

Mystery Solved!

Who or What is HETRA?



Susan R. Arthur, First place for best original research article 2019 "Who or What is Hetra?"

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How Flat-Foot Sleuthing + Social Media + *Sherlockian* Deduction Solved a Perfume Bottle & Glass Mystery

by Susan R. Arthur

A hot topic on our IPBA Facebook (FB) Interactive site this year has been the glassmakers/glassblowers behind the very fragile, novelty type perfume bottles that are often seen in unique presentations offered by Rochambeau (often described as "by HETRA"), and seen during the Perfume Bottle Auctions at convention or appreciated individually in many members' individual collections, including mine. I attempted to narrow down the likely artists along with Helen Farnsworth and Michael Rhoads in our Winter 2016 PBQ article, *The Novelty of It All: Perfume Bottles as Christmas Ornaments*. We narrowed down the region to Lauscha but not the specific artists. New information has come our way recently.

Often historical and family documents, including those related to glassblowing and the manufacture of perfume bottles and vanity-related items, are seemingly lost forever due to internal conflicts and border disputes among states and countries, world wars, immigration and relocation, and the untimely deaths of people. But with the advent of the all-powerful Internet and social media, the possibility of connecting like-minded and curious thinkers is infinite, and the sharing of said information is quick and painless, often enticing discussions and various opinions. Case in point: through our interactive IPBA FB site and one of its ever-vigilant administrators, **Judy Parker**, and her love and quest for all things related to glass, I was introduced to **Dominic Pennock** from the UK.

MEET DOMINIC PENNOCK – "flat-foot" sleuth, UK glass collector and aficionado, researcher and author. Dominic collects glass cocktail umbrellas, also known as "drink markers," that are very similar in technique and structure to the fragile perfume

Above: sampling of Dominic Pennock's collection of glass cocktail umbrellas or "drink markers" and the impetus behind his eBook, "Bumbershoots" (right).





Whimsical animal-shaped perfumes by Traut Brothers and part of Judy Parker's collection. (Parkerhouse Photos)

bottles and Christmas ornaments that were described in the aforementioned PBQ article. Dominic has written an e-Book *Bumbershoots* that can be found on Amazon (Kindle ebook, published 17 October 2017). Dominic essentially conducted a walk-about in the German glassblowing areas of yesteryear with a translator, interviewing people whose families have been glassblowers for decades. This area is very close in geographic location to Lauscha, known as the glass Christmas ornament source of yesteryear and still today. His quest was to discover the creators of his favorite glass cocktail umbrellas. His 76-page book describes his hunt for and discovery of the glassblowers of the town of Neuhaus, the Traut family and others who have handed down the craft of glassblowing. We applaud the Geißlerhaus museum in Neuhaus am (and) Rennweg for their resources in support of his quest.

MEET JUDY "ATOMIZER" PARKER – FB Interactive head administrator and moderator, cross-over queen of glass collectibles, a lady with a curious mind and a thirst for glass-related details. Judy asked Dominic to join the conversation on several occasions regarding his opinion on the glass artist of her perfume bottle treasures, specifically her elephants.

Because of Dominic's research on his glass cocktail umbrellas and their similarity in fragility and structure, he suggested to Judy that her elephant was made by the Traut family, specifically Max Traut. Max used the logo MATRA in his advertising.

Dominic's answer inspired me to read his book. Something about his journey and discovery tickled a few personal neurons (as well as my envy), and gave me think there could be a connection between this Max Traut and the name HETRA that pops up on many of the Rochambeau presentations we have seen at auction, in books, and on some of the catalog pages shared by Ken Leach.

I started conversing with Dominic, and presented my theory. Could it be that Mr. Traut created his logo from the contraction of his Christian name, i.e. M-A from Max, and T-R-A from his surname Traut? If MATRA = Max Traut, why couldn't HETRA be another family member with the first name starting H-E?

At first Dominic didn't buy into my theory; then, after pondering the idea, he agreed that I may be on to something. He found a related item on eBay of mouth blown glass figures dangling from

a display (more glass drink markers). Its label said "ALTRA"!!! This was too coincidental not to be related to MATRA and HETRA. Recently, Dominic sent me a copy of a document that contained a detailed interview with Lieselotte Altermann, daughter of Albin Traut, that was published in 1998, and roughly titled *The Life and Works of the Brothers Traut*. Although this document does not specifically state that HETRA is Hermann Traut, I believe it will convince you that we have solved the mystery of "WHO or WHAT is HETRA"! This document also revealed the answers to a few other questions regarding these whimsical glass curiosities that once contained perfume and *still* tickle our collective fancies!

The following information has been gathered from the translated interview of Lieselotte Altermann. The article contains family photos, newspaper articles and advertising regarding the Traut family and their respective glass operations. Neuhaus, Germany, is the home of the Brothers Traut. Parents Martin and Minna had 10 children. Martin had immigrated from Heubach in 1887, and was originally a lumberjack. It is unclear how a lumberjack's family got involved in glassblowing, but most of the children

were involved in this cottage industry. Subsequent generations are still at it today in some capacity. Listed below are each of the original Brothers Traut and a bit about their connection to glass.

ARNO (1885-1980), the oldest, ran the glass bellows as a youth. His expertise was in glass fabrication and shipping. He worked with ampoules, test tubes, tablet glass and other chemical-pharmaceutical glass, and aquarium accessories. His niece referred to him as a "glassblower with body and soul" and that he worked for his brothers Max, Hermann, and Joseph.

ERNST (1887-1984) produced work for Joseph's company.

ALBIN (1890-1963) also worked with producing chemical-pharmaceutical type glass, which he exported to the Erfurt area (was in the Eastern block of Germany after WWII). At one point, he had over 200 employees and some machinery. There is a photo of him in the publication in ~1960 with the caption "after he took over premises of brother Hermann." Later in life, Albin created art glass, and distributed these pieces until his death in 1963. The ebay item that Dominic recently found has the ALTRA sticker on it, and we surmise that ALTRA = Albin Traut.

OTTO (1894-1965) worked for Albin as a technical director. He had two sons:

Otto, Jr., who died in WWII, and Paul, who worked with Joseph as an "art glassblower."

HERMANN (1896-1984) is described as mostly working with medical glassware. It is my and Dominic's opinion that he also distributed art glass under his logo, HETRA, on behalf of the two younger brothers Max and Joseph.

MAX (1900- 1970) is apparently the glass artist of the whimsical and animal perfume bottles we collect. His niece describes his talent of hand blowing "blumenvased" (vases for blooms, i.e. flowers) and perfume bottles. Later, he produced pipettes and droppers (medical glass). An advertisement in the publication lists "MATRA Original" Max Traut Handwerkshutte for Glaskunst. Then their catalog pages of the animal perfume bottles attributed to Max are listed on the following pages. These are the very same pages we have seen before but with HETRA stamped on them!! There is also a newspaper clipping presented discussing Max Traut's animal figurines.

IDA (1903-1991) helped out in the offices in support of several of her brothers' shops. Brother Paul died in WWI, and brother Wilhelm died during childhood.

JOSEPH (1905-1988) apprenticed with brother Albin (3rd brother) in the making of "ampoules, test tubes, vials, aquarium

items, cotton and perfume tubes" and is specifically said to be the blower of the bottle devil "Kartesiani Tauchers" and similar Woman and Man (shown right).

An art glass workshop was opened in 1926-27 at Sonnenberger Str 21, with Max and Hermann as directors and where Joseph worked. Apparently in 1927, Joseph opened his own shop and hired his own glassblowers. Max did the trade shows in Cologne and Leipzig in the early 1930s.

In a specific advertisement copied into the interview, Joseph's logo is presented in the same triangle as the HETRA triangle. (Note: 2 photo inserts with JOSTRA and HETRA logos). Also there is a photo of Joseph Traut's workshop with the caption "Four work tables with lamps and bellows. The women painted the hollow animals and bronzed the ping closure." (Many of our perfume bottle collectibles have the bronzed ends where the cork was inserted.)

In 1934, Arno moved the business to a larger shop where they produced "predominantly animal forms, e.g. Schnapps elephants for the company Mampe, Berline as well as glastiere and figures for export to Spain were manufactured before the lamp." Further, in 1936, "hollow glass filled with perfume was in great demand. Joseph Traut bought the essences, prepared perfumes

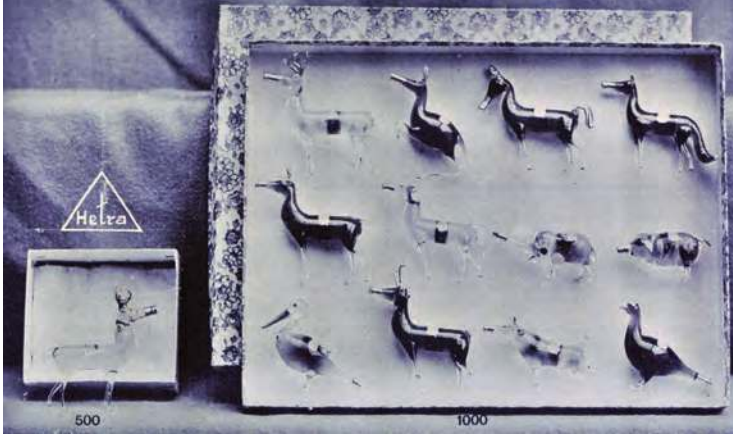
Right: ALTRA cocktail glass marker set with 12 glass markers. Label reads "ALTRA," the wooden and glass display is 4 1/2" long. Thank you to eBay fritzgragg29oq (Steve) for his expressed use of the photo.

Below: JOSTRA triangular logo



GLASKUNST-WERKSTÄTTE
JOSEPH TRAUT
NEUHAUS AM RENNWEG / THÜR.





according to the recipe, filled them and stuck the hollow glass molded [i.e. he plugged the ends with corks]." We have often wondered if the bottles were sent elsewhere to be filled with perfume, now we know the family did it all.

The family sold to companies in Hochstein Ernstthal (Hohenstein-Ernstthal) and to Erwin Muller-Bleck Lauscha (this family made glass Christmas ornaments). During the war, the glassblowers made electrodes for war purposes.

The interview ends with an apropos finish:

"The common ground of the brothers Traut was also found in love and dedication to glass, ambition, diligence and perseverance, to further develop and bring to the benefit of the family, the children and the grandchildren, and the chemical-pharmaceutical glass, the use glass and the art glass for the hometown of Neuhaus."

The glass blowing Traut family has come full circle in deserved recognition of their contributions to our perfume bottle collecting interests. We now know that the Trauts were the artists behind our whimsical and animal figure bottles, and that this little cottage industry produced them ... made the perfume ... filled them ... sealed them ... and sent them off to all parts of the world, and likely to distributors like Rochambeau.

Many thanks to the talent of Dominic Pennock and the curious mind of fellow perfume bottle collector Judy Parker.



Perfume bottle similar to the Arno Traut "Kartesiani Tauchers" (shown front and back); BELOW: Woman and "Jockey Club" Man bottles. Owned and photographed by Earline Kopriva.



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The life and work of the Brothers Traut

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