

Allegheny County Maryland Glass

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Barrel Samovar – one of two known samovars whose glass components were made by Utility Glass Works.

Allegany County glassware – colorful, historical, fun to collect, and a source of pride for enthusiasts! These works of art may now be readily enjoyed by visiting the Allegany Museum, where showcases in the Grand Courtroom feature an impressive display of local glassware.

For over a century, artisans produced a variety of glass items that distinguished the county as a regional center for the industry. While production ceased more than six decades ago, many of the products are currently prized for aesthetic and historical reasons. Local enthusiasts deserve credit for preserving the county's glass making heritage, which is a direct result of their quests to find rare pieces from the Cumberland and Lonaconing communities.

Recently, the Lonaconing glass industry quietly passed the century mark since the founding of its first enterprise. In fact, the George's Creek facility that employed hundreds of skilled workers over the years nearly disappeared from the collective memory of county residents. Fortunately, a few hobbyists found the glassware to be intriguing and searched antique shops, yard sales, and flea markets in hopes of discovering hard-to-find pieces that added to their collections.

The Cumberland glass makers existed over a longer period of time and were far more numerous, thereby creating multiple opportunities for exploration and research. Documenting those sites and products is still a work in progress, although much information has recently been updated and published.

In recent years, two local collectors contributed to the historical record by identifying and researching products manufactured in Cumberland and Lonaconing. Dale

Murschell and Jay George met more than a decade ago and quickly found a common interest involving local glassware. It was decided that Dale would focus on Cumberland while Jay, a native of Lonaconing, would concentrate on his hometown. Dale's publication, **Glass**

of Cumberland, Maryland and Local Area (2002), and Jay's monograph **Utility Glass Works, Lonaconing, Maryland 1920-29** (2014), proved to be major additions to the subject.

According to Jay, his interest in glass collecting began as a little league baseball player during the late 1950s. The baseball diamond was located adjacent to the glass factory's dump site where colorful shards attracted his attention. Several large chunks were retrieved from the site and deposited in his aquarium. Jay's attention to glassware waned until the completion of military service. "I would

pick up a few pieces at yard sales just because the glass was made in Lonaconing. But after Dale's book came out, I became more interested in Lonaconing glass and decided to get more serious about collecting and documenting the glassmakers."

Jay points out that Lonaconing glass is a broad term because more than one company occupied the same site. The original factory, constructed in 1914 by Thomas and Alfred Dugan, was located along George's Creek near the center of town. Dugan Glass Company advertised tableware, bar goods, novelties, and decorated wares but also made carnival glass. For reasons unknown today, the Dugan's transferred ownership to the Lonaconing Glass Company in 1915. Pitchers, marmalade and mayonnaise sets were among the products of the second company. Unfortunately, the factory burned to the ground in 1917.





The company with the colorful products quietly closed and Sloan Brothers Glass Company opened on the site in the winter of 1929 with 350 workers on the payroll. The Sloan brothers suffered a fate familiar to glass companies – destruction by fire. The building burned in March 1932 and was never rebuilt, thereby ending a generation of glass making in the George’s Creek town.

Jay notes that Lonaconing glass had an amazing presence throughout the United States. “We know that Sloan’s glass was sold at Gimble’s, Macy’s, Montgomery Ward, Sears, and other major retailers. They made high end products and items for everyday use.” He is also quick to point out the gratitude owed by collectors and historians to the Inskeep family of Lonaconing.

Left photo: A metal mould was used to make this goblet. The goblet was then decorated.

Photo below: Several pieces of green glassware made and decorated at the Maryland Glass Company.

Although the facility was quickly rebuilt, natural gas shortages brought about by the effects of World War I caused its closure.

In July 1920, a new corporation called Utility Glass Works leased the plant from the Lonaconing Glass Company and began the manufacture of automobile headlight lenses. While the lenses were a staple product, Utility Glass company is best known for its colorful glassware and is the most sought after of all Lonaconing items. Blown glassware of many hues and color combinations made up an extensive product line that included bi-color bud bases, stemware, candy dishes, and candle holders. Utility’s most recognizable stemware is “Cambodia,” a patented pattern that was produced in single or bi-colors with circular, arc-like horizontal sections.



When Utility Glass closed in 1929, the remaining inventory was moved to the home of Robert J. Doyle who lived a short distance from the factory. Thelma Inskeep, Robert's daughter, continued to preserve and document the glass industry of her home town.

Dale's research of Cumberland glass factories culminated in a second edition to his initial publication and a new volume on **George Truog and His Art** (2004). Through excavations of glass factory dumps, oral history interviews, and collaboration with local collectors, he was able to organize and publish reliable information about Cumberland's companies, patterns, styles, and colors. Thirty-one Cumberland area companies were identified and several former workers interviewed, making it the most comprehensive volume to date on the subject.

According to Dale, "Collectors most prize the products of Utility, Potomac, and Maryland companies because they made glass of color. Cumberland Glass Works located near the Narrows was also important because of the skilled workers employed by the company. They



Above photo: Windmill Samovar — advertised in a 1928 Butler Bros. wholesale catalogue, the glass portions were made by Utility Glass Works.

Left photo: Orange enameled glass with gold band showing the etched Dragon design from the Maryland Glass Company.



featured ‘deep cut’ work using a stone wheel for creating decorative designs. To acquire that information, I had to go back to the basics because catalogs were not available. That meant seven years of digging at glass sites and shopping for complete items. In that way I was able to identify and catalog company products.”

By 1920, the glass industry was a major source of employment in Cumberland with more than 1,000 workers producing hand blown stemware and other products. One-by-one the factories eventually closed, leaving little behind except dump sites and glassware sold through retailers. Locating and identifying Cumberland items is now an intriguing quest for hobbyists.

Dale and Jay recently collaborated on their latest venture, creating a glassware display at the Allegany Museum in Cumberland, Maryland, that features various manufacturers and time periods. Four showcases filled with artifacts represent the once thriving industry. The Grand Courtroom display and a second room dedicated to glass making are excellent primers for novices and an opportunity for more experienced collectors to enjoy rare pieces. The glassware exhibit in the Grand Courtroom will be open through 2015.

The Allegany County glass display may be viewed

during regular museum hours — Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 4 pm and Sundays, 1 – 4 pm. Allegany Museum is located at 3 Pershing Street, Cumberland, Maryland.

www.alleganymuseum.org.

Top photo: Dale Murschell (left) and Jay George in front of their glassware display at Allegany Museum.

Middle photo: Various patterns and color combinations made by Utility Glass Works in Lonaconing, Maryland.

Bottom photo: Citron pitcher and cordials with an acid etched to clear design made and decorated by the Maryland Glass Company.



Visitors may also view a Lonaconing glassware display at the Frostburg Museum located in the former Hill Street School at 69 Hill Street, Frostburg, Maryland. Hours are Thursday – Saturday, Noon – 4 pm or by appointment (301-689-1195).

www.frostburgmuseum.org.



Below left: Various color stemware made and decorated by the Maryland Glass Company.

Below right: Satin bud vases and salt and pepper shakers made and decorated by the Maryland Glass Company.

Bottom left: A crackle glass pitcher made by Utility Glass Works — many of the pitchers made by Utility were offered in crackle glass in various colors and color combinations.

Bottom right: Stemware made by Sloan Brothers Glass Company, Lonaconing, Maryland. Note the unusual “tulip” type stem.

