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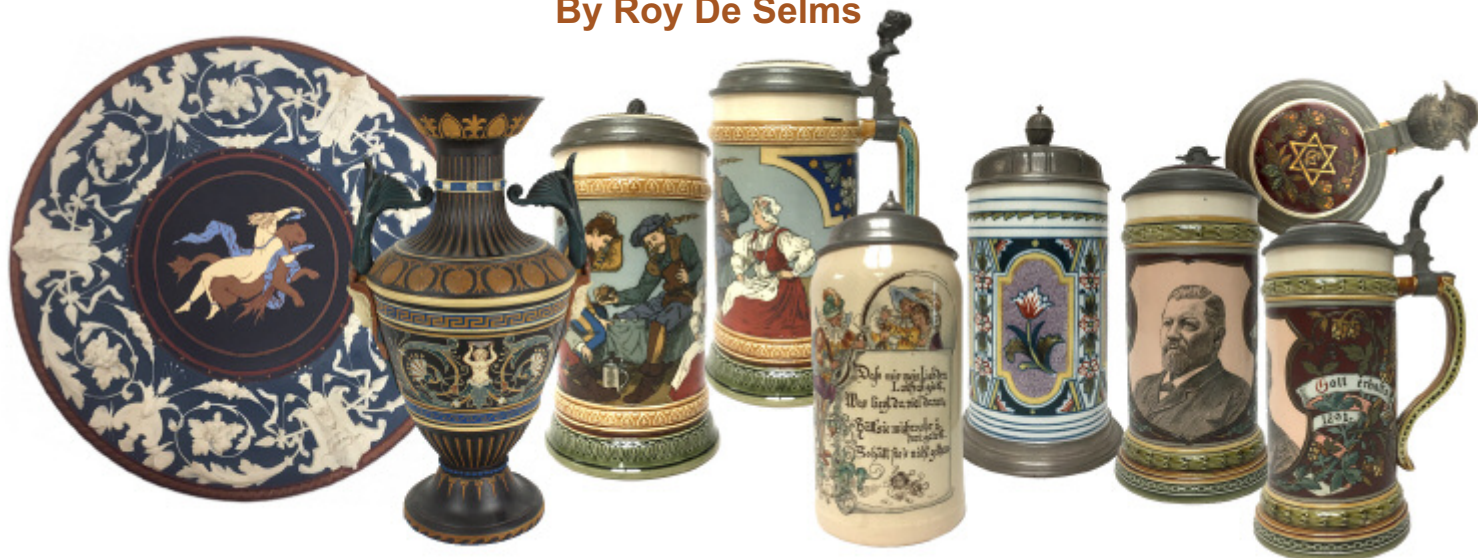
September 2021

Photos From the Road - 57th Installment By Ron Fox



Wetterau Scratch Steins By Mike Adkins

Villeroy & Boch Mettlach Evolution: Chromolith, Etched, PUG, Rookwood/Faience/Delft, Combination Wares and Custom Orders By Roy De Selms



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COVID-19

Say it ain't so, Joe! Munich Oktoberfest canceled again!

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Mettlach at the AMOCA Museum - Part 4b

The Evolution of Chromolith, Etched/ Incised, Print Under Glaze (PUG), Rookwood/Faience/Delft Styles and Combination Wares

By Dr. Roy C. De Selms SCI Master Steinologist



This is part two of the fourth in a series of articles that will describe 19th Century German history, culture and folklore, and the artists, styles and techniques of the Villeroy & Boch firm at Mettlach (VBM) using items from the Wilson Mettlach Collection at the American Museum of Ceramic Art (AMOCA) in Pomona, CA. (For convenience, when referring to *The Mettlach Book* by Gary Kirsner, the abbreviation TMB is used.)

In the prior article we dealt with VBM wares in various forms of relief (three-dimensional) decoration; this article expands to consider surface (two-dimensional) decoration techniques. The beginning of this article contains much information published only in German by Horst Barbian writing in *Mettlacher Turm*, a magazine published by V&B Mettlach for the *Mettlacher Steinzeugsammler* (Mettlach Stoneware Collectors).

This chapter begins with the story of ceramic artist Christian Warth (b. 21 April 1836 Birkenfeld; d. 28 March 1890 Berlin). We now know that Warth was directly responsi-

ble for the introduction of Chromolith wares at VBM, as well as the evolution of that technique ca. 1880 to what we know as "Etched." The Etched wares were arguably the single most important line in VBM production, as they brought the company wide acclaim and fame. The first illustration in this article is one of the earliest models of Etched steins, the style of which greatly contributed to the renown of Villeroy & Boch Mettlach. This stein, 7-Liter VBM #1161, bears the signature "C. Warth" and was introduced ca. 1880.



Figure 3 - Warth's Parian statuettes at the 1867 World Exposition

Warth was somewhat of a prodigy having completed his early education in Birkenfeld and then continuing his education with full-time studies at V&B Mettlach at the age of 15 in 1851. Some of his early works for VBM included figurines executed in Parian. By the time of the 1867 World Exposition in Paris Warth's works completely filled the V&B Mettlach booth (fig. 2). In the center of the booth can be seen nine Parian figurines, with the "Little Drummer Boy" (*Prosit* Sept. 2014) at center, flanked by two other figurines (fig. 3). Figure 4 is a tobacco jar designed by Warth which combined three dimensional Parian figures with two-dimensional Chromolith decoration, the next subject to be considered.

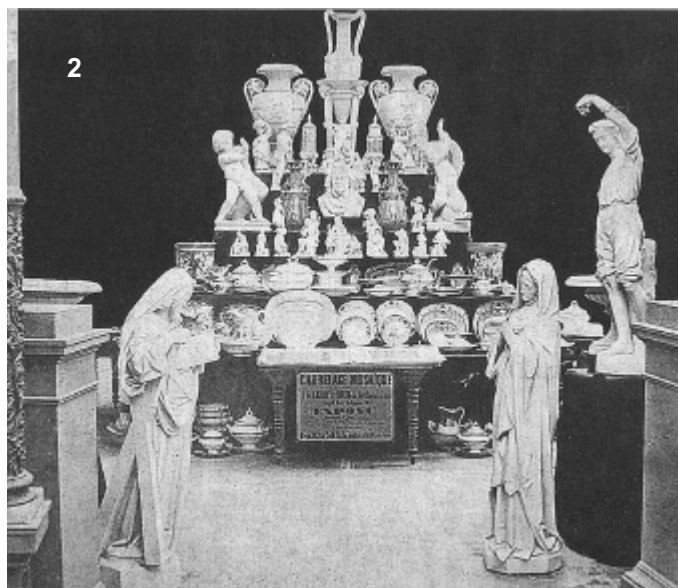


Figure 2 - VBM booth at the 1867 World Expo in Paris



Chromolith

At the end of 1865 Warth was sent to Rome for an extensive study to enhance his knowledge and to learn new techniques in decorative ceramics. When he returned home, he brought sketches of oriental geometric design techniques called *Pietra Dura* which included "Florentine Mosaic" (AKA "Commeso"). The terminology is vague and *Pietra Dura* encompasses work where glazed ceramic tile fragments, whole decorated tiles or thin, flat pieces of gemstones were cut, fitted and inter-locked or embedded in a substrate so precisely that there were no spaces visible. Figure 5 shows an example of *Pietra Dura* (Florentine Mosaic) work which used thin, flat pieces of gemstones embedded in shaped recesses in black marble.



Figure 5 - An example of *Pietra Dura*, aka *Commeso* or Florentine Mosaic (Cathedral of the Virgin Mary, Dubrovnik)

When Warth completed his studies and return to Mettlach he cleverly adapted these techniques to ceramic production, using colored clay applied in very thin layers and compressing the whole surface before firing. This creative technique, called Chromolith, was a critical innovation for Mettlach, as it would evolve into the popular etched (incised) wares.

The first true Chromolith pieces were shown at the Vienna World Exposition in 1873 (fig. 6). Although records have been lost, it is thought that Chromolith pieces were compressed under high pressure before firing, using hydraulic-type presses. This resulted in the original *echtes Chromolith* (true Chromolith) seen in figure 7. (The photo of this plaque seen in TMB, 2005 edition, is identical since the Wilson collection provided about 75% of the photos in that book.) Note that the border seems to have Parian appliqués reminiscent of Warth's statuettes. Note also that the sketch of this plaque shown in the 1873 World Exposition in Vienna (fig. 6) has a different border design, again indicative of the individuality and scarcity of the Chromolith wares.

Figure 7a is a shard from a broken example of the same plaque which reveals the thin surface decoration. The thin colored portions were applied over a plain background and did not have the incised black borders characteristic of etched wares. Differences in color and slight changes in the position and highlighting between the plaque and the shard, particularly noticeable in the flowing cloth to the left of the female figure, are evidence of the handwork required.

All of the numbered Chromolith pieces have numbers ranging from 830 to about 895, and there are no true Chromolith steins. The Chromolith areas of many of those pieces are on flat or slightly concave surfaces amenable to mechanical com-



Figure 6 - VBM Chromolith plaque #834 and Chromolith vase #835 (from the 1873 World Exposition in Vienna)



Figure 7 - VBM Chromolith plaque #834 and Chromolith vase #835 (from the Wilson Collection at AMOCA)



Figure 7a - A shard from a broken example of plaque #834

pression. Because of the difficulty of compressing a rounded or convex surface, pieces like the vase #835 are both rare and expensive, and likely wound up exclusively in the hands of wealthy clientele.

Etched/Incised

As discussed above, true Chromolith was very expensive to create and Warth soon devised a slightly less, but still relatively expensive technique using slightly thicker colored clay areas separated by black incised borders between the colored areas. In German this technique became known as *billiges Chromolith*, or “inexpensive Chromolith,” while in America it has become known as “etched” or “incised.” This technique did away with the need to compress the clay surface before firing, reduced the amount of handwork involved, and opened the door to a much wider range of items with curved/convex surfaces. It is very important for collectors to recognize the distinction between these techniques, as Chro-

molith items are much higher quality, greatly limited in availability, and both more desirable and expensive.

Figure 8a shows the master design created by Fritz Quidenus in 1897 for VBM etched stein #2441. Each colored area was given a numerical code which was to be followed by the decorator to select the colored clay for each particular area. There were well over 100 different colors to choose from. Despite this scientific accuracy, color variations occurred from stein to stein, possibly due to availability on a particular day. This variation sometimes can be enough to affect the desirability of one example over another of the same stein. Figure 8b shows the completed product.



Figure 8a - The design of VBM stein 2441, signed by Fritz Quidenus, 1897
altdeutsche Zecher beim Würfelspiel (old German drinkers throwing dice)
 (Illustration from Villeroy & Boch, 1885 Mettlach 1905, published by Anton Post and Hans J. Ammelounx, 1975)



Figure 8b - VBM etched stein #2441, commonly called “the Gamblers”



Figure 10 - VBM Etched stein #2090 with two views of a shard from a broken example
Weib und Kneipe (Wife vs. Local Tavern)

Figures 10a-c show etched VBM stein #2090 commonly called the “Club” stein. The central scene consists of areas of colored clay outlined by thin black lines. Within some areas additional black lines were used to provide highlighting, or suggest detail, as in the wood grain of the table. All of these black lines are slightly recessed from the surface, and can be felt with a fingernail, which has resulted in these pieces sometimes being called “in-cised.”

The shard shown in Figure 10b is from a broken example of another #2090 stein, and it reveals some aspects of the etched technique. Note first that the etched decoration is not an integral part of the gray body, but a separate thin surface layer. In addition,

1. The two arrows labeled “(1)” in this picture point out the thinness of the inlaid colored clay, which is only about 1/6 of the thickness of the underlying clay body.

2. The arrow labeled “(2)” points to a thin black line which extends all the way along the break, indicating that a black color was applied to the surface of the body before the etched decoration was added. This has not been previously noted or discussed. It might have been a layer added to help bond the white surface layer to the body.

A slightly different view of this shard is seen in Figure 10c, which provides additional information about the black detail (highlight) lines.

3. In the lower part of this decoration a number of “etched” highlight lines have been provided, along with the signature of Heinrich Schlitt, the artist who created this scene. The lines on the table have been added to simulate wood grain. In the circled area we can see a few instances where these lines are not black, but show the color of the underlying clay to which they have

been added. The highlight lines are not as deep as the border line, and could only have been added on top of the colored clay inlay.

4. Comparison of the highlight lines on the shard and those on the intact stein indicate they are identical, ergo, they were formed by using some sort of template. Schlitt’s signature, which is included in these highlights, certainly would not have been left to a hand worker to in-scribe.

The method by which the etched wares were created has been studied and debated in numerous articles in *Prosit*, none of which have resulted in absolute certainty. A full discussion of various theories that have been put forth attempting to explain the overall process is given in “The Mettlach Book” by Gary Kirsner.



Figure 11 - VBM Hand Engraved vases, #2535 and 2536

Hand Engraved

Figure 11 shows the front and back of two “Hand Engraved” etched vases with Art Nouveaux designs. It is difficult to distinguish this technique from regular etched pieces, but the decoration was hand done and there are differences from one piece to another. The colors seem to blend into each other without harsh borders. These pieces were more expensive and desirable and described in detail by Bob Wilson in the March 2003 issue of *Prosit*.

Print Under Glaze (PUG)

The final major technique utilized at VBM was adopted from the British and is very similar to some items made by Royal Doulton. Commonly called “PUG,” a good example of this technique is shown by VBM stein 2488/1106—“The Seven Schwabians” (figure 12). An engraved zinc printing plate is used to transfer an image to paper using ceramic pigments. The paper print is then laid onto the surface of the stoneware body, and when fired the paper is burned away leaving the

image fixed to the surface. The surface is then coated with a clear glaze material and fired again, resulting in... a print under glaze. PUG stein #1526/625 is shown in figure 13 after the pewter lid was attached by a pewterer associated with VBM.



Figure 13 - 1-liter VBM PUG stein 1526/625

Figure 12 - VBM Print Under Glaze (PUG) stein #248/1106
The Seven Schwabians

Figure 14 (on the next page) is an original zinc plate containing the image for VBM PUG decoration 627, identified by that number on the plate itself. The Wilson Collection does not include an example of a stein bearing this decoration, but a small image has been taken from The Beer Stein Library (hosted by AMOCA) and inset into the image of the zinc plate for reference.

Note that VBM offered steins in an unlidded state, or with a choice of plain pewter lids (figs. 13, 14), fancy pewter (fig. 12) or inlaid lids (fig. 19), this latter option being most common for etched steins. Pewter (mainly tin) was more expensive than clay at the turn of the last century, so inlaid lids were the least expensive, then the plain pewter lids and most expensive were the fancy pewter lids. Today, most collectors favor the inlaid lids because they are usually designed to match or complement the body decoration, and are therefore not interchangeable or easily replaced.



Figure 14- Engraved zinc printing plate for VBM stein 1526/627 (shown in inset)

Painted Under Glaze

In this section we discuss three more decorative styles which VBM adopted from others: *Rookwood*, after the wares of the Rookwood Pottery Co. of Cincinnati, Ohio; *Delft*, after the products of that city in the Netherlands; and *Faience*, after the European tin-glazed faience of the 17th and 18th centuries. While the PUG items featured a wide range of subject matter in full color, these three categories focused on a more limited artistic aesthetic. Each of these styles employed outline transfers to guide the hand-painted decoration, and they are referred to by collectors by their style—Rookwood, Delft or Faience.

The Rookwood Pottery Co. is considered by many to be the pre-eminent producer of art pottery in America. Founded in Cincinnati in 1880, they were known for their hand-painted decorations executed by their staff of resident artists. Their most popular line, and the one which VBM sought to emulate, was termed "Standard" glaze. These works are characterized by a generally dark greenish-brown body which was finely shaded to an area of lighter color through the use of atomizers. The coloration of this body made it particularly effective for decoration with themes from nature, especially flowers. The decorations were slip-painted using air-driven atomizers, creating a low relief. No transfers were used. Some portrait pieces were made, but they are scarce.

For their Rookwood line VBM adopted a very similar brownish background with subtle shading into areas of lighter color. Instead of using atomized slip-painting the decoration was hand-painted within an outline transfer. Significantly, VBM chose to limit the subject matter to portraiture (fig. 15).



Figure 15 - Two VBM Rookwood steins
Left, 2789/6144 *Knabe mit Pauke* - Drummer Boy
Right, 2788/6149 *Fräulein* (young maiden)

The VBM Delft and Faience lines (fig. 16) mimicked such items from prior eras, although they did not use a tin-glazed body which would have been subject to flaking. Both involved plain backgrounds and outline transfers on an earthenware body, the Delft line being primarily blue on a white ground, the Faience being multicolored. The pewter lids and thumbblifts employed on these lines are similar to the pewter mounts on true Delft and Faience steins.



Figure 16 - VBM Faience #5019 (left), Delft #5190 (right)

Combinations and Special Orders

This final chapter will deal with examples of technique combinations and special orders. Figure 17 shows an example of the transition from hand engraved to Rookwood style. This vase has been described (TMB) as hand engraved and essentially the technique akin to hand painting that might have been used in making Rookwood style wares. All it needs is a final glossy glaze.

I had intended to treat the etched and glazed combinations including mosaic and some of Otto Hupp's designs when I became aware of Walt Vogdes' interest in writing an article on this subject which begins on the next page.



Figure 17 - VBM Hand Engraved Vases #1709 and #1710

AMOCA has a compilation of hundreds of special order decors. Figure 18 shows one of these in a simple PUG decor. This particular stein was made for German *Schutztruppen*



Figure 18 - VBM special order stein #2140 *Schutztruppen* (Protection troops, S.W.A. 1905)

(Protection Troops) in Southwest Africa. These troops were not part of the German military, but were volunteers after their official service time. Germany lost all of its colonies in Africa after defeat in WWI.



Figure 19 - VBM Etched and PUG special order stein #1997 for George Ehret Hells Gate Brewery

Most of the special order decors were designed for steins for breweries and beer halls or beer gardens. So it is with the ubiquitous George Ehret Hells Gate Brewery stein decorated in the combination etched and PUG decor (fig. 19).

George Ehret (1835 to 1927) came from Germany to the U.S. in 1851 as did many Germans after the social revolution of 1848. He became a very successful brewer and apparently had many friends and patrons to whom he gave these steins. The steins were ordered in two large batches dated 1890 and 1912. They can be found with or without two 25 year anniversary dates 1866 - 1891 and 1886 - 1911. Note the American Eagle thumbflit and the hexagram motif on the lid inlay. When this hexagram is on an Israeli flag or a Jewish synagogue, it is called a *Davidstern* (Star of David), but when it's associated with brewery items, it's called a *Brauerstern* (Brewer's Star) and appears on many beer steins. When it appears over the entrance to a *Bier Keller* (beer cellar), it's called a *Zeuglster* or *Zoiglster* (advertising star) as an invitation to come in and enjoy a cool one or two..... *PROSIT!!!*

That concludes Part 4b of this series of Mettlach at the AMOCA Museum. I extend thanks to Anna Sanchez, Collections Manager at AMOCA for photographs of items from the Robert Wilson Mettlach Collection, and to Walt Vogdes for his careful and thoughtful editing. The next chapter will be part 5 and will deal with VBM artists, their motifs and art styles from Medieval to Modern.

