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Published by the Historic Manheim Preservation Foundation, Inc., 27 Market Square, Manheim, PA 17545

April 2017

## THE STIEGEL OLD WEDDING GOBLET



HMPF received permission from The National Early American Glass Club, [www.glassclub.org](http://www.glassclub.org), to reprint this article by Sheldon D. Butts, which appeared in the Winter 1983 issue of The Glass Club Bulletin.

In 1773 Henry William Stiegel was both at the height of his success and on the brink of financial collapse. His newest and largest factory had opened in 1770 and now employed over 100 workmen. In a February 15, 1773, letter to John Dickinson he said, "My glasshouse is making money fast and is in fine order and the last addition thereto finished." Later, however, in the same letter he noted that he "... was informed by Mrs. Stiegel that the Sheriff of Lancaster County in pursuance to Isaac Cox's execution levied all my effects and taken an inventory of all my household furniture." Stiegel's properties were heavily mortgaged, and his creditors were losing their patience. By late 1774 his collapse was complete, and he spent a brief time in debtor's prison.

On March 23, 1773, we assume he put his financial troubles behind him and joined in the celebration of the marriage of his daughter, Elizabeth, to William Old. The March 29, 1773, issue of *Pennsylvania Chronicle* carried the following announcement:

**"On Tuesday, the 23rd ult was married at Manheim, in county of Lancaster, Mr. William Old, junior of Speedwell forge, ironmaster to Miss Elizabeth Stiegel, eldest daughter of Mr. Henry William Stiegel, proprietor of the American Flint Glass Manufactory."**

We are fortunate that young Mr. Old picked this particular time to declare his love for Elizabeth Stiegel. If he had waited another year or two his father-in-law would not have been able to present the newlyweds with the engraved wedding goblet which is subject of this article. The Old Wedding Goblet has been passed down in the family for over two hundred years and is now available for study by both scholars and collectors. This goblet is important because it holds the promise of being the first piece of glass that can be confidently attributed to Henry Stiegel's American Flint Glass Manufactory.

Henry William Stiegel is eighteenth century American's best know glass figure. His story is told in Frederick William Hunter's 1914 book, *Stiegel Glass*, and in George Heiges' 1948 biography, *Henry William Stiegel and His Associates*. The Stiegel story of rise to riches and fall to debtors' prison had such popular appeal that it was the subject of a 1941 historical, romantic novel by Mildred Jordan, entitled, *One Red Rose Forever*. Yet despite this attention very little is known, with any degree of certainty, about the glass produced by Stiegel in his Manheim, Pennsylvania factory.

Hunter's pioneering book on Stiegel was for years the Stiegel glass collectors' bible and soon all manner of American and European glass of the 18th and early 19th century was attributed to Stiegel. Hunter included 158 examples of glass attributed to Stiegel in his book, but later when George S. McKearin asked John B. Kerfoot, Hunter's brother-in-law and fellow researcher, how many of the specimens illustrated could be proved to be made by Stiegel on the basis of definite evidence, Mr. Kerfoot answered, "Not one." This is not to say that Hunter's book is without merit. *Stiegel Glass* still stands as a monumental achievement and is worthy of serious reading and study particularly when read in the light of today's knowledge. Frederick Hunter helped start a movement in his study of American glass which is continuing today, and for this we owe him a tremendous debt.

As research techniques improved and the amount of information available expanded, scholars and collectors alike began to realize that not all the glass attributed to Stiegel could possibly have come from this one eighteenth century factory. The major attribution problem was that Stiegel staked his commercial fortune on being able to produce glass that was equal to and a direct copy of the imported wares of the period. Therefore, the more successful his imitation, the more difficult it was to distinguish Stiegel wares from that imported from England and the continent. Ultimately glass of the type and style believed made by Stiegel came to be referred to as "in the Stiegel tradition" or "Stiegel type."

This was essentially the situation when our chapter of NEAGC, The Dorflinger Glass Study Group, decided to do our annual tape-slide presentation on Stiegel glass in 1978. In a long-shot effort to gain more knowledge on Stiegel we decided, at the urging of Ken Lyon, one of our members, to write each of the known descendants of Henry Stiegel and ask if they knew of any family held pieces of glass. The task was feasible because the Lutheran Church in Manheim, Pennsylvania, maintained a mailing list of descendants to invite to their annual Rose Festival. The church, which stands on land donated by Henry Stiegel, holds a ceremony on the second Sunday in June during which a single red rose is presented to an heir of Henry Stiegel as specified in Stiegel's

original land grant. Our club, with the help of the church, then mailed out letters of inquiry to 275 known descendants. It was the kind of research gamble that only us eager amateurs would try.

The initial results were anything but encouraging. Then in the fall of 1978, after the tape-slide presentation had been prepared, a letter arrived from Mr. and Mrs. Roland C. Luther, III, of Bluefield, Virginia, describing a goblet believed to have been made for the wedding of Henry Stiegel's daughter, Elizabeth, to William Old. In order for the story to be true Elizabeth Stiegel would have had to have been married within a very narrow time period. Advertisements of the period indicate that Stiegel did not begin producing quality tableware until 1770 and his glass factory was bankrupt by late 1774. We were understandably delighted to read in George Heiges' biography of the newspaper wedding announcement from the March 29, 1773, issue of the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*.

Shortly thereafter we traveled to Bluefield, Virginia, and met the Luthers. They, of course, knew they owned an authentic piece of Stiegel glass; what they did not know was that we glass enthusiasts were desperately seeking it. Mr. and Mrs. Luther acquired the Old Wedding Goblet from Mr. Luther's grandmother, Theresa Yuengling Luther. Her husband, the first Roland C. Luther, was Elizabeth Stiegel Old's great, great grandson. It seemed unusual that such an important piece of glass could have gone unrecorded for so long — especially considering Hunter's intense research in the early nineteenth hundreds. We carefully examined Hunter's book for some reference and were rewarded for our efforts when we found the following note on page 221:

**"Miss Annie L. Boyer, of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, who is a great granddaughter of Stiegel's, informs me that her mother told her this conventionalized rose design was first made for the marriage of her grandmother, Elizabeth Stiegel, to William Old."**

The photographs which illustrate this article were taken in the Luthers' living room when we first saw the goblet. The piece was badly damaged and crudely repaired. Yet even in this state, it demanded respect and inspired awe.

The goblet is clearly in the English tradition, not the Germanic tradition usually associated with Stiegel. It tries to duplicate the best of English wares, but falls short in execution. It is too imperfect in technique to be English, but probably too ambitious in concept to be done by any American glassmaker of the 1770's other than Stiegel. We should not be surprised to find Stiegel glass in the English tradition since he was trying to compete in the Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York and Boston markets. Whether or not he engraved glass in Germanic designs for the local Pennsylvania German market is still an open question.

The goblet is approximately 6¾ inches high and the glass contains some lead. The white opaque twists in the stem resemble, but are not identical to those in a stem fragment found by Hunter in Manheim. The engraved W & E Old is enclosed in heart shaped vines. A rose is engraved on the reverse side.

The Luthers have generously lent the goblet to the Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum in Delaware and it has been professionally repaired. Researchers will now be able to compare the chemical composition of the goblet and the style of the engraving with other pieces believed to be done by Stiegel. Hopefully the Old Wedding Goblet will lead us to other pieces of Stiegel glass.

Mr. Hunter and Mr. Kerfoot, please be assured—the search you started, continues.

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Heiges, George L., *Henry William Stiegel and His Associates*, (The Arbee Foundation, Manheim, Pa., Second Printing, 1976, First Printing, 1948)

Hunter, Frederick William, *Stiegel Glass*, (Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1950, originally published by Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914)

McKearin, George S. and Helen, *American Glass*, (Crown Publishers, Inc., New York, 1941, 1948)

### Footnote:

It's great that The Dorflinger Glass Study Group received cooperation from the Lutheran Church in the search that revealed the existence of the goblet. One wonders why, with the annual Rose Festival service each year in Manheim, the existence of the goblet never came to light. Its presence at the Red Rose services each year would have been wonderful.

## We Too Search!

Other than George Danner and Nathaniel Long, early collectors of Manheim items (1880's-1920's), it seems that few if any of the residents of Manheim ever had an interest in preserving the town's early artifacts. Many items important to Manheim's early history now reside somewhere other than Manheim. Even the so-called local historians over the years made little or no effort to retain and preserve the town's artifacts. Some of them had opportunities to keep in the community, or bring to the community, things like: the candle chandler from the 1772 Lutheran Church; the Stiegel Office stove; the original 1774 fourteen-page act releasing Stiegel from debtor's prison; the pump organ used in the Stiegel Mansion Chapel; the lock from the Stiegel Office door; important specimens of Stiegel type glass from the Ida K. Hostetter Estate auction sale (1946); the many documents once in the possession of the Ensminger Family; the local artifacts acquired and sold by antiques dealers (Missemer, Hahn, Hart), just a few example of the many treasures gone, and, with some, much of their historical identity lost.

Things have slightly changed, since HMPF exists. Besides the items listed in the December Special Edition of our newsletter, many others have been acquired, and we are continually searching to find things that we can hopefully bring to our museum to share with others who love American history, and especially our local history. Our name really states our goal: **Preservation of Historic Manheim!**

**The following are some items just acquired and now in the HMPF museum, archives and library:**



**MATE-BY-M SCHWARTZ  
IN-MANHEIM  
1844**

**Michael Schwartz's shop was located on the south side of Manheim's Market Square. Below is what Manheim artist William S. Rice said about Michael Schwartz's craftsmanship.**

"Several years ago I ran across an illustration in the School Arts Magazine, a publication devoted to arts and crafts in the Public Schools. It interested me very much because I was unaware of such beautiful craft work being done in Manheim by our neighbor Michael Schwartz. It was an illustration of a coverlet beautiful in design (perhaps not original, but nevertheless an artistic creation.) Mr. Schwartz wove beautiful rag carpets, I knew, because we had some of his work on our living room floor. His work was lovely in color and pattern. Where he received his training, I never knew. He reminded me of the lines in Gray's Elegy that ran thus:

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene  
The dark unfathomable caves of ocean bear:  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

Judge of my surprise on seeing this example of Michael Schwartz's weaving in a magazine years after his demise and never having known of such lovely work being produced just across the Square in my own neighborhood!"

William S. Rice



Also acquired is this beautiful oil on canvas painting by William S. Rice, signed and dated 1895. It's framed and now hangs in the hallway leading to our Ensminger Library. Mr. Rice was born in 1873 and died in 1963, at the age of 90. He was 22 years old in 1895.

**William Seltzer Rice** was born in Manheim, Pennsylvania on June 23, 1873. His family's home was on Market Square in Manheim and he and his family were neighbors to John Kendig and his family. Mr. Rice, in his youth, was interested in art and taught himself drawing and even developed an art studio in a small area of his grandfather's carriage shop. After he finished high school and had the necessary funds, by teaching other students to draw, he enrolled as a student in the Pennsylvania School of Industrial Art.

Mr. Rice's talent as a painter and printmaker is recognized nationally. HMPF has copies of Mr. Rice's block print artwork, and now we have one of his fine early oil paintings. Also, in our Ensminger Library Room, we have two different great books on Mr. Rice's life and his talent as an artist.

#### **Additional Acquisitions:**

In memory of the Baron Stiegel Coin Club (1950's -1970's) and George F. Flinchbaugh, Numismatist and co-founder of the coin club, HMPF received a fine group of early and scarce numismatic publications. They have been placed in the Americana section of our Ensminger Library. Since Miles Keiffer and George Flinchbaugh were close friends and Manheim businessmen, Elizabeth Keiffer would be pleased with the gift to our library.

Samuel Ensminger's bible with a decorative bookplate. - loan

#### **Notice of Publication**

**The fourth publication in the Manheim "series" by Henry Deemer will be on sale at Longenecker's True Value, Sloan's Pharmacy and HMPF May 15th. It is entitled "Historic and Notable Buildings of Manheim" and will contain 50+ properties of "Yesterday and Today" photos and information. Also included will be a 40+ page "Reminiscence In Advertising" of what really is a small portion of local businesses advertising up to 1976. It is hoped it will "trigger" the memories of many readers.**

**Please support HMPF by renewing your dues with a \$20.00 payment. A check mark here \_\_\_\_\_ indicated that your dues are due. This is the first 2017 dues notice to our membership.**