

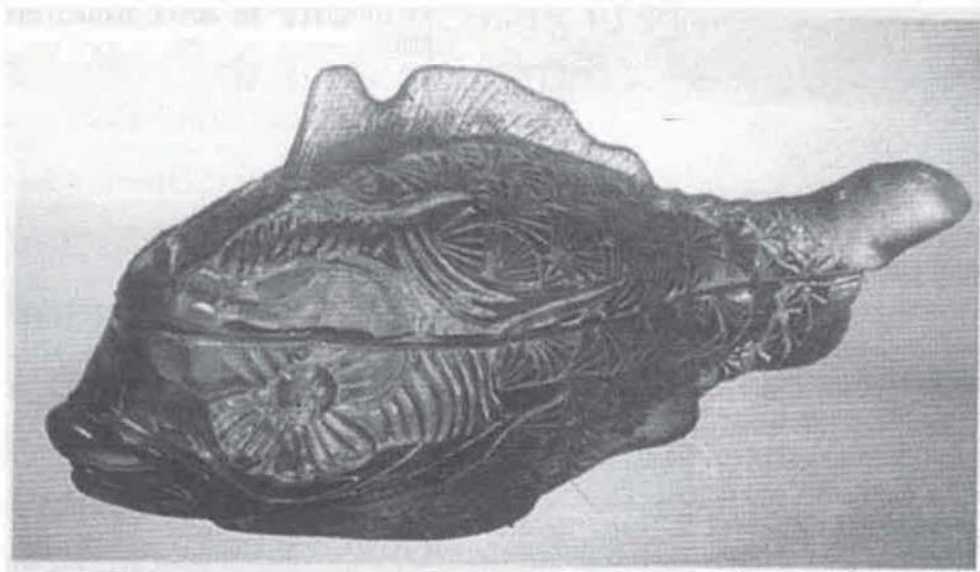


News & Views

The Co-Operative Glass Animals

by Earl & JoAnn Autenreith

During the late 1920s, the Co-Operative Flint Glass Company of Beaver Falls, PA made a variety of glass animals that have now become quite highly sought after. Hazel Weatherman in her *Depression Glass II*, page 50, illustrates them.



Included is a fish (called a whale, but it has scales and tail that is obviously a fish tail), a cat that can be easily identified by its upright tail, a bear, a bull-type dog, a frog and an elephant that was made in two sizes. These animals all have removable tops.

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So far as I can determine, the animals have not been made by any other manufacturer since then with the exception of the elephant, which has been made by several other glass companies as the years have passed.

When the Co-Operative Flint Glass Co. went out of business in 1934, the elephant mold went to the Erskine Glass Co. in Wellsburg, WV. In 1980, the Erskine Glass Co. also folded, and the mold passed on to Indiana Glass. AA Importing Co., a wholesale importing firm, is also marketing them in the United States at this time. The AA Importing Co. animals come from somewhere in the Pacific market.



The frog and the fish are identical copies of those made by the Vallerysthal Company in France. The Vallerysthal catalog pages are not dated, but they are 19th century. These Vallerysthal animals were certainly made before the Co-Op animals of the 1920s. They were marked "Vallerysthal" on the bottom. A milk glass dealer at the Harrisburg Antique Show has had both in milk glass; they are identical except for the mark on the bottom of the Vallerysthal animals. The bear, the cat and the dog are easily identifiable as they are distinctive; and, as far as I know, another company has never made them.

The animals have a removable top, making them good containers for candy. The original elephants also had other lids—one was an ashtray lid containing a depression for ashes and a place alongside for putting a cigarette, another had holes in it for flowers, and one had a round area on top for incense. The elephants often have the other tops, but the only other animal I have seen with a different top is the milk glass bear that appears in *Milk Glass Today* by Regis and Mary Ferson.



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Determining which elephants were actually made by the Co-Operative Flint Glass Co. would be a good task for Sherlock Holmes, but unfortunately he is not around, so we have to do our sleuthing without him.

How do you tell a new (or reproduction) elephant from an old one that Co-Op made? After study, I have come up with several ways.

The easiest to determine is the color.

Co-Op made the animals in black, milk glass, a nice clear green, amber, ruby, light blue, pink, and a royal blue (almost cobalt) as well as in clear.

Erskine made a brown, dark green and probably the other colors that I've seen: a lavender pink, and some of the same colors that Co-Op made.

The AA Importing Co. has had a cobalt one and a red one in the catalogs I have seen, and undoubtedly they have made them in other colors also.

The clear glass elephant has been made in profusion. Frosted glass elephants are also appearing in clear and other colors. The last one I saw was a pink frosted one in Florida. It would not surprise me to find an elephant in just about any color at this point. The reproductions all seem to have the regular top, not a flower frog, ash-tray or incense top.



Obviously, after all this time (and elephants), the mold would have to be reproduced also, and there are also mold differences:

1. The wrinkles on the trunk of the old elephants are deeper, and there are more of them.
2. The tusks on the new elephant are fatter and have a rounder tip than those on the Co-Op elephants.

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3. The legs are thinner on the new elephants, though this is hard to tell without an old one with which to compare it.

4. In some of the newer molds, the inside of the elephant is different. In the old molds, you can stick your finger quite a way down into the elephant's leg; in the newer ones the legs are solid glass up to the top of the leg.



Of course, the wear on the feet and the quality of the glass itself are also indications of age. The glass in some of the Pacific-rim elephants is of inferior quality.

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Please send your articles to me at editor@ndga.net. Remember, I can't print what I don't have.

Rosemary