

# Whimsical Whip Holders and Figural Carved Hooks

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Horn and wood go together like butter and bread or hearts and flowers. Long ago, 16<sup>th</sup> Century German artisans used these elements together to craft “Leuchterweibchen” that are carved and painted figures with horns as the tail (a bit like a ship figure-head) and used for lights and decorations. Earlier whip holders often resembled these objects



Illustration # 1



Illustration # 2

because they were carved and painted as well. (See illustrations # 1 & 2). Although, the most popular ones being the carved whimsical holders from the late Victorian times.

These figural objects, affectionately called whip holders, were used to hold whips and crops by either laying them across the horns or simply hanging them by the loop. Mostly, the subjects were of hunted animals with a parody twist were the hunted becomes the hunter. Hence, hunted animals became popular subjects as whip holders.

These days we recognize the “looking down” fox hunter and the rabbit as one of the most common whip holders carved in three sizes.

(See illustrations # 3 & 4). Sometimes, musical boxes were inserted with a variety of different switches.



Illustration # 3

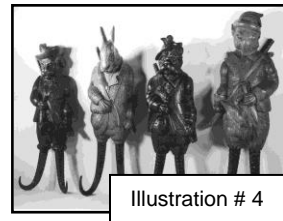


Illustration # 4

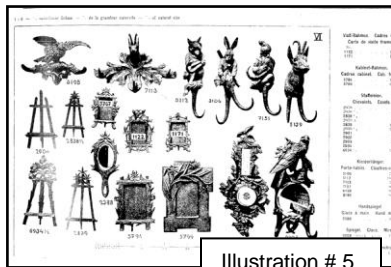


Illustration # 5

The horns that were used as hooks attached to the carved figure were horns of the Chamois which is a deer/goat animal that lives in the Alps. Other animal horns were used as well and sometimes the hooks were carved. The wood for the figural body was carved for most part from “linden wood” or walnut with some lesser ones in pine. Even though most of the whip holders were carved in Switzerland (where some of the best carvers lived and

kept the art as a family business), some were carved in France and Germany and Austria. Some whip holders were clearly “mass produced” but they were all hand carved by skilled carvers. Therefore, they retain certain individuality even though the model was the same and manufactures produced catalogs. (See illustration # 5). Human figures were also done mainly as hunters with their rifles, tradesmen or fairytale dwarfs and elves.

Collecting those wonderful “characters” is quite a hunt since they are hard to find and becoming harder still are the ones that are very desirable. Within the Black Forest collecting arena there are collectors who just collect whip holders; some even built a one-animal collection such as only rabbits or only bears or dogs, etc. As a dealer, I have found that the furry animals are the most sought after and even though a musical box may help, the carved figure is the most decisive factor. Likewise, condition is

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important, but as wood breaks occur and well mended, they are fairly acceptable by most collectors. Although, replacements and general wear and tear can affect the value and it is relative to the object. Modern uses of a whip holder as we learned from our collectors range from kitchen hangers to hat holders or simply decorations. We know of walls full of them, literally.

A “pretty face” will get you anywhere. The same applies for our creatures - face, pose and subject are big factors that affect price. Prices can vary dramatically from hundreds for less desirable subjects to thousands for highly sought after and very rare ones.

In closing, take a look at the below pictures because they tell it all. They are pictures of some rare and highly desirable whip holders which includes a cow, a double bear, a dog playing bagpipes, a monkey playing bagpipes, a bear gardener, a lion king, and a bear mother with baby. And so the “hunt” is on.

