

~ Gerz Etched Steins, A Closer Look ~  
Simon Peter Gerz I, GmbH



by Don Birschel

Even though its advertising states that the company opened its doors in 1862, the Simon Peter Gerz stoneware firm began operation in 1857. The first steins produced at the factory were the well-known grey stoneware salt-glazed variety. In fact Gerz still produces them today. Some time later they produced relief steins in cream stoneware with tans, blues, greens, reds and full color varieties. The most intriguing steins, however, were the etched steins Gerz produced from the late 1890's through the early 1900's.

When the Mettlach incised steins became popular, other manufacturers weren't far behind. These included names like HR, Marzi and Remy, JWR, and Girmscheid to name a few. Each stein made by these factories was distinctive and recognizable in its own way. This article will deal with that quality in Gerz.

Let's begin with the body colors Gerz used. For the most part the colors above the upper band and below the lower band, at the foot, were what I would describe as olive brown, with slight shifts to the green as well as the brown. The scene between the bands was hand-painted with a background in the same olive brown color. It should be noted that the colors of the hand-painted scenes were not always consistent. At times the hues were darker or lighter or even differed in color totally, an example being body number 1217, a 1/2 L, depicting a man holding a candle on a stairway while two others wait below. Another example is a 2-1/2 L, number 1214A, (see figure 1) depicting two women, one holding a candle enabling a gent to find his way home after a few drinks. One version has the man wearing a red frock coat, while one of the women is wearing a blue dress. A second version has the colors of the dress and frock coat reversed. A third version has the frock coat painted in lavender.



Figure 1.

There are also total body color variations. An example of this is number 1265, which has a scene of a hunter on horseback with his dogs, plus leaves and vines. The color above the upper band and below the lower, at the foot, are a dark tan rather than the olive brown. The scene background is a reddish-brown color. A number of steins were done with a grey body color over the cream stoneware, making the stein appear as grey stoneware. Stein numbers 262, a 1/2 L, and 1347, a 3 L, are examples of steins found in both olive brown and grey. Here again the scene on 1347 depicts different colored clothing being worn by the people shown on each stein.

A variation can also be found whereby the scenes are uncolored, appearing cream-colored against the olive brown back-ground. Examples of both colored and uncolored versions are found on stein numbers 262, 1210, 1215, 1217, 1254, 1318 and 1287, the latter of which is a tobacco jar. Most likely, many other steins were produced in these varieties. Some steins, such as numbers 1477 and 1214B, were also produced in the grey variety with no coloring whatsoever except for the band near the rim.

The color used on the bands seems to be consistent, being a pretty French green. I have discovered one stein, mold number 1254, which can be found with three varieties of bands. One style is horizontally ribbed with a 45 degree hatch through it.

The second, and most often seen, is a type of a clover inside of an oval repeating pattern. The third is a repeating three-set beaded pattern (Figure 2).



Figure 2.

The same scene can often be found on different size or shape steins. An example of this can be seen on stein numbers 1217 and 1220. Number 1217 is a tall and thin 1/2 L stein, while the number 1220, 1/2 L, is a short and wider stein. Both steins bear the same aforementioned scene. Stein number 1237A is a 3 L which is narrow at the top and bulbous at the bottom, curving in at the foot. It is a master stein to number 1237B, a 0.3 L stein of exactly the same shape. The scene is one of ancient hunters, a man and woman. The same scene can be found on stein number 1222A, a 3 L, (see figure 3) which has a standard shape and is a master to 1222B, a 1/4 L stein. Stein number 1254, a 1/2 L, also has the same scene; however it is not part of the set. The scenes differ slightly (figure 3) in that the 1/2 L shows three hunting scenes while the 3 L has the same main scene on the front of the stein, but game hanging on the side scenes. Note that the dog is a different color on each stein.



Figure 3.

Of interest are stein sets with related scenes and concurrent numbers such as 1419 through 1422, which depicts Wagner opera scenes such as "Lohengrin" and "The Ring." A ewer, number 1425, goes with this group (see figures 4 & 5).



Figure 4.



Figure 5.

The inlaid lids found with Gerz steins are generic, that is, they depict flowers, hops and leaves, or art deco designs, none of which adds to the scenes found on the steins. The lids do seem to be consistent with the stein numbers however.

Some of the same scenes can be found on Gerz etched and relief steins. Two examples are relief number 390, commonly found, and etched number 1335, a rarely found 1 L stein depicting Achilles, Minerva and Agamemnon from mythology. The etched 1236 "Four Seasons" is more common than the relief number 239.

As etched stein production continued, Gerz began to branch out into new types

which bore the appearance of Mettlach's "Ludwig Hohlwein" designs. While I have not seen many of these, it appears that the 1600 and 1700 series numbered steins are of this variety. Examples are a 2 L 1689A and a 1 L 1709.

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