

PITTSBURGH STEIN SOCIETY NEWS

Volume No. 8, Issue No. 5

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

May 2023

MAY

My favorite Month !!!

Next Meeting

Our next stein club meeting will be on Saturday, June 24, 2023. This will be a show-n-tell meeting so bring along a few steins that you can share with all of us at the Pittsburgh Stein Society (PSS). We will offer a sandwich buffet complete with German meats, cheeses, and side dishes. Our always low prices of \$7.00 for stein club members and \$10.00 for non-stein club members will once again be in place (exact change please). Lunch will begin at 12:00 noon in the Teutonia Ratskeller followed by a brief business meeting. The "Learn Deutsch" club will be conducting their German class ahead of our meeting so please respect their need for quiet voices. If you know someone who is interested in joining our stein club, by all means, bring them with you. Hope to see you there.



Birthday Wishes



Happy Birthday To:

Amy Baade May 4
Heide Engel May 6
Eileen Froehlke ... May 8
Rich Sweigart May 9
Frank Glazer May 13
Jim Bee May 18
Peter Froehlke ... May 20
Bob Lindstrom May 24
Brian Heshler May 26
Jim Rouhan May 29
Tom Levenson May 29

May your special day be filled with happiness and good health !!!

Welcome New Members

From all of us at the PSS, WELCOME to Peter & Eileen Froehlke and Sean Hahey who joined our stein collecting family on April 22, 2023. Also, welcome to our longtime friend and PSS members Bob & Kathy Lindstrom who just recently made the PSS their primary chapter. Thank you Peter & Eileen, Sean and Bob & Kathy from all your fellow members at the PSS.

Published Monthly by the Pittsburgh Stein Society

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April 22nd. Meeting

If you missed this one, you missed one of the best meetings the PSS ever had !! To say that this meeting was a success would be a huge understatement. Thirty-seven attendees were present for this meeting which included eight guests and twenty-nine PSS members. We started out with a hot buffet lunch that was equal to any buffet offered by Teutonia at any of their sit-down events. With a menu that included baked chicken, roast pork, hot potato salad, Bavarian pretzels and a garden salad, no one went away hungry. Following lunch, our guest speaker, Chuck Keiser, gave a fantastic power-point presentation on the "Evolution of Westerwald Steins". Chuck is a member of the Pennsylvania Keysteiners Chapter of SCI and a retired Biology teacher. His subject matter and his knowledge of it, along with his ability to interact with his audience, really held our attention. Thank you Chuck for a great presentation.

The lucky winner of the 50/50 raffle took home \$115 and one of our newest members, Eileen Froehlik, in a supplemental free raffle, won a very nice,

limited edition, modern stein. Just right for someone who is just starting a collection.

Stein sales tables were located in three areas of the Ratskeller and, as always, great bargains were there to be had by the buyers.

Our brand-new logoed polo shirts were passed out to all those who purchased them and a number of members bought shirts that were still available. When we all get together wearing these beautiful polos, we will make a good-looking group to say the least.

Our longtime friends and PSS members Jim & Polly Rouhan were present, stopping on their way from New Mexico to their summer home in Vermont. Also, Jeff Arduini came in from Erie, PA and Brian Hoffman came from Port Matilda, PA. And, how can we have a stein club meeting without Hal Platt and Jim Bee coming in from Johnstown, PA? It is always good to see our friends and fellow PSS members who travel long distances to attend our meetings. It is members like them that makes the task of making all the arrangements needed for a PSS meeting worthwhile.

As we said at the beginning of this section, if you missed this meeting, you missed one of the best meetings the PSS ever had !! Everyone present had a great time. Hope to see you in June.



Tip Of the Month

So, you're at the Pittsburgh Stein Society meeting and one of the stein sales tables has among the Mettlachs and Diesingers and Westerwald Stoneware this little, 1 / 4 liter stein with a bright pewter lid made by GERZ and dated 1993. The bottom of the stein has the GERZ trademark and the words "Made in Germany" inscribed in it. The asking price of this stein is marked as being \$20. You really like the stein but, being new to the hobby of stein collecting you think it is prudent to ask a "seasoned collector" for his/her knowledgeable opinion. Sorry to say, this seasoned collector tells you that this stein is "junk" and that you should be looking at the older and more expensive steins to begin building your collection. WOE IS ME !!! That "seasoned collector" should be banished from every known stein collecting club in the universe for giving such extremely bad advice. Finally, here is the TIP OF THE MONTH; whether you are new to our hobby of stein collecting or you've been at it for years and years, when buying steins, you should buy WHAT APPEALS TO YOU AND WHAT YOU CAN AFFORD, period. If you can afford a mint condition, 110-year-old Mettlach stein but happen upon a brand new, beautifully colored souvenir stein that you just love, BUY IT !! Having steins in your collection that you can look at and smile is what it's all about. Happy stein hunting.

Featured Article of the Month

As a follow-up to our guest speaker's, Chuck Keiser, presentation on the Evolution of Westerwald Stoneware steins, this month's featured article deals with another region of Germany which became well known for the production of Stoneware steins. "*Early German Stoneware: Altenburg*" written by Mike Adkins and first appearing in the June 2020 issue of *Prost* magazine, tells us about the beautiful stoneware steins that came out of the Altenburg region. Mike's detailed information and beautiful photos will want to make any stein collector add one or more of these fantastic stoneware steins to their collection. Word of caution: as with all stoneware steins, proper support is a must since these steins are HEAVY !

24 AND GROWING

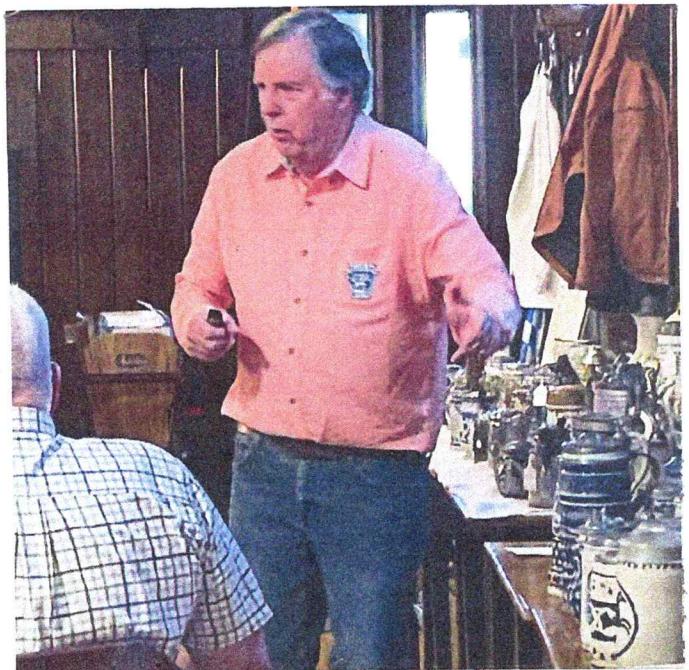
Thanks to our friend and PSS member, Dr. Mary Strum, we now have 24 PSS members who are also members of SCI !! HOORAY !!! Mary signed-up for three years of *Prost* magazine and will be a member of SCI through March 2026. Nice going Mary. Our 1st place position with SCI just got a little bit stronger however, a few more members will really solidify our number one spot. Come on, we can do it. Just go to the website www.stein-collectors.org and click on the "Subscribe or Renew" button and follow the instructions. It's easy. If we can get to 26 SCI members in our chapter, we will have more than a 50% representation in SCI. That's awesome. LET'S DO IT !!!

MAY 2023

PITTSBURGH STEIN SOCIETY NEWS

PHOTOS

**PHOTOS OF OUR GUEST SPEAKER, CHUCK KEISER, AND PSS MEMBERS
APRIL 22, 2023**



Early German Stoneware: Altenburg

By Mike Adkins

Thoroughbred Stein Verein

Altenburg is in the German state of Thuringia. It is twenty-five miles south of Leipzig and fifty-six miles west of Dresden. The city is centrally located among several other early stoneware sites: Bürgel, Rochlitz, Waldenburg, and Zeitz. Altenburg is first mentioned in written records as a royal estate in 976. The city served as the capital of the Duchy of Saxon-Altenburg from its founding in 1603 to its fall in 1672.

Prior to 1980, there was widespread disagreement regarding the attribution of Altenburg stoneware. Most researchers attributed the pieces to towns around Altenburg. In 1980 Horschik published the most detailed analysis of the topic. While no hard archaeological or archival evidence exists, he attributed the stoneware to Altenburg based on several factors:

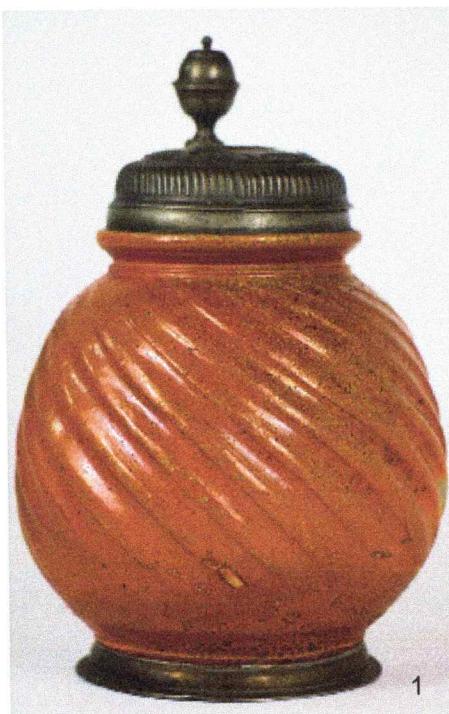
1. The availability of nearby clays suitable for stoneware production,
2. The presence of a range of wares in the area that could not be traced to another site,
3. The appearance of pearl decoration, some of which bore inscriptions saluting Altenburg,
4. The Guild records, and,
5. An analysis of armorial designs found on the steins.

The Altenburg Guild rules had an interesting quirk not found in other early sites. Pottery rights were not granted to an individual. Rather, the rights were granted to parcels of land. The production of stoneware was limited to six property sites. A Master Potter still had to be present for the actual production. If a new Master Potter wished to begin producing in Altenburg, he/she would have to purchase one of the specified tracts of land. The value of one of the approved parcels was approximately thirty Imperial thalers.

The Altenburg potters were allowed to sell everyday use items at local markets and fairs. This was not true for decorated stoneware items. Instead, the potters were required to sell these pieces to a pewtersmith. The smith would add pewter mounts to the stein and would be the ultimate retailer for these products.

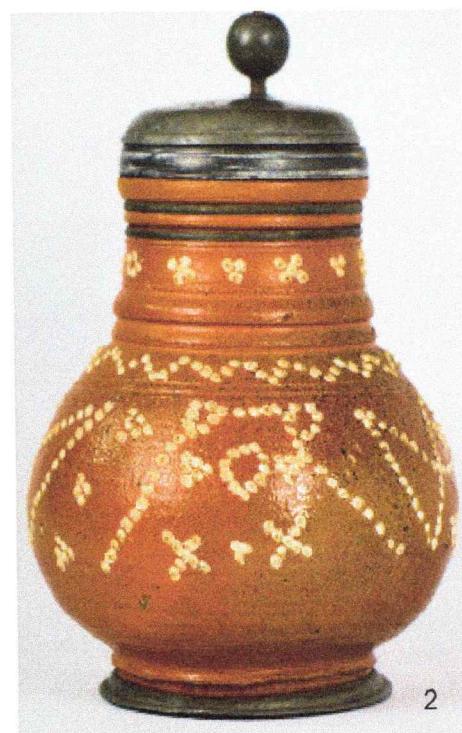
Stoneware production began in 1628 and continued until 1775. Early production featured stamped decoration. Double walled steins with cut-out triangles and diamond shapes on the outer wall are also found. Berry burls were often used to form frames for the decoration or were simply arranged in stripes. These burls were simple relief nubs painted cobalt blue to contrast with the stein body. Steins tended toward a squat cylindrical shape.

Around 1680, medallions began to be affixed to lids and stein bodies. Generally, three to five medallions were applied around the stein body. Only ball shaped steins were decorated with medallions. Horschik was able to find only twenty of these medallion steins.



Ball shaped steins were a popular shape for Altenburg potters from 1680 to around 1700. A ball shaped stein decorated with diagonal furrows is shown in Picture 1. It is 7.2" tall. The stein has the ochre color associated with Altenburg stoneware. The color is due solely to glaze oxidation during the firing process. Unglazed Altenburg clay fires to a white or near white shade.

In the late 1600s, the berry burl evolved into the "pearl" decoration for which Altenburg is famous. The pearls are simply small pellets of white clay applied to the stein body. The clay used for the pearls was a white pipe clay mixed with kaolin. The key point is that the clay contained no iron and retained its white color during firing. Both the pipe and kaolin clays were imported from Frohnsdorf, Steinbach, and Rasephas. Frohnsdorf and Rasephas were nearby, but Steinbach is located near Frankfort.



The stein in Picture 2 is decorated with pearls in simple geometric patterns. It stands 9.8" tall and has a bulbous body.

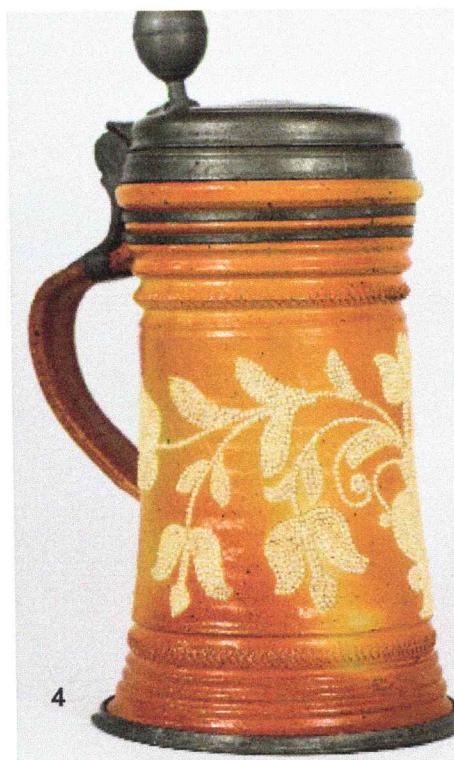
with a neck. The lid is dated 1711. It has two body bands and a pewter footing. Additional furrows at the bottom of the neck could have been used for additional body bands. This is common for Altenburg steins. Remember that the Altenburg potters sold their decorated wares to pewter smiths. The steins tended to have many furrows to give the pewter smith flexibility when adding the mounts.



3

Ball shaped and bulbous body steins fell out of favor around 1700. The potters began producing concave (hour-glass) and cylindrical steins. The stoneware in Picture 3 has a concave shape and is decorated with pearls. The face is a vase containing a flower. Each side has vine-like leaves flowing from the flower. Note the poorly glazed area just to the right of the vase. This is the fired color for unglazed Altenburg clay. The stoneware is 10.9" tall. The lid is dated 1711. The stoneware has two body bands and a footing. A herringbone pattern frames the decoration above and below.

Another characteristic of Altenburg



4



5

steins is the shape of their handles. See Picture 4 for the handle of this stoneware. Note that it has a belt like shape: wide but very thin. This handle is 1"

wide, but only 1/4" thick. To mitigate the weakness inherent in such a shape, the clay used for the handle would be tempered with sand. Black flecks seen in Altenburg handles are a result of this tempering. Many Altenburg steins also feature a vertical handle strap not only as decoration, but as additional protection for the handle.

In time, cylindrically shaped steins prevailed. Concave, hour-glass shaped steins were produced from 1695 to 1720, and Horschik was able to find only thirty examples. In time, cylindrically shaped steins prevailed, being produced from around 1700 through the remainder of Altenburg's production period.

Picture 5 shows a 9.1" cylindrical pearl decorated stoneware. From 1720 on, only cylindrical steins were produced in Altenburg. The face art is a crown above two birds. The side art is a floral pattern with what appear to be a bunch of berries. Two smaller birds frame the handle (Picture 6). The outlines of the figures are formed by a three deep out-



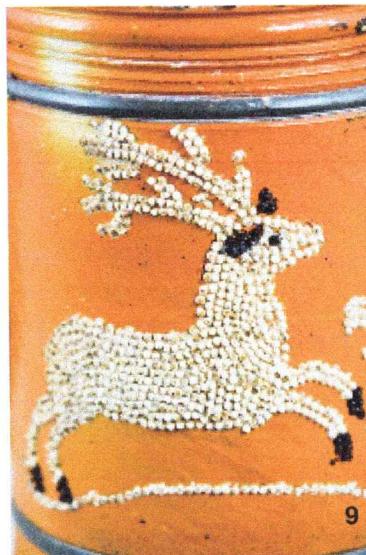
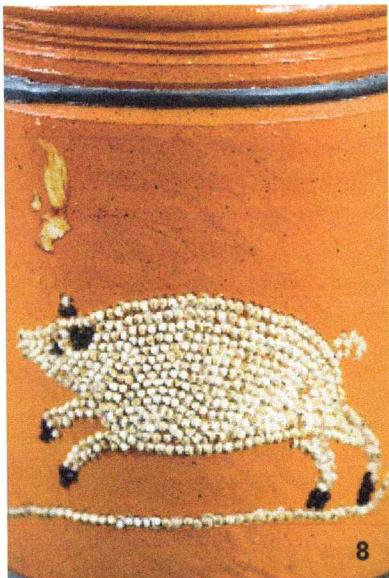
6

line of pearls. The interior is painted cobalt blue. The lid of the stoneware is dated 1701. On this stoneware the clay normally used for pearls is painted on to form banners above and below the primary art. The banners bear inscriptions in cobalt blue. The pewter mounts include two body bands, a footing, and a vertical handle strap.



The next stein (Picture 7) has its simplest art on the face of the stein. The year 1714 is surrounded by a crowned wreath. This stein actually has approximately 1,400 pearls in its decoration. Obviously, most are found on the sides. One side shows a boar (Picture 8); the other shows a stag (Picture 9). By count, each animal is composed of approximately 640 pearls. The stein features three pewter body bands, a footring, and a rim covering.

Applying the pearls is obviously a labor intensive and time consuming process. How was this done? The literature refers to a tube being used. I find this a less than satisfying explanation. Whatever tool was used, it must meet four criteria:



1. The potter must be able to easily load clay into the tool.
2. The tool must be able to impress pearls of a consistent size and form onto the stein.
3. The potter should be able to readily clean unused clay from the tool, and,
4. The tool must be constructed using materials and technology available at the time.

Adler (pg 51) notes that "Les Paul speculates that a type of cake decorating tool may have been used." In thinking about this, it is easy to visualize a small pliable leather pouch open at one end with a ceramic or pewter nozzle sewn into the other end. This visualized tool meets all four of the criteria above. I believe that Les is correct in his conjecture.

Several Altenburg pearl decorated occupational have been identified. The occupations depicted include butcher, baker, blacksmith and wheelwright. A shoemaker occupational symbolized by a boot enclosed in a wreath is shown in Picture 10. Rosettes appear at the upper and lower corners of the wreath. A flowering vine decorates each side (Picture 11). Inscriptions written in pearls appear above and below the artwork. The stein is dated 1716 in pearls below the handle. The pewter mounts include eight bodybands and a footring.



Potters are not immune to economic forces. Over time production costs will rise and stein producers will attempt to find ways to lower costs and maintain profit margins. In an effort to save labor cost, Altenburg potters developed larger relief forms to accompany the pearls. The stein from the early 1700s in Picture 12 is ringed by diamond shapes formed by combining four sided pyramids. Within the diamond shapes are pearls glazed to match the color of the stein body. Small applied rosettes circle the stein above and below the diamond shapes. This is a short stein, measuring only 6.0" in height. It has three body bands, a footring, and a vertical handle strap.



12



14



13

Another way to reduce the number of tiny pearls required is to use them only for outlines of figures. For example, instead of filling the complete figures of the boar and stag pictured previously, larger relief rosettes would be used to fill the interior of the figures. A further step in reducing decoration time is demonstrated by the art work on the stein in Picture 13. Applied relief interiors have been abandoned completely. Pearls are used for the outline of the floral pattern and the interior is simply painted cobalt blue. The lid on this stein is dated 1749. Alternating rosette shapes are used above and below the floral design. Pewter mounts on the 8.5" stein include three body bands, a footing and a rim covering. This style of decoration was popular in Altenburg from 1730 to 1750.

Altenburg potters did not limit themselves to pearl decorations. The stein in Picture 14 has an applied relief armorial on the face of the stein. The coat of arms features a bird, likely an eagle, perched on a visored helmet. Below the helmet are crossed arrows on a shield. A variety of large relief pieces complete the art work. The reliefs that compose the top and bottom border are the same relief form painted in different ways. The side art (Picture 15) is a floral design with relief leaves and blossoms. Not counting the coat of arms itself, there are a total of forty-eight relief pieces on the stein. There are only a few small pearls representing stems. This 9.0" tall stein has a single body band and footing. Large furrows just above and below the primary art are painted cobalt blue, perhaps to give the impression of body bands.



15

The most dramatic change in Altenburg stoneware took place around 1750. Gone was the glaze and oxidizing firing that had given the stoneware its distinctive ocher color. The potters changed to reduction firing. Kiln vents were plugged so that there was insufficient oxygen in the kiln firing chamber for oxidation to occur. The result was light gray stoneware such as the stein in Picture 16. This 8.0" stein was probably produced around 1760. Small relief circles are formed into diamond shapes to encircle the stein body. Various small rosette reliefs with painted centers form borders above and below the diamond shapes. The lid and a footing are the only pewter mounts. Reduction firing was used exclusively through the balance of Altenburg's stoneware production. By the late 1700s decorated pieces were no longer being produced. Only everyday use items appear.



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Adler, Beatrix, Early Stoneware Steins, Krüger Druck + Verlag, Dilligen 2005

Gaimster, David, German Stoneware 1200 – 1900, British Museum Press, London, 1997

Horschik, Josef, Steinzeug 15. bis 19. Jahrhundert . Von Bürgel bis Muskau, Dresden, 1978



THE PITTSBURGH STEIN SOCIETY

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