



PCA, Inc

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100 Least Important Paperweights and Why You Should Collect Them

Definition: *Medallion Paperweights*

- Medallion paperweights are among the “most historically interesting paperweights one can collect” ... “although not particularly attractive”.
- The medallion weights are also known as intaglio weights with: “a figure or design carved into or beneath the surface”
- There are at least six examples from NEGC from the 1850s. The designs were taken directly from medals or medallions that were issued during the 1850s. (1851 Crystal Palace, Peace Medal, Clay, Lafayette, Webster, Lawrence brothers)

Definition: *Mercury Glass*

- Mercury glass or silvered glass, has with a coating of silver-coloring on the inside. The reason it is sometimes called *mercury glass* is because in the early days the internal coating was mercury. Mercury proved unsuitable. Silver nitrate was used instead.
- The hole on the bottom which allowed access for pouring in the silver coating, was sealed with either a metal or glass disk.

Definition: *Potichomanie*

- In the early 19th century, Victorian sentimentality sparked a revival of decoupage. Brightly colored paper designs and magazine cutouts were used.
- These cutouts were used to decorate glass vases as well. This process, called *reverse decoupage*, applied the glue to the front of the cutouts, which were then positioned inside the glass object. White paint (or plaster) was applied to the back of the print and the inside of the glass. The technique, called **potichomanie**, was intended to imitate porcelain...

Definition: *Flowers & Fruit Paperweights*

- The use of flowers (and fruit) as an extension of Victorian sensibilities and symbolism is fairly well documented and understood.
- Many beautiful encased floral or fruit paperweights were made during this period with a great deal of experimentation with various results. Interesting and often beautiful shading and three-dimensional effects were achieved.
- The NEGC blown fruits are hollow – those from the continent were solid glass.

Definition: *Leaf and floral forms*

- Probably the most interesting design elements that were used were individual “leaf” objects that were individually or collectively added to create an abstract or collective design.
- These weights cannot be positively identified to either NEGC or Sandwich – the workers moved between the factories and many have been restored or polished.
- The flower crosses are among the most complex ‘assembled’ paperweights made.

Definition: *Frit Weights*

- A process where finely powdered glass is formed into a design (with or without a die/mold) and is picked up by a gather of hot glass to create a design in a paperweight or other object.
- There are elaborate polychrome designs with up to 10 different colors being used in the design.
- Almost uniquely American, the frit paperweights range from simple, monochrome folk art objects to incredibly fine, *meister-works* from makers like Michael Kane of Millville.

Definition: *‘Name’ Weights*

- The name weights are found in a variety of forms and levels of artistic merit.
- There are several possible sources of these weights (in terms of factory and maker) and there is little documentation to rely on...
- They represent a growing affluence of those around the glass-workers – a ‘customized’ paperweight was either a work of friendship or a “commissioned” piece. There are many intended for members of fraternal organizations or occupations (e.g., the railroads).

Definition: *Plaque Weights*

- Plaque weights encase a glass plate or disk that incorporates the primary design of the weight
- Plaque weights are another almost uniquely American folk art form from the 19th century and do not appear in great numbers on the continent until after WW I.
- Several plaque type exist: clear glass plaques that have the design or lettering “float” in the weight and opaque glass with paintings or photographs. There are also translucent glass plaques.

Definition: *Patriotic and Nationalism*

- Patriotism and nationalism were at a fevered pitch during the times when paperweights were being made for the mass market and to specialized appeal.
- Citizens of England and the United States were especially eager to have some sort of ‘statement in a paperweight’ although some German ones exist from the early 20th century.
- These are especially interesting from an historical point of view – usually the aesthetics leave something to desire...

Definition: *Midwest Paperweights*

- The term “Midwest paperweights” is sort of a collective catch-all for paperweights that are made in a folk-art style and have no specific attribution available.
- Most were made in Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Indiana although some example can be traced to upstate NY, Kansas, and Missouri.
- Similar to the label ‘Bohemian’, these paperweights are beginning to get the attention of collectors and researchers.

Definition: *Mary Gregory*

- The distinguishing feature of Mary Gregory glass is the stylized white enamel painting usually of a child in an outdoor setting. The trees and foliage often have a typical “feathered” style, the figure is oddly old-fashioned in its proportions, and the enamel is fired onto the glass.
- This kind of decoration developed from the “painted cameo” glass produced in Europe after about 1870 which itself was developed to compete with the very popular carved cameo from England.
- There was no **Mary Gregory** making these objects.

Definition: *Canadian Paperweights*

- There were paperweights made in Canada, eh!
- Hamilton Glass Works, Ontario (1865-1895)
- Burlington Glass Works, Ontario (1875-1909)
- Diamond Flint Glass Works (1890-1902)
- There are at least two books on Canadian glass that show many paperweights similar to the folk-art paperweights made in the ‘Midwest’
- Interesting website as well

Definition: *Chinese Weights History*

- While “common knowledge” has it that a European and American businessman brought several examples of antique paperweights to Shantung province in the 1920s, no actual records exist.
- Great copies exist of beautiful weights flawed only by the quality of glass. The “fakes” have become collectible in themselves.
- Innovations: painted plaque & aquarium weights
- Introduced to American public at the 1933 and 1939 World Fairs (cross-collectible)



Figure 1. New England Glass Medallion Paperweight



Figure 2. Massachusetts Fantasy Flower Paperweight



Figure 3. Potichomanie Paperweight



Figure 4. Czech Coil Butterfly Paperweight



Figure 5. American Frit Sentimental Paperweight (Probably Millville)



Figure 6. Antique Venetian Scent Bottles



Figure 7. Chinese Plaque Paperweights (1930s)



Figure 8. Bohemian Millefiore Paperweight



Figure 9. Joe St Clair Crimp Rose Paperweight



Figure 10. Pennsylvania Area Photographic Paperweight (1890s)



Figure 11. Midwest Plaque Paperweight (Occupation Type)



Figure 12. Union Glass Flag and Name Paperweight (1916)