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On the Cover:

Glass vase with silver overlay, probably designed by Frederick Carder at Stevens and Williams, Brierley Hill, England, about 1895. H. 13 in. Courtesy of Bonhams & Butterfield.

The Wayward “k” of Frederick Carder’s Signature

by

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On April 4, 2007, a glass vase with a sterling silver floral overlay was sold at auction at Bonhams (cover and Figure 1). Engraved on its silver cartouche was the following inscription: *To my dear friend / John Northwood 1st / as a token of appreciation / and esteem / from / Frederick C. Carder.* Mr. Carder’s engraved name was not a facsimile of his signature, but was in the style of the rest of the inscription. Assuming that the engraver had worked from a handwritten copy of the inscription provided by Mr. Carder, it would be the only instance I knew of where he had written his name with a middle initial. I wondered if the engraver had made a mistake.

Frederick Carder usually wrote his signature as Fredk Carder, usually without an apostrophe, and sometimes, particularly when signing his Steuben pieces, as F. Carder. He spelled out the name Frederick only when

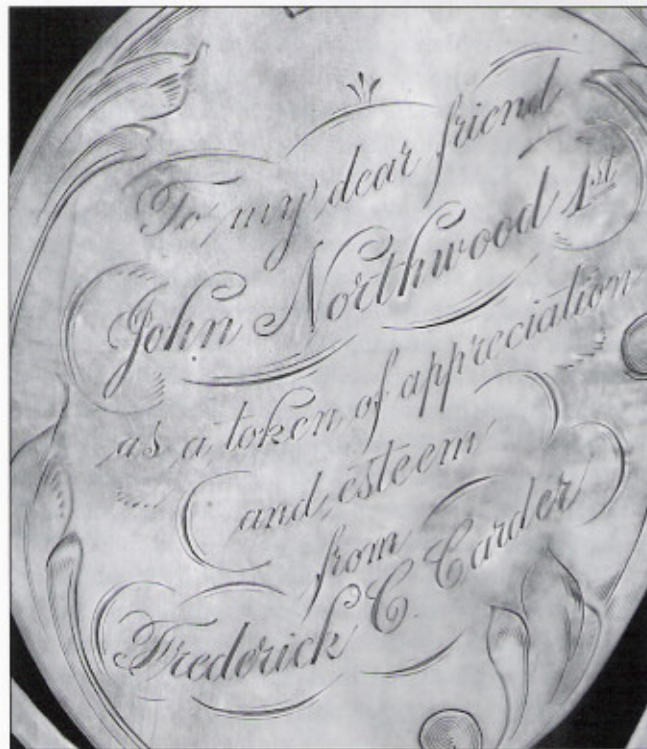


Figure 1

Detail of glass vase with silver overlay, illustrated on the cover, showing inscription. This vase was presented to “John Northwood 1st” by Frederick Carder. It was auctioned at Bonhams on April 4, 2007, and was previously auctioned at Sotheby’s New York Galleries on November 12–13, 1982.

Figure 2
A rare example of Frederick Carder's full signature. He wrote it expressly for the 1952 Carder exhibition at The Corning Museum of Glass.

signing a form or document that required his full name, e.g., his will and his application for a Social Security number. In my experience, he never included a middle name or initial, even when a form called for one.

An example of Carder's rare full signature that is familiar to collectors first appeared on the sign at the entrance to the exhibition *The Life and Times of Frederick Carder* held at The Corning Museum of Glass in 1952 (Figure 2). Thomas S. Buechner, the director of the museum at that time, featured this signature at the beginning of three articles about Carder that he published in the 1950s.¹ There is no middle name or initial in this signature.

In 1965, two years after Mr. Carder's death, a group of his former colleagues met to share their recollections.² Surprisingly, the transcript shows them discussing Carder's signature at length. Except for the 1952 exhibition signature, none had ever seen him write out the name Frederick, and there was no mention of a middle name or initial. Paul V. Gardner speculated that Mr. Buechner must have asked Carder to write his full signature expressly for the exhibition. Robert F. Rockwell Jr. remarked, "It is such a perfect and beautiful signature!" and in 1966 he placed it on the cover of his booklet *Frederick Carder and His Steuben Glass, 1903-1933*.³

Referring to Thomas P. Dimitroff's book *Frederick Carder and Steuben Glass: American Classics*, I found that Carder's name appears with the middle initials "C" and "R," and once with the middle name Caleb.⁴ Jason Ellis called him Frederick C. Carder in his recent book *Glassmakers of Stourbridge and Dudley 1612-2002*.⁵ However, the following statement appears in the endnotes of Paul V. Gardner's book *The Glass of Frederick Carder*:

From time to time newspapers and other publications have used the name Frederick C. Carder. While Carder was alive, he always denied that he had a middle initial with the same profane emphasis that he used when his surname was spelled Carter ("My name is Carder—with a 'd' for 'damn'"). A copy of his birth certificate in the author's possession gives no middle name or initial.⁶

Intrigued by these contradictions, and being an amateur genealogist and a Carder Steuben collector, I embarked on a study of Frederick Carder's name and signature. I began with a search for Carder signatures in the files and published literature at the Rakow Research Library and elsewhere, assuming that finding a bona fide signature containing a middle name or initial would settle the issue. Typical signatures that he wrote at various times in his life are shown in Figure 3, but no signature with a middle name or initial was found.

I next consulted the English 19th-century census records, baptismal records, and "vital records," as birth, marriage, and death records are called in the United States. Birth and baptismal dates for Frederick and his siblings were located in the records of the Wesleyan-Methodist Chapel, Brockmoor, Staffordshire.⁷ The following is a listing of the full names, birth dates, and baptismal dates for the eight children of Caleb and Annie (Wadelin) Carder in order of birth date:

William Henry Carder	Aug. 26, 1860	Oct. 2, 1860
Emma Eliza Carder	Apr. 8, 1862	May 7, 1862
Frederick Carder	Sep. 18, 1863	Oct. 21, 1863
Caleb Carder	Aug. 30, 1865	Jun. 25, 1867
Annie Carder	Jun. 1, 1867	Jun. 25, 1867
George John Carder	Oct.-Dec., 1868	Not Registered
Albert Harry Carder	Jul. 1, 1872	Jul. 23, 1872
Arthur Edward Carder	Sep. 17, 1875	Oct. 17, 1875

Emma Eliza and Caleb Carder died young, and are not found in previous listings of this family. Remarkably, the census, baptismal, and vital records are consistent in presenting the full names exactly as they are given above; i.e., children with middle names always appear in the records with middle names, and children without middle names always appear without middle names. For example, the entire Carder household is listed in the 1881 census as follows⁸:

Caleb Carder		
Head	Age 44	Earthenware Potter
Annie Carder		
Wife	" 48	
William Hy. Carder		
Son	" 20	Iron Master Clerk
Fredrick [sic] Carder		
Son	" 17	Earthenware Potter
Annie Carder		
Daughter	" 13	Scholar
George Jno. Carder		
Son	" 12	"

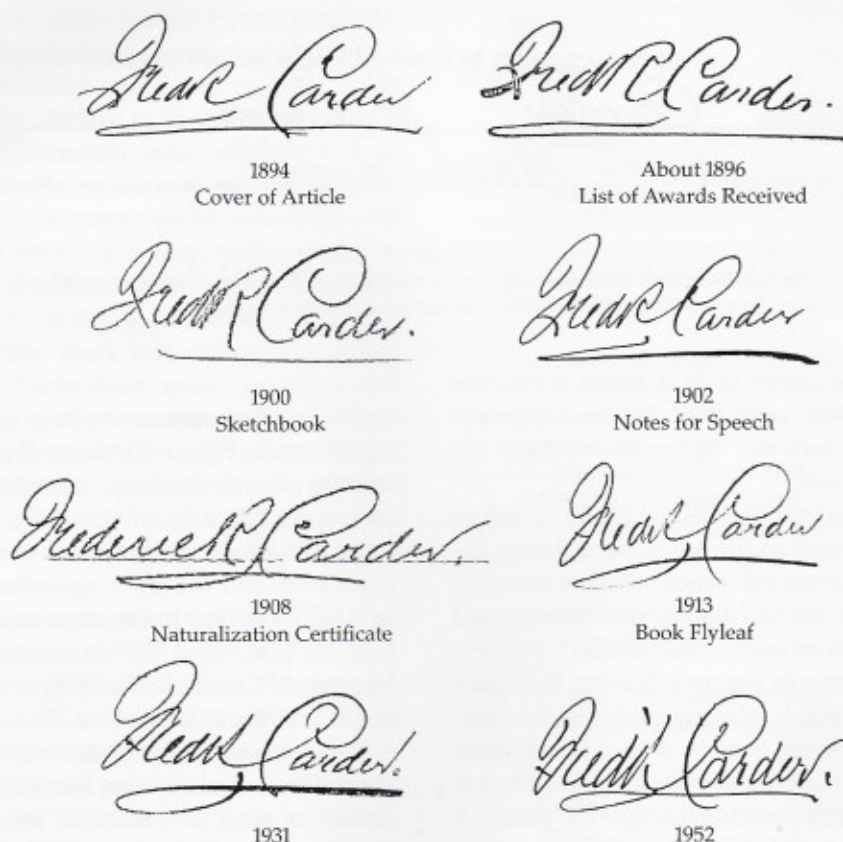


Figure 3

Typical Frederick Carder signatures from 1894 onward. After about 1940 an apostrophe is occasionally found in the name Fred'k, particularly in his correspondence with J. Stanley Brothers, Jr., who also had a very distinctive signature. Note the change in the underline between 1902 and 1908.

Albert Hy. Carder		
Son	" 8	"
Arthur Ed. Carder		
Son	" 5	"
John Wadelin		
Father-in-law	" 79	Formerly Iron Worker
Hannah Wadelin		
Mother-in-law	" 73	

If Frederick Carder had been given a middle name by his parents, it would very likely have been found among these records.

Another phase of this study involved the review of documents, books, journals, articles, and correspondence to determine how widespread middle names and initials for Carder appear in the writing of others, and to determine how it came about.

The following three sources state that Carder's middle name was Caleb: (1) a memorial to Cyril Frederick Carder⁹ states that Cyril, who was killed in 1918 in the World War I, was the son of "Frederick Caleb Carder (1863–1963) and Annie Walker Carder (1868–1943)"; (2)

in the introduction to *Collector's Review*,¹⁰ a publication of The Rockwell Museum, Carder is given the middle name Caleb; (3) it is stated in Dimitroff's book¹¹ that Carder's parents "named the child Frederick Caleb." I have found no justification for the name Caleb, and believe it is highly unlikely that the Carders would have given that name to two consecutive children.

Aside from the inscription on the Bonhams vase, the earliest published occurrence of a middle initial in Carder's name is in the text of the Aurene trademark patent issued to Steuben Glass Works, filed on July 22, 1904, where his name appears three times with the initial "R."¹² His name was on the patent as Secretary of the corporation, and it is printed once as Frederick R. Carder and twice as Fred. R. Carder. It is clear that the letter "k" of Carder's signature was taken to be the middle initial "R," and a glance at his early signatures in Figure 3 shows how this mistake could easily be made.

This mistake was repeated when Carder joined the American Ceramic Society (ACerS) as an associate member in 1908.¹³ In the roster of the Society for that year his name appeared as Frederic [sic] R. Carder, and it re-

INFORMATION TO BE FURNISHED CONCERNING NOMINEE

(1) Name (in full)..... Carder Frederick ~~_____~~
Surname Given Name Middle Name

(2) Name as customarily used..... Frederick Carder
Surname Given Name Middle Name

Figure 4
The ACerS Fellows form showing Carder striking out the words "Middle Name" to indicate that he did not have a middle name.

mained thus until the roster of 1934 when it became Frederick R. Carder. Not until 1938, 30 years after his becoming a member, was the "R" removed from his name in the ACerS roster!

In the process of becoming a Fellow of the ACerS in 1931 Carder was required to fill out a form listing his various professional accomplishments.¹⁴ The first line of the form asked for his full name, with designated spaces for surname, given name, and middle name. He wrote his name as shown in Figure 4, leaving the space for his middle name blank. Having endured the misprinting of his name by the Society without complaint for 23 years, he decided, in his own irascible way, to tell them that he did not *have* a middle name—by penning a slash across the words "Middle Name." This had the desired effect, and his name entered the List of Fellows without the initial; however, someone later thought a mistake had been made, and in the 1937 List of Fellows the name reverted to Frederick R. Carder. On his application for a Social Security number in 1939 he drew a diagonal line across the space calling for his middle name, wishing to make clear to the Internal Revenue Service that he did not have one. These are the only instances I found where Carder, in his own hand, denied that he had a middle name.

The Carder archives at the Rakow Research Library contain several hundred letters, telegrams, memos, etc., mostly dated after 1930, that are addressed to Mr. Carder. Of these, 14 are addressed to Frederick R. Carder. Probably many of these writers had obtained Carder's name directly or indirectly from the ACerS rosters, and their mistakes can therefore be attributed to the original error made at the ACerS headquarters in 1908.

Probably the most recent appearance in print of the initial "R" was in Jackson's December 1–2, 2001, auction catalogue where the painting "Curious Clouds," Lot 370, was attributed to Fredrick [sic] R. Carder. The title, Carder's name, and the date 1948 were inscribed on a plaque attached to the frame of the painting. The painting sold for \$2,185.

It is clear that people had been confused by Carder's exaggerated rendering of the clockwise loop of the let-

ter "k," and he appears to have recognized this. As the signatures in Figure 3 indicate, by 1913 he began reducing the size of the loop, intending to make the letter look more like a "k." Eventually, however, the loop almost disappeared, in the end even becoming counter-clockwise, and the letter again became unrecognizable as a "k." This led to the appearance of the middle initials "A," "M," and "W" in correspondence, and a photograph of Carder in the 1929 volume of *The Bulletin of the ACerS* bears the caption "F. A. Carder."

Aside from the Bonhams vase, the earliest appearance of the initial "C" that I found was in the "Abstracts" section of the 1917 volume of the *Journal of the (British) Society of Glass Technology* (SGT). Carder had contributed to a paper published in the *Transactions of the ACerS* in 1915 where his name was printed as Frederic [sic] R. Carder, in agreement with the spelling of his name in the ACerS roster at the time.¹⁵ In the SGT abstract of this article, however, his name appeared as F. C. Carder.¹⁶ This is very unusual since an abstracter would not normally change the name of an author without reason; this particular abstracter was on the council of the Society and may have had access to correspondence from Carder, whose name entered the roster as a new member the next year as F. Carder. In 1938 Carder became a Fellow of the SGT, at which time he was asked to write his signature on a "slip" for filing in the Society's Roll of Fellows. This roll still exists, and an examination of his slip at my request showed that there is no middle initial present in the signature, although my correspondent remarked that "... as you say, his k is distinctive and the way it runs into the C [of Carder] could cause mis-interpretation. . . ." The current "Roll of Fellows" lists his name as Frederick Carder, but I was surprised to learn that, since at least 1983, Carder's name has appeared in their regular membership roster with the middle initial "C."¹⁷

In the Carder archive at the Rakow Research Library, Carder's name bearing the initial "C" is found on a total of 33 items addressed to him, including 24 memos, letters, invitations, telegrams, etc., that originated with-

in Corning Glass Works (now Corning Incorporated). Most surprising of all is that two secretaries who typed Carder's letters consistently typed the middle initial "C" in his name in the closing or in the initials at the lower left corner. Unfortunately, only carbon copies of these letters were available, so it is not known how they were signed by Carder. He provided his secretary with handwritten drafts of letters for typing, and most drafts that survive do not include his signature, which left the secretary to type whatever name she felt was appropriate. As late as the 1950s, there was widespread belief within Corning Glass Works that Carder's middle initial was "C," as shown by its appearance in two of Buechner's publications¹⁸ and on a 1953 anniversary dinner program when his 50 years of service with the company was recognized. As with the initial "R," there is no evidence that Carder ever attempted to stop this practice within the company.

The auction catalogue and the inscription on the Bonhams vase provide no information regarding when or on what occasion it was presented to John Northwood. According to Gardner,¹⁹ Carder and Northwood had become estranged in their later years at Stevens & Williams, so it is unlikely that it was presented on Northwood's 65th birthday in 1901, the year prior to Northwood's death. If it was a birthday gift, it more likely would have been presented on his 60th birthday in 1896. In either case, Figure 3 shows how Carder wrote his name at the time.

As with the letter "R," I believe that the appearance of the initial "C" on the vase and elsewhere can be attributed to mistakes in reading his signature because of his peculiar rendering of the letter "k"; see especially the 1908 full signature in Figure 3 where the loop is completely detached. Furthermore, the census, baptismal, and vital records for the Carder family in England, taken together with his own denials, make a strong case that Frederick Carder did not have a middle name. As Mr. Carder would do for the next 60-odd years, he ignored the initial and presented the lovely vase to Mr. Northwood.

References

Acknowledgments: I thank (1) Gail P. Bardhan for her assistance at the Rakow Research Library, (2) Thomas P. Dimitroff for providing copies of various Corning Incorporated papers showing a Carder middle initial and for the article with the 1894 Carder signature, and (3) Sandy Greiff and Carole Onoda at the Paul Vickers Gardner Glass Center at Alfred University for providing the 1902 Carder signature and copies of other material from the Center.

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7. The birth dates, baptismal dates, and place of baptism were provided by Jane Humphrey, Archives and Local History Service, Dudley, West Midlands, WV 14 9JR; <http://www.dudley.gov.uk/libraries>. (Search Keyword: *archives*.)
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9. The Cyril F. Carder memorial is displayed at American Legion Post #746, 145 Walnut Street, Corning, New York, 14830.
10. Peterson, Robyn G. ed., *Collector's Choice Review: Masterpieces of Glassmaking*, The Rockwell Museum, Corning, New York, 1993.
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12. Dimitroff [note 4], p. 314.
13. *Transactions of the American Ceramic Society*, v. 10, 1908, p. 15.
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17. Information from The Society of Glass Technology was provided by David Moore at the Society headquarters in Sheffield, England.
18. Buechner [note 1].
19. Gardner [note 6], p. 26.