

# Millersburg Glass Association Newsletter

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**Millersburg Glass Association**

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The Millersburg Glass Association has been very busy with the details of the Millersburg Glass Card Project. You should be pleased to know that 21 sponsors filled the 56 spaces with their own prized crystal and carnival glass. Yes, we do have four jokers in the deck. Of course, Jim Wroda sponsored two of the Jokers that we reserved especially for him. We have had fun with this project.

Steve Maag took 46 nicely illuminated pictures with his fancy real estate camera; we have 10 additional pictures provided by collectors far from Ohio's borders.

You should know that we filled ALL the slots in five days. Thank you sponsors for your wonderful support of this unique Millersburg Glass picture card project. In case you were wondering, we used the best photo we could find for the backside of each card — a photo from a postcard of the Millersburg Glass Factory Building. The project is with the printer at the present time. The set-up is very time-consuming and has to be carefully proofed.

In summary, you will be delighted to see the final product. The sponsors share excellent selections from their private collections. It was a joy to see Millersburg Glass that has been held close by the owners. There are many precious pieces to behold!

## JeanMarie

### The Journey of a Family Heirloom

I'd like to share the provenance of a plate I named JeanMarie. JeanMarie is a Millersburg Amethyst Peacock Chop Plate that was given to Alice Gwin from John Fenton. Alice was my great-great aunt and worked in the front office of the Millersburg Glass Factory. As we all know, plates manufactured at the plant were very special pieces because none were ever made for mass production.

We'll never know why John gifted the plate to Alice, but we do know Alice carefully transported the plate home to the family farm. Alice was the eldest of nine children. The youngest sibling, Orpha Gwin Donald, her junior of 20 years, eventually became the new keeper of the family heirloom. Orpha loved riding horses with her granddaughter Jean Mathie Grenert. A special bond formed between the two, which explains why Jean, my mom, inherited the Millersburg Peacock Chop Plate.

JeanMarie spent the first sixty years in Millersburg before moving to Guerne, Ohio with Jean in the 1970's. Guerne is a small group of houses between Wooster and Apple Creek, Ohio. Jean understood the plate was very valuable and kept it hidden away in our breakfront. I recall seeing the plate maybe once or twice in all the years living at home. Mom would refer to it as "the ugly oil-slick plate." A man by the name of George would stop by once a year, and ask if mom would be willing to sell the plate. Several years passed, until one day, George's persistence paid off. I believe mom always knew it would be impossible to divide the plate evenly among her four children. Selling the plate was a relief, and also a wonderful way to purchase new furniture for her humble home. JeanMarie would fly far away from Holmes County.



In September 2012 my wife and I attended a fundraising benefit at Triway High School located just southwest of Wooster, Ohio. As we searched the items to be auctioned, my wife discovered a green peacock bowl that reminded her of my mother's "ugly oil-slick plate." After winning the bid, we soon learned Dolores Wagner who lived only 3 miles from Guerne in Wooster had donated the bowl. With the peacock bowl in our possession, it became clear to me, it was time for JeanMarie to come home. I contacted Dolores to see, if by chance, she knew who bought the plate. Since Harold and Dolores were avid Millersburg collectors, they knew this was a prized possession. In fact, Harold had also expressed interest in purchasing the plate. Dolores recalled a very happy George Loescher arriving in her driveway 20 years earlier to show off his new prize—you could say he was proud as a peacock!

Coincidentally, George, Harold and my mother each passed away in 2005. Luckily, I was able to introduce myself to George's widow, Mavis. After trading stories and sharing great phone conversations, I asked Mavis if she ever considered selling the plate. She said that she had not, but if she did, mine would seem like the perfect home. A few weeks later, Mavis contacted me with the great news that she was ready to sell the plate. She offered to carefully pack and ship it, but I wanted to show my gratitude in person. My wife and I drove nine hours to Wisconsin to pick up the precious cargo. JeanMarie made her final migration back home in 2013. Her 100+ year journey is a beautiful story of a peacock coming home to nest. Hence, the origin of our glass collecting and love for Millersburg Glass commenced. Thanks, Mom.

Ed & Nannette Grenert, Holmesville, Ohio

## “I can’t believe she spent \$1,200 on a fish.”

That was the running joke as I was growing up. My grandparents, Bud and Jean Fulmer, were big into antiques. Every month, they would be at a different auction, purchasing items for their shop, “Out on a Limb,” in Loudonville, Ohio. They rarely bought for themselves, but my grandma had a fondness for carnival glass, particularly, Millersburg.

On July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2004 after returning home from a local sale, news quickly spread that she had spent \$1,200 on a “fish.” Nobody could understand why (although a theory I never confirmed was that someone bidding on this dish made her mad and she wasn’t going to let them have it). We all laughed it off and it became a running joke that would surface during family meals throughout the years.



As I began to get older, I started to develop my own interest in antiques. As with most kids, their tastes differ greatly from that of their parents. I was no exception. Where my parents enjoyed the more primitive items, I gravitated towards things from the atomic age, glass included. My focus was on uranium glass. I liked the idea that it contained uranium, the main element contributing to the atomic age. As with most collectors of certain items, your knowledge, or at least acknowledgement, spills over into all facets of its classification, and I began to understand the value and beauty behind carnival glass.

My grandma and I would visit; the conversation generally turned to collecting. A couple years ago, long after the joke had faded from memory I asked her, “Didn’t you spend a bunch of money on a fish?” She just nodded her head, and the look on her face was enough to pique my interest. I went home and did what I usually do when trying to research different things. I hopped on eBay and searched “Millersburg Fish Dish.” The rest, they say, is history. Carnival glass was added to my list of interests.

Several months later, as my grandma’s health was declined, she mentioned that she was thinking about having an auction to downsize. I told her not to sell her glass and that I would buy it privately. The auction never came to be. She passed away in 2020 and shortly after, I found out that she wanted me to have her carnival collection. I knew the Big Fish was in her collection, but I had no idea what else she owned. I never actually *looked*. Moving day came. We went to her carnival cabinet and began pulling everything out. WOW! Big Fish. Trout and Fly. Peacocks. Peacock and Urn. Blackberry Wreaths. Strawberry Wreaths. Grape Wreaths. Another Big Fish, but a Diamond. Another Trout and Fly. Zig Zag. Hanging Cherry sugar, spooner, plates. Sunflower. Courthouse...

After about 10 banana boxes full of glass, I thought we had it all. There couldn’t possibly be any more... Another room, another cabinet. Ohio Star. Hobstar and Feather. More Peacocks. More Blackberries. Another Courthouse. Dishes. Tankards. Bowls. Compotes. It didn’t end. I can picture my grandma now, smiling as we would joke about the fish. I remember thinking she was just enjoying the joke. No. She was laughing at us—saying to herself, “If you only knew...”

I spent long hours and many evenings going through her collection to get a proper ID for inventory purposes so I truly understood what I had been given. The appreciation was already there, and much more than just the average collector or even lover of Millersburg Glass. This was grandmas’!! And to me, it doesn’t matter what it is, it’s priceless. In addition to Millersburg, there was Fenton, Dugan, Imperial, Cambridge, Northwood... I remember a specific piece I pulled out and thought, “this is a cute little piece, but probably isn’t worth anything.” It was a *mint* condition marigold Seacoast Pin Tray... With a lot of internet time and help from Randy Jones, I was able to make a full inventory of what she had collected over the years.

In just a few short months, I’ve added several pieces to her collection, joined the MGA, and attended my first MGA Gathering and auction. I continue to research and learn. I still consider myself a novice when it comes to Millersburg, and the friends I’ve made through the MGA have helped me immensely. Now whenever I am in an antique mall or pursuing eBay, the hunt is on for the next Millersburg piece. My highlight of 2020 was finding a Sunflower Pin Tray for \$25 at an antique mall. Without luck, good pieces command a bit more than that. However, with that price tag comes a new joy. Now, I get to be the one to smile and chuckle to myself as people say, “I can’t believe he spent \$1,200 on a fish...”

Submitted by Matt Young, Loudonville, Ohio

## Buying Glass by the (Banana) Boat Load

by Andrew Lycans of Millersburg, Ohio.

I'm always wary of auctioneers who sell a "collection" of carnival glass as a single lot. While this sometimes presents an opportunity to pick up a deal, I'm always suspicious that someone selling a group of carnival glass items without any apparent knowledge of the value of what they are selling (or even what they are selling beyond simply "carnival glass") won't be able to provide an accurate assessment of the condition of the pieces, or won't want to take the time to look at each piece.

Thus, I had some trepidation in 2017 when I stumbled upon a "16-piece collection of American carnival glass" in a late December sale in New England. The listing indicated that the collection included "various makers and patterns," without providing specifics.

The first photo was a large group shot of the entire collection, followed by several multi-item photos. The only piece that was individually photographed was a large amethyst Imperial Grape bowl. However, on the left side of the large group photos and one of the smaller group photos was an amethyst Millersburg Holly bowl. That, in and of itself, would not have convinced me to bid on a "collection" of glass. However, the shape of the bowl seemed odd. I asked my father to look at the pictures and tell me what the shape of the bowl was. While the pictures were small enough that he couldn't make out the pattern, he did confirm that he thought it was a banana boat (or oval) shape.

I checked the Doty website and could not find any reference to a Millersburg Holly banana boat having sold previously, other than a banana boat shape, marigold compote. A review of my other reference materials also didn't indicate that this bowl was previously known.



After asking the auctioneer to check for damage, I decided to go ahead and set up a phone bid. The pre-sale estimate was well below what the pieces were worth, even if the Holly bowl didn't end up being a banana boat. Apparently, I was not the only collector to see the listing because the lot ultimately sold for twice the high end of the estimated sale price. At that price, I was hoping both that the Holly bowl was indeed an unusual shape and that the condition was accurately noted.

The auction house did their own shipping, and it took them approximately two weeks to get everything wrapped and out the door. The entire collection was sent in a single box. By the time the box arrived, I had forgotten what all the collection included. Unwrapping everything was almost like Christmas morning, with some surprises about items I had forgotten.

Ultimately, a few of the pieces did have small chips that the auctioneer failed to note. (The Imperial Grape bowl they seemed so proud of was the one that had a noticeable enough chip that the auctioneer actually noted it.) However, the Millersburg Holly bowl did turn out to be a banana boat shape and (thankfully) was free of any damage. I have wonderful memories about this glass adventure. Thank you for letting me share my risk-taking endeavor with you.