

## **The Schierholz Discoveries A Story in Three Parts**

*This lengthy article was originally published in three parts, in the September 1986, December 1986 and March 1987 issues of Prosit, the quarterly journal of Stein Collectors International. All three articles were authored by Ron Fox, recipient of SCI's Master Steinologist award for his efforts in developing and sharing his broad knowledge of beer steins.*

The Stein Discovery of the Century  
**Musterschutz and Schierholz: The Missing Link**  
by SCI Master Steinologist Ron Fox  
*Prosit, September 1986*

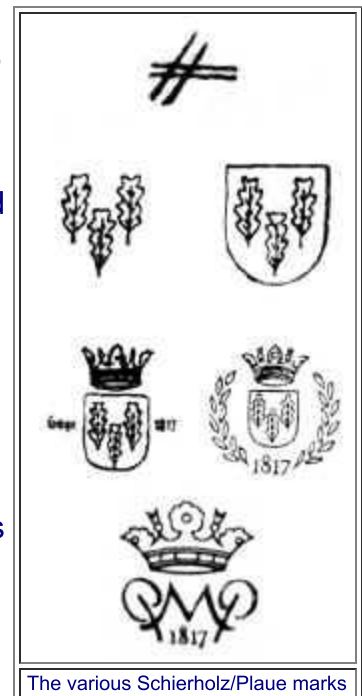
Ever since collectors of beer steins became infatuated with those magnificent porcelain figurals with the familiar "tic-tac-toe" (or hash mark) symbol or the stamp with the magical word "Musterschutz", theories and speculations regarding their manufacturer have been bandied about. But none of them could be substantiated.

In 1976, the publication of the popular book, "Encyclopedia of Character Steins" (Manusov), stirred much interest in this area of stein collecting. I had only been collecting for a few years at that time, but my interest also leaned toward these porcelain figurals - which everyone called "character steins". While visiting the Los Angeles SCI convention I noticed an unusual honey-colored character stein of a monkey's head (see Fig. 1) in the Erste Gruppe stein exhibit. It seemed to have many traits of the "Musterschutz"-marked characters but the mark was that of Schierholz & Sohn (see Fig. 2). The stein was also in a locked case and couldn't be handled. It wasn't until late 1984 that I was able to see this stein again. I was visiting a collector in California and I spotted this stein sitting on his stein shelf. Now I was able to actually hold it in my hands and examine it closely. By this time I was much more knowledgeable about this type of stein as I had learned much about their traits and had done many repairs on them. I had even gone so far as to actually make entire porcelain copies of several of the popular "Muster-schutz" character steins! It was evident to me that his stein was definitely made by the same factory which made the "Musterschutz" porcelain character steins. There was absolutely no doubt that the manufacturers of both this monkey stein and the "Musterschutz" characters were the same. This was indeed the "Missing Link" we had been searching for!



Two views of the "missing link" Schierholz monkey stein, and the Schierholz & Sohn mark on the base.

I decided to seek the help of Jack Lowenstein to write to the Dresden Art Museum in German on official SCI stationery to try to get more information. We sent along photos of several of the steins, plus copies of the usual "Musterschutz" marks. Being that Dresden is now in East Germany, getting information from them seemed doubtful. But they did reply. Unfortunately the curator had no knowledge of either the steins or the marks. We decided to go one step further. We wrote another letter (also in German) to the factory now known as VEB Porzellanmanufaktur Plaue, located in the city of Plaue, which is in the Thuringia region of East Germany. We sent along the same photos, but used the Dresden Museum's curator as a means of introduction. After some time, Jack received a reply. The letter said in part, "We are able to tell you that the beer steins illustrated in the photographs were produced at our factory at the end of the last Century. The models are the work of modellers (designers) Edmund Haase and Edmund Sieder (actuaflly Oskar Sieder) who were employed at our plant during that time." Bingo! Definite proof at last.



The various Schierholz/Plaue marks

This factory was known as Schierholz & Sohn at the turn of the Century. I was off to Germany to meet with them, but visa problems stopped me on two occasions. I turned to my German friend, Werner Sahm, who promised to visit the Plaue factory and find out more about the factory and the steins. He was extremely successful. A full article about what he found, how these character steins were made, a complete history of the factory, and all we know about the "Schierholz" character steins will appear in the December 1986 issue of *Prosit* (no. 86). In the meantime I will have given a verbal report of our findings at the 20th SCI Convention in San Diego in July.

We must now try to label these fine character steins correctly and stop calling them "Musterschutz steins" - and properly start referring to them as "Schierholz character steins".

**Schierholz Character Steins**  
 by SCI Master Steinologist Ron Fox  
 (Photographs by Ron Fox, John Mertz, Werner Sahm and Werner Baumann)  
*Prosit*, December 1986

While adding steins to our shelves is quite enjoyable, I have found that finding new

information about my steins gives me a deeper understanding and appreciation of them. Therefore I am very happy - after so many years - to be able to call the "Musterschutz" steins by their correct factory name: "Schierholz".



Page number 72, one of five pages from an original Schierholz catalog which, taken together, show many of the Schierholz porcelain characters. The stag with monocle and ribbon around his neck (#107 at the center of the middle row) has not been seen.

## History

These well-known character steins were made in a small town called Plaue, in what is now East Germany (about 60 miles north of Coburg). This factory, Schierholz, has continued to produce fine porcelain in the same manner they did 100 years ago. Their character stein line, which is so collectable today, was made in the 1890's. The factory name has changed several times over the years, but was Schierholz & Sohn (son) while these steins were being produced. It seems that the character steins were only a small part of their total production, since they are not mentioned in the current factory booklet, "VEB Porzellan Manufactur Plaue", which tells the factory's history.

The factory was established by two brothers, Johann Karl Rudolf Heuäcker and Dr. Gottlob Ferdinand Heuäcker, in 1816. Dr. Heuäcker died a year later and Johann took on Christian Gottfried Schierholz in 1817. In that year the factory was granted an exclusive license for porcelain wares by the government of Schwarzburg-Sondehausen, which ruled the town of Plaue. These porcelain wares were manufactured for the pharmaceutical and chemical industries. In 1818 Johann Heuäcker left the partnership, leaving C.G. Schierholz as sole owner. The factory prospered over the years, especially after their most outstanding modeler, Edmund Haase, joined the firm in 1884. He remained with them until his death in 1914. Haase had been trained as a sculptor at the Munich Academy of Art and he is believed to have been responsible for the design and modeling of the character



The author explains the details of character stein manufacture (San Diego, 1986)

steins. Another modeler, Oskar Sieder, joined the firm in 1873 and worked with Haase to produce the majority of items in that product line.

Hard coal was substituted for firewood in the kilns after 1870. In 1887, Arthur Schierholz - who appears to be the grandson of Christian - became the owner of the factory. He died in 1899, and in 1907 the firm became a private limited liability Company (Corporation), known as "Von Schierholz Porzellan Manufactur Plaue G.m.b.H.". In 1972 the factory was nationalized by the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) and became known as "VEB Porzellan Manufactur Plaue", the name which it still retains today.

## Marks

As might be expected, a number of different marks were used by this factory over the years. Their first trademark was officially used from the end of the 19th Century, but it was probably used occasionally on wares as far back as 1865, when they lost their monopoly on sanitary wares. This first mark is the one most stein collectors refer to as the "tic-tac-toe" or cross-hatch mark (#), which was underglazed in blue. This mark had not been registered with the county court at Arnstadt because only one form had been filled out instead of the prescribed three. An attempt was then made to register the mark with the patent office in Berlin, but this fell through due to objections raised by the Meissen Porcelain factory owners, who were afraid of confusion with their own trademark. According to factory accounts, the triple oak leaf mark was adopted in 1899 and the shield-like frame and crown was added in 1910.

Since the majority of character stein production occurred prior to 1899, the first mark, i.e., tic-tac-toe, is the one we most often come across. The triple oak leaf mark has not been spotted on any stein, but the leaves in the frame and crown were seen on the "Missing Link" monkey head stein written about in the previous article (September 1986). It has also turned up on the innkeeper (CS-M1-7) and on a skull-on-book (CS-SK9-10). It is my opinion that Schierholz tried to revive the character line after 1910, but, as all stein manufacturers found out, the demand was no longer there. They then expanded into other items.



Very often these steins carry the word "Musterschutz", usually in green, stamped onto the base over the glaze. This word in reality simply means "copyrighted" or "patent-protected" and has absolutely no bearing on the manufacturer. But even though collectors knew this fact, the characters were called "Musterschutz steins" for want of a better name. Sometimes this mark appeared along with the tic-tac-toe mark, sometimes it was the only mark on the stein's base, and sometimes there was no mark at all. No matter how they are marked, the characteristics of these steins make them unmistakably different from other steins!

On occasion we find hand-written numbers on the base, in the same color as the decoration. It is believed that this number referred to the bench number and was used as a quality control to identify the decorator. The porcelain stein lid might also carry this number if also decorated by the same artist. But frequently the lid was decorated by a different artist and in such a case the lid number would differ from the base number. It is not uncommon to find different shading on a stein lid and base, only to also find different bench identification numbers. On rare occasions an incised number can be found on the

stein base, generally near the handle side. This was meant to correspond to the mold number found in the catalog, but it often differed. I will explain why when we discuss the catalog pages. Although other marks were used later, these are the only marks usually found on Schierholz character steins.

The tic-tac-toe mark became synonymous with these great quality figural steins, so it would naturally follow that other factories would try to duplicate this mark on newer character steins. The Drunken Monkey (ECS-39) and the Bismarck head (ECS-134), both original Schierholz designs, along with the Hunter Rabbit (ECS-64) and Heidelberg Student (ECS-190), which were not Schierholz designs, have been produced after World War II. These four porcelain steins carry a black or dark blue tic-tac-toe mark in an attempt to copy the Schierholz pieces of the 1890's. These are overglaze marks and do not match the under-glaze pocked characteristics of the original, nor do the steins themselves match the quality of their 1890's counterparts.

### Catalog Pages

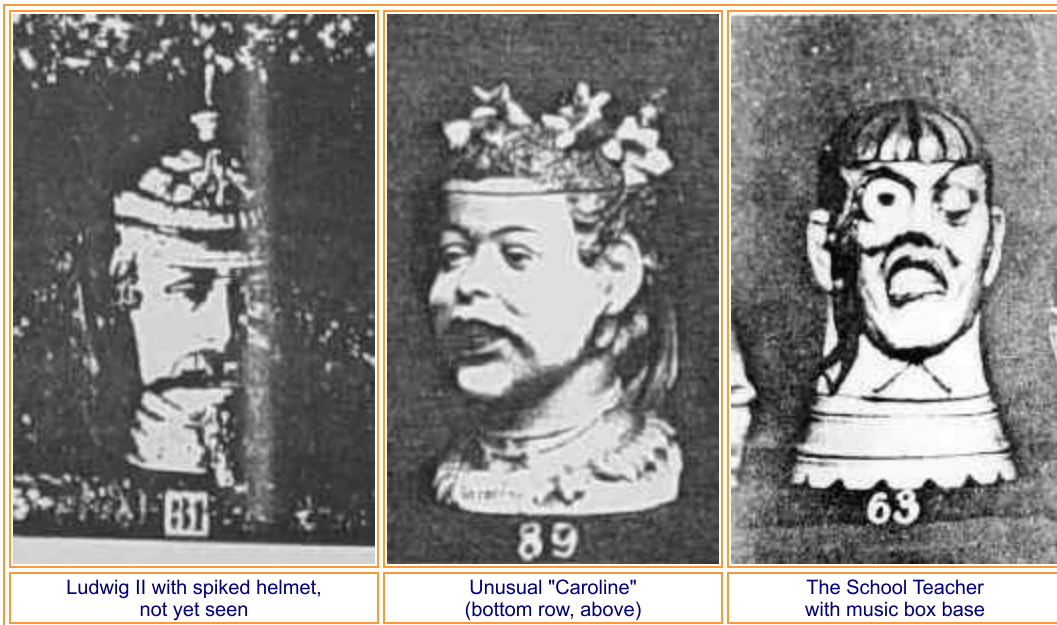
With the help of Werner Sahm, I have recently been able to uncover five original Schierholz catalog pages that not only show most of the known character steins attributed to them, but also some that we have never come across. One such example is catalog number 107, which is a stag wearing a monocle and with a ribbon around his neck. Another, which is on a page not clear enough to reproduce, shows a head of Ludwig II with a spiked helmet. There are at least three others, but they are unrecognizable. Variations that we haven't seen before also show up on these pages: Many of the figurals were made on pedestal music box bases. Some we have already encountered, but others, such as the School Teacher (ECS-268), the Heidelberg Student (ECS-269), the Drunken Monkey (ECS-66), and even the Bowling Pin (ECS-79), show up on the catalog pages. As the catalog pages show duplicate items it is evident that they were issued at different times. I am certain that many more catalog pages were printed, as many known Schierholz steins do not appear on these five.

Each stein has a number which appears to identify the piece. But in studying the actual steins that carry numbers, most do not correspond to the catalog numbers. Note that the Happy Radish appears as #5 on page 72, while the Sad Radish is #8. These same two steins appear on another page, with the numbers reversed. It is my opinion that these steins were probably known by their names - due to the easily recognizable shape - rather than by numbers. The catalog numbers remain the same on steins even when their size changes or when a lid variation occurs, such as #24, Wilhelm II, either with a spiked helmet or with the eagle-topped helmet. The number stays the same even though the stein appears on a pedestal base. However, in the case of Father Jahn the number changes when a cap is added (see 40 & 41, catalog page 71). In the list of numbers there are many blanks which could represent other pieces that Schierholz made at that time, or possibly there were other steins that we are not yet aware of. These missing numbers remain a mystery at this time. Please note: A complete list of the Schierholz character steins, with catalog number and ECS identification, will appear in the March issue of *Prosit*, when part 3 of this series appears.

Below, page number 71 from the original Schierholz catalog.



It is curious that there is only one non-character stein on these pages, #114, which depicts relief dancing girls (see middle of the bottom row).



### How They Were Made

For a chapter in the new character stein book, "Character Steins, a Collectors' Guide" by Manusov and Wald (Cornwall Books, 1987), I wrote about "how Musterschutz steins were made." What I wrote three years ago still proves accurate with our new Information in hand.

The first step in making a character stein is to produce sketches. Next comes the actual modeling, which is done in clay. Careful consideration is necessary with respect to where the lid separation can be worked into the design. Once the design was acceptable, the

mold-making process began. The number of molds needed to make the stein depends on how many protruding parts the stein has. The molds were filled with a fine white porcelain, which is made largely of kaolin (a very fine white clay), quartz and feldspar with all impurities carefully removed. This porcelain used to fill the molds was in liquid form, called "slip". The molds themselves were made of a plaster material which absorbed water from the slip, forming a crust or build-up on the interior walls of the mold. After a brief time the remaining liquid was poured off: The thickness of the piece was determined by the amount of time the slip was allowed to remain in the mold. The solidified porcelain material was then removed from the molds and excess casting material was trimmed off so the pieces could be joined together. The joining process was achieved by coating the edges with porcelain slip. Additional porcelain was applied to the joint to fill any gaps. When the mold parts were joined, air chambers were created; the worker would puncture these chambers, leaving expansion holes so that, during firing, the heated air and water vapor could expand without exploding the chamber. These holes are generally well-hidden in the design, but can be found if a piece is carefully examined. After all the mold parts were joined the piece was air-dried for a few days. The "green" (in age, not in color) porcelain would now be firm but fragile and had to be handled carefully.

The mold seams were cleaned up using cutting tools and a damp cloth; any extra detail was then hand-carved. The article was now ready to be bisque fired.

This was done at about 2200 degrees Fahrenheit (1200 degrees Celsius) to vitrify (or fuse) the porcelain. At this point of vitrification the porcelain would be almost at the melting stage and at slightly higher temperatures the piece could distort, warp or melt altogether. Any protruding parts and handles had to be propped or supported to hold them in place. Because porcelain shrinks about 15-20% during this first firing, some joined areas could pull apart, causing firing separations. Also, the piece had to be formed oversized to allow for this shrinkage.

After cooling, a clear lead glaze was applied to the piece and it was refired at 1850°F (1000° C). Lower temperatures were needed here so that the glaze would not burn off.

Many pieces never made it to this stage without breaking or developing flaws. But now the piece was ready to be decorated. The painting or decorating was done using china paints, sometimes called porcelain enamels. These were fired at about 1250° F (675° C). The china paint required just the proper use of oil as a medium, or vehicle, and could only be applied by the most skilled decorators. They used brushes for the fine details and sponges or cheese-cloth for the background shading. Even though the fullest possible palette of colors was available, most of these character steins were honey colored. This was probably done because of the ease of application and to hold down the cost. On rare occasions you come across a normally honey-toned stein in full color. This was probably a custom order and more expensive. Sometimes we also come across some of these steins in blue and white coloring. These also sometimes have



Fourteen separate pieces that make up the stag stein (left); Assembled and lead-glaze fired on right.



The three stages of "Mephisto" (from left to right): Separate pieces, finished product, lead-glaze fired.

blue flowers on the body. In this case the decorating was done before the clear glaze was applied and fired on. Only two firings were needed on these steins, as the third firing was eliminated. The blue was applied in such a manner that it would flow into the surrounding areas, creating an overall blue-white effect. The flowers were applied similar to transfers, and are actually prints under glaze.

### Sizes

Like most stein makers, Schierholz was obligated to mark their steins with a capacity mark. In most cases this was done on the inside of the stein so that it would not detract from the outer beauty of the stein. Sizes range from 1/8-Liter to 2-Liter in capacity, but it should be noted that the great majority were made in the 1/2-Liter size.

### Traits

Although Schierholz steins are usually marked, some were not. After studying Schierholz character steins for a while, you should be able to spot one without even looking for a base mark. Here are a few distinctive features found on Schierholz pieces:

1. On handling the stein you will feel a slight roughness to the china paint.
2. The base area is unglazed, giving it a bisque appearance except where the mark is covered by glaze.
3. In most cases the porcelain is thinner and lighter in weight than in conventional porcelain steins.
4. There is always a thin bisque line on the inside and outside of both the top of the body and the bottom of the lid, just where the two meet. These lines are created as a result of the way they were stacked in the kiln. If glazed areas were touching in the kiln, they would stick together; the thin unglazed area prevented this.
5. Schierholz consistently used a heavy, good quality pewter; there were only two major thumblift styles.



The most common Schierholz thumblift

### Other Items

In addition to the character steins, Schierholz also made many companion character items. They are noted for tobacco jars, mustard jars, pipes, goblets, figurines, salt and pepper shakers, beakers, Schnapps sets and countless other items. For many of these companion pieces they took an existing stein design and stylized and modified it to fit the item.

### Today

Even though Schierholz made top-quality porcelain character steins, these steins only accounted for a very small portion of their total production, and then only for a short period of time. Schierholz was always known for their fine quality lithophanes - which they still produce today. All of their products are of the finest quality porcelain and are still hand-made and hand-decorated. They are known today for their exquisite chandeliers, lamps, mirrors, clocks and figurines. Some of these items were on display during my lecture given at the San Diego Convention this past July.

When Werner Sahm went to Schierholz, representing me, besides coming back with the five catalog pages, he also learned that they still had all the molds used to make the steins so many years ago! He convinced the factory to produce prototypes of Mephisto (ECS-413) and the Stag wearing the monocle (not previously seen), in the three major production steps: Individual pieces before being joined; assembled and lead-glazed fired; and finished and fully decorated. They were indeed made the same way as the originals, with only minor differences. It is my hope that if/when these steins are reproduced that they

are properly marked and identified so that they will not confuse anyone as to date of manufacture.



From the left, a modern prototype Mephistopheles, the stag with monocle as seen in the original Schierholz catalog, and the modern-day version executed by Rastal.

In the next issue of *Prosit* we will present more photos and as complete a listing of the identified Schierholz character steins as possible.

### **Listing of Schierholz Character Steins**

by SCI Master Steinologist Ron Fox  
*Prosit*, March 1987

Following is a list of the character steins found on the five catalog pages furnished to us by the Schierholz Porcelain Factory of Plaue, East Germany (please see the previous articles about this manufacturer in the September and December 1986 issues of *Prosit*).

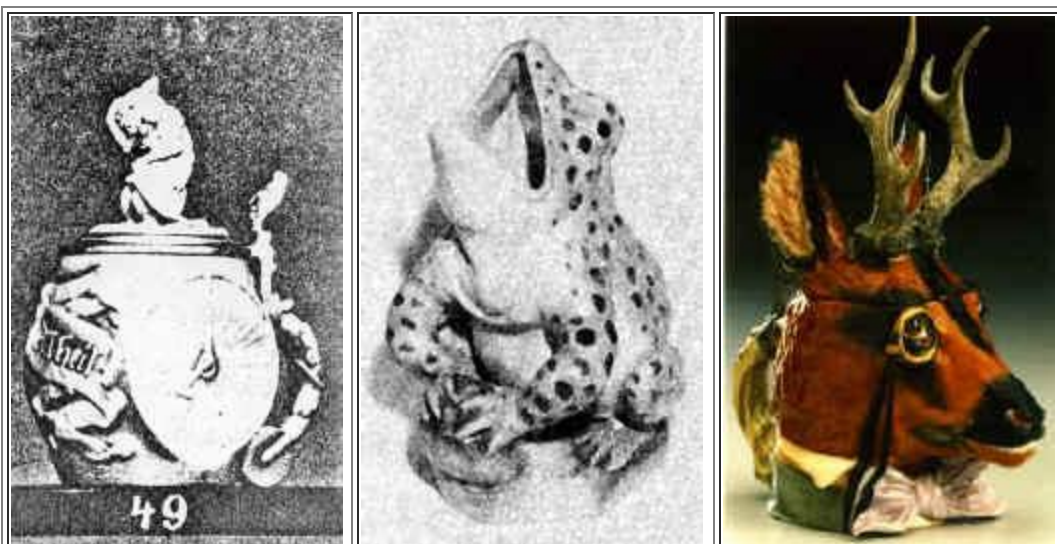
The numbers in the first column are the numbers shown on the catalog pages (see

Illustration); the description (name) is the one historically and commonly used by stein collectors. The "Identification" reference in the right column refers to the character stein books currently available: ECS is The Encyclopedia of Character Steins (Manusov), while the letter-number designations refer to the new Book of Character Steins (Manusov & Wald).

This gives us an excellent cross-reference on these Schierholz character steins; it also indicates that Gene Manusov and Mike Wald have done a very complete Job in cataloging the Steins. We are continuing to dig for additional reference material from Schierholz, and will keep the readers of Prosit advised on our progress from time to time.

3	Bowling Pins	ECS-79-9	62	Barrel w/Munich Child, Cat on Shoulder	ECS-397
4	Bowling Ball	ECS-78	63	Student's Head	ECS-269-270
5	Radish (happy or sad)	ECS-257	64	Professor's Head	ECS-268
7	2-Liter Radish	ECS-256	66	Alpine Man	ECS-165
8	Radish (happy or sad)	ECS-257	67	Turkish Man	ECS-161
10	Bismarck Radish	ECS-136	68	???	
11	Pig with Pipe	ECS-49-5	69	Burgermeister	ECS-163
12	Elephant	ECS-25-26	70	Chinese/German Soldier's Head	MT-2-3
13	Singing Pig	CS-55	71	Fisherman	ECS-162
15	Bismarck	ECS-132-133	72	Four Fish	WA-1
16	Caroline	ECS-292	73	Barmaid	ECS-167
17	Soldier Head	ECS-323	76	Cucumber	ECS-254
22	Soldier Head w/Caterpillar Helmet	ECS-322	81	Old Man's Head	ECS-300
23	Hops Lady	ECS-288	84	Alligator	ECS-430
24	Wilhelm II	ECS-150	85	Rhinoceros	ECS-72
25	Trichter (Funnel)	ECS-445	87	Black Man	ECS-285
26	Nuremberg Judge (full figure)	ECS-307	89	Karoline	HD-6-7
27	Drunken Monkey	ECS-39-40	91	Barrel with Monkey	ECS-47
28	Cat with Hangover	ECS-5-6	92	Frederick III	ECS-140
29	Full Figure Ram	ECS-65	93	Frog	ECS-432
30	Nuremberg Judge's Head	ECS-272	97	Clown	CL-2
31	Ludwig II Head		98	Smiling Lady's Head	ECS-293
32	Ram's Head	ECS-66	105	Boar	ECS-3-4
33	Pixie	ECS-305-306	106	Stag	ECS-76
37	Owl	ECS-120	107	Stag with Monocle	

38	Snowman	ECS-184	108	Rooster	ECS-129
39	Egg (?) -- unknown		110	Mephistopheles (Mephisto)	ECS-413
40	Father Jahn with Cap	FP-15	111	Newspaper Lady	ECS-171
41	Father Jahn without cap	ECS-141	112	Radish Lady	ECS-170
42	Berlin Bear with Shield	ECS-1	113a	Dutch Boy	ECS-166
43	Masquerade Lady	ECS-294	113b	Dutch Girl	ECS-166
44	Barrel with Berlin Bear	AN-5	114	Dancing Can-Can Girls (not a character stein)	
45	Barrel with ???		120a	Potato Head	ECS-301
46	Standing Lion	AN-35	120b	Potato Head	ECS-301
47	Bismarck in Retirement	ECS-131	121	Lion Head with Monocle	AN-35
49	Bicycle w/Cat, Hangover Lid	AN-19	122	Mushroom Man w/Hands in Pocket	ECS-158
50	Bicycle, "All Heil"	ECS-458	123	Mushroom Lady Holding Stein	ECS-160
51	Dog	ECS-20	124	Mushroom Lady with Shawl	ECS-159
52	Fox	ECS-32	125	Baby	FI-6
53	Rabbit	ECS-62	<b>Not shown in catalog pages</b>		
56	Uncle Sam	ECS-143A	n/a	Gooseman Fountain	ECS-173
57	Mushroom with Dwarf on Lid	ECS-456	n/a	Perkeo in Barrel	ECS-449
58	Barrel with Target	ECS-447	n/a	Stag Horn	
59	Wilhelm I	ECS-148	n/a	Chinese Head	ECS-275
60	Von Moltke	ECS-145	n/a	Owl with Mardi Gras (Party) Hat	
61	Barrel w/Munich Child holding Radishes	ECS-396			



From left to right, L.A.W. stein variation; Porcelain "Frog" vase; brand new stag with monocle

# C. G. Schierholz & Sohn, G. m. b. H.

## Porzellanfabrik Plaue, Thüringen.

Feinste Luxuswaaren wie: Tafelaufsätze, Leuchter, Uhren, Vasen,  
Jardinteren und Körbe mit aufgelegten Blumen in modernem, wie Meissener Genre, sowie im Styl der Secession.  
Ferner Figuren, originelle Seldel und Aschenschaalen.  
Apotheker-Geräthschaften, wie: Abdampfschaalen, Reibschalen, Standgefässe, Salbenbüchsen, Pomadedosen, Kastenknöpfe  
und Schilder.

### Feuerfestes Kochgeschirr und sonstige Küchengeräthschaften.

Muster- Berlin SW.: Ludwig Fränkel, Ritterstraße 76.  
Lager Hamburg: Schäfer & Ihm, Gr. Bleichen 35/39.  
Paris: F. Lelebet, 17 Cit. Rue de Paradis.  
London EC.: G. v. Moltheim & Co., Aldersgate Street 93.  
Wien T.: Neurath & Heun, Burggasse 12.  
Leipzig: Zu der Messe, Kanthaus Z. 107.

Reiche Auswahl in Neuheiten zu jeder Zeit.

An old advertisement found in a pre-WW-I trade journal by Werner Sahn. The text under the heading states, "Finest Luxury Wares such as: Table settings, candelabras, clocks, vases, flower pots and baskets with applied flowers in modern, such as Meissen, as well as in Secession style. Further, figurines, original [unusual] beer steins and ashtrays. Apothecary furnishings such as evaporating dishes, grinding bowls, flasks, salve and pomade container, drawer pulls and name plates. Flame-proof cooking vessels and other kitchen utensils." The various addresses at the bottom are for Schierholz's showrooms in Germany, Austria, France and England. The final bottom message proclaims, "Large Selection of New Items at All Times."