

Decorations on Heisey Glass
Presentation to the Great Plains Heisey Club
By Tom Files on March 15, 2008

In a previous program, we learned about Heisey decorations known as cuttings, etchings, and carvings. In this presentation we will focus on other types of decorations applied to Heisey pieces by Heisey and other companies. It should be noted many Heisey purists consider any decorations other than Heisey cuttings, etchings, or carvings to be heresy. Many Heisey collectors will not acknowledge or acquire decorated pieces. I am somewhat in that category, I guess, since I collect Heisey - not the work of some other company. I have passed on purchasing many pieces with non-Heisey decorations. Unfortunately, that has cut down on the number of pieces available for display at this presentation.

Madam, have you been Flashed or Stained?

Some of the most common decorations on Heisey are color overlays. This process is usually referred to as flashed or stained. Although these terms are often used interchangeably, they are a different process. Flashed glass was developed in Europe in the mid 19th century as a process of applying a very thin layer of glass (usually ruby or red) to the outside of an existing piece of glass. The initial gathering of glass is dipped into a pot of ruby glass, thereby coating (flashing) the outside with a very thin layer of ruby. The piece was then finished to be a pitcher, vase, etc. After leaving the lehr where the glass was gradually cooled, engravers would often engrave through the ruby glass. This was an expensive process.

In the 1880's a process was developed whereby a coating could be painted and then fired onto the surface of already finished glass products. A date, city, name, etc. was often engraved into the piece to form a gift or souvenir. These pieces are commonly called ruby stained. Almost all flashed glass is blown, where ruby stained glass is mostly pressed. Other color stains were developed later. Using these definitions, it would appear Heisey pieces with a color over clear glass should be properly referred to as stained pieces although the term flashed is more often used. We have some examples today of Heisey ruby and marigold stained items.

Pity the Fool Who Doesn't Like Gold

In addition to its cutting, etching, and staining shops, Heisey applied other types of decorations to its glass. In an article in the Heisey News/1/, I found a list of all early Heisey decorations known as of 1981 (see following pages 5 & 6). The most common decoration applied by Heisey was gold trim. In addition, there are known engravings done by Heisey (numbers 28, 30, and 33 for example), as well as enamel hand decorations and floral motifs. Heisey used numbers to designate various decorations just as it used numbers to designate patterns, cuttings, etchings, and carvings.

Want to Step Outside for a Decoration?

Another article in the Heisey News/2/ cited 87 companies that purchased Heisey blanks for their own decorating purposes. And this list included sales for only a five year period covering 1938-1942. Many major glass houses and silver companies are included - Hawkes, Farber Bros., Benson and Hedges, International Silver,

Manning Bowman, Pairpoint, Reed & Barton - to name a few. I had never heard of most of the companies listed. I have not included information about all of these companies; only some major ones and some where you might be familiar with their decorations or where we might have an example on display today. It is also possible Heisey sent blanks to outside companies for decorating and return to Heisey for Heisey to sell. I am not aware of this practice occurring since all transactions I observed were sales to the outside companies.

The Charleton Line/3/--When many people see a reference to the Charleton decorations on Heisey they assume Charleton is the name of a company. Actually, Charleton is the hand decorated line name beginning in 1943 used by the Abels, Wasserburg Co. of NY. Typically they used flowers in their painted decorations but were also prone to randomly splotch colorful gold, red, and black patterns on Heisey animals in almost gaudy fashion. The Charleton Line appears on Fenton blanks more than any other company. Undoubtedly some of the ugliest Heisey pieces existing today are some of the animals with Charleton decoration. The company filed bankruptcy and dissolved in 1967. We have some of their work on display today.

Honesdale Decorating Company-Established by Dorflinger & Sons in 1901 as a subsidiary, this company closed in 1932 when founder Carl Prosch became ill. They usually applied acid cut pale green or gold to glass - frequently signed 'Honesdale' or 'HD' in gold script on the pontil.

Lotus/Glastonbury/4/--The Lotus Glass Company was founded in Barnesville, OH in 1912. The Company is still in business. Lotus never made any glassware. They bought undecorated stemware and accessory pieces from Fostoria, Heisey, Cambridge, and others. Some items were hand painted. Many other pieces were encrusted with gold, silver, or platinum. A rich metal banding was a treatment of Lotus. Lotus was most popular in the 1940s and 1950s when it employed over 100 workers. Hundreds of Lotus patterns have been made over the years. Two of the company's most popular patterns have been the Rambler Rose #110 series and Minton #118. On Heisey, Lotus often applied gold bands with draping, enameled flowers. About 1960, Lotus purchased The Glastonbury Co., a Chicago glass decorating firm. Unfortunately, a 1976 warehouse fire destroyed nearly all the records of The Glastonbury Co. Lotus currently employs about a dozen people and supplies jewelry stores with cut products.

Oriental Glass Company/5/--This company was located in Pittsburg, PA and records indicate large quantities of Beaded Swag and Winged Scroll blanks were sold to Oriental over the years. They are known for their painted floral decorations including Daisy, Straw Flower, Cornflower, and Oriental Poppy. We have some probable samples here today.

T.G. Hawkes Glass Company-This company was established in 1880 in Corning, NY. Exclusively a designing company, they purchased blanks from glass companies like Heisey. In 1920, the script "Hawkes" began to appear, in acid-etched form. About 50% of their pieces are marked. During their early years, glass blanks came only from Steuben. Tiffin purchased Hawkes in 1964 but produced few pieces. In 1984, Jim Maxwell, a former Tiffin glass cutter, bought Tiffin. In 1992, Maxwell

began producing 4 old Hawkes patterns under the name "Maxwell Crystal, Inc." The company continues today as Crystal Traditions of Tiffin. We have an example of marked Hawkes here today.

Wheeling Decorating Company/6/--This company, in business from 1900 to 1962, was most known for its enamel paintings. Some of their pattern examples seen on Heisey pieces include "Fingered Swirls, Arrows, and Flowers" (Gold and Blue Bands), "Double Connected Roses" with 2 pink roses and other flowers with a black background (often seen on #465 Recessed Panel candy jars, and "Pheasant and Stump" in various colors. Heisey pieces totally encrusted in gold are likely Wheeling's "Doves, Roses, and Daisies" or other Wheeling gold patterns. The colorful birds often seen on Heisey bitters bottles were probably painted by Wheeling. We have some Wheeling decorated pieces for your viewing.

Heisey Not So Heavy Metal

Apollo Metal Works-This company is known to have created metal containers for Heisey pieces. Gold filigree holders for Heisey pieces are sometimes marked Apollo on their underside. This filigree holder for the Crystolite cigarette case was the type of work done by Apollo but I cannot attribute this specific piece to them.

Chicago Brass Company-Metal embossed lids on Heisey Wreath and Crystolite candy containers and Heisey puff jars and hair receivers were often done by this company in the 1950's.

Farber Bros.-This company of NY often used bright yellow and red flowers with a label "Corn Gold Farberware" to decorate Heisey Lariat and other patterns. Farber Bros. also produced metal holders for Heisey pieces such as the # 1519 Waverly covered lemon dish.

Reed and Barton-In 1837, Charles Barton, Henry Good Reed, and Charles Leonard formed a company named Leonard, Reed, & Barton. Leonard sold out - leaving Reed & Barton as the company name. Throughout the next century the company steadily grew, producing sterling silver plated flatware. In 1928, Reed & Barton purchased Dominick and Hoff, later acquired the Webster Co. and Sheffield Silver. Today, Reed & Barton remains a privately held company.

Silver City Glass Company-This company in Meriden, CT operated 1905 to the 1980s. They applied silver and gold decorations on glass of most major glass companies of the period. Silver City used a store display and sticker showing "Sterling on Silver" on a blue background. Silver overlay with a flying bird and cattails was applied by this company on Heisey Lariat, Victorian, and other patterns.

I Want to Say Just One Word to You: Plastics

Plaskon Company-Developed in 1930 by this division of Libbey-Owens-Ford Glass Co. with a plant in Toledo OH, Plaskon or Plascon was a forerunner of Bakelite. The Walter Von Nessen designed Heisey Stanhope pattern was introduced in 1936. Heisey collaborated with the Plaskon Co. to incorporate their plastic inserts into certain Stanhope pieces. Round inserts were incorporated into pieces such as the ones shown here today in a Stanhope creamer. Their plastic rods were inserted

into the ends of other pieces, e.g. the Stanhope relish. The inserts used were made in black, blue, red, yellow, and ivory colors.

Summary

This presentation is, by no means, a complete listing of all companies that put their decorations on Heisey glass. Unless you find original information listing the particular decorating company picturing a known Heisey piece, there is no way of exactly identifying the specific decorating company. There are some identification clues, however. Decorating companies, like Heisey, often designed proprietary stickers to attach to glass they decorated. It's still possible to find Heisey pieces with those stickers intact. Heisey and outside decorating companies also designed and inscribed their own packing boxes to ship the product to retailers. A most fortunate find would be a Heisey piece in one of those original shipping containers. You can also often identify a decorating company by features unique to their company in style or content. Of course, nothing prevented an individual from purchasing a piece of Heisey, taking it home, and applying a decoration of their choice. Keep looking - you may find a piece of Heisey on which your grandmother hand painted her favorite flowers.

Footnotes:

- /1/ Heisey News, October 1981, pages 8 & 9, article by Neila Bredehoft
- /2/ Heisey News, February 1981, pages 7 & 13, article by Louise Ream
- /3/ Book, The Charleton Line by Michael and Lori Palmer
- /4/ Book, A Collection of American Crystal by Page and Frederiksen
- /5/ Heisey Herald published by National Capitol Heisey Club - February, 2003
- /6/ Book, Wheeling Decorating Company by James Webster