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## THE EDITOR'S ATTIC

### Safe and Sane Fireworks

MANY glass collectors have a fondness for the so-called Christmas lights that survive among products of early glass factories. These little cylindrical cups with curved bases, which occur in various colors, are for the most part pattern-molded and are generally classified as Stiegel-type. Some examples of later type that have been found were apparently blown in full-size molds, rather than being expanded after receiving a pattern impression in a small mold. And though the Attic is not acquainted with examples, it is quite possible that lights were produced in pressed glass as well. Certainly the form was made at a number of glass-houses in this country, as well as abroad, and over a considerable period of time. Indeed, glasses made to serve as altar lights today

are not very different from their nineteenth-century prototypes which shed a tinted glow by means of a wick floating in oil.

While these objects are commonly referred to as Christmas lights, it is recognized that their use was not limited to Yuletide illumination. Helen McKearin, who has had occasion to list a number of specimens in auction catalogues, states that they were used at garden fêtes and in churches. The latter utilization explains why they are often called vigil lights.

The advertisement of 1876 here reproduced

**1776. FOURTH of JULY. 1876.**

**Illuminate your Houses & Grounds**

—WITH THE—



FIG. 1 — ADVERTISEMENT OF A PROVIDENCE MERCHANT. From the collection of Lawrence B. Romaine

duced (Fig. 1), forwarded to the Attic by Lawrence B. Romaine of Middleboro, Massachusetts, supplies a new name for an old object: centennial lamp. For celebration of the glorious Fourth, such lamps, "in all colors," are offered to illuminate indoors and out. The illustration of a window with a dozen lights ranged in it suggests that these particular examples have flat bases, sufficiently stable to keep the lights upright without other means of support. This is in contrast to the early pattern-molded pieces with curved bottoms. The pattern in the glass is not clearly enough portrayed to be identified. It might be an expanded diamond, or it might be something quite different. The lights are offered for sale by "John R. Shirley, Cor. Pine and Eddy Sts., Providence, R. I., sole agent for Rhode Island. Price per Dozen, ready for Use, \$1.50. Price per Gross, \$15.00." Shirley's source of supply is not revealed, but doubtless several contemporary glass factories were producing similar wares.

### A Mold for Pewter

A RARE find has recently been added to the pewter collection of John W. Poole of El Dorado, Arkansas — a copper mold for the casting of large pewter basins (Fig. 2). As Mr. Poole writes the Attic, spoon molds are very common, plate molds have been found, and so have molds for small elements like porring handles. But a piece as large as this one is so unusual as to be



FIG. 2 — COPPER MOLD (open and closed). For casting pewter basins 10 3/8 inches in diameter. A great rarity, complete except for one clasp. Identification of the original owner could doubtless be made by discovery of a pewter bowl that fits the mold. From the collection of John W. Poole

unique. Moreover, it is in excellent condition, complete except for one clamp.

The workings of the mold are readily comprehensible from examination of the illustrations showing it open and closed. The two parts were tightly clamped together, then grasped by the long handle. The molten pewter was poured in through the small aperture (apparent in the open view), which was likewise the outlet for air. The result was a fine pewter basin of large size.

It is probable that the original ownership of this mold could be traced, if a pewter basin could be found that exactly fitted it. The mold has been submitted to Ledlie I. Laughlin, who compared it with bowls in his extensive collection without finding the answer. Of a number of basins that he owns, only one is of exactly the required size: a two-quart item, 10 3/8 inches in diameter, made by John Bassett. But while it corresponds with the mold in size, it differs sufficiently in the rim molding so as to make it highly improbable that the basin was cast in this mold.

The mold is an odd size in which very few basins are found. Yet surely there must exist somewhere at least one piece that was made in it. In order that other collectors may join the quest for the Cinderella basin that fits the glass slipper, the measurements are here given: inside diameter, 9 7/16 inches; diameter including rim, 10 3/8 inches; depth, 3 inches. The mold itself is at present on loan at the Brooklyn Museum where it may be examined by any hopeful Prince Charming.

### Information Not Lacking

THERE is scarcely a phase of American antiques that someone has not appropriated as his special field of study. Often he has done it solely to satisfy personal curiosity, and the results of his research are not publicly available or even known to exist. But nine times out of ten, when the statement is made in ANTIQUES that information is lacking on a certain point, *someone* will turn up to supply the deficiency.

In ANTIQUES for December 1939 Lawrence B. Romaine prefaced his article, *American Toys After 1850*, with the remark that information about the first toy factories in the United States seemed to be lacking. While he proceeded to furnish a number of facts, he made no claim that the gap was filled. And now comes word from Louis Hertz, editor of *The Model Railroaders' Digest*, that he can