

DEGENHART GLASS STORY

BY

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Charles Degenhart was born in Germany in 1845, he grew up as the eldest of eight children, and at the age of ten he went to work to help support his family.

He worked as a shoe repairman, an iron worker, and apprenticed as a mold maker, by the age of 15, he was working full time in mold making for glass and pottery factories in Southern Germany.

When he was thirty years of age Charles migrated to the United States. He settled first in the Jersey area, but because of the climate he decided to move farther inland and moved to Wheeling, West Virginia.

He was working as a mold maker for the Dalzell Glass House when he met and married Louise Franc, a girl of German descent.

Charles and Louise Degenhart had six children. Two of their children, Charles Jr. and John were born in Wheeling.

When the Dalzell Glass Works moved to Findlay, Charles Sr. moved his family there. He worked as a mold maker in Findlay and two of his most famous molds were the "Last Supper" bread tray with the open edge grape leaf design and the "Dewey" pitcher.

At the age of eleven and nine, Charles Jr. and John went to work doing odd jobs around the nineteen glass houses located in Findlay. In 1900 the gas field went dry in Findlay therefore creating much hardship on the families employed there.

In 1901 John Degenhart moved to Cambridge, Ohio. On his arrival in Cambridge, he met Mr. Arthur J. Bennett, who had come from New York to manage the new Cambridge Glass Company which was in the process of being built. John drove the horse and buggy for Bennett until the glass factory opened in 1902. Mr. Bennett liked John and gave him a job as a gatherer for the blowing shop.

John worked and saved his money and in 1904 brought his mother, brothers, and sister to Cambridge. His father died in 1901 in Findlay.

John and Charley worked in the Cambridge Glass Factory for almost 40 years. John became the head of the pressing shop and Charley worked in the mold making shop.

John met Elizabeth Garrett in 1907. They courted one year and were married in 1908. Elizabeth worked in the packing plant of the Cambridge Glass Factory until her marriage and then quit to be a housewife and run an antique business. It was a dream of John and Elizabeth to have their own small glass factory.

Finally in 1947 after saving for several years, the Crystal Art glass Factory was opened in Cambridge. Elizabeth was 58 years old at the time.

John didn't invent the Rose paper weight, but he had made some of the finest paper weights before his death in 1964. One of the most famous weights made by John was the overlay cobalt window weight with George and Martha Washington with the olive branch painted by his wife Elizabeth. Only three of these weights were made, one is in the Bergstrom Paper Weight Museum, one is privately owned and Mrs. Degenhart had the third one.

Upon the death of John Degenhart, Zack Boyd, a former worker for the Cambridge Glass Company came to work for Mrs. Degenhart. Many new colors were created by Zack. After the death of Zack Boyd in 1967, Bernard Boyd his son came to work for Mrs. Degenhart as a glass worker and paper weight maker.

The Degenhart trademark was a capital D encircled with a heart.

Mrs. Degenhart had the only known complete book of formulas from the defunct Cambridge Glass Company. It was given to her by her husband when the Cambridge plant closed its doors.

The Degenhart Glass Company produced over two hundred different colors. Most of these were slag glass. Many of the colors were named after persons who are affiliated with the glass business. The Degenhart's sold some carnival glass, but none of the iridization was done in the factory. Most of their iridizing was done by St. Clair at Elwood, IN, Terry Crider also did some iridizing and the Hansen's iridized some of the Degenhart glass.

The Degenhart's made several small items and shapes of glass consisting of toothpick holders, salt dips, slippers, covered dishes, sugar & creamers, and owls. Priscilla the colonial lady is very collectible and commands a high price.

On October 2, 1975, Governor James A. Rhodes of Ohio proclaimed that day to be Elizabeth Degenhart "First Lady Of Glass" day. Mrs. Degenhart died April 16, 1978. Upon her death it was stipulated in her will that Mr. Bernard C. Boyd would be given first opportunity to buy the factory. On October 1978 Bernard C. Boyd and his son Bernard F. opened Boyd's Crystal Art Glass.