

Stein Collection Is Pathway Back To Haze Of Antiquity

By Margaret Koch

Americans are famous for collecting things.

At some time or other the "pack-rat" bug bites most of us, whether we end up collecting buttons or bellows.

Mrs. F. U. Little of 506 West Cliff drive, and her late husband, were world travelers and they made a hobby of collecting anything they could carry home to Santa Cruz.

In Mexico they watched the native glassblowers puff delicate goblets from molten glass; in Navajo country they saw the silent Indian silversmiths at work; in Italy, stones were being cut into sparkling, faceted beads to be strung on silver chains. They saw teak being worked in the Orient and fine china manufactured in Europe. They also "collected" many happy travel hours along with samples of native handcrafts.

One of the Littles' most prized collections in the special "collection" room of their home has always been the group of fine old beer steins.

"Whenever we saw a good one, we couldn't resist buying it," Mrs. Little recalls.

Originally the stein collection numbered more than 300 but now that she is alone and simplifying housekeeping duties, Mrs. Little has just about 50 of the choicest left. The "piece de resistance" is a large silver and pewter antique which is lined with gold. It is finely carved with human figures and is thought to be the work of Peter Rohde, famed German artist of the 1600's.

There is a Bismark "character" stein dated 1870; an alligator china stein; a "Tree of Life" stein, "Queen of the Hops," and amber and ruby glass steins.

A two-foot high Musterschutz stein towers above the rest. Another almost as tall depicts a history famed world explorers in panels around its middle. There are also quite a few old Mettlach steins—known to collectors as the "Cadillacs" of the stein world.

A little on the macabre side are several very realistic bone china "skull" steins. One has a wooden music box base that tinkles a tune when the elbow is bent.

Stein-making became a fine art in Germany and other European countries where beer-drinking was popular. Beer, according to records, is one of the oldest alcoholic drinks known to man. The Babylonians and Egyptians brewed it more than 6000 years ago.

Much like the old fashioned moustache cups, the beer drinker who was a man of substance kept his own special stein at the beer garden or club that he frequented. Most of the ordinary steins were of heavy, serviceable earthenware but many others were costly works of art. The fine types of steins are no longer being made and are becoming rare each year.

Old, Rare And Retired



Old, rare and retired from elbow-bending days are these

"collectors' steins" from the collection of Mrs. F. U. Little of 506 West Cliff drive. They are

shown by her cousin, Mrs. Mary Ringwald of Salem, Ore.

Inquiry Forum