



32 engraved playing cards, with black diagonal pattern to verso, tax stamp to Four of Hearts.

PASTIMES, PROFESSIONS AND PASTORAL PURSUITS

[German deck with vignettes and ancient gods]

Author

WEGENER, T[heodore] [and] L[udwig] HEIDBORN

Publication date

[c1870].

Publisher

T. Wegener [and] L. Heidborn,

Publication place

[Stralsund],

Physical description

32 engraved playing cards, with black diagonal pattern to verso, tax stamp to Four of Hearts.

Dimensions

100 by 58mm (4 by 2.25 inches).

Notes

The Makers

The publisher's imprint on the Four and Eight of Hearts reads 'Vereinigte Stralsunder Spielkarten Fabriken Actien Gesellschaft Stralsund'. Vereinigte Stralsunder was the name the Altenburg printing firm operated under after merging with two other local playing card companies in 1872.

Altenberg cards became well-known for their good quality and value. The business changed hands numerous times throughout the following century, and remains active today as a market leader of German playing cards.

The Knave of Hearts has inscribed on the side 'früher L. v. d. Osten, L. Heidborn. T. Wegener' and, on the bottle of beer held by the double-figure character, 'Stralsunder 8s. g.'. Thus it seems that Ludwig Heidborn and Theodore Wegener had taken over the earlier business of one L. V. d. Osten, and were producing playing cards in Stralsund during the late-nineteenth century, before their firms were brought together under the Altenberg company.

The Cards

Using the traditional German suits of Acorns, Bells, Hearts and Leaves, the pip cards seems to be thematically arranged. In addition to the suitmarks, the number of which correlates to the value of the card, each one shows a small vignette, those on the Acorns and Bells associated with professions and pastimes, the Hearts and Leaves with rural pursuits. For example, the Seven of Acorns shows a dentist extracting a patient's tooth, and the Ten a fencing match; together the Seven and Eight of Leaves depicts a stag hunt, while the Nine of Hearts shows a fisherman with a large catch.

The court cards show double-figure male characters, who descend in rank from the King, suitably dressed in royal garments, to the Over Knave, formally dressed and three of whom carry some form of weapon, to the Under Knave, three of whom bear a mundane item: a beer bottle, a pheasant and a tablet. On the Four of each suit is a double-figure representation of a different ancient pagan god or goddess: on the Four of Acorns Dionysus, the Four of Bells Demeter, the Four of Hearts Athena and the Four of Leaves Artemis.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price: £1200

Inventory reference: 21533