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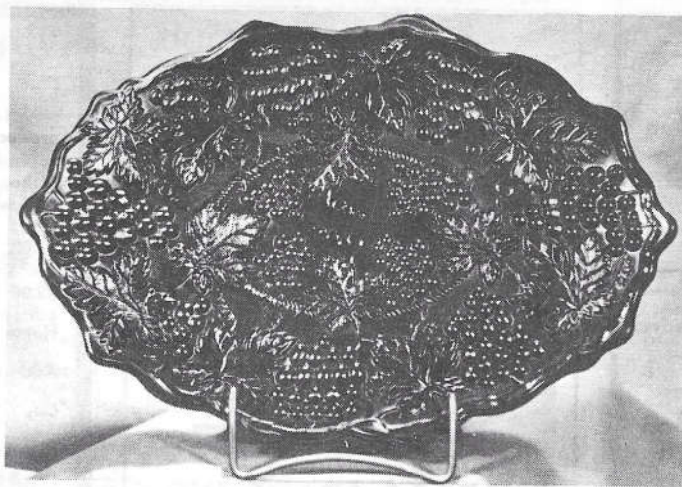
CARNIVAL GLASS



ESSENTIAL CLAY PIPES

ADVERTISING FANS

HOW TO IDENTIFY CURRIER & IVES



IMPERIAL PURPLE Grape and Cable dresser tray, 11 inches long, 7½ inches wide. Courtesy Mrs. Pearl Daggs, Tulsa, Okla.; Carter Photographs, Tulsa.

CARNIVAL

*A ranking authority on the subject dispels
Some long-held notions about the production
Of this iridescent glass and the deference
Accorded it in this century's earlier years*

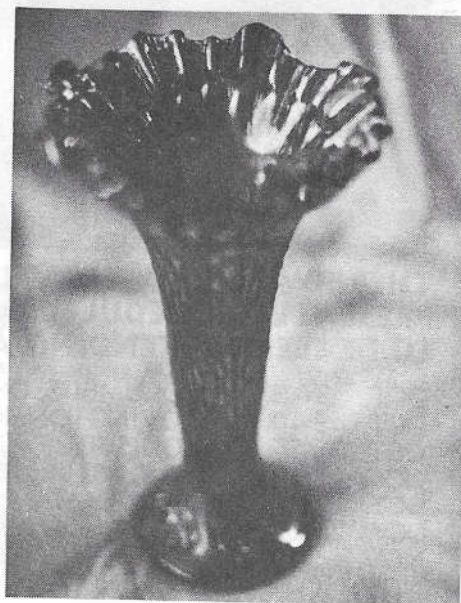
By MARION T. HARTUNG



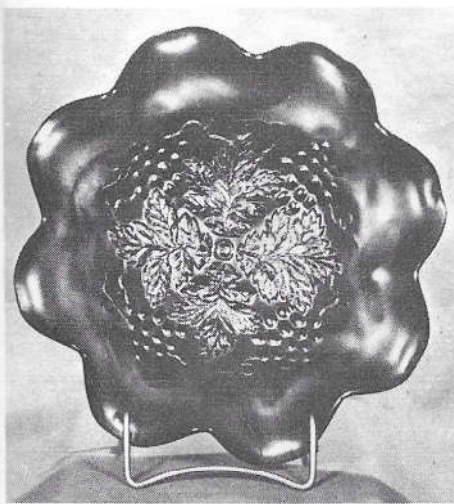
AMETHYST GRAPE epergne, 5¾ inches diameter, 4¾ inches tall. Courtesy Mrs. Pearl Daggs, Tulsa; Carter Photographs.

◆ OFTEN DUBBED the "Cinderella" of American antiques, Carnival glass has certainly seen both sunshine and shadow in its long career. In its original era of popularity, shortly after the turn of the century, probably no other product made in this country had as wide an appeal both in the domestic and foreign market as did this colorful glass.

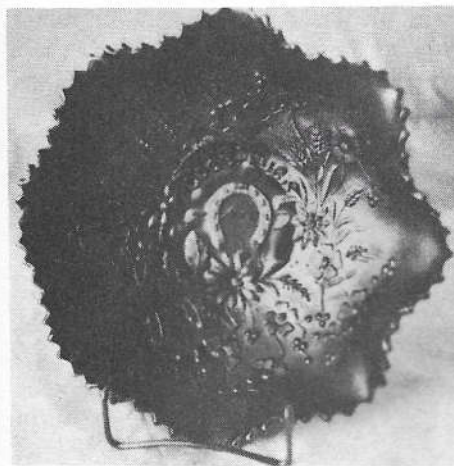
Mrs. Hartung is the author of a series of books on carnival, opalescent and Northwood pattern glass, and is a pioneer in the Carnival glass field.



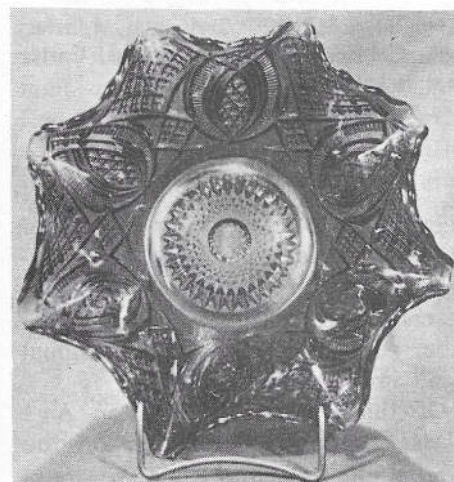
KNOTTED BEADS marigold vase. Courtesy Sherry Klabo, Seattle, Wash.



NORTHWOOD AMETHYST Grape bowl, 8¾ inches diameter, 2½ inches tall. Courtesy Mrs. Pearl Daggs; Carter Photographs.



GOOD LUCK blue bowl. Courtesy Sherry Klabo, Seattle.



NORTHWOOD SMOKY gray Fine Cut bowl, 9½ inches diameter. Courtesy Mrs. Pearl Daggs; Carter Photographs.

But, in the same way that the feather boa came and disappeared and after the fashion of the bustle's hey-day and exit, so Carnival glass came upon the scene, took the spotlight for a while, and then retreated into the wings to wait for a curtain call. The years from 1905 to 1920 saw it rise, blaze, and gradually disappear.

Originally called simply iridescent glass, or occasionally designated as "Venetian" by some advertisers, the original Carnival glass was invented to bring to the ever-growing domestic market a suitable and acceptable substitute for the popular but expensive iridescent blown glass, shimmering with the precious metals incorporated into the glass itself.

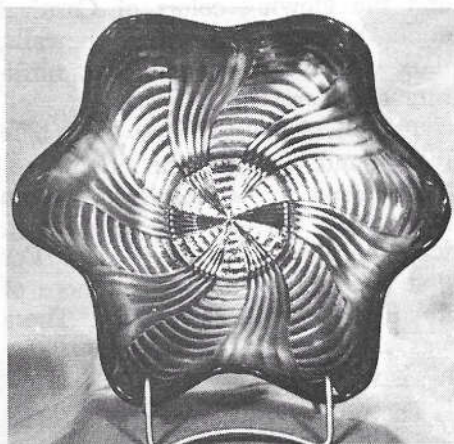
After some experimentation, a method of achieving the same effect with a fraction of the cost was found. Essentially this was a simple process of three main steps. The first of these was the pressing to the glass itself. An American invention, this was a common practice among glass houses. Obviously, it was here that the basic color was determined.

The second step was the one that gave Carnival the iridescence that set it apart from any other pressed glass. To obtain this effect, the glass was sprayed by hand with a liquid mixture of metallic salts. While we have no record that these mixtures as they were used by the various companies were patented, it is certain that they were kept secret from one company to another, and in fact, each had its own particular formula. The general effect of all of these is the same, however, and from the iridescence alone it is impossible to determine the maker.

The third step consisted in the re-firing of the glass so as to render the iridescence almost impervious to washings and daily use. A great deal of the Carnival being collected today has retained its original iridescence and lustre. In fact, the more nearly in original condition a piece of the old glass is, the more of a premium price it commands.

In these early years of the century the American housewife was enjoying the leisure that such inventions as the washing machine had brought to her. She turned her attention to the beautifying of her home. Things Oriental were much in vogue,

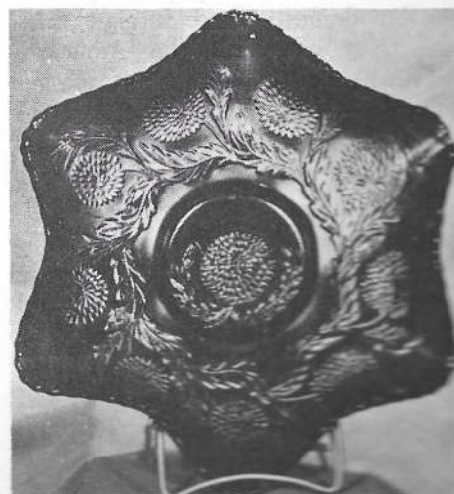
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COMET PATTERN bowl, 8 inches diameter. Courtesy Mrs. Pearl Daggs; Carter Photographs.



IMPERIAL BLUE Cherry vase, 5½ inches high, 6 inches diameter. Courtesy Mrs. Pearl Daggs; Carter Photographs.



IMPERIAL GREEN Chrysanthemum bowl, 10¼ inches diameter, 3 inches high. Courtesy Mrs. Pearl Daggs; Carter Photographs.

and the glowing colors of Carnival added a spice of life to drab walls, dark woodwork, massive dark furniture and kerosene lamps.

The vivid colors were especially in demand. In fact, the orange color referred to as "marigold," taken from some of the old advertising, was the best-seller of its day. For that reason only do we see more of it still on the market today. There was simply more demand for it, so more was made.

The range of colors in Carnival is quite wide, and divides nicely into two main categories—the vivid hues and the pastels. Remember we are speaking of the colors of the base glass, not of the colors of the iridescence. The vivid hues range from marigold to cobalt blue to emerald green through amethyst, to purple. And while in very short supply, true red is also classified as a vivid color. The surest way to determine the base glass color of most pieces of Carnival is to hold the piece to a strong light and look through it.

The pastel, or light colors, apparently were not quite so popular in the original days of production, for they do not appear in great quantity now. These ranged from clear, to white (sometimes advertised as "Pearl"), to pastel marigold, clam-broth, pastel blue, pastel green, and vaseline to a few pieces of pink. The iridescence on these base colors is often of the pastel-rainbow type, and it has great eye appeal for the modern collector.

For some 20 years Carnival enjoyed the sunshine of great popularity, both on the domestic and foreign markets. Not only did the American housewife buy it in quantity, but her counterpart in such far-away places as Great Britain and Australia also enjoyed its cheerful colors.

The original production of Carnival was sold just as was the clear pressed glass, although Carnival was slightly more expensive. It appeared on the shelves of china and glass shops, in variety and general merchandise stores, and in the pages of large mail order catalogues. The majority of it never saw a carnival at all, nor was it so named or intended. It was only after the vogue for it waned that the glass houses took their left-over stocks, packed them indiscriminately into wooden barrels



ACORN BURRS water set is choice collectible in Carnival glass.

and sold them to street fairs and games of chance to be used as prizes.

Carnival glass in its original heyday was not so cheap as many now believe. When looking through any old merchandise catalogue of the 1910 era, compare a similar offering of the now-collectible clear glass with that of the iridescent. You will find that the latter is about equal in price with that of cherished caramel slag—both being more expensive than clear glass. Logic would lead one to this conclusion, even if there were no printed material to verify it. Carnival is "pressed glass PLUS," and required several more hand processes than did the clear pattern glass.

One other facet of the fascination of Carnival, in addition to the colors of the base glass and the play of changing colors on the surface iridescence, is the wide variety of patterns to be found. These may be roughly divided into four main categories: the naturalistic designs, such as Acorn Burrs; the stylized patterns like Peacock at the Fountain; the geometric patterns, such as Hearts and Flowers; and the near-cut designs like Diamond Lace.

So far we have classified and delineated nearly 1,000 different Carnival patterns, and we believe this is about the total number of those used. The majority of these we have



FENTON AMETHYST Carp mug, 4 inches high. Courtesy Mrs. Pearl Daggs; Carter Photographs.

been able to identify as to maker as well. There were four glass companies prominent in the field of iridescent pressed glass and several other firms that made an occasional small line.

Of the makers, the Fenton Art Glass Company comes first on the list, alphabetically speaking, and very probably was the first to market Carnival as well. The firm is

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Carnival Glass

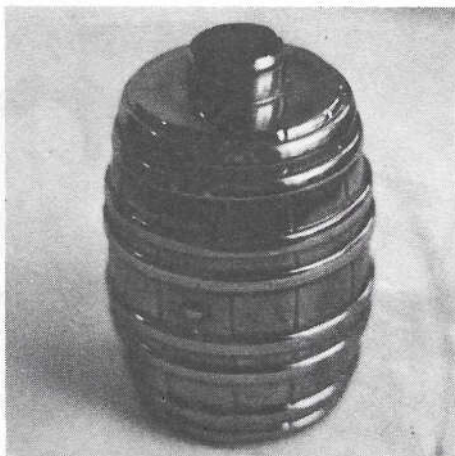
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still in existence and still in the hands of the Fenton family. Several years ago they began re-issuing Carnival on a small scale, each piece bearing a new trade-mark in the glass, while the old Carnival had no marking of any kind as it left this factory.

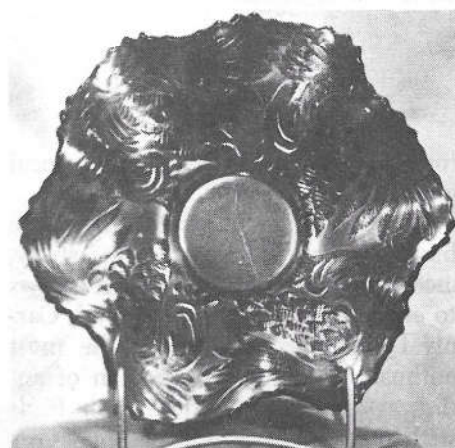
The firm was founded in 1906 in the town of Williamstown, West Va. The various activities were under the direct supervision of the members of the Fenton family. Mr. F. L. Fenton had been an apprentice and foreman at one of the Northwood factories and was experienced in the making of both colored and clear pressed glass of quality. Jacob Rosenthal, the chief designer for the Indiana Tumbler and Goblet Company of Greentown, Ind., was related to the Fentons, and, after the untimely demise of this company, came East to join the Fentons. Oddly enough, the first president of the Imperial Glass Company, another of the big Carnival-producing firms, was also related to the Fentons.

Although we are primarily concerned here with their production of iridescent glass, the Fenton Company made a great many other types of colored glass. But during the decade of 1910 to 1920 their chief and almost the only output was Carnival. This was a highly lucrative business and one that established them firmly as a leader in the field. Fortunately for the modern collector, they did illustrate some of their advertising. Such patterns as Orange Tree, Butterfly and Berry, as well as the popular animal patterns such as Panther, Lion, and Horses' Heads are known to have been among the Fenton patterns.

Next on the list is the Imperial Glass Company of Bellaire, Ohio. This company was founded four years before the Fenton firm by Edward Muhleman. "Captain" Muhleman, as he was called because of his years on a riverboat, also had a great deal of experience in the glass business. From the first appearance of their wares, Imperial specialized in glass for the housewife, rather than the industrial type, and every effort was made to cater to



LITTLE BARREL in green is rarity. Courtesy Sherry Klabo, Seattle.



FENTON BLUE Artichoke bowl, 7 inches diameter. Courtesy Mrs. Pearl Daggs; Carter Photographs.

her taste. Starting with clear or crystal patterns, by 1910 they, too, were trying their hand at iridescent glass with great success. They had a grape pattern, a design featuring large roses, now called Lustre Rose, and one pattern featuring pansies, among others. These were all popular and were made by the carloads. During the 1960s the Imperial Glass Company, also still in existence, began a "re-issuing" of some of their old Carnival. The vast majority of this carries a new trade-mark of a capital I and superimposed capital G. Their old Carnival carried no such marking.

The next is the Millersburg Glass Company of Millersburg, Ohio. This

firm was a town project; it was incorporated and shares of stock sold to raise the necessary capital. The date was 1910. The types of glass made? A clear, very bright crystal, and, later, a type of Carnival with a particularly brilliant finish called "Rhodium Ware." Although its last date of production remains in some doubt among collectors, it seems to have come only three or four years after the opening.

In spite of, or perhaps because of this limited output, Millersburg glass enjoys quite a reputation among present-day collectors and is eagerly sought. Some of the representative patterns from this firm are the Millersburg Court House bowl, the large Trout and Fly design, Millersburg's Marilyn (found only on a very handsome water set), and Holly Whirl, among others.

Last on the list, but by no means last in popularity, is the famous Northwood Company. Mr. Northwood moved his firm several times as he climbed the ladder of popularity, but probably the majority of his Carnival was made in West Virginia.

Harry Northwood came from a long line of artisans in glass and had had years of experience with colored glassware prior to the invention of Carnival. He was an experienced business man, and had a talent for filling the current market. While very probably his was not the first pressed iridescent glass on the American market, his particular patterns and colors proved quite popular. Much of his glassware carried a permanent trade-mark of the capital letter N in some form. This has added to its already prominent place in the hearts of present-day collectors.

Each of these glass companies made some patterns that were truly outstanding and some that were indifferent in quality. Mr. Northwood had a very high batting average. One of the most popular of all patterns then and now is his famous Grape pattern shown on the cover of this issue in some of the sought-after shapes. It was made in the largest range of forms of any of the Carnival patterns from any company, there being about 50 different shapes in this pattern. It was made in all of the usual Carnival colors, vivid and pastel, and in both decorative

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and useful forms. The water sets, berry sets, and table sets were widely sold and are much in demand today. Such other shapes as the cookie jar and tobacco humidor are also prized pieces. Whole collections have been built around this one pattern.

In addition to these big four in the field, we know that several other firms tried their hand at least briefly in the Carnival field. One of these was the Heisey glass company, not particularly noted for its iridescent glass but the maker of a few items. Another was the Cambridge company, as well as at least one of the small firms which had joined together to form the United States Glass Company. (Some 18 small companies had pooled their resources to form one larger unit, each contributing some patterns, or methods, or materials.) Still another firm is the Higbee Glass Company, which made a few pieces. Undoubtedly there were some other small firms as well, but these are the main ones known to collectors at the present time.

By the early 1920s the vogue for Carnival was waning, and soon its production was drastically reduced. In the 1930s a brief flurry of activity appeared. This time the production was entirely of marigold, and the few patterns made were produced solely to be used as premiums or prizes. In the parlance of the modern collector, such glass is called "late Carnival", and a pattern such as Bouquet and Lattice is typical of the period.

For all practical purposes the age of Carnival was over. The fine old pieces were pushed aside and lay neglected in the shadows of attic or basement for over 40 years. During this period only a few collectors appreciated its beauty and sought out the fine old glass.

A very large percentage of pattern glass in America is bought and sold by mail, and this was obviously impossible for the entire field of Carnival until some basic research had been done. With the first book solely on Carnival patterns to appear in the early 1960s some of the patterns were named and Carnival began to come into the limelight again. Today the collectors number in the thousands. There are at least two national organizations of these collec-



TWO AMETHYST Argus mugs, each 3¾ inches high. Courtesy Mrs. Pearl Daggs; Carter Photographs.

tors, as well as many smaller local clubs.

For the novice collector there are books to read, pictures to study, meetings and sales to attend, shows to enjoy and newsletters to read. Carnival collectors are among the most enthusiastic of the whole clan of antiquers and love to share their finds with others. There is a national Carnival Week in the Fall, during which displays are often arranged at various libraries and local museums.

Carnival glass has indeed come out of the shadows into the limelight. This time it is not the "poor man's Tiffany," as it was sometimes referred to during its latent period. This time it not only still resembles the art glass it was created to imitate, but is appreciated for both the artistry of color and design inherent in itself. The demand for it has created a lively market, especially for the rarities and for those patterns regarded as the most desirable. The prices paid are worthy of note, and any price guide to Carnival more than a year or so old is completely worthless.

Carnival has completely and firmly established itself as one of the more interesting and desirable types of American antique glass, and we believe that the only shadow it will occupy in the future is that of the collector's cupboard. ❖