

## REFLECTIONS

Viewing the panorama that ensued from the Steuben plant under the impetus of Frederick Carder, it is easy to formulate false premises as to the reception these wares were accorded. Often we tend to view the past from an olympian stand feeling that we have an advantage time alone can bequeath. While true in the general sense, to some degree, time and distance have been known to work equally against unfounded premises.

Mr. Carder noted that it was persons of European extraction who were inclined to look upon his creations, not as functional and decorative mediums in glass, but rather as works of a more creative and significant nature. The creative artist thrives on acceptance. A limited acceptance in effect limits the artist, especially when financial success depends upon sating the unappreciative.

Significantly, Frederick Carder pointed out that the interest in his glass today by collectors and dealers has made this period of his life the most gratifying from the standpoint of personal satisfaction.

There were other problems which beset his company during its embryonic state. To better understand how the glass creations we admire today have survived is a series of incidents that deserve illumination.

In the early years of the Steuben Glass Works, conditions for a budding competitor were not conducive to longevity in a corporate sense. Mr. Carder related how chemical supplies were adulterated so that whole batches of glass were ruined. He strongly suspected carelessness on the suppliers' part, but more strongly that certain companies who were being pressed with the popularity of Steuben, were engaging in a clandestine effort to ruin him. Conditions became so intolerable he was tempted to quit. After due reflection, he decided to fight. Thereafter, each lot of chemicals was tested for purity before payment was made. The adulteration ceased.

About this same period, quite early in the history of Steuben, the Corning, New York, area had a preponderance of families of European extraction. Frederick Carder to them was John Bull personified--tough, cocky, and full of fire. As

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he locked the front door in the evening and went home to his family, he would not know for certain just how many windows would be broken when he returned the following morning. Nor would he know if water would have been flooded on the floors, vats overturned, furnaces tampered with, and other heart-breaking damage. His spirit sorely tried, he again thought to quit while he was ahead.

While the idea of throwing in the towel was fermenting in his head, he had a visitor. The local parish priest called on him. In the interchange of pleasantries, Mr. Carder unloaded his burdens. Listening, intently aghast and with profound shock, the priest assured Mr. Carder that such goings on would not be tolerated. Following the subsequent Sunday Mass, not one iota of damage ever was perpetuated against his plant again.

In the period of World War I, the government of the United States found it necessary to form various agencies to whom was entrusted authority to regulate certain industries. Glass factories had a difficult time to get a basic commodity, coal, with which to run their furnaces. Fred Carder was about to go under when he secured a contract from the government for the manufacture of light bulbs.

Things proceeded at an orderly pace for a short period, and again the essentials of his business were denied him. He informed his friend, Amory Houghton of the Corning Glass Works, of his plight. Mr. Houghton tried to help Carder get another light bulb contract, while Carder hoped for a miracle to save his beloved Steuben plant. Houghton did all he could, and in the end could do no more than offer Steubensurvival under the protective banner of the mushrooming Corning plant.

Faced with survival or oblivion, Carder readily accepted Houghton's offer, and relaxed content he had done all that was possible to perpetuate the idea of quality glassware in America.

Since the great bulk of the colored crystal which we have concerned ourselves with in this treatise, followed assimilation by the Corning Glass Company, in large measure, due credit must be accorded Amory Houghton for his faith in perpetuating the idea of fine glassware and for allowing Frederick

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Carder to proceed unimpeded.

Irrespective of how far our civilization grows, and irrespective of how remote chance appears to affect conditions, in the final analysis it is the unknown element of chance that writes the chapters to a history.

In the short space of fourteen years the Steuben plant was faced three times with passing from the scene; yet, a chance happening saved it in each case. The glass which we admire today would not be available. A valuable link with our cultural past would not be available for analysis.



Mr. Carder authenticating Steuben for the author.