

# SCHLARAFFENLAND STEINS AND THE SCHLARAFFIA SOCIETY

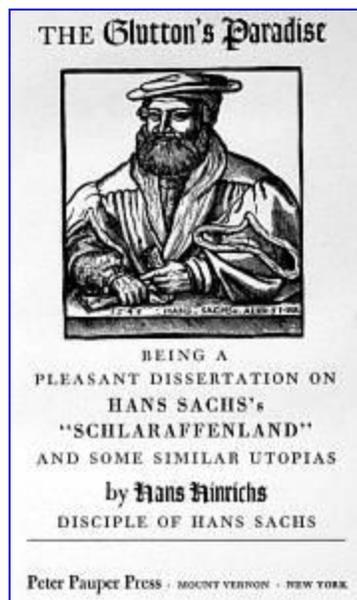
by SCI Master Steinologist John McGregor

This lengthy article was inspired by my discovery of several very intriguing steins which at first I could not explain. Over the course of my studies I discovered that they were related to a poem entitled "The Glutton's (or Fool's) Paradise" written in the 16th century by Hans Sachs, Meistersinger of Nuremberg. Like many studies, the more I knew, the more I was puzzled, and my continued examination of the themes and decorations on these steins led me to a German association called the Schlaraffia society. In this article I discuss Hans Sachs and the Meistersingers of his time and then look at the poem which establishes a context for the steins which began this search. From there we examine the steins themselves, then explain the nature of the Schlaraffia society, examine two Schlaraffia chapter steins which I found later, and consider some of the German drinking habits or traditions which appear on our steins.

## HANS SACHS, MEISTERSINGER OF NUREMBERG

**Hans Sachs**, 1494-1576, German poet, leading *Meistersinger* of the Nuremberg school. A shoemaker and guild master, he wrote more than 4,000 master songs in addition to some 2,000 fables, tales in verse (*Schwänke*), morality plays, and farces. His Shrovetide plays, humorous and dramatically effective, present an informative picture of life in 16th-century Nuremberg.

The Meistersingers had their origin in the early part of the fourteenth century, and their golden age was about the time of the Lutheran Reformation. A versifying mania had taken possession of the lower classes. As one historian phrases it, blacksmiths, weavers, shoemakers, doctors, and schoolmasters sought to mend their fortunes by making verses. Companies of these persons formed themselves into guilds or corporations, calling themselves "Mastersingers," and holding periodical gatherings at which they criticized each other's productions. They composed their verses in conformity with certain strict guild rules; accuracy, industry, and painstaking care, rather than an unfettered expression of the true spirit of poetry, were the main features of the Mastersingers' art. "Every fault was marked, and he who had the fewest faults was awarded the prize and permitted to take apprentices." When his apprenticeship was over the young man was admitted to the corporation as a full-fledged Meistersinger.



Expert writers who have studied the subject have shown that there was a guild of Meistersingers at Mainz as early as 1311. The idea caught the popular fancy, and before the fourteenth century was out,

few towns in Germany were without their guild of Meistersingers. It was, however, at Nuremberg, and in the time of Hans Sachs (1494-1575), that the school attained its highest development. (*music-with-ease.com*)

# SCHLARAFFENLAND

(Glutton's or Fool's Paradise)  
A poem by Hans Sachs (1494-1576)  
Meistersinger of Nuremberg

Freely translated by Hans Hinrichs and  
"purged of some vulgarities which the modern reader will prefer unprinted."

---

In fabulous Schlaraffenland  
The Sluggards sit in full command.

It lies three leagues past Christmas Day;  
And he who'd go must eat his way  
(Digging a tunnel like a mole)  
Through hills of porridge, to his goal.  
But once he does, with breeches tight,  
He'll belch at all the wealth in sight:  
There peaked roofs are Pancake-shingled,  
Walls and halls are solid Cake,  
Porches Pork, and ceilings Steak;  
Stout Sausage strings, all crisp and brown,  
Are strung for fences in the town.

From every well you crank up Wine;  
Malmsey and Mulberry and Rhine;  
The hemlock trees are hung with Scones,  
Buttered well and shaped like cones;  
The pine produces Pies forsooth,  
The dogwood - Doughnuts. It's God's truth!

The willows bend with Rolls and Bread  
By waters that run Milk instead;  
And all streams teem with toothsome Fish  
Fried, baked, roasted, as you wish;  
In fact they swim so close to land  
You reach and catch them with your hand.  
Roast Chickens, Geese and Pigeons go  
Flying within reach, and slow:  
And when the birds are winging South  
Just gape - they'll fly into your mouth!

The Hogs you meet on every side  
Are sleek and fat and crisply fried:  
They carry knives - it's very nice -  
And stand by while you carve your slice!  
The very horses drop - poached Eggs!  
And Figs pile up by donkey's legs;

For Fruit you never climb a tree:  
Cherries hang down to each man's knee.

The Fount of Youth flows down past benches  
Filled with oldsters mad for wenches;  
For others there's the target shoot,  
Where he who misses gets the loot.  
The last man wins in every race,  
And being first is a disgrace.  
Thus if you loose while rolling dice  
The winning player pays you twice;  
If you owe money past one year,  
The lender pays you back I hear.  
A whopping Fib is worth a crown:  
Great Liars gather great renown;  
Whereas the man with honest wit  
Provokes the populace to spit.

There is no place in all the land  
For anyone who works by hand,  
And he who calls for Trust and Order  
Is promptly shooed across the border.  
But any good-for-nothing Ass  
Is honored as a man of class;  
The laziest lout is crowned the King,  
The Boor becomes an Atheling;  
The Poltroon, all afraid to fight,  
Is promptly dubbed a gallant Knight.  
If you have hugely drunk and whored  
You're promptly honored as a Lord;  
And every kind of Rotter can  
Announce himself a Nobleman.

Are you like that? Alack-a-day!  
Go to Schlaraffenland and stay!  
To warn my hearers this was writ;  
Now go and do the opposite!  
Not greedy, gross, nor lazy be,  
And shun my friends, iniquity;  
Be diligent, and work, and pray,  
For laziness will never pay.

## SCHLARAFFENLAND STEINS

The stein seen directly below is an etched, ivory stoneware piece that is marked HR #407. It was manufactured for Hauber & Reuther by Merkelbach & Wick.



Below we see a panorama of the scene on this stein. Note the abundance of food and drink in this scene, the stein full of beer ready to fly into the man's hand, the duck flying over the man's head and the pig walking toward the table, both with eating implements already in place! Referring to "The Glutton's Paradise" by Hans Sachs:

*The Hogs you meet on every side  
 Are sleek and fat and crisply fried:  
 They carry knives - it's very nice -  
 And stand by while you carve your slice!*



The next stein (below) is salt glazed stoneware, or *steinzeug*, done in relief, with transfer and enamel d*ü*¼cor. Actually, we're going to look at two examples of the same stein.



The stein shown above features a painted scene on a body which is decorated in relief above and below the scene. A second version of this stein is shown below, this time with a large owl dominating the lid. Both of these steins (above and below) are marked LB&C, have no model number and they were manufactured by Hauber & Reuther, as evidenced by the miniscule "*gesetzlich geschütz*" on the base and the HR capacity mark. Both steins employ a lizard, or salamander, as the handle, and the stein below features a large (and original) figural inlay of an owl.

To the best of my knowledge Hauber & Reuther was the only manufacturer to produce, or have produced for them, steins with the Schlaraffenland theme. The bases of all three of these steins are similar, but of course, the first is etched and the others are in relief.



Neither the salamander nor the owl have anything to do with the poem, so their presence on the stein, was somewhat of a mystery until I learned about the *Schlaraffia Society*.

**THE SCHLARAFFIA SOCIETY**

After a bit of research into the meaning of the steins discussed earlier, the mysteries began to fade, revealing a couple of interesting stories. The owl, or UHU, has been recognized since ancient times as a symbol of wisdom, but it is virtually unknown as the emblem of the Schlaraffia Society. The owl in this case, is the European Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*), seen at right.



The Schlaraffia Society was founded in Prague, on October 10, 1859, by opera singer Albert Eilers after he was snubbed for membership in Arcadia, an upper crust association of art aficionados. The goals of Schlaraffia are to foster an interest in music and the arts, provide some humor and promote friendship among its members. Songs, poems, or skits, written by members, making fun of the politically and socially pretentious, may often provide the humor. The selection of the eagle owl as their emblem was somewhat serendipitous. The Gasthaus, or hotel, where they held their first meeting had a stuffed eagle owl mounted over the inside entrance and those in attendance decided that it represented their interests and goals better than anything else.

At one time there were 144 Schlaraffia chapters in Germany alone. In 1935 Hitler ordered the society to expel all of its Jewish members. The society pretended to comply by removing those member's names from their membership lists. However, even though their names had been removed from the lists, all were encouraged to keep attending the meetings. Finally, in 1937 Hitler closed down the chapters for not complying with his orders, trashed their meeting halls, stripped the books from their library shelves and burned them.

After World War II it was still necessary for those members in Eastern Europe to meet secretly because the Society was banned by the Communists. Today they can once again meet openly in Prague where the society was founded. Shown below are a couple of modern Schlaraffia pins. The pin to the left is from *Schlaraffia Vindobona*. *Vindobona* is the ancient Roman name for what is now Vienna, Austria where this *Reych*, or chapter, is located.





Currently, the Schlaraffia Society has over 400 chapters worldwide, with some 12,500 members, about 1,000 of which reside in the United States. New Jersey alone has three chapters. The society has only two membership requirements, you must be male and you must speak German, or at least be willing to learn German. Their weekly meetings are held in halls called Burgs (see above), where they dress in medieval costumes, address each other with humorous titles and German is the only language allowed. Religion, business and politics of a personal nature, are forbidden subjects within the Burg. All members are considered equals regardless of their occupation, or station in life.



The LB&C stein discussed earlier could very well have been produced for sale to society members. The scene on the body of that steins shows two individuals dressed in medieval clothing with their street attire hanging on the bushes behind them; a glove, a top hat, a pair of long trousers and what appears to be a tie or cravat on one and a student jacket and a pipe on the other. This would seem to indicate that the characters are in costume only and not actually living in the middle ages.

Here again this scene reminds us of the promises of Hans Sachs' poem. The fellow at left need only lie on the ground and wine will gush forth directly into his mouth, while at right we see an example of -

*Roast Chickens, Geese and Pigeons go  
Flying within reach, and slow:  
And when the birds are winging South  
Just gape - they'll fly into your mouth!*

---

**SCHLARAFFIA CHAPTER STEINS**



The stein seen above is from an actual chapter of the Schlaraffia Society. The inscription, in Bavarian dialect, reads:

Wenn's letzte Tri'et 1/2 pferl von da Pip'm rinnt,  
 wenn koana mehr zur Haustü'et 1/2r aussifindt,  
 wenn da Spielhahn balzt und da Gockl schreit,  
 na is fi'et 1/2r d'Uhu erest zum Hoamg'et 1/2 Zeit.

When the last drop runs from the tap,  
 when no-one can find his way to the door,  
 when the wood-cock (grouse) performs the courtship dance and the cocks crow,  
 only then is it time for the Eagle Owl to go home.

Around the front half of the base is a dedication:

Die Activen i/l (ihrer lieben) Oberuhu "Zollkare" zum 26.10.03.

(From) the Members (to) i/l (their dear) Chief Eagle Owl "Zollkare" on October 26, 1903.

The use of "zum" before the date tells us the date is an anniversary of some kind. There are two exclamations, one on either side, **Aha!** and **Uhu!** **Aha!** is the positive exclamation of "I told you so! Eureka! and Yes!" all rolled into one word and of course **Uhu!** is simply, but maybe a bit more than simply in this case, the German word for Eagle Owl. The lid is engraved with a monogram of the owner's initials and the names of 16 chapter members. This 1.0 liter *steingut* stein is marked E.D.& C. and was manufactured by Ernst Dorfner.





This second stein, seen above, is a 1.0 liter, salt glaze piece by Reinhold Merkelbach. It has a silver plated lid with an "Uhu" mounted top-center reading a book. The thumblift is a bust of a man holding a shield and dressed in renaissance style. It has an engraved inscription around the lid which reads:

<i>Schlaraffia Monachia i/l Damian zum 50 Geburtstag</i>
--

(From) Schlaraffia Monachia (to) i/l (their dear) Damian on his 50th birthday."
---

All in all, a very nice stein. Another view of the massive silver finial and the *Wappen* of *Schlaraffia Monachia* are seen below.



## RUBBING A SALAMANDER

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, drei*" (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.

---

## §11 AND DIE SCHWENINGEKUR

### PARAGRAPH 11

The lid seen below is the one David Harr installed on the LB&C stein discussed above, which also has a "Paragraph 11" thumbliift (seen below right). To refresh everyone's memory as to the meaning of Paragraph 11 is the following quote, again from "100 Years of Brewing":

"The beer code, or *Bier-Comment* of the Senior University, Heidelberg, as it is officially known, has passed through several revisions and editions since 1829. In common with other university beer codes, however, the Heidelberg laws begin with paragraph 11. Paragraphs 1 to 10 are left blank, being presumably the ten commandments of the Old Testament. The eleventh paragraph, or commandment of

Heidelberg University reads: *Es wird fortgesoffen*, or, freely translated, "Keep on drinking."



### ***Die Schweningerkur***

On the lid, which I feel is at least as appropriate, if not more so than the original, we see a robust gentleman with his bowl of dumplings, and on the table in front of him, more dumplings, a roast chicken, a loaf of bread, his 1.0 liter beer stein and a jug, on the floor beside him, for refills. All in all, a great lid and thumblift for a stein representing the Glutton's Paradise. However, over the man's head is a sign, seen below, that reads "*Schweningerkur*" and this was also a mystery.



I inquired on the SCI web site to see if anyone was familiar with the word and I received one reply that, while it was a good guess, unfortunately turned out to be incorrect. That same day, I received an e-mail from Walt Vogdes to let me know that he had tried the Internet, and got a couple of hits on the word, but hadn't attempted to determine the word's meaning. So, I tried the Internet myself and got three hits. The first hit was for a book appropriately titled "*Die Schweningerkur*" and the other two were extracts from German publications that contained the word. The book had been written by one Oskar Mass and published in Berlin by Steinitz & Fischer in 1886. The second hit concerned a group of friends, one of whom was a former drunk and was now on the wagon after taking the *Schweningerkur*. The third was about a person who was traveling in the Middle East, was over weight, and wished they had had time to take the *Schweningerkur* before making the trip. Evidently the cure addressed both eating and drinking disorders. Was the *Schweningerkur* one of those fad cures that were very popular during the latter part of the 19th century, not unlike today's many fad diets? Possibly it was, because about six weeks after my inquiry, I received a second reply. Apparently the *Schweningerkur* was devised by one Dr. Ernst Schweningen (1850-1924) who in 1882, became the personal physician of Otto von Bismarck. Bismarck had both eating and drinking problems and Dr. Schweningen devised a plan of exercise and proper diet for him that helped him loose weight and keep it off. Bismarck declared that "Without him I would have died." After that, Dr. Schweningen became a "Celebrity Doctor" and in addition to Bismarck he became the personal physician to Alfred Krupp and Cosima Wagner. The "*Schweningerkur*" sign on this lid, may have been a reminder to the owner not to over indulge, or they might have to take the *Schweningerkur*.

---

Portions of this article first appeared in *Prosit*, but before the article appeared in print it began to grow. This version is considerably expanded, and covers additional material

and newly acquired steins. Walt Vogdes was instrumental in structuring my work for the SCI web site.

My thanks also to Walt Vogdes and Terry Hill for the information on "Rubbing a Salamander" and to Marc Lang and Walt Vogdes for help in decyphering the inscriptions on the Schlaraffia Society steins.

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

Lowenstein, Jack, Beer Drinking Customs at the University of Heidelberg, Baden, an excerpt from One Hundred Years of Brewing, the Western Brewer, H. S. Rich & Co., Chicago/New York, 1903 (pp. 689-690).

Oxford English Dictionary, vol. 18, Oxford: Clarendon, 1989.

Hinrichs, Hans, The Glutton's Paradise, Being a Pleasant Dissertation on Hans Sachs' Schlaraffenland and Some Similar Utopias, Peter Pauper Press, Mount Vernon/New York, 1955.

#### **ON-LINE REFERENCES:**

##### **Hans Sachs:**

[www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns\\_and\\_Carols/Biographies/hans\\_sachs.htm](http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns_and_Carols/Biographies/hans_sachs.htm)

##### **Schlaraffia Society:**

[www.gacl.org/schlar.html](http://www.gacl.org/schlar.html)

[members.aol.com/germanclub/engnyt.html](http://members.aol.com/germanclub/engnyt.html)

##### **Schweningerkur:**

[www.slaek.de/aeb1\\_fs.htm?/aeb1/2003/11/pdf/1103\\_495.pdf](http://www.slaek.de/aeb1_fs.htm?/aeb1/2003/11/pdf/1103_495.pdf)