

# RUBBING A SALAMANDER

by SCI Master Steinologist John McGregor

This article is one portion of a larger article entitled "Schlaraffenland Steins and the Schlaraffia Society". The "chapters" in that article are:

- Hans Sachs and the Meistersingers
- *Schlaraffenland*, or "The Glutton's Paradise", a poem by Hans Sachs
- Schlaraffenland Steins
- The Schlaraffia Society
- Schlaraffia Chapter Steins
- Rubbing a Salamander
- Paragraph 11 and the *Schweningerkur*

There is a link at the bottom of this article to the next chapter, or, to read

## ["Schlaraffenland Steins and the Schlaraffia Society"](#)

in its entirety, click on the title of the article.

Let's now try to make some sense out of the use of a salamander as the handle of the LB&C stein discussed above. The first time I encountered the word salamander, as it related to beer, or beer steins, was in an article in the June 1986 *Prosit*. Jack Lowenstein had reprinted a section from the book "100 years of Brewing", The Western Brewer, H. S. Rich & Co., Chicago/New York 1903 (pp. 689-690); titled "Beer Drinking Customs at the University of Heidelberg, Baden." An excerpt follows:

"The wretch who has lost his beer honor is indeed a pitiful case. Being declared under the ban by the president, he is forthwith "chalked down" (by a beer-honorable fox, as already described) with the opprobrious title, *Bierschisser*, on the blackboard, the pillory of weak-kneed drinkers. From this ignominious position he can only extricate himself by "fighting out" after the manner to be hereafter explained. Meanwhile he can take no part in the musical diversions of the evening; he must not participate in the mysterious rite known as "rubbing a salamander"; he cannot act as beer judge, umpire, or witness in a beer trial; he can not challenge anyone to drink, or "drink in response" to anyone who may challenge him; and generally he is in a very bad way."



In the following, the terms used are a mix of German and Latin. The translations are how we might expect to hear them in modern English. The word "salamander," in this case, is derived from the term "*Sauft alle mit einander*" (All drink together). However, the word *Sauft* means more than just drink; it is one of those over the top words meaning "get sloshed" or "guzzle." To have a Rubbing of the Salamander ("*einem einen Salamander reiben*") proposed to you is evidently considered a great honor. As the leader, or toast giver, proposes to honor a guest or special person, all stand and lift their steins at the words of the leader, "*Ad exercitium salamandris praeparatiestisne?*" (Are you prepared to do the salamander?) The drinkers say in unison, "*Sumus*" (we are). The leader further orders, "*Salamandes inciptur, eins, zwei, drei,*" (Begin the salamander, one, two, three) and each drinker rubs his stein on the table three times. The leader further instructs them with, "*Bibte eins, zwei,*

*dre!*" (Drink up, one, two, three) and all steins are emptied in unison to the count one, two, three. They are then rattled on the table till the leader once again says, "*Eins, zwei...*" (one, two...) and all steins are held still until the leader says, "*Drei!*" (three) whereupon all bang their steins on the table.

A variation of this is the "*Trauersalamander*." All done as before, except the glasses are "rubbed" in the air and they are stopped before striking the table. A silent, solemn ceremony honoring a departed brother.

I believe the student blazer and pipe on the bush behind the individual at the left of the scene on the LB&C stein is the connection to the handle that identifies it as a salamander. Even if you don't agree with this assumption, you will at least know how to "rub a salamander" in case you are ever called upon to do so.

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[Click here to read the last chapter in this article - \*\*§11 and die Schweningerkur\*\*](#)

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