

When Frederick Carder Lost Control of Steuben

by

Edward A. Bush

In 1903, Thomas G. Hawkes recruited Frederick Carder to come to Corning, New York, to found and run the Steuben Glass Works. The purpose of the plant was to manufacture crystal glass "blanks" for T. G. Hawkes & Co. to decorate by cutting and engraving, but before long the manufacture of colored art glass became an important part of the business. While working in England, Carder had become highly skilled in all aspects of glass manufacture and, as written by Gardner, "during the next three decades, Carder was Steuben's guiding genius, designing the glass and its decorations, devising the batch formulas, hiring and firing the employees, supervising all the production, and selling the finished glass."¹

In 1918, because of the unavailability during the war of raw materials for manufacturing Steuben's products, the factory was acquired by the Corning Glass Works (CGW) to obtain the glass furnaces for their own wartime production. Thus, the Steuben Glass Works became the Steuben Division of CGW, and Carder, being offered a 10-year contract, was retained as the managing direc-

tor. Accustomed as he was to running the plant as he saw fit, Carder quickly came to resent the interference of CGW personnel in "his" business. Matters deteriorated further when, on August 1, 1919, Dr. John C. Hostetter was hired to act as Carder's assistant. Hostetter was given the title of assistant manager, and Carder's status was somewhat diminished with the title of art director. There being no one with the title "manager" at that time, one could conclude that Hostetter was being groomed for that position. The almost four-year period from August 1, 1919, to May 20, 1923, when Carder was restored to the position of manager of the Steuben Division, was undoubtedly the low point of his long career.

These events have been described in several books that deal with Frederick Carder and Steuben glass.² However, these books do not quote extensively from the original documents written by the various participants, and therefore a reader can fail to realize the audacious struggle that eventually put Carder back in control of the Steuben Division. This article tries to



Figure 1
Frederick Carder, about 1921.

accomplish that goal by presenting verbatim transcripts of entire or relevant sections of letters and memos from the time that are found primarily in the Steuben Document Notebook at the Corning Incorporated Department of Archives and Records Management (CI-DARM).

Prior to coming to Corning, Hostetter had been a physical chemist at the Geophysical Laboratory of the Carnegie Institution of Washington and, during the war, had carried out research on optical glass.³ With so little experience in the glass industry, it was natural for Hostetter to begin essentially as Carder's understudy. On February 8, 1920, Hostetter wrote the following alarming letter to Dr. Arthur L. Day, the CGW vice president in charge of manufacturing, to inform him that he and Carder had become seriously estranged, and that an unexpected development had taken place that threatened the viability of the Steuben Division.

Conditions at the Steuben Plant have now reached the stage where a definitely outlined procedure must be decided upon in order to keep the blowing-room organization intact. Furthermore, certain recent devel-

opments would indicate definitely that my services are no longer desired by Mr. Carder who has taken active steps to curtail my activities. The following statement of conditions is not made in a spirit of complaint but rather that, as clearly as possible, a plan of action may be decided upon which will keep the Steuben plant's biggest asset—namely the experienced gaffers and their shops—intact and to preserve to the Steuben organization the services of Mr. Schroeder who has been connected therewith some 15 years or so and who is now the main-stay of production.

The situation may be briefly summarized as follows: It seems to have become more or less generally known among the foremen at the Steuben plant that Mr. Carder has been opposing as much as possible the development of the Steuben plant wherever his wishes have been in conflict with the administration at the main plant. This knowledge has come to me in the form of questions as to whether a person should stick to Mr. Carder or to the Corning Glass Works. It seems to be sensed, in this connection, that I represented the latter. It was in this spirit that Mr. Schroeder came to me recently and stated that he had been raised \$3.00 per week but that, considering his long experience at the plant and his responsibilities, he felt more insulted at such a slight raise than pleased. He further stated that the only reason he had not resigned on the spot was that he hoped that, through the activities of the Corning Glass Works, conditions at Steuben—not merely monetary but otherwise—would soon change. I advised him to hold out a little longer.

(The second page of the letter was not in the archives, and this transcription resumes with the third page.)

Incidentally, a situation may be mentioned here that has no direct bearing on what has gone on before but which is illuminating in showing Mr. Carder's attitude towards the owners of his plant. It appears that, four months ago, Walter Herriman, who has charge of maintenance [*sic*] at Steuben, approached Schroeder on the subject of forming a stock company to make art glass. These men were, with Carder's permission, to take the entire blowing room staff from Steuben and start another factory. It was stated to Schroeder that Mr. Carder could not, on account of his contract with the Corning Glass Works, take an active part in forming the new company but that he, nevertheless would be the guiding spirit.

I realize the seriousness of such a charge but Schroeder maintains the correctness of his statement. I have no other direct information on this point but I have on

several occasions heard Mr. Carder state that he would like to establish another factory.

In presenting the above statements I have tried to be fair and impartial,—the facts can be readily verified and I trust that my interpretations are as unbiased as may be possible for the opinion of a participant. It is, I think, quite obvious that the situation between Mr. Carder and myself is nearing the breaking-point,—if indeed it has not already reached it,—but this phase of the matter is not so serious as the fact that we are in immediate danger of having the blowing-room staff at Steuben disorganized unless a definite constructive course is decided upon at once.

JCH

It was not unusual for glass companies to abandon a plant and reestablish the business at a more favorable location. This may have been on Carder's mind at this time, as he would have been aware of the precarious state of Dorflinger & Sons, which could make their glass factory at White Mills, PA, available.⁴

Hostetter's letter aroused the immediate attention of CGW executives at the highest level, as indicated by the following letter to Arthur A. Houghton, the president, written by Alexander D. Falck on February 17, 1920. Falck would be named president the following month.

Dear Mr. Houghton:

I received your letter of the 14th with the enclosed notices relative to Mr. Carder and the appointment of Mr. Hostetter and proper action was taken. I found that Mr. Carder had told Mr. Hostetter on Sunday of the action to be taken and in a very nice way said that he would call in the foremen and tell them, etc., concluding, however, with a very positive statement to Mr. Hostetter that he was not to make any changes in the plant or its methods during Mr. Carder's absence. This led Mr. Day and myself to infer that Mr. Carder did not realize that the change was a permanent one. However that may be, it has gone into effect and any misunderstanding on Mr. Carder's part as to the future can be corrected in due time.

It must have been at this time that Hostetter was appointed manager, or the equivalent, of the Steuben Division. At the same time, Carder was advised to make an extensive tour of Europe, ostensibly to observe the glass industries in several countries. He appears also to have been informed that he was now disconnected from the Steuben Division, and now held the new position of art director of CGW. He seems not to have understood what had happened, and was initially left with

the impression that he would be back in charge when he returned. Incredibly, the CGW executives failed to disabuse Carder immediately of his belief that nothing had changed.

On March 15, 1920, Frederick and Annie Carder applied for passports, stating that their intention was to depart New York for Europe on May 12th for the purpose of studying the glass industry of Europe and visiting the grave of their son Cyril, who had been killed in France during the war.⁵ Accompanying Mr. Carder's application was a letter from Alanson B. Houghton addressed to the Secretary of State stating that "This will certify that Frederick Carder, Art Director of the Corning Glass Works is being sent abroad to study the glass manufacturing situation in Europe in the interest of the said Corning Glass Works."

The March 25, 1920, issue of the *Crockery and Glass Journal* has the following entry on page 19: "Mr. Carter [sic], formerly with the Steuben Glass Co., has become associated with the Corning Glass Co., of Corning, N. Y., and has left for Europe where he will remain indefinitely making an exhaustive study of the glass industry." (The Carders did not leave until May 12th.)

The final stop on their tour was the Stourbridge area of England where they visited family and friends. Gardner states that, while there, Carder "toyed with the idea of resuming his career in his native land," but decided to return to Corning.⁶ They arrived back in New York City on September 23rd, 4 ½ months after their departure.⁷

Carder's new position as art director of CGW required that his office be moved from the Steuben factory on Erie Avenue to Corning's main office building.⁸ On January 7, 1921, after reflecting on the many changes that had taken place at Steuben during his absence, he sent the following steaming letter to Falck, who was now president of the company.

Dear Mr. Falck,

Since having the short interview with you and A. A. Houghton yesterday I have come to the conclusion to put in writing what I consider is the trouble with Steuben.

1st. I was asked to take over an assistant, a stranger recommended by Dr. Day—a man who was pitchforked into the Glass Industry—by the war. He was employed at two glass factories making optical glass for about 6 months each. His services to both were not rated high enough to warrant his retention by either factory.

2nd. As instructed I took him into the Steuben and gradually gave him all of my formulas with definite instructions how to use same.

3rd. I went abroad and upon returning was appalled to find instead of a small staff—one large enough to run the entire Corning Glass Works. In fact, 12 people were doing what I did myself before I was so politely kicked out. Upon drawing attention to these glaring overhead costs, I was informed that it was none of my business.

4th. I noticed that this extravagance held good all over the works all were emulating the Corning Glass Works. Every foreman must have an assistant and stenographer, also smoke a pipe, look wise and do nothing.

5th. Reliable apparatus was scrapped and installed in its place was an outfit better than the Corning Glass Works.

6th. The men I had trained were ignored and school boys were put over them.

7th. Engineers who knew nothing of the glass trade were given a free hand, and record keepers given jobs to make records that are of no use and never looked at.

8th. In one case alone the excavation for a cement tank for oil where a bid of 500 dollars was given by an outside party & refused—this cost the firm four to five times that amount.

9th. If such methods produced better results I should not have a word to say.

10th. As I understand you want cooperation between men and officers, you can not get this when you ignore men in your employ by putting school boys over

them. This is one of the things that destroys all enthusiasm amongst your employees.

I trust that when you peruse these remarks that you will view them in the light they are meant—that is the success of the Steuben Glass Works.

Yours truly,
Fredk Carder

Unfortunately, Falck's response to this letter, which was an attack on all that had been changed at Steuben under Hostetter's direction, is not known. Carder would be further incensed when Hostetter issued a report on May 14, 1921, in which he made comprehensive recommendations directed towards improving the quality of Steuben ware and reducing costs. Included in the latter was that the number of shapes and colors be greatly reduced. At a meeting of Falck and his staff on June 3, 1921, George B. Hollister, the corporation sales manager, agreed to call a meeting of sales personnel who would "establish a list of standard shapes, eliminating those which may be considered obsolete, will standardize colors and color combinations, and give consideration to the other suggestions made in Mr. Hostetter's report." The standard shapes presumably were to be selected primarily on the basis of sales records.

On July 1, 1921, Hollister released a report that listed the shape numbers, colors, and color combinations that would thenceforth comprise the standard line of Steuben ware.⁹ On that list were just 167 shape numbers, the

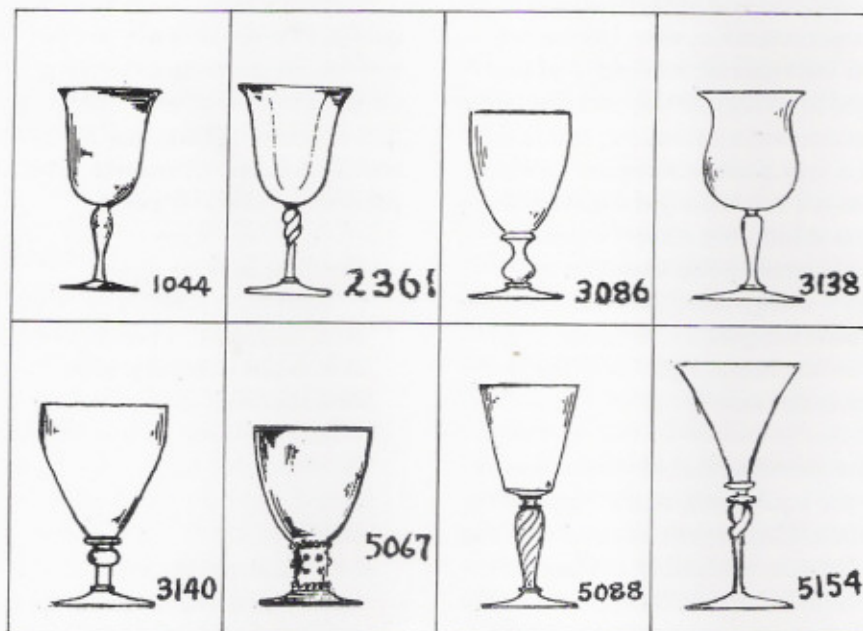


Figure 2

Line drawing of the eight goblets included in the 1921 standard line of Steuben shapes.

Paul Gardner, *The Glass of Frederick Carder*, pp. 190-191.



Figure 3

The eight goblets of the 1921 standard line of Steuben shapes. *Clockwise from left:* No. 5067, Aqua Marine; No. 3140, engraved with Grape pattern, selenium ruby; No. 1044, calcite and gold Aurene; No. 5088, Flemish Blue; No. 5154, Roseline and alabaster; No. 2361, gold Aurene; No. 3138, a light version of Pomona Green; No. 3086, engraved with a coat of arms bearing the Latin motto "ANIMAE CRUX ANCHORA" (The Cross is the anchor of the soul), a version of Dark Topaz corresponding most closely to Dark Topaz No. 2. (Photo by Ann Cady)

highest number being 5230.¹⁰ Thus, of the approximately 3,838 designs created by Carder up to that time, 3,671 were now obsolete.¹¹ For example, of the more than 100 goblets that had been designed by Carder, only the eight goblets shown in Figure 2 made the standard line; a photograph of these goblets from the author's collection is shown in Figure 3.

On December 16, 1921, Falck issued a memo dealing with agreements that had been made relating to the standard line, pointing out that "certain tendencies have appeared which evidence either lack of familiarity with or neglect of agreements heretofore made on these subjects." He emphasized that, "New designs originating with any one in our organization [are] not to be added to the list." This was clearly directed at Carder, who was among the recipients of the memo. Recognizing this, Carder responded on December 19, 1921, with the following caustic letter addressed to Falck.

Dear Sir,

I have carefully read your memo of the 16th Inst. relative to the Steuben Division. As one who has not been officially informed of the changes in authority of the Steuben Division would you kindly inform me what position I hold, and what authority 'if any' regarding Steuben Division as well as the Corning Glass Works—as I do not wish to tread on the toes of any of your appointees.

Yours truly,
Fredk Carder

Falck replied to Carder on December 28, 1921, with the following letter:

Dear Mr. Carder,

In reply to your inquiry as to your position and authority in connection with the Steuben Division and the Corning Glass Works, [I] would say that in respect to the corporation, there has, of course, been no change in your position as Art Director. In respect of Steuben Division, Dr. Sullivan intends to talk with you, if he has not already done so. What he will say and what we wish is that you give the Company the benefit of your advice with respect to Steuben products.

The change in organization does not mean that any new authority or responsibility is vested in you. But we hope that with the direction of the affairs of Steuben Division being handled from and by the main organization, you will confer very freely with Dr. Sullivan, so that no opportunity may be lost to improve, if possible, and maintain the standard of Steuben ware.

Very truly yours,
A. D. Falck
President

At long last someone had told Carder what his job consisted of. He was to continue as art director of CGW, reporting to Dr. Eugene C. Sullivan who had replaced Day as vice president in charge of manufacturing; however, Carder had no authority or responsibility in the Steuben Division except to be cooperative in offering

advice. The "change in organization" probably involved the transfer of Hostetter to a managerial position at CGW in December. Following this, the Steuben Division operated without a manager until September 1922 when Glen W. Cole was named superintendent.¹²

Both being members of the District Nine Board of Education in the City of Corning, Sullivan and Carder were accustomed to working together, and CGW made the following announcement on February 28, 1922: "In connection with the reorganization of the manufacturing departments of Corning Glass works, Frederick Carder will have in addition to his duties as art director, the supervision of all batch mixing for art and illuminating ware in the Steuben Division."¹³ Carder's foot was in the door at Steuben.

Following this, very little was found in the record until May 10, 1923, when Carder was fully reinstated as director of the Steuben Division. On that date a memo that was probably written by Sullivan stated that "Mr. Carder will be in charge of Steuben Plant for the manufacture of art and illuminating glass and blanks and will sit as a member of the Manufacturing Committee whenever Steuben matters are involved." He stated further that "Mr. Greenley having been retained by the Company for assistance in designing and sales promotion, the suggestions for new articles will receive approval of both Mr. Carder and the Sales Division before being put into production."¹⁴ On the same day Carder responded with the following conciliatory letter to Sullivan.

Eugene C. Sullivan V. P.
Corning Glass Works

In the event of assuming direction of the Steuben Glass Works, I understand the following to be observed.

1st—To work the plant in harmony with you, the production Dept. and sales.

2nd—That the present personell [sic] to be kept until I have observed thoroughly what changes are necessary and then take the matter up with you before deciding.

3rd—That all questions of policy relative to production, method of sales and recommendations from travelers as to new goods must be taken up with me.

4th—That all foremen of the Steuben be informed that all matters relative to Steuben be referred to me and further that they be stopped from wasting time running over to the main plant unless with permission.

5th—hat suggestions of Howard Greenley will be given careful consideration by me and tried out originally if possible, failing that then with alterations as

I see fit to make them practical.

Sincerely yours,
Fredk Carder

Frederick Carder was back in charge of the Steuben Division, a position he held until August 1, 1931, when he left Steuben permanently and was again appointed art director of CGW.¹⁵ In 1928 Mark J. Lacey wrote a report that dealt in part with the operation of the Steuben Division during the period covered in this article. Included in the report was the following statement.

The Steuben Glass Works has always been operated as a "One Man Concern." Even after its acquisition by the Corning Glass Works, this holds true, except during the period when Mr. Carder was appointed Art Director, and Mr. Hostetter was in charge of manufacturing. He [Hostetter] introduced system into the factory, perhaps bordering on quantity production, but the finished product lacked the former quality and texture, showing how essential was Mr. Carder's personal touch to the actual manufacture of the glass.

References

Acknowledgments: The author wishes to thank the following for their assistance in this study: Kristine Gable of the CIDARM; Gail Bardhan and Jill Thomas-Clark of the Rakow Research Library of The Corning Museum of Glass; and Carole Onoda and Sandy Greiff of the Paul Vickers Gardner Glass Center at Alfred University. The compositions of the green and topaz goblets shown in Figure 3 were qualitatively determined by Dr. Gregory Merkel using non-destructive X-ray fluorescence spectrometry.

1. Gardner, Paul V., *Frederick Carder: Portrait of a Glassmaker*, Corning, NY: The Corning Museum of Glass and the Rockwell Museum, 1985, p. 21.

2. Blaszczyk, Regina L., *Imagining Consumers: Manufacturers and Markets in Ceramics and Glass, 1865–1965*, in 2 vols., Ph.D dissertation, University of Delaware, 1995; Dimitroff, Thomas P., *Frederick Carder and Steuben Glass, American Classics*, Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 1998; Gardner, Paul V., *The Glass of Frederick Carder*, New York, NY: Crown Publishers Inc., 1971.

3. John C. Hostetter File, CIDARM.

4. Feller, John Q., *Dorflinger, America's Finest Glass*, Marietta, OH: Antique Publications, 1988. The Dorflinger factory closed on May 7, 1921.

5. *U. S. Passport Applications, 1795–1925*, Database, Ancestry.com., 2007.

6. Gardner [note 2], p. 42.

7. *New York Passenger Lists, 1820–1937*, Database, Ancestry.com., 2010.

8. *The Telegram*, Elmira, NY, October 24, 1920.

9. Hollister, George B., *Memorandum on Steuben Ware*, July 1, 1921, at the Paul Vickers Gardner Glass Center, Alfred University, Alfred, NY.

10. Dimitroff [note 2], p. 49. A complete list of the 167 shape numbers is shown in footnote 24. The footnote incorrectly attributes this report to Hostetter instead of Hollister.

11. Ketchum Marshall D., *Frederick Carder's Steuben Glass, Guide to Shapes, Numbers, Colors, Finishes, and Values*, Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2006.

12. Gardner [note 2], p. 357.

13. *Corning Evening Leader*, Corning, NY, February 28, 1922.

14. Blaszczyk [note 2], pp. 579-580. Howard Greenley was the architect for the Knoll, the home of Alanson B. Houghton in Cor-

ning. He was also the architect for the Corning Free Academy, built in 1922, with Carder acting as chairman of the building committee of the Board of Education.

15. *Application for and Record of Employment, Corning Glass Works, Frederick Carder, CIDARM*. This official CGW employment form states that Carder was "Appointed as Director of Corning Glass Works, effective August 1, 1931. Bulletin no. 34852-61131."

A Note about Frederick Carder

Submitted by Edward Bush

*Changes Made at The Glass Works:
Carder to Enlarge Scope of Art Work;
Vaughn Steuben Division Sales Manager*

Corning Glass Works announced the following organization changes, effective today: Frederick Carder, art director of the company, will enlarge the scope of his activities to include design and art work related to all the company's products instead of devoting his efforts exclusively to the Steuben Division. His office will be located in the main plant. Ralph C. Vaughn of Jackson Heights has been appointed sales manager of the Steuben Di-

vision. He will reside in Corning. Mr. Vaughn since 1930 has been general manager of Leigh, Incorporated, perfumers, of New York. Previously he was associated with the Waterbury Watch Company.

Manufacture at the Steuben Division will be carried on with Robert J. Leavy as production manager and Fred M. Schroeder as office manager, under the general supervision of Charles E. Githler and Glen W. Cole, in charge of all manufacturing operations of the company.

— *Evening Leader*
August 1, 1931, p. 6