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Friday, 05/26/06

Know Your Stuff: Fenton glass sets come in wide array of patterns, colors

By CONNIE SUE DAVENPORT
For Williamson A.M.

Ms. Davenport,

I am 52 years old and my grandmother purchased this pitcher and glass set when I was a small child. She gave it to me several years ago before she passed away. I remembered her showing me the "strawberry" pattern. I have no intentions of selling it, but was wondering what the pattern is called and what it may be worth.

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Cathy Burlason

Franklin

Dear Cathy,

Your lemonade set is Fenton's opalescent cranberry glass in the coin dot pattern. Current value for the set is \$500. Looking through the tumblers or pitcher of your set would be "eye candy" to a child. The pattern repeats itself as if seen through multiple mirrors. I know this must be a sweet memory of quiet times with your grandmother.

The Fenton Art Glass Co. was begun in



enlarge 

This Fenton glass pitcher set is now worth about \$500. The Fenton Art Glass Co. was begun in Martins Ferry, Ohio, and is still in operation. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Contact Connie Sue Davenport with any questions about your antiques and collectibles, and we'll discuss them here. Send to conniesue@conniesueinc.com or by mail in care of Williamson A.M.

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Martins Ferry, Ohio, by Frank I. Fenton. In the beginning they painted glass made by other companies, but as demand increased they opened their own glass factory in 1907. They are still producing in Williamstown, W.Va., and in 2005 the company celebrated its 100th birthday. In 1986, a third-generation Fenton, George W. (!), took the helm. They have 400 employees and continue to produce artistically created colors and patterns.

In nearly every home I visit for an appraisal, there are a few pieces of Fenton Art Glass on display. Our mothers and grandmothers all seemed to have a favorite color or style. I see the pieces displayed in the "just for special

occasions" dining room, on a platform mirror, on the table or sideboard. And I see Fenton Glass lamps adorning the dresser of "guest rooms." Many ladies had color categories for various holidays or seasons. There was milk glass for Christmas, warm earth tones for Thanksgiving and pastels for spring or to decorate a daughter's room.

Fenton is famous for its carnival glass produced between 1907-20 in more than 100 patterns inspired by Tiffany and Steuben. They made glass that looked like custard and chocolate milk. Any color of the rainbow can be seen in the form of a vase, pin dish, bride's basket or serving dish. There were fairy lights (covered votive holders), pitchers and rose bowls. Some pieces were hand-painted — mostly in the 1970s. During the 1930s and '40s, the company even offered mixing bowls and juicers so that we could be cheered by color in the kitchen.

Fenton's milk glass is in every home I inventory and all over the antique shops and malls I visit. Made in the 1950s, this white glass is rising in price quickly — especially the banana boat on a stand and cake platforms. The most plentiful patterns in Fenton's milk glass are the grape pattern and hobnail (raised dots of glass).

Fenton produced fluted-edge glass with a combination of colors to tempt buyers in the 1940s when other glass companies were going out of business. They have always known what we needed to brighten the day with — color, color and more color. Their glass is of a good quality, yet not too expensive for regular folks to collect. There are Fenton Glass clubs and conventions for the truly crazed!

Some of the simple creations made since 1973 are limited and collectible with the oval-shaped Fenton logo stamped directly in the glass. Some are signed by the decorator in cursive letters on the base and sell into the hundreds of dollars. Most Fenton glass was marked with a paper label that has worn or washed away over the years. Fenton remains the largest producer of handmade colored glass in the United States.

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