

Glass House Whimsies

By Mark and Elaine Corriero

Glass Whimsies

Glass workers did not have time to amuse themselves with their creations during working hours. Pay scales were equated to the volume of the product or numbers of piece work. A major problem the workers faced when they made a whimsey, was preventing someone else from taking it. The item had to be cooled in the lehr overnight, and whoever was first to get to work the next morning had the opportunity to grab the whimsey if he was so inclined. Some workers just expected their whimsies to disappear and were surprised when it was still there for them to have.

These whimsical items the glass blowers made on their own time included canes, chain, hats, sock darners, doorstop turtles, bellows bottles, bells, witch balls, banks, powder horns, pipes, rolling pins, horns, and many more items. In fact, there are additional items coming to collectors' attention every year. These include witch wands, gavels, screw drivers, pistols, and swords.

Glass Canes

After becoming interested in glass canes while on a trip to the St. Joseph, MO show two years ago, we acquired our first piece of a glass cane - a twisted piece of glass dug at the Brookfield Glass Co. dump. Since then, we've been on the hunt for more.

We thought we'd find a few, but once we started looking, we found them everywhere (mostly on eBay).

Glass canes were never made to be utilitarian - they were made by glass workers to test their glass handling skills or to show off those skills to co-workers.

Glass canes range in size, shape and color. Color is the most interesting aspect of these canes as insulator manufacturers had a limited number of colors for the workers to play with. Our most colorful canes were likely made by marble companies or glass manufacturers that produced colorful glass, while the aqua ones we've found (some near the old Hemingray plant) were likely produced by insulator and fruit jar companies. Handle shapes and twists in the cane were a way for the workers to test their glass handling skills.

Sock Darners

Both whimsy and production darners were produced. Most glass sock darners are whimsies that were made by glass workers for their own use and were not intended for retail sale. Their colors range from aqua to nailsea glass.

Rolling Pins

While glass rolling pins were manufactured during the depression for home use, whimsy rolling pins were also made with no intention of being sold to the public. These pins were hand blown and made from beautiful colored glass.

Glass Turtles

Glass "turtles" were easily made by glass workers. By taking a full ladle of molten glass and lying it on a table or cooling rack, and gently pulling at the glass for the legs, tail and head, a turtle was made!

Glass Hand Tools

Glass hand tools (screwdrivers, knives, hammers, etc.) were never made to be used. These items were purely whimsies as they could easily break if put into use!