

Schafer & Vater Porcelain

by Peter P. Spirito

Schafer & Vater character figural bottles are the perfect go-with for beer stein collectors.

Schafer & Vater was founded by Gustav Schafer and Gunther Vater in 1890. The porcelain factory was established in Volkstedt Rudolstadt, Thuringia, Germany, and the buildings are still there today. The firm was still operating until 1962, although most active in the period from 1910-1920, appearing to cease production thereafter until a small number of items were produced in the 1950s-1960s. It is reported that in 1972 all the equipment, files and molds were destroyed and the factory was converted to apartments, figure 1.



figure 1

The factory trademark, a crown above an "R" in a 9-pointed star, is often found stamped on the bottom of their wares. In addition to the trademark, pieces may have



figure 2

the words MADE IN GERMANY, or a form or model number, or no marks at all.

The reason that Schafer & Vater are the perfect "go-with" for beer stein collectors is the following similarities:

- They are drinking containers for alcoholic beverages.
- They were MADE IN GERMANY.
- Many pieces were made in different sizes and colors.
- Most pieces were made in either a high gloss or a bisque finish, and may be multi-colored, blue and white, or brown. A smaller number of pieces were made as cameo or jasperware.
- They are antique pieces.
- The inscriptions are in German, English, Swedish and French.
- Some of the inscriptions are the same as on steins, figure 3, "Prosit".



figure 3

- One piece (figure 4) is a perfect go-with for the Schierholz stein known as the Nurnberger Trichter, or the Funnel Man.
- Some pieces were made both with and without a music box.
- The dealers and auction houses that sell beer steins also sell Schafer & Vater.
- As with Mettlach, they made many other items.
- Size is always a factor in desirability, and I admit to preferring larger pieces, but as in steins, the rarity of the item is always a major factor in determining value.

I started collecting Mettlach beer steins in



figure 4

1958. A gentleman who had a very large and advanced collection introduced me to Mettlach. My family and I saw our first Schafer & Vater when we visited his beautiful home and discovered that in addition to his stein collection, his wife had one of the nicest collections of S&Vs. The S&Vs were figural bottles, all blue, 8 to 12" tall displayed above their blue kitchen cabinets with a lighted background. When I saw the S&V collection I thought that some day when my Mettlach collection was where I wanted it to be, I would start collecting S&Vs. That day came in Feb. 1995 at the Miami Antique show where I purchased my first figural bottle. The bottle is light blue color, 8.5" tall, and is a lady holding a bunch of keys and a bottle, figure 5.



figure 5

My study of the large 12" tall music box bottles (figure 6) has identified 19 different models, produced in brown, blue and multi-colored. These music box bottles have only been found with English inscriptions,



figure 6



Der "ALKOHOL", The devil on the moon, 9" h.



OLD SCOTCH and LITTLE SCOTCH, 9.2" h. The entire head is the stopper.

and many if not all of the music boxes were made by and presumably installed by an American company, suggesting that distribution of these large music box bottles may have been exclusive to the U.S., or at least to English-speaking markets. They all play an English language song (How Dry I Am).

For an excellent source for Schafer & Vater, visit carlopeto's SCHAFFER & VATER web site (<http://www.schafer-vater.com/>). You can also see more photos of my collection at that site by clicking on "Pictures of Collectors".

Here are some additional photos from my collection.



Mr. Cocktail, brown, 9.5", multi-color 6.5"



"Let us go to Maxims." 8.5" h, large molded letters on the rear base "New York, 110 West 38th Street. Molded S&V mark on the bottom plus stamped "Copyright by Maxims." Very rare.



Flasks: BPOE or Order of Elks and Order of Moose



Flask with mirror, 5.2" h, Swedish inscription



Cameo bottle with ornate stopper has three sides and there are six shots with this set.



American Indian 9.5" tall with large 2.25" tall shots and 8.0" tray set.



Dutch boy and girl. Note the ornate stoppers.



So-called "Cannon flasks", bent neck style, 6.2" h. From left to right, the bowler, Santa Claus, and Night Guy.



German Hausdokter, 9" h with 6 shots. Note the different titles on each shot.



American version with music box, 13" h. "First aid" doctor with a large hypodermic needle, 6 shots, each 1.7" h, and an 11" tray.



Drinking Monks: French, English and German.



The drinking rabbit "ALKAHOLIKER" is 11.25" tall, and next to him is a German Santa Claus, 10" tall. Note the toys in his bag. The entire head of these pieces is the stopper.



American version music box "Can You Spare It?" 12.0" tall, and German "Gut Holz!" bowler, 9.2" tall.

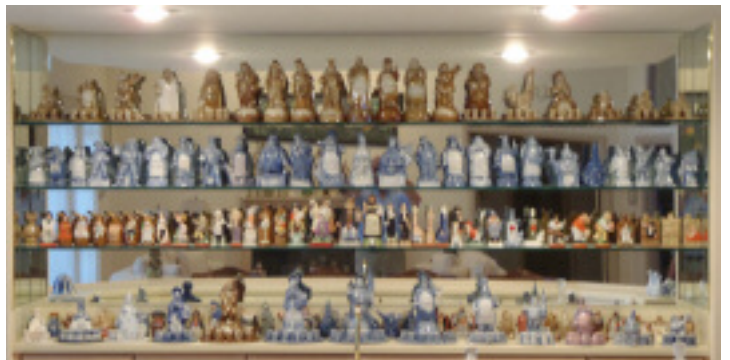


Complete set, 12" "Now you pull one" w/music box base, eight shots 2.25" tall and 11" tray.



Lady wearing a cross and holding a bottle, 9.5" tall with shots and tray, German version without music box.

This is a good example of why I find collecting S&V so interesting and a challenge. I had the bottle for many years but could never find the shots and tray. Recently my son found 4 of the shots at an antique mall. I contacted some of my collector friends to see if anyone had the rest of the shots and tray. A collector had 4 shots and the 11.0" tray and sold them to me. The complete set has much more value than the separate pieces.



Some of my Shafer & Vater collection on display.