

Portrait Lids

Randy Satterfield

Dixie Steiners

My stein collection contains a number of "niche collections." These are minor collections within the whole and they are, to say the least, diverse. Some were deliberately started, and some just seemed to form on their own. One of these niche collections is of steins with hand painted or photo-transfer ceramic inset lids, with the subject matter being portraits.

These steins/lids seem to have been popular from around 1890 to 1930 judging by the likely dates of the steins. The most common type of stein that featured these lids were 1/2 liter glass steins which varied wildly in quality. The focus tended to be on the lid, not the stein body. Picture 1 is a typical glass beer stein with a ceramic lid.



While glass steins vary in quality, they tend to have hand painted ceramic inset lids. In addition, you also find these ceramic inset lids on the bodies of other materials. Pictures 2 and 3 show stoneware steins showing ceramic inset lids.

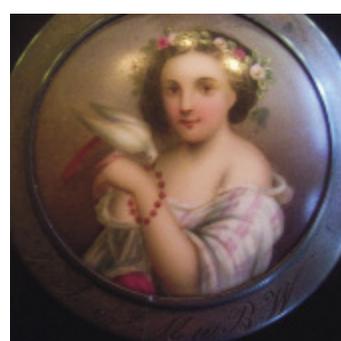
The great majority of the portraits on these lids are of women. Who were they? Most likely they were someone important to the owner of the stein, with the stein owner likely being male. A wife, daughter, girlfriend, or relative would seem to be the most probable candidates. The gallery of pictures on

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... less commonly than ... male portraits on lids. Presumably, these would be the owners of the steins, or the stein was owned by a woman and the portrait is of a significant other. Picture 3 is one example.

In addition to painted portraits, there were also photographic ones such as pictures 4 and 5.



on the cut mug in pictures 6 and 7 and the porcelain stein in picture 8.

Picture 9 is a puzzle. The stein's body is a typical "various subjects" stein. While it has no markings on it, it is most likely made by Merkelbach & Wick. It may have been sold as a blank to a decorator and someone had his/her two children portrayed. Or, due to its size of 1/4 L, it may have been intended for use by the children themselves. A third possibility is that it was actually intended as a generic children's stein.

Another, not uncommon, subject for porcelain lid portraits was famous and fictional people such as the emperors or King Gambrinus. For my purposes at least, I don't include these among this collection. There are basically two reasons why I'm attracted to these steins. One is that they can be quite beautiful. The other is that they are, to some degree at least, historical documents. The people depicted are ordinary people of their time and in many cases, these may be the only remaining likenesses of them.

Also there are examples of the portraits being on the body of the stein instead of the lid. Examples of this are shown