



Displays Collections by Area Glass Makers

Written by **Dan Whetzel**
Photography by **Lance C. Bell**

“Allegany County had a great glass industry but it has become an unintended secret among the public and glass collectors.” Dale Murschell, curator of the glass exhibit at the Allegany Museum, succinctly summarizes the fate of locally produced glassware.

The local glassware industry played a major role in the economic prosperity of Allegany County, Maryland for more than five decades. Starting in the 1880s, glassmaking employed thousands of residents during peak production years that ended during the 1930s. While the industry was once an economic staple for the region, it has since become the domain of collectors and historians. Through the efforts of local collectors and the Allegany Museum in Cumberland, MD, Allegany County glassware is available for visitors to enjoy. While there are examples produced by a number of manufacturers, the museum display features the Maryland, Potomac, and Utility Glass Companies.



The glassware on these pages is just a sampling of some of the many fine pieces at the Allegany Museum in Cumberland, Maryland.

The Maryland Glass Company (1918-1930s) had a long run at its South Cumberland location between Queen Street and the CSX Railroad. Primarily a glass decorating company, the firm did produce some hand blown stemware and molded pieces. Gold rim, acid etched, and wheel plate designs made up most of the company's inventory. Also of interest to collectors are hand painted items and different colored glass offered by the firm.

Potomac Glass Company (1904-1929) established operations on the west side of Will's Creek near the present day Market Street Bridge. In addition to hand blown stemware and tumblers, the company offered a variety of dinner ware items which typically had rings around the outside or plate lip. Regular dinner plates, sandwich plates, saucers, and cups were manufactured in several different colors including amber, pink, and light blue. Potomac Glass Company suffered an all-too-common fate for the industry as it was destroyed by fire in 1929.

Utility Glass Company, located in Lonaconing, Maryland started in a building originally operated under

the name of Dugan Glass Company. In 1915, the Dugans' departed and the company changed owners and its name to Lonaconing Glass Company. In 1920, the name changed once again to Utility Glass Company which specialized in pressed ware, hand-blown tableware, etched, and cut pieces. The Sloan Glass Company occupied the site from 1929 until 1932 when a fire destroyed the building. Lonaconing glass collectors have acquired a representative sampling of products that are displayed at the museum.

Dale Murschell recently announced that the West Virginia Museum of Glass will be holding its yearly meeting at the Allegany Museum October 19-20, 2013. Collectors from across the region will be available to discuss and identify glassware. The Allegany Museum is opened Tuesday through Sunday. See alleganymuseum.org for more details.

Mr. Murschell can be contacted through the Allegany Museum at 3 Pershing Street in Cumberland, Maryland, or at dmurschell@frontiernet.net.