

HISTORY OF THE MUNICH CHILD

By Jack G. Lowenstein

Princeton, New Jersey

All stein collectors are familiar with the picture of a child, dressed in a cowl, with radishes in one hand, a filled beer stein in the other, smiling devilishly from a stein decoration. The saying on the stein is usually **Gruss aus München**, or translated, "Regards from Munich." But how many collectors know that this figure is really a semi-comic take-off of the official Munich coat-of-arms?

Here are a few historic notes about Munich, its coat-of-arms, and the Munich Child (**Münchner Kindl**):

The first written proof of Munich as a small settlement of monks dates from 1158 A.D. With the increase of the population, the town administration developed a constitution of the council. Soon a seal was used to prove the authenticity of town-council documents. The oldest seal of Munich, of which only fragments are left, with the presumable inscription "**Sigillum Civitatis Monacensis**" and the picture of a monk wearing an open hood, appears on a document of May 28, 1239.

In the course of the following centuries a number of slightly varying representations of the seal were used. But all of them show the monk with the book (of city laws) in his left hand, while his right hand with three outstretched fingers is held up. Next to most of these seals is shown a town gate and an eagle, which, in the fourteenth century, is replaced by a lion (of the coat-of-arms of the reigning dynasty of the Wittelsbachs). For some time the monk was represented in profile, later full-face and bare-headed.

Colored representations of the town coat-of-arms go back to the fifteenth century. From then on the features of the heraldic figure began to lose their serious character, the face became more youthful, the hair sometimes even curly.

The present form of the official coat-of-arms with a monk in black cowl, (law) book and blessing in right hand, was given to Munich by the reigning king, Louis I, on September 16, 1834.

At the request of the Magistrate of the city, King Louis II (he was the king who, in 1886, was drowned in the lake of Starnberg) granted minor changes in the coat-of-arms on June 11, 1865, from his castle at Berg (the book and shoes

of the monk were given a red color). Since that time no further significant changes have been made.

It is not known when the "Munich Child" (**Münchner Kindl**) appeared in the coat-of-arms for the first time or who gave it the sympathetic name. Some representations of the fifteenth century already show the child figure instead of the monk. The metamorphosis was not brought about by some order of the sovereign, but instead by artists, by the seal and copper engravers, by the sculptors and painters who transformed the old bearded town-monk into a curly-haired child resembling the Christ child who appears with blessing hands on the altars at Christmas. A medallion which the town gave in 1577 to the Brotherhood of crossbow marksmen, as well as painted "cartoons" of 1579, show the "Munich Child."

The most charming impression is given by a miniature, dating to 1686, in the town law book showing the "Munich Child" with a red halo. These old representations of a child instead of a monk are among the possessions of the Historical Museum of the City of Munich and the City Archives.

The good humor and inexhaustible fancy of Munich artists of the second half of the nineteenth century added various supplements to the image of the child: A laurel wreath, a foaming beer stein, radishes and pretzels. These humorous additions made the **Münchner Kindl** the well-known symbol and guardian spirit of the city and its festive events.



These are three varieties of the Munich Child as it appears on steins from the collection of Jack Lowenstein.



Munich's old coat of arms, left, dates from 1480. The modern city coat of arms is at the right.

Interesting differences in the representation of the child can be seen in the accompanying photograph of three typical Munich steins. Note that the child on the stein on the left has no hood on his cowl and holds the stein of beer in his right hand, radishes (with the bulbs up) in his left. The child on the other steins wears a hood in each case, and holds the beer stein in his left hand, the radishes in his right. The red halo and cross-like belt are maintained in each figure.

For a long time the "Munich Child" was a boy who did not deny his artistic descent from the town monk. Around 1890, Munich artists, in the fashion of the **fin de siècle**, began to represent the child as a girl.

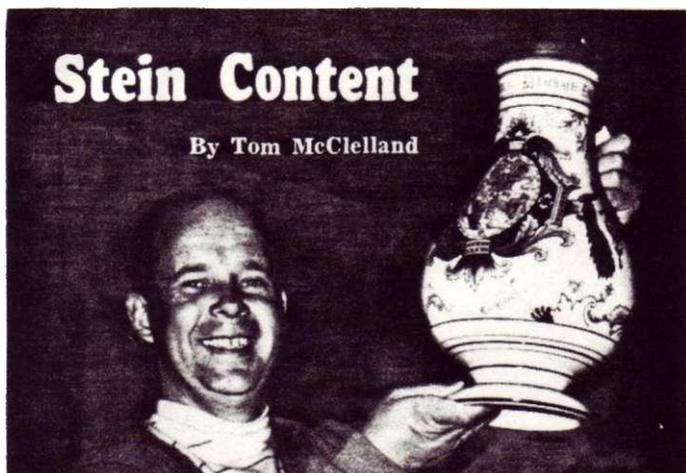
But the child figure in the seal and on the steins has no official character. The monk-head still graces the official seal!

(Pictures of the original coat-of-arms of 1480 and a more modern representation are shown in the accompanying illustrations.)

Nevertheless, apart from all heraldic art and science, the merry **Münchner Kindl** represents a phenomenon in the history of civilization. And we hope that the next time you drink from a Munich stein you will recall this brief history and metamorphosis of the "Child of Munich."

Sources:

"Der Mönch im Wappen," Verlag Schnell & Steiner, Munich, 1960. "Münchens Stadtwappen und das Münchner Kindl," by Ernest von Des-touches, in the periodical "**Kunst und Handwerk**," Vol. 10, 1905. Personal communications from the Office of the Mayor, Munich.



I'm back again—and this time in a hurry. The last bulletin was dated August and was mailed in August. The only problem was that particular *der Gemutlichkeit* was actually supposed to be a June number. The linotype man didn't believe it when he was setting the type in August and the word before him was typed **June**. So he did what any good American should do. He corrected. And this time he will be right when he sets the type for September—for we are back on schedule, for the moment, friends and ex-friends.

Robert Ripley, that famous "Believe it or Not Man," would have run this item in his famous feature if he were still alive: The directory of SCI members is off the press. No fooling. Honest to Ripley.

The SCI commemorative stein is en route from Germany. All of those who were in Milwaukee for the convention will have one mailed free as a souvenir of the convention. Others who ordered them (\$7 postpaid) will have theirs on the way soon, too.

* * * * *

* * * * *

Since I've been known to mention other hobbies of SCI

Joe and Mary Durban recently finished a new addition to their home in Monterey Park, California. Highlight of the addition is the stein room, complete with bar, pool table, player piano, and a magnificent stein collection. To warm the room officially the Durbans had several collectors from southern California as their guests in August.

The meeting may have served as a warm-up for the organization of a Southern Cal chapter of SCI which is being organized by Paul Cornell of Anaheim. Paul and wife Donna were at the Durbans where they started getting ready for the first official shindig for members in their area. The date has been set for October 19. The Cornells live at 2805 Burntwod in Anaheim. Phone number is (714) 630-2556.*

Paul wants members to RSVP. He wants members to bring color slides and pictures for the first meeting. He hasn't decided on dues or other formalities as yet. He just wants to get collectors together.

Incidentally, the Cornells have also added a stein room in their house. Their grandest feature may turn out to be the sauna bath just outside the swinging door.

The idea of regional organizations may be catching on. Robert Gillespie is talking about getting the Michigan collectors together. Jack Heimann is following through in Minnesota. Tom Crocker is also pushing for a Minnesota or Twin Cities meeting. Crocker is quick to remind us that there were 13 at the national from Twin Cities. That's tops!

* * * * *

Virginia Armstrong's initial effort at publishing something on steins is another contribution to the combined efforts of SCI members to learn more about steins.

Her reproduction of the 1899 Villeroy & Boch catalogue is not, however, the first such effort. The reproduction of steins and other items is the best we have seen. The binder

is superb and could be quite useful in holding other findings. An artist's sketch of the abbey is on the binder and the spine of the book identifies the contents adequately and has copies of the two most popular Mettlach marks.

If the \$25 price seems high, it should be considered that the market is limited. The catalogue reproduction is highly recommended, especially to those who have not purchased the other catalogue.

It should be noted that no Mettlach catalogue is complete in showing all of the V&B steins.

Kirk Power has now gone through the trial and error method of learning how to make a stein. After a great deal of effort he thinks he has an unusual piece, contemporary in reality but ancient in appearance. He has not attempted to make a duplicate as such. His new stein is shown in an ad in this copy of *der Gem*. His original cast was made from a carved ivory piece—a Hunsiatic hunting stein. Some four years ago, Kirk bought the ivory stein from the carver's daughter. She was 68 years old at the time.

Each of the KPB (Kirk Power & Borzai) will be numbered and registered. A limited number will be made. Furthermore, Kirk promises to advertise to let dealers know if one of them has been stolen and to repair them expertly and reasonably if damaged.

Power is an ex-acrobat who collected steins, 450 of them at one time, for much of his life. His "retirement business" is more a hobby than a task for him.

He is such a low pressure salesman that his technique couldn't even be called anything as harsh as "soft sell." He simply chats about steins. When customers or visitors are genuinely interested in stein talk, Kirk is happy.

The former acrobat has tumbled a long way from Coney Island where he first learned the gymnastics that led him to an 18-year career as an acrobat. His house of Steins in Studio City is a fun place for collectors. It is, in fact, a fun place for Kirk Power, too.

By late August, Power had already sold 165 of the limited steins. Italian Francois Borzai is the designer. He was once a professor of designing and sculpture at Budapest University.

members I should say that I know of three of us who restore old autos. They are Frank Poppy, California; Dr. John Baeke, Kansas; and Emil Gislason, Washington.

My wife and I are also collecting children with our third addition expected in October. We ordered a girl but will be happy boy or girl, even without a castle mark on the bottom or an old pewter lid on top.

SCI headquarters has been moved. Though the address is the same, I'm handling everything in a workshop—sweatshop in my garage. There's more room to spread out, less noise from the kids, no TV, no icebox-refrigerator, no nothin'. Just lots of space to spread out.

Travel Agent Peter J. Lilla, an SCI member and agent for the SCI summer tours, recently visited Prague, Czechoslovakia. As soon as he and his group were settled in their hotel, things began to happen. They got caught in the occupation by Russian troops. An experienced travel man, Lilla got out and has interesting stories and movies to back up the experience.

By the way, Lilla had suggested that our next tour include Prague and several members had agreed they would like to go there. We are sitting tight on that part of the itinerary for now. Wherever you are in this land, lift your stein to Lilla. His tours are usually exciting—but this last one was too much.

The master stein in this column heading is another of the prizes from the Pabst collection. Snap was taken at the convention which gets me started all over again.

I forgot last edition to thank the members in convention for a gift that will never be forgotten. On our mantle is a special 1-liter cameo type Mettlach (No. 1005) which was presented by the group at Milwaukee. Thanks, group. Drop by and we'll fill it up. And empty it. So mine is empty again and the column ends with the next period.

Stein Exchange

WE BUY & SELL antiques and steins, etc. Serendipity Shop, 4360 No. 27th Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53216. Phone (404) 873-8030.

TRYING to locate a top for Mettlach Humpen (POKAL) 1820. Inside diameter for fitting top is 3.5 inches. Top is 1735 or 2110 may also do. Jack Beckwith, 123-40 83rd Ave., Kew Gardens, N.Y. 11415.

I NEED METTLACHS No. 2076, 3L in coral BG. Also 2 No. 2086, ½ L in coral BG. Edwin F. Langham, 1607 Nob Hill Rd., Dallas, Texas 75208.

I WANT V&B BEAKERS. Do you have any of those Mettlach tumblers so I can build some sets. Send numbers on bottom and price. Sal Palma, 4800 Ocean Beach Blvd., Apt. 311, Cocoa Beach, Florida 32931.

I'M INTERESTED IN PURCHASING Mettlach steins, plaques, etc. with dwarf motifs. Norman B. Medow, M.D. 1741 Park Ave., Long Beach, Calif. 90815.

I BUY QUALITY ANTIQUE steins—Meissen, Royal Vienna, Mettlach and character steins. Walt Richards, 46 Fitch Ave., New London, Conn. 06320.

IS THERE A LOCAL chapter of SCI in the Chicago area? J. G. Braun III, 7540 McCormick Blvd., Skokie, Illinois.

WE CHALLENGE SOUTHERN CALIF. There is no doubt in our minds that we will have more members in our Minnesota (Twin Cities plus) group than any other SCI chapter. Contact Jack Heimann, 1653 Pinehurst, St. Paul, Minn. 55116. (612) 699-8720.

I JUST WANT STEINS—any type will do except the ones that say "made in Germany." What do you have and how much? Ron Heberlee, 114 East Roosevelt, Phoenix, Arizona 85004.

der Gemütlichkeit

A bulletin for collectors of antique steins and other drinking vessels, published quarterly (March, June, September, December). 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.



Kirk Power deals in antiques for men. His specialty is steins. A collector himself for many years, Power now runs his "hobby-business" more for fun than money. He welcomes SCI members into his shop for stein talk anytime. He is shown with the stein he helped create.



Here's a relaxed Munich Child, a takeoff on earlier conceptions. This one is sitting down. From the stein collection of Frank Poppy.

WANTED — Mettlach steins and plaques, Musterchutz characters, Royal Vienna, Meissen, Kreussen, Capo-di-Monti and Faience steins. Collections or singles bought outright or trades arranged. Send your "have" and "want" list.

ANITA and SOL BOTKIN
3278 Bertha Drive
Baldwin, New York 11510
(516) BA 3-8978

METTLACH COLLECTORS ITEM

The complete 1899 Mettlach factory catalogue is available reproduced in its entirety. There are more than 80 pages with 100 illustrations — clearly reproduced by modern offset printing. Everything is shown that was in production at Villeroy & Boch in Mettlach at that time: steins, flower containers, punch bowls and wall plaques. Identifying numbers are listed under each illustration.

The book is contained in a first-rate loose leaf binder which can be used to hold other 8½x11 inch papers or copies of **der Gemütlichkeit**.

The original book is appraised at \$300. The quality reproduction is available at \$25 and is a must for the Mettlach collector. This is a rare opportunity to have a copy of a collector's item as well as a very important reference book. The catalogue is available for delivery immediately. Send your checks and money orders now.

We hope to have other articles and photographs of Mettlach steins which will be sent to collectors who buy the book.

ARMSTRONG ENTERPRISES

2100 Pridgen Road

Hampton, Virginia 23363

