

# METTLACH

## Old Abbey Is Mecca For Steins

Mettlach is the brand name in steins. It's the Cadillac in quality and the Ford in production.

The steins that came from the Villeroy & Boch factory at Mettlach in Germany were mass produced although not as we think of mass production today. With as many as 2500 workers producing the fine Mettlach ware at the turn of the century, Mettlach was a true brand name. Company reputation was at stake with every product that was stamped with the famous castle mark (an outline of the old Mettlach Abbey). Pride in the products led to a line of steins that was to be the finest in the general line of drinking vessels. Royal Vienna or Capo di Monte might be of more value but they were not produced in such great numbers or in such organized manner. And they weren't as rugged or manly in appearance.

Mettlach became a combination of artistic skill and new innovation. Mettlach may never be as priceless as a solid gold cup, a sterling silver tankard or hand carved ivory pieces, but Mettlach craftsmen mixed imagination with dexterity to come up with a line of steins that has never been duplicated or equaled.

The Villeroy and Boch steins were catalogued thoroughly. Code numbers indicated mold, design and year produced.

The artists at Mettlach called upon legend, national heroes, cartoon humor, occupations, athletics, geometric design, views of beautiful German cities, student life, games, drinking scenes, and the professions. The illustrations that appeared on Mettlach steins incorporated all phases of German life, especially the *gemütlich* side. The printed inscriptions were often as clever as the illustrations:

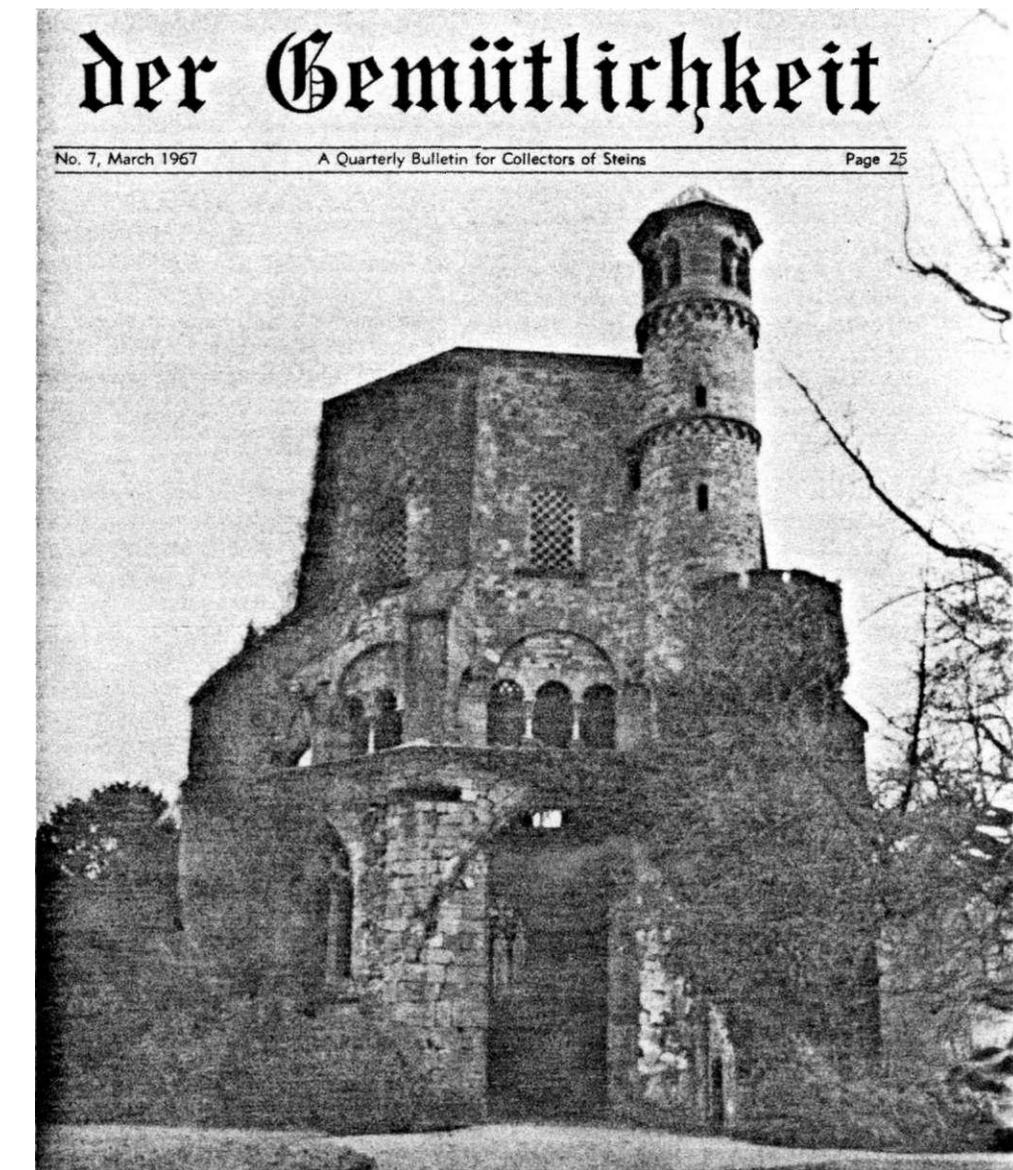
*He who doesn't like wine, women  
and song remains a fool all his life.*

*Good eating and drinking is better  
than false pretense.*

*Since man is made of dust and  
dust makes thirst, he must drink day  
and night.*

Some of the other favorite themes on Mettlachs included the *Münchner Kindl* (the Munich Maid or Monk), bowling games (especially elves), and hunting scenes.

The ceramic artists of Mettlach gained much fame for their work. Collectors, even today, are more than a little familiar



**METTLACH'S OLD ABBEY** is the prototype of the famous castle mark that appears on the bottom of so many Villeroy & Boch steins. This photo was intentionally taken so as to look like the mark. Charles McKittrick of Washington, D.C visited Mettlach and took this photo in February of 1967. The Abbey was ravaged and plundered several times in the centuries that it became the landmark of Mettlach.

with Heinrich Schlitt and Char Warth, two artists who did so much of the stein illustrating. Many Mettlachs are signed by these two or other Mettlach artists.

Mettlach is a picturesque German village located in the Saar region of Western Germany. Off the beaten paths and not of any consequential size, Mettlach might have gone unnoticed except for the fact that one of the world's great pottery firms located there in the 1800's.

Jean Francis Boch founded a pottery at Mettlach in 1809. His father, Piere Joseph Boch, already ran a pottery at Septfontaines (founded in 1767). Nicholas Villeroy had been operating a pottery in Wallerfangen since 1789.

The three firms were consolidated in 1841. The ensuing exchange of exper-

iences resulted in operational improvements and new inventions.

Though there were only about twenty families in the tiny fishing village of Mettlach in 1809 when the land came into the hands of Jean Francois Boch, the Villeroy and Boch firm employed more than 2,500 employees in its Mettlach plant a hundred years later. At that same time in 1909, Villeroy and Boch employed approximately 10,000 artists, workmen and heads of departments in their nine factories throughout Germany.

Many forms of pottery were developed at the Mettlach site. However, it was the Mettlach steins that have helped to build the company's reputation to a peak in Germany and throughout the world.

After the consolidation in 1841, decor-  
**Continued on next page**

## Castle Mark Is Outline of Mettlach's Old Abbey

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ative stoneware was studied and then produced. The first jugs, tankards, steins and chalices were decorated only with ornaments in relief. Some of the decoration was included in the mould. Other relief was modeled separately and applied. This applied relief was in the style of the old Rhenish stoneware.

In 1860 at Mettlach, a ware known as Chromolith was developed. Instead of being in bas relief, the ornamentation was inlaid into the body of the articles in colored clays in different designs. This enamel-like work was the beginning of Mettlach's inlaid ware for commercial purposes. Though the Chromolith was too expensive for the average family, its development spurred Mettlach craftsmen to develop an inlaid ware that could be priced competitively. They succeeded. The secret of the colored clays with soft, unglassy effects was kept secret.

Considering the drawbacks, it's a miracle that the products produced at Mettlach were to become such collector's items. They were handicapped from the start. The Saar region is rich in hard coal. By governmental regulation, Mettlach was allowed to use coal, and coal only, to fire the kilns. Wood had been used previously. Jean Boch eventually succeeded in using coal for this purpose. He gained the distinction of being the first potter to introduce coal-firing for kilns on the European continent.

Boch's ingenuity also led to a water-

power system for turning the lathes. The lathes had previously been turned by potters' feet.

Another Mettlach discovery was the print under glaze (abbreviated PUG by stein buffs). By using transfers from copper plates, prints were made on earthenware. The steins were subsequently fired to a high glaze.

A majority of the Mettlach steins can be classified as either print under glaze or etched. Both are of high quality though the etched seem to have the edge in value and desirability.

Other terms have been used to describe some of the Mettlachs: Wedgewood type or cameo-like (white relief figures and designs over sky blue or olive green background), mosaic (it has the appearance of being put together from many small pieces), applied relief (decoration stands out from the stein's surface), tapestry (the etched design looks like a tapestry which has been nailed to the body of the stein) plain (one color, often for print under glaze) and faience (Mettlach ware which has the appearance of the old faience pieces).

Mettlach steins range in size from 3/10 liters to as large as 8 liters. The 1/2-liter and 1-liter sizes are most popular. Some of the larger steins, or krugs as they are actually called, were known as master steins or pouring pitchers. Many have a pouring lip.

Prices on Mettlachs have skyrocketed. The name alone is not enough to warrant

a high price. It is best to inspect the actual stein thoroughly. Cracks in the base of the stein or repairs in the pewter lids can lessen the value of a stein considerably.

When buying by mail, buyers should deal only with reputable parties. On paper a Mettlach may look good. However, a Mettlach No. 1526, 1/2-liter with castle mark is probably not worth even half as much as an average etched Mettlach. The reason? No. 1526 was a plain stein often used for print under glaze. Without the print and the glaze and perhaps without a lid, it is nothing much more than a giant shaving mug.

The old Abbey is not only the landmark of Mettlach but the source of the town's name. At the place where the Moselle River takes the waters of its tributary, the Saar River, Romans built a monastery thirteen hundred years ago. They named it Abbey Medioclacum (literally abbey between the lakes). Medioclacum became Mettlach in German. The old abbey stands today.

When a fire destroyed the pottery in 1921, all of the company secrets went up in flames. The secret art of producing inlaid stoneware was lost. Imitations at best can be called Mettlach-like but an experienced collector will know the real Mettlachs. Mettlach is said to be so obvious that many collectors hold that the piece does not need to be marked to have value.

Other collectors look for the mercury mark or the castle mark. Some believe that the castle mark carries the most value—even if they were to find it impressed on a toilet bowl.

Such a possibility is not too far removed. Villeroy and Boch is operating today in Mettlach. Most of their production is bathroom porcelain and tile. They produce some dinnerware but the stein production has been flushed down the drain.

### Der Gemütlichkeit

A bulletin for collectors of antique, or just old beer steins, published quarterly (March, June, September, December) throughout the year. One year's membership is three dollars; two years is five dollars. Extra copies: \$1 per year for an extra copy per edition (to members only). Back copies: 50 cents each. Published by Tom McClelland, 815 South McClelland, Santa Maria, California 93454.



Some Mettlachs appear to have tapestries tacked to the body of the stein. These three half-liter Mettlachs are from the Radford Smith collection (Left to right: No. 1648, No. 1641, No. 1647). Middle stein is 3/10 liter; others 1/2-L. Textured bodies are described as "orange peel" by owner Mr. Smith. Two at right have ball-finial type thumblift. All three are castle marked.

## Mohr's Revised Is More than Before

Robert H. Mohr's new revised edition of *Mettlach Steins and Their Prices* is not at first glance any different than his original booklet. The simple blue cover, the 6 x 9" page size, the offset printing job made from typewritten pages—all indicate that Mohr has more of the same. And he has—much *more* though.

Mohr has increased the content to cover Mettlach plaques, beakers and punch bowls. He has added to the historical section in the introduction. Several pages were used to reprint the material that appeared in a company brochure written by E. R. Thieler in 1909 when Mettlach was celebrating its first hundred years. There is much of interest in this section.

A few photographs add to the new edition. Mohr has portraits of Villeroy & Boch founders, plus some reprints of Mettlach steins, plaques and punch bowls. Some photographs of the old Abbey as it appears today are interesting.

The price has increased, though not significantly. The book is available for \$5.95 by sending check to R. H. Mohr, 2208 Douglas Street, Rockford, Illinois.

Mohr's 110 pages make up a guide book for Mettlach collectors. Though there is much to be rediscovered about Mettlach pottery, this book can be considered the bible for Mettlach collectors. There is room to jot down new information in the book.



**Wise Old Owl (Mettlach No. 2036) is one of three characters produced by V&B firm. The owl, like the drunkard, is a creature of the night. Coloring is dark brown and tan. Owl's head is lid. From Rad Smith collection.**

Mohr's insistence on listing prices for each stein is a kiss of death. Stein prices, particularly those of Mettlach wares, have been on a rampage. The book may be out of date within a year.

Further, prices range from area to area. Some experts disagree with Mohr's price listings. The prices listed by Mohr, incidentally, are prices that collectors have paid. In some cases, average figures prevail. These are probably most valid. In other cases, one or two collectors may have paid a high or low price for a particular stein, thus making Mohr's listing unreal.

Collectors, however, seem to demand the price listings. They treat them as a golfer does par. Buying under Mohr's list price is comparable to shooting a birdie in golf, getting under par for a hole. The prices are meant as a guide and that is the way they should be used. The prices are based on perfect, mint condition steins.

Prices were updated from the first edition. The one-liter Black Forest stein (No. 2828) is still listed at \$350, a price that one collector called "absurd."

It's the gigantic steins that have taken the lead in the price race. Mohr lists a 24" No. 2455 at \$400. He puts a 22" No. 2524 in second place at \$375. A four-liter No. 2765 checks in at \$360, according to Mohr.

Low price in the book is \$20 for a plain No. 1909 (only 3/10 liter). The stein is completely without decoration, made for print under glaze. If it is a finished PUG, the price will be \$30 or more.

Prices for PUG steins are much lower generally than prices for etched steins. Another generalization is that prices go up as the size of the stein is increased. However, a three-liter print under glaze might not be more than a one-liter etched stein. Experience and personal taste dictate the price that one is really willing to pay. And before you can quibble about a price, the stein must be found—a difficult task in an unusual market.

Mohr included 818 steins in this study, 89 more than his 1963 book. If a collector could find all 818 as listed at the price listed in Mohr's book, the bill would be about \$62,000.

Mohr's pioneer efforts in publishing information about Mettlachs continue to be a success. The little book is still a must for Mettlach collectors.

## Europe Brochure Still Available

Copies of SCI's brochure for the 21-day trip to Europe (July 19-Aug. 9) and the first national convention (July 16-19) are still available. Write to SCI headquarters in Santa Maria if you were missed the first time or you want an extra. No charge.



**Knight on a White Horse shows detailed work of Mettlach No. 2765, an etched, one-liter stein. Colors are blue, white and amber. Lid is an example of a domed or turret-type lid, pottery circled by pewter edge. From the Rene von Schleinitz collection.**

## Stein Exchange

Listings in the Stein Exchange will be free to members. Standing ads or strictly commercial ads will be billed at \$1.50 a column inch with a minimum charge of \$1 per ad.

**FOR SALE:** 12-inch plaque. \$30 plus postage. Villeroy & Boch marked on back. Number looks like 1514, Wallerfangen, Germany. Print under glaze, blue water, castles & boats on creamish white background. Harry Wolfe, 726 Eureka St., Pittsburgh, Penna. 15210.

**COLLECTION OF 45 STEINS** For Sale. \$1000. Two porcelain faience steins dated 1791 and 1829 with pewter tops and rims are included. Also have some Mettlachs. S. N. Noyes, Hartford, South Dakota.

**I AM INTERESTED** in locating some commercial steins depicting the names and/or marks of the many German breweries. Describe fully and quote price. John B. Hickman, 9005 Weldon Drive, Richmond, Va. 23229.

**I'M INTERESTED** in purchasing and hearing from anyone who has steins or mugs picturing early automobiles or aeroplanes. David K. Bausch, 252 North 7th St., Allentown, Penna. 18102.

## Dr. Long's Steins

### Appear on TV

Steins were featured on television in Ohio recently. Dr. Harold W. Long, an SCI member, loaned steins from his collection for a half hour program on the Ohio State University television station (WOSU-TV) in Columbus.

According to Dr. Long, the show was done in black and white, prepared by the German language department of the University. The German language was used primarily in the show, one of a series of programs referable to the German people and their customs.

The show was carried under the name of "Ilsedore Edse Show." Dr. Edse is a native of Germany and is at present in the German language department of the University.

Dan Kramer, producer-director of WOSU-TV, informed Dr. Long that the taped show may be borrowed by any educational television station in the country.

Dr. Long felt the show was a good promotion for "we stein enthusiasts." He mentioned that credit for the steins was given as "a member of Stein Collectors International."

For those interested in showing the taped presentation on educational TV, inquiries should be directed to Dan Kramer, Producer-Director, Station WOSU-TV, Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio.

## Pouring Krugs Have Companions

Mettlach pouring pitchers were companion pieces to smaller steins, beakers or tumblers.

Some of the sets were actually used in the household. The PUG set shown here is owned by E. F. Langham of Dallas. The pouring krug is a 3 liter No. 2183/953. The 13" tall stein depicts dwarfs playing and drinking. Three verses in German would translate to: (1) Well chewed is half digested; (2) A good drink with barley and hops is the best elixer of life; and (3) A good drink makes the old young.

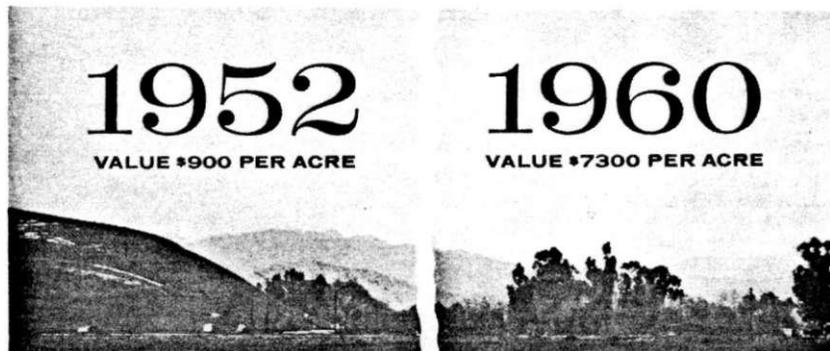
The matching beakers are 1/2-liter each; numbers are 1170, 1171, 1172, 1173, 1174 and 1175, each a different multi-colored scene with pictures of a dwarf in a different pose.

The coasters are No. 1032, approxi-

mately 4-3/4" in diameter. Each has another dwarf pictured. The coasters are most difficult to find.



A collector's dream is a matching set. These print-under-glaze pieces are from E. F. Langham collection.



Investing in land in California is much like collecting steins. When either is available in quantity for a modest price, not too many bother to buy. But wait until either items are in great demand and costly, then listen to the "I **should** have's" and the "I **could** have's"! If you think steins have increased in value during the past years, you had better check what selected acreage in the perimeter growth area of Los Angeles has done. **House & Home** magazine says, "In the last decade increases in prices of raw, usable land have ranged from about 100% in slow growing areas like Pittsburgh and Detroit to as much as 2,000% for choice land in Los Angeles . . ." THESE ARE THE FACTS.

Tom McClelland, your executive secretary, investigated Southern California land as an investment for the future. So have others in your organization and their friends.

I am sure you will want additional information as to how you can profitably use Southern California land in your investment portfolio. Just write or call . . .

### LANVAL CORPORATION

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P.S. I will probably be making a trip to New York this June. I'll be happy to make a stop-over anywhere in the U.S. if you should like to spend some time with me discussing any details. Remember, as little as a few hundred dollars can start you on the way to a very exciting future.

**Columnists George Kammerer and Tom McClelland are NOT on vacation. Their columns were scrapped to make space for Mettlach copy. Their regular features will continue in the June edition. And there will be more on Mettlachs.**