

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

HENRY C. FRY AND THE H. C. FRY GLASS COMPANY

GEORGE FRY

Background

THE material in this record of the H. C. Fry Glass Company, for many years one of the most noted of Pennsylvania's glass-producing factories, was dictated by George Kenneth "Ted" Fry, grandson of the founder of the company, the late H. C. Fry, and came to the Society through his friend Carlton Ketchum, one of our members.

"Ted" Fry graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 1917. He was class president, honor student, and a letterman in football, track, and swimming. He was a fullback and famed for his punting. After service as a pilot in the Army Air Force in World War I, he married a classmate, Brenda K. Wright of Pittsburgh, and went to work for his grandfather. Mrs. Fry died in 1973. Their children are Barbara Heise, wife of a member of the faculty of Indiana University at Bloomington, Indiana, and Henry C. Fry, district sales manager for the Armstrong Cork Company in Dallas, Texas. Ted Fry lives in Dunedin, Florida, to which he and his wife moved when he retired from business.

In an industry which for so long was regarded as one of Pennsylvania's and Western Pennsylvania's most distinctive, the H. C. Fry Glass Company was eminent.

Henry C. Fry

Mr. H. C. Fry was born September 17, 1840, near Lexington, Kentucky, and was educated in his native town. He came to Rochester, Pennsylvania, in 1872 from Pittsburgh, where he had been associated in the glass works since leaving his birthplace in 1857. His original venture in the glass business was interrupted by the Civil War. He enlisted as a private in the Fifteenth Regiment Pennsylvania Cavalry and was mustered out in 1864. He took part in all the engagements of the Army of the Cumberland and at the close of the war returned to business in Pittsburgh before locating in Rochester. Mr. Fry organized the Rochester Tumbler Company, the largest and most important tumbler works in the world, personally supervised the erection of this

Fry Quality*Glassware*

Cut Vanity Pattern

4024	8" Bowl.....	\$ 5.75	455	4 Pint Jug.....	\$10.00
4024	9" Bowl.....	8.25	8121	9 oz. Tumblers, doz.....	17.75
54	8" Basket.....	10.00	4101	Sugar and Cream.....	7.00
54	10" Basket.....	12.25	4006	7" 2 Hld. Nappie.....	5.50
54	12" Basket.....	16.50	4006	8" 2 Hld. Nappie.....	6.75
1628	6" 2 Hld. Bon Bon.....	3.00	4006	6" Hld. Nappie.....	3.00
4006	7" Hld. Basket.....	6.00	1076	May Bowl and Plate.....	6.50
4006	8" Hld. Basket.....	7.25	101	12" Roll Nappie.....	15.00
228	10" Hld. Sandwich Plate.....	7.25	4004	11½" Center Fruit.....	13.25
307	8½" Vase.....	10.00	4004	13½" Center Fruit.....	16.00
307	10½" Vase.....	11.00	223	12" Cheese and Cracker.....	14.50
307	12½" Vase.....	12.00	3367	8" Nut Bowl.....	5.75
307	14½" Vase.....	17.75	4045	11½" Orange Bowl.....	8.25
332	10" Square Vase.....	11.00	1000	15" Lamp.....	30.25
332	12" Square Vase.....	13.75	1457	8" Pegged Rose Bowl.....	7.75

plant, and served as president until it ceased operations.

In 1901 he organized the H. C. Fry Glass Company in North Rochester, one of the country's finest works, especially noted for its product of cut glass, oven ware, and other products, and was president until his death.¹

In addition to being an industrialist, Henry C. Fry was civic minded and interested in the affairs of the community, served as a member of the town council, sponsored and financed the H. C. Fry Band, an outstanding musical organization, and also sponsored the Welcome Club as a community center. In 1883 he organized the First National Bank and was president until 1926. He was the first president of the Duquesne Light Company and was director and officer in numerous organizations. He died January 3, 1929, in his home on Jackson Street and New York Avenue, Rochester.

H. C. Fry Glass Co.

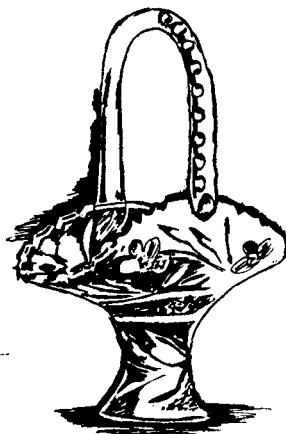
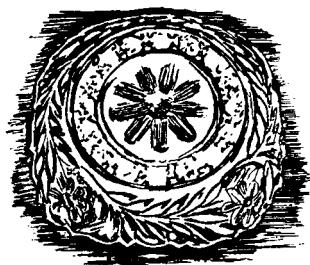
The H. C. Fry Glass Company had its plant located at North Rochester and was established in 1901 by Henry C. Fry, who also built the Beaver Valley Glass Plant, a subsidiary of the Fry Company. For many years it was one of the most modern and best-equipped factories in the world and produced oven glass, cut glass, etched ware, blanks for cutting, and numerous specialties which were known throughout the trade for their excellence of quality. This plant was a great asset to the borough of Rochester and vicinity, employing about one thousand people, and it was a sad blow to the community when it encountered financial difficulties in 1925 and went into receivership. The company was carried on that way until 1933 when it was reorganized. However, in 1934, it closed its operations for good.

In 1905 the H. C. Fry Glass Co. produced a cut-glass punch bowl, five-part pedestal, and twelve glasses, Rochester pattern, height 4½ feet, weight 150 pounds (see picture opposite 336). It was the largest composite piece of cut glass in the world and was shown at the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Oregon. It was awarded the Grand Medal of Honor in the glass division at that exposition.

After the exposition closed, it was sent to the Fry Glass Company's New York office where it remained for some time. During its stay there, the then reigning shah of Persia offered the office manager \$2,500 for it, but H. C. Fry refused the offer.

¹ J. Howard Fry, a son of the founder, was vice-president and treasurer from 1905 to 1928, the period of the company's greatest success.

Useful & Beautiful for Table Service



Cut Asteroid Pattern

4024	8" Bowl.....	\$ 4.50	4006	7" Nappie.....	\$ 3.00
4024	9" Bowl.....	5.50	4006	8" Nappie.....	4.00
4004	11½" Lily Bowl.....	8.50	4006	5" Hld. Nappie.....	1.65
4004	13½" Lily Bowl.....	12.00	4006	6" Hld. Nappie.....	2.15
1618	Bon Bon.....	2.00	4006	8" 2 Hld. Nappie.....	4.35
54	8" Basket.....	5.50	52	10" Nut Bowl.....	4.25
54	10" Basket.....	7.50	4004	9" Plate.....	3.75
54	12" Basket.....	11.50	1543	Sugar and Cream.....	3.00
756	6" Compote.....	4.75	4101	Sugar and Cream.....	4.75
4941	8" Compote.....	5.75	4054	Sugar and Cream.....	6.50
1618	Celery Tray.....	3.50	515	12" Tray.....	9.50
223	12" Cheese and Cracker Set.....	8.00	8121	9 oz. Tumblers.....	11.50
543	10" Dish.....	4.50	307	8½" Vase.....	5.25
455	4 Pint Jug.....	6.00	307	10½" Vase.....	6.25
4006	5" Nappie.....	1.50	307	12½" Vase.....	7.25
4006	6" Nappie.....	2.00	44	Wafer Tray.....	2.00

It was then sent to the sample room of the Fry Glass Company in Rochester where it remained until about 1934. Later H. C. Fry, Jr., loaned it to the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh as a permanent exhibit. A special glass-display case was designed to protect the punch bowl set. Strangely enough, the whereabouts of the cut-glass punch bowl set is presently unknown.

Another spectacular piece of cut glass made by the H. C. Fry Glass Company was a nine-inch cut-glass berry bowl, Hobnail (or Hobstar) pattern. This cut-glass bowl was entered in the International Glass Show in Leipzig where it won honors and attracted much attention.

At that time, one of the very good customers of the company was so impressed by the bowl that he bought it and brought it to H. C. Fry in his office at the plant. The customer carefully and with much ceremony unwrapped the bowl and in handing it to H. C. Fry said: "Mr. Fry, this is the most exquisitely beautiful piece of cut glass I have ever seen. Why can't you folks make glass like this?" H. C. Fry carefully examined the bowl and then said, "I want my boys to see this bowl." He summoned five of his division managers to the office, and each of them in turn examined the bowl. Finally one of them could stand the pressure no longer and burst out saying: "Mr. Fry, this is our bowl. We made it in our own plant and cut it in our own cutting shop." Mr. Fry did not often laugh out loud, but this time it came with a real Haw Haw!!!

This bowl is at present in the writer's possession among other cherished pieces of cut glass, Hobnail pattern.

In addition to cut glass, the Beaver Valley Glass Co. (subsidiary of H. C. Fry Glass Company) made a fine quality line of lead-blown stem ware, jugs, decanters, perfume bottles, salad bowls, plates, iced-tea sets, hot-tea sets made of pearl oven glass, candlesticks, fruit bowls — much of the stem ware was etched in the etching shop, plate etching, needle etching, and pantograph-etching patterns were produced. Also some fine gold-encrusted ware was made and proved to be quite popular though expensive.

About 1917 oven glass (a high boro-silicate glass) was patented by the company and sold throughout the United States and Canada. Fry's oven glass gained much of its popularity for its durability when used as a cooking or baking utensil and for its lovely opalescent mother-of-pearl color. It was often referred to as Fry's pearl oven glass.

Fry Quality*Glassware*

Cut America Pattern

4024	8" Bowl	\$ 7.50	4006	7" 2 Hld. Caboret	\$ 6.75	4006	7" Nappie	\$ 5.25
4024	9" Bowl	9.50	4006	8" 2 Hld. Caboret	7.75	4006	8" Nappie	6.00
1457	6" Ftd. Bowl	5.50	4112	Celery Tray	5.00	4006	6" Hld. Nappie	2.85
1457	8" Ftd. Bowl	9.50	1637	Celery Tray	4.75	4006	7" 2 Hld. Nappie	5.50
4045	11 1/2" Oval Bowl	7.50	4618	7" Dish	6.25	4006	8" 2 Hld. Nappie	6.50
4618	8" Bowl	9.00	4618	9" Deep Fruit Dish	10.50	4128	Pickle Tray	2.85
4321	Butter Plate and Cover	11.00	4618	6" Ftd. Dish	5.25	1638	Spoon Tray	2.50
4006	7" Basket	6.50	4618	7" Ftd. Dish	6.50	4618	Sugar and Cream	6.75
4006	8" Basket	7.75	4618	7" 2 Hld. Dish	6.75	1303	Sugar and Cream	7.25
4618	7" Basket	8.25	4618	8" Dish	8.25	4101	Sugar and Cream	6.50
675	9" Basket	6.50	4618	8" Ftd. Dish	8.50	8121	9 oz. Tumblers, doz.	17.50
4618	8" Basket	10.00	4618	8" 2 Hld. Dish	8.75	305	10" Vase	11.00
4362	Bon Bon	2.75	1617	Nut Dish	3.50	305	12" Vase	13.25
1303	Ftd. May Bowl (No Plate)	3.25	1604	6" Hld. and Ftd. Dish	6.50	333	10" Vase	10.50
176	May Bowl and Plate	6.25	4134	14" Ice Cream Tray	7.25	302	14" Vase	16.50
4618	May Bowl and Plate	8.75	4308	Ice Tub	7.00	303	14" Vase	20.00
1254	6" Compote	7.25	5133	4 Pint Jug	8.25	302	12" Vase	13.25
1254	7" Compote	8.50	455	4 Pint Jug	9.75	305	14" Vase	20.00
1254	8" Compote	10.25	4006	6" Nappie	2.75			

Useful & Beautiful for Table Service



7715 Line, Wide Optic D.E. KING

Goblet, 9 oz.....	\$11.60	7 54 oz. Tankard.....	\$47.50
Saucer Champagne, 6 oz.....	11.60	9416 3 oz. Whiskies.....	7.00
Cafe Parfait, 5 oz.....	11.60	9416 5 oz. Apollinaris.....	7.20
Ice Cream, 6 oz.....	11.20	9416 7 oz. Mineral.....	7.35
Claret, 5 oz.....	11.20	9416 9 oz. Table Tumblers.....	7.60
Wine, 3 oz.....	11.00	9416 10 oz. Hi Ball.....	7.70
Cocktail, 3 oz.....	11.00	9416 12 oz. Lemonade.....	8.80
Grape Fruit, 21 oz.....	30.80	9416 14 oz. Ice Tea.....	10.00
5133 Finger Bowl.....	16.90	9416 11 3/4" Hld. Ice Tea.....	14.40
501 6" Finger Bowl Plate.....	18.20	2 Hld. and Ftd. Ice Tea Cut Star	
11 Jugs, Cut Neck and Star Bottom	82.20	Bottom.....	22.90
4074 3 Pint Jugs, Full Cut.....	82.20	2 Hld. and Ftd. Ice Tea, No Star.	20.50

An industrial glass division was developed in which were made such articles as cylinders for gasoline-measuring pumps, battery jars, defrosting trays for electric refrigerators, domestic watt-hour-meter covers, glass door knobs, shields for X-ray tubes, and many other pieces of a highly specialized nature, that were used in many manufactured products including heat-resisting glass bowls and funnels for coffee-making devices.

The lens and reflector department made a wide variety of single convex and double convex lenses for the moving-picture camera industry. Some very efficient reflectors were made of a glass having great fog-piercing qualities. These reflectors were sold to a Philadelphia firm which specialized in making lights for locomotives, steamboats, railroad yards, floodlighting buildings, etc. Uranium oxide was used in the batch to produce the color of this glass.

Three main factors contributed to the termination of operation of the H. C. Fry Glass Company. First of these was a growing and long-continued difficulty in obtaining the materials required to produce high-quality glass, such as pentoxide of lead, potash, and nitre. These were diverted to produce war materials. When the public found high-quality glass hard to obtain, they turned to lime glass as a substitute.

Second, the silver manufacturers launched a well-conceived and well-executed national advertising campaign extolling the beauty and durability of their products. The buying public to a high degree substituted silver for the unavailable high-quality glass. And with that, Prohibition reduced the demand for quality glass. Hotel dining rooms, restaurants, cafés, and bars turned to cheaper glassware because of the reduction in their patronage.



Fry Punch Bowl.