

## ~ The Corona Characters ~ Steins with a Pedigree



by Frank Loevi

This article is drawn from a series which appeared in *Prosit* between 1996 and 1998. The articles were written as the steins they discuss were at various stages in the process of coming to market, and that perspective has been maintained. An update on the later steins in this series is included at the end.

### Part 1 (from *Prosit* of September 1996)

Even the most demanding of stein collectors will be interested in the new character steins created by the firm of Albert Stahl & Co. for the makers of Corona beer. The three steins, in what will be a continuing series, were produced in individually numbered limited editions of 5,000 and rank with some of the nicest I've seen, antique or otherwise.

In addition to their quality, what makes these steins unique (and very collectible) is the fact that Stahl is the successor to Ernst Bohne Söhne, a well-known and respected character stein manufacturer with a history dating back almost 150 years. Before getting any deeper into the Bohne-Stahl connection, however, let's take a look at the Corona character steins.

### You Get What You Pay For

All steins in this series are created in deep relief and entirely hand-painted, with porcelain tops mounted on pewter lids. The first in the series (figure 1) is made in the shape of a very "hip" parrot, complete with sunglasses and a towel draped over one wing, which also holds a bottle of Corona Extra. The Latin American motif is continued right through to the stein's palm tree thumblift.

The second in the series, and my personal favorite, is the Iguana Stein (figure 2), which combines a very realistic-looking head with a body decked out in a Corona tank top, shorts and a serape. The sombrero it's holding provides a final humorous touch to this striking and unusual piece.



1 - The Corona Parrot



2 - The Corona Iguana



The Toucan Stein (figure 3) completes the current series. It's dressed in a grass skirt and a red pepper necklace, and has a four-inch beak held high in the air. Add the Latin drum under its wing (a drumstick?) and it's not hard to imagine this Toucan on a beach in Mexico leading the band.

A fourth Corona stein is in development and that, in keeping with the animals-indigenous-to-Mexico theme, the character will be a Jaguar.

At the risk of sounding overly enthusiastic, these steins leave little room for comparison with most other contemporary character steins - particularly those aimed at American consumers. While "Budman" has clearly found an audience, from a quality standpoint he's not even in the same league with the Corona steins. Much the same can be said about virtually any of the character steins from Brazilian manufacturer Ceramarte, as well as the steins

in the Gerz "Schultz and Dooley" series, all of which, like the Corona steins, were created specifically for sale in North America.

As might be expected, however, all that quality doesn't come cheap. Any one of the Corona steins will set you back about \$170.00 and, because they are quickly becoming favorites among beer-drinking Tex-Mex and Jimmy Buffet fans, there appears to be very little discounting at the retail level. If you can only afford one, my advice would be to start with the parrot stein. Because it was the first in the series, it's likely to be the first to disappear from dealer shelves and also the one with the highest appreciation potential.

### Some Bohne-Stahl History

As already noted, the quality of the Corona character steins can, at least in part, be attributed to the fact that the manufacturer is the successor to Ernst Bohne Söhne, a stein-maker with a long history of producing quality character steins. Perhaps the most popular and recognizable of those today are the several variations of the familiar skull on book stein (figure 4), which was a Bohne "best seller" and a prized souvenir among German university students around the turn of the century.

In 1937, the company was sold to Albert Stahl and was incorporated as "Albert Stahl & Co. vormals (formerly) Ernst Bohne Söhne." Unfortunately for Stahl, the factory was located in the town of Rudolstadt, in the formerly East German state of Thüringen (Thuringia) and, following World War II, the production facilities were nationalized and eventually converted to the production of technical porcelain. While the company managed to retain many of the original molds and, after reunification, was able to reclaim others that had been confiscated, stein production both during the war years and thereafter under the socialist regime was virtually non-existent.

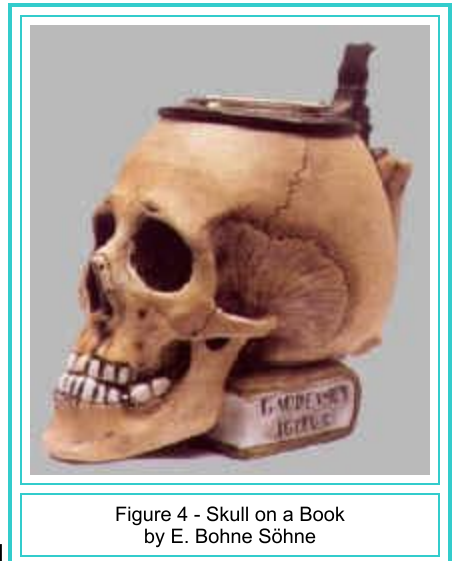
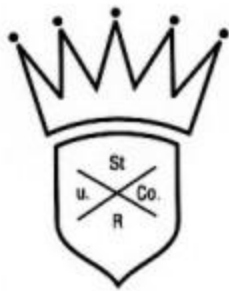


Figure 4 - Skull on a Book  
by E. Bohne Söhne



Re-privatized in 1990, the company again began regular production of character steins using the E. Bohne Söhne molds, creating pieces which are quite similar (although intentionally not identical) to the Bohne originals. Anyone familiar with Bohne characters should be able to distinguish the reproductions on sight. For those with less experience, look for Stahl's crown and shield logo on the bottom.

Since returning its facilities to beer stein manufacturing, the company has also produced a number of new designs, in addition to the Corona series, deserving of serious attention. I hope to take a look at some or all of them in a future issue of

*Prosit.*

Given their history and continuing attention to quality, there can be little doubt that today's Albert Stahl & Co. steins, including both Bohne reproductions and the company's new creations, will be actively sought-after by future generations of character stein collectors.

### Part 2 (from *Prosit* of December 1997)

#### And Then There Were Four

The latest addition to the Stahl line-up, this time via Tradex, is the fourth stein in the Corona beer series. The new Corona Jaguar stein (figure 5) features this South-American jungle cat fashionably decked out in a khaki jacket and slacks with a matching sun helmet. He also sports a hunting rifle slung over his shoulder while he sits on a case of Corona with his overhanging tail curled up to serve as a handle.

As this is written, no decision has been made as to whether or not there will be a fifth in the series. Regardless of what is decided, however, the innovative Corona steins deserve lasting recognition for modern beer stein pioneering. They are the first contemporary equivalents of old world, high quality porcelain character steins based on new world concepts. More recent characters like the Budweiser frog and penguin, not to mention [the Bulldog stein by Albert Stahl & Co. and the Disney "Looney Tunes" characters developed by Cornell Importers for Walt Disney], all took their cue from the early Corona editions to produce a category of steins that will surely be among the most sought-after by future collectors.

### Part 3 (from *Prosit* of September 1998)



### Two New Steins Announced in the Corona Beer Series

When the Corona Jaguar, last of the currently available Corona character steins, was pictured in *Prosit* last September, it was unclear as to whether there would be any future additions to this very popular series. Apparently the good guys have prevailed, and I can now report with certainty that two new Corona steins are in the pipeline.

Shortly after reading about it you should begin to see the fifth stein in this series, a sea turtle decked out in pirate garb, holding a Corona beer in one hand and a shovel in the other as he gets ready to bury his trunk full of ill-gotten gains. Jim Brooks, of Tradex GmbH, sent me the accompanying photograph of the model for this stein in its pre-production stage (figure 6). As for number six, I'm told they've decided on a Mexican bull.

Look for the Sea Turtle stein later this year (hopefully, in time for Christmas), and the Mexican Bull in late 1999.

### Subsequent Events (provided by Frank Loevi)

The Sea Turtle (figure 7) has now been on the market for some time, followed by an Octopus (figure 8) and an Armadillo (figure 9), bringing us to a current total of seven of these "critters". The popular series is expected to continue, with possible future additions of a Horned Toad, a Chihuahua and the long-awaited Mexican Bull.





**...and one more**

The eighth stein in this series, a 10 1/2" high Macaw lounging in a chair at the beach, is now available.

**...and here's the rest (provided by Walt Vogdes - 2019)**

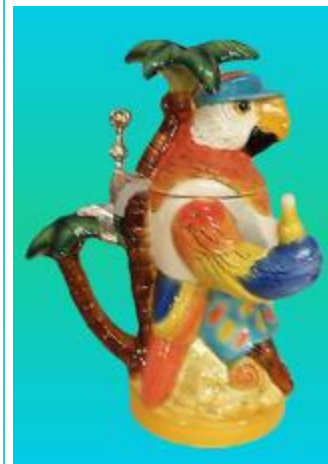
Stahl continued to produce steins in this series until for a number of years, although with a burst of three steins in 2009 the series seems to have ended. While the Horned Toad did arrive, the Chihuahua and the Mexican Bull did not.



8 - The Corona Macaw



9 - The Corona Horned Toad



10 - The Corona Palmtree Parrot



11 - The Corona Pirate Parrot



12 - The Corona Crab & Bucket



13 - The Corona Snorkel Parrot