

Steuben Glass

“Steuben glass? What’s the big deal?...Hey, I’m a guy! What do I know about Steuben glass?” Well, I don’t have to say that anymore!

Steuben Glass Works is an American art glass manufacturer, founded in the summer of 1903 by Fredrick C. Carder and Thomas G. Hawkes in Corning, New York. Hawkes was the owner of the largest cut glass firm then operating in Corning. Carder was an Englishman (born 18 September, 1863) who had many years experience designing glass for Stevens and Williams in England. Hawkes purchased the glass blanks for his cutting shop from many sources and eventually wanted to start a factory to make the blanks himself. Hawkes convinced Carder to come to Corning and manage such a factory.

The factory started operation in October 1903. Carder produced blanks for Hawkes and also began producing cut glass himself. Carder's great love was colored glass and had been instrumental in the reintroduction of colored glass while at Stevens and Williams. When Steuben's success at producing blanks for Hawkes became assured, Carder began to experiment with colored glass and continued experiments that were started in England. He soon perfected Gold Aurene which was similar to iridescent art glass that was being produced by Tiffany and others. Gold Aurene was followed by a wide range of colored art glass that eventually was produced in over 7000 shapes and 140 colors.

Steuben Glass Works continued to produce glass of all sorts until World War I. At that time war time restrictions made it impossible for Steuben to acquire the materials needed to continue manufacture. The company was subsequently sold to Corning Glass Works and became the Steuben Division. Carder continued as Division manager. CGW management tried, mostly unsuccessfully, to limit the articles that Steuben made to only the most popular. Production continued until about 1932. Then there was a major change in Steuben management. The nationwide depression had limited the sale of Steuben and there was also a lessening of public interest in colored glass. In February of 1932, John MacKay was appointed to Carder's position and Carder became Art Director, Corning Glass Works. Steuben then produced primarily colorless art glass whose production continues to this day. The last known sale for colored art glass by Steuben was in 1943.

Corning Glass Works appointed Arthur Houghton as President in 1933, and under his leadership Steuben changed artistic direction toward more modern forms. Using a newly formulated glass developed by Corning, which had a very high refraction index and unsurpassed transparency, Steuben designers developed designs that defined a new look in glass art. Pieces such as Gazelle Bowl, designed by Sidney Waugh incorporated Art Deco and modernist themes into glass. Recently celebrating its hundredth year of operation, Steuben Glass remains the premiere art glass manufacturer in the United States.

The glass egg featured in the motion picture, Risky Business (1983), was designed by Steuben.

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