multiple scenes.

Another important component of the regimental stein is the finial on those steins which have one. Finials almost always are indicative of the type of unit. In some cases, however, it is relative to the state the unit came from.

The *seated soldier* is probably the most commonly encountered finial. It comes in two sizes and is found on steins from many types of units (i.e., infantry, Jaeger, machine gun, naval, etc.). The headgear worn by the figure should be indicative of the unit for that time period. One should also expect to see a large pioneer shovel mounted on the backs of pionier finials.

Standing soldier finials in various styles were also popular and exist on several unit types. They include soldier with post, single and double standing soldiers, and a soldier with animal. The latter includes several designs involving a soldier and lion, common to Bavarian steins. A singular example is known to the author of a soldier with seated eagle. Pionier steins employ the use of standing figures in concert with pieces of engineer equipment, most commonly, an anchor. Naval steins most often display a standing Matrose (seaman) with flag.

Feld and Fuss artillery units utilized a variety of ordnance and therefore steins from



1st Bavarian Train Battalion, Munich 1909-10

those units do also. Field guns in different shapes and sizes, some with accompanying gunners, grace their lids.

Eisenbahn unit steins usually have various locomotive finials, including those mounted on sections of trestle and examples with smoke emitting from the smokestack.

Steins from machine gun companies and detachments sport several different finials but none more popular than the Model 1908 Maxim machine gun. A few rare examples exist in which the machine gun is accompanied by one or more crew members.

Crown finials are sometimes displayed in different styles, including one mounted on a pillow. They are most frequently found on steins from the *Bavarian Leib Infantry Regiment*, the *1st Baden Leib Grenadier Regiment No. 109*, a few telegraph units, and navals.

Shako finials appear on Jaeger steins and



SMS Vineta, 1910-13

differ in style depending on the unit involved. Steins from the *1st Garde zu Fuss Regiment* sometimes bear the distinctive and very beautiful mitre finial typical of the unit's dress headgear. Most known examples date from the turn of the century and come in two sizes. They include coloration of the bag on the mitre's rear, being either red or yellow depending upon the battalion in which the owner served.

Horse and rider finials were, of course, representative of the cavalry units, but were also utilized on steins from field and foot artillery regiments, machine gun companies and detachments, telegraph battalions, and train battalions. Most cavalry horse and rider finials display a lance tipped with a pennant—sometimes painted in the state colors. A few Jaeger



Guard Pioneer Battalion, Berlin

zu Pferde (mounted rifle) steins, early dated, and other non-cavalry units have riders with raised sabres in a variety of arm positions. Late dated telegraph steins may have riders with a lightning rod upraised. The horses come in three sizes, with two sizes of riders. The riders come in differing uniform and helmet styles depending on unit and should agree with the uniforms displayed in the stein's scenes. Collectors should be careful to note that such is the case. Eagles are found as finials on early dated Prussian steins and some later dated technical service pieces.

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Other rare finials exist, including the striking, but rarely seen, King Neptune finial found on 1-L naval steins. The god of the sea is seated in a large throne with beer stein in left hand and trident in the right. In most cases, however, the metal trident has long since been misplaced.

Thumblifts represent the final element to be discussed here. They normally are indicative of the respective German state or type of unit. The former grouping includes the Prussian eagle, the rampant lion of Bavaria and Hesse, the griffin of Baden, and the crests of Saxony and Württemberg. The Ulmer Spotze, or Ulm wren, is found on steins in which the garrison town is Ulm.

Artillery steins sometimes use the St. Barbara thumblift, patron saint of artillerymen. St. Hubertus, patron saint of hunters, is common to Jaeger steins. The Muenchner Kindl is found on some Bavarian Eisenbahn pieces, the winged wheel on Eisenbahns, and various deerheads on Jaeger steins. Horsehead and saddle thumblifts are rare cavalry examples, usually seen on Bavarian cavalry units. Pionier thumblifts include a grouping of engineer implements. Anchors are found on naval and pionier steins but are rare in the former case. A few rare thumblifts include busts of Wilhelm II in the uniform of the *Regiment Garde du Korps*, a fist with protruding lightning bolts on a Prussian telegraph, and a standing pionier. Early steins may have civilian-style floral or shield-type thumblifts.



Pottery stein to the 70th Field Artillery, Bitsch, 1907-09