

CLEVELAND HISTORY UNDER GLASS

Special to the Ohio Swirl
by Jack Sullivan

Collecting paperweights is one way to capture the social and industrial history of bygone times. Although many weights are metal figurals, the most interesting are those made of glass. Shown here are a sample of glass paperweights from Cleveland, many of them a century or more old, preserving elements of the city's past.

Funeral homes often found paperweights a discrete way to advertise. When Aunt Fanny was choking on her meatballs, the glass object on the desk would tell you whom to call. Geo. Sharer and Son were Cleveland undertakers, with a chapel and funeral home on Prospect Avenue (Fig. 1). Their "limousine invalid car" -- a combination ambulance and hearse -- would take you anywhere in the city for \$5. Even, I suppose, to East Cleveland Cemetery.



Figure 1

Until as late as the 1970's hearses in the United States could double as ambulances. Late in that decade, however, stricter Federal standards were decreed for ambulances. The hybrids were unable to meet them and after 1979 were discontinued from production although some are still used in rural America.

The next weight, although it was issued from a dealer in Kansas City, depicts a homegrown product (Fig. 2). The Jordan Motor Car Company was founded in 1916 in Cleveland by Edward S. "Ned" Jordan, a former advertising

executive turned entrepreneur. His factory produced what became known as "assembled cars," using components from other manufacturers.



Figure 2

These vehicles were known for their styling and original advertising, rather than their advanced engineering. Jordan's theory was that his competition was too dull and drab. Since people dressed smartly, he reasoned, they wanted smart looking cars. He provided them with the Jordan until 1931 when the Depression killed his market.

C. H. Miller, a lifelong Clevelander, worked as a teamster, a farmer and a traveling salesman before he found his true calling as an inventor. Although Cleveland boasted several oven manufacturers, Miller figured out that two flues are better than one, patented the idea and founded the Champion Steel Range Company in 1892. He incorporated the firm in 1903 and was elected president and general manager. Somewhere in this time frame, Miller issued a nicely illustrated paperweight (Fig. 3).

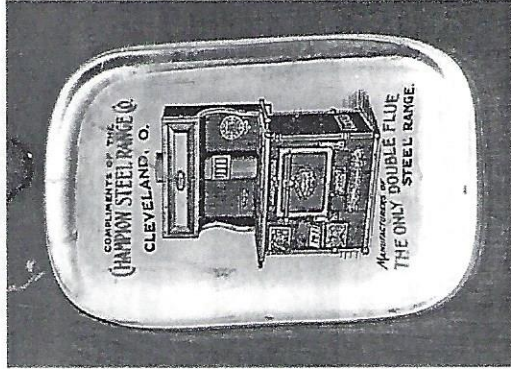


Figure 3

The Cleveland - Akron Bag Company is another "American upward mobility" story. Charles Jaite emigrated from Germany as a young boy and at the age of thirteen worked at a paper mill in Cleveland. He rose through the ranks and eventually became the president of the Standard Bag and Paper Company, and vice-president of the Cleveland Paper Company. He eventually merged both businesses to become the Cleveland-Akron Bag Company, which opened a factory in 1900 in Boston, Ohio. A paperweight commemorated the business (Fig. 4).



Figure 4

Although Jaite resigned in 1905 to start another

company, Cleveland-Akron Bag is said to have altered the ethnic makeup of the Cuyahoga Valley's population. Large numbers of Polish and other immigrants moved from Cleveland south to the valley to find work in the paper-making business.

Another weight, also one with dice (Fig. 5) was issued from the Everlasting Finish Linings brand from a Cleveland firm. It bears a



Figure 5

latest and best in all matters pertaining to modern woodwork, doors and finish...."

Of a more recent vintage is a paperweight featuring the S.S. Aquarama (Fig. 8). This ship was a World War II troop carrier for the U.S. Navy called the S.S. Star. In 1952 it was converted to become the largest passenger ship ever to operate on the Great Lakes. In 1956 it began operation by touring various Great Lakes ports but soon



Figure 6

The United States Coal Company, memorialized here in a paperweight (Fig. 6) was headquartered in Cleveland but its Crow Hollow Mine was located in Dillonvale, Ohio. The mine is said to have produced a particularly high quality coal and was in considerable demand by other industrial firms.

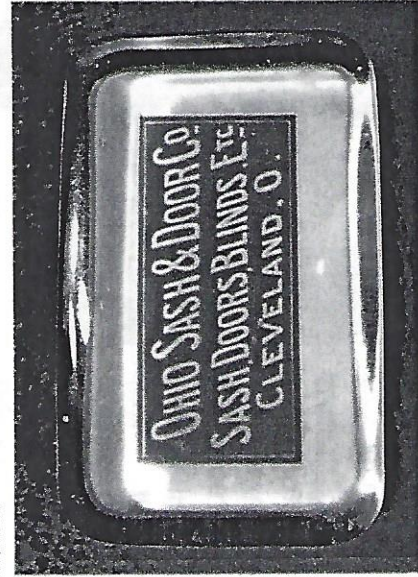


Figure 7

Street. The company was cited by the Ohio Architect, Engineer & Builder Magazine in 1913 for having the "the



Figure 8

restricted service to a Cleveland-Detroit run, carrying both automobiles and passengers. Although popular the route was not profitable and in 1962 the ship made its last trip and was scrapped.

The final weight is a vintage item, circa 1900, that depicts a familiar Cleveland landmark, the Cuyahoga County Soldiers and Sailors Monument (Fig. 9). Located in the southeast quadrant of Public Square in downtown Cleveland, the Civil War monument opened to the public in 1894. Four bronze groupings at its base depict the four branches of the Union Army—the Navy, Cavalry, Infantry, and Artillery. Inside

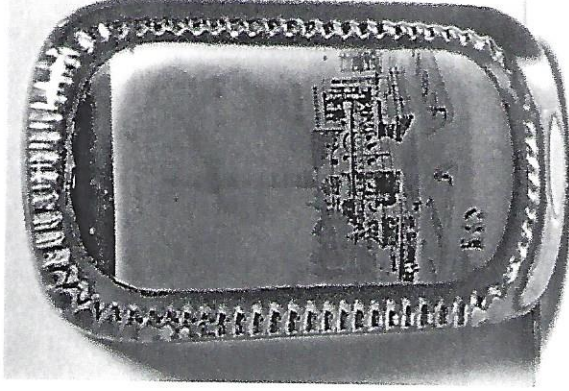


Figure 9

the memorial building are a series of marble tablets listing 9,000 Civil War veterans that served with Cuyahoga County regiments or were from Cuyahoga County.

Shown here are nine paperweights, in reality nine pieces of Cleveland history preserved under glass. They are just a few of the dozens of such glass artifacts awaiting history buffs and collectors of Cleveland and Northeast Ohio memorabilia.

Note: The information and images presented here are from a wide range of Internet sites. www.bottlesboozeeandbackstories.blogspot.com, my blog, contains several posts pertaining to glass paperweights.

Paperweight illustrations:

1. Geo. Sharer & Son
2. Jordan Car
3. Champion Range Co.
4. Cleveland-Akron Bag Co.
5. Everlasting Finish Linings
6. Crow Hollow Coal
7. Ohio Sash and Door
8. S.S. Aquarama
9. Cuyahoga Monument