WELCOME TO Fenton

AUTHENTIC Fenton HANDMADE ®

THE FENTON ART GLASS COMPANY
Williamstown, West Virginia 26187

We are pleased to have you visit us. And we hope that you will enjoy seeing the creation of handmade glass.

As you watch the ancient art of making fine glass by hand you will see a curious blend of centuries old skills and tools and computer age glass technology. For even though working with a quality of glass unknown to history, it is the historically respected skill of Fenton craftsmen which imparts the ultimate beauty to each handcrafted piece of Fenton glass. The matchless skill of hand and eye — the source of pride of the hand-glass craftsman — this is the real story of Fenton glass.

We take pride in our facilities and in the dedicated craftsmen who create world famous Fenton glass.

FACTORY TOUR SCHEDULE

September through May

Monday through Friday (Daytime)
9:00, 9:20, 9:40, 10:00, 10:20 A.M.,
12:20, 12:40, 1:00, 1:20, 1:40, 2:00, 2:20, 2:40,
3:00, 3:20 and

Tuesday and Thursday (Evenings)
5:20, 6:00, 6:40, 7:20, 8:00 P.M.

June—July—August

Monday through Friday—Tours *each evening* from 5:20 till 8:00 P.M. in addition to the regular daytime tours above.

Advance reservations are requested where possible for groups of 20 or more.

GIFT SHOP HOURS

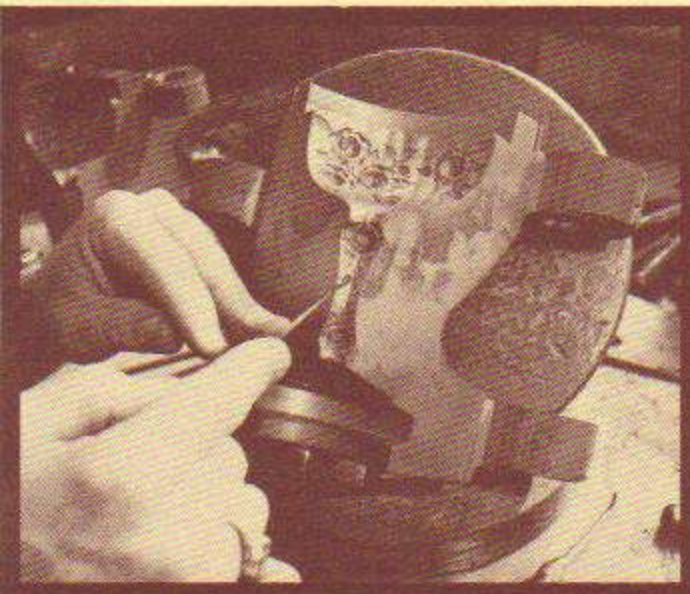
September through May

Daily—Monday through Saturday—9:00 A.M. till 5:00 P.M. and Tuesday and Thursday open till 9:00 P.M.

June—July—August

Monday through Friday 9:00 A.M. till 9:00 P.M.
Saturday 9:00 A.M. till 5:00 P.M.

The Fenton Art Glass Company is located in Williamstown, W.Va., just across the Ohio River from historic Marietta, Ohio. It is easily reached by Interstate I-77 and from W.Va. State Routes 2, 14 and U.S. Route 50.

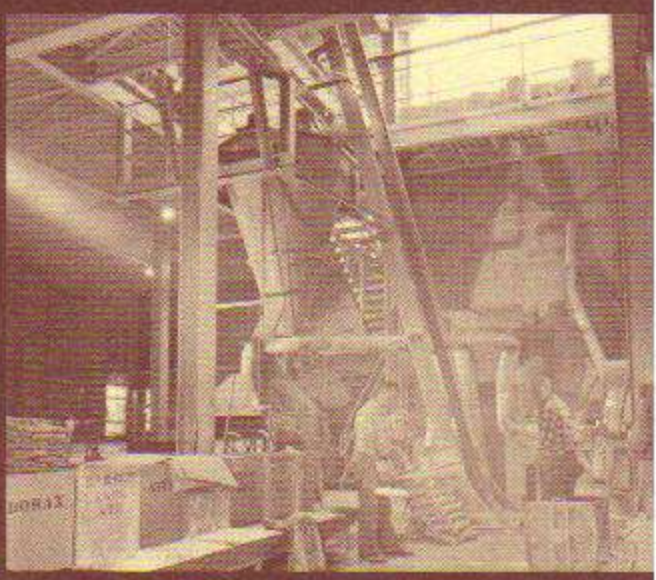


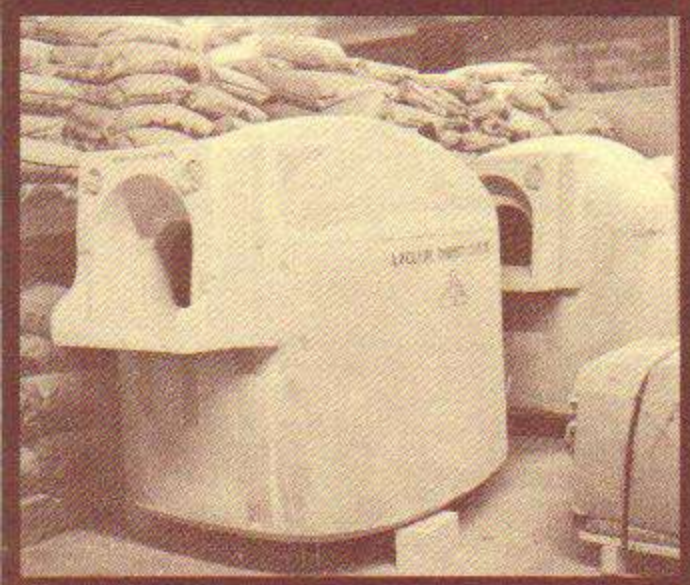
MOULD SHOP

Beginning with blank moulds cast from special high quality alloys, the vise hand patiently carves the beautifully intricate Fenton patterns and designs into the vacant mould. Some designs may take several months to sculpt. The tools used are very delicate chisels and files. Translating the one-dimensional lines of the designer's drawings into the complex bold reliefs and valleys of the finished mould requires great patience, skill and artistic feeling.

BATCH

Basic ingredients in Fenton "batch" are silica sand, soda ash and lime. Other chemicals are added to create colors or to give the glass special physical properties. For example, Fenton's Colonial colors require sugar, iron and sulphur (amber), copper (blue), iron or chromium (green), selenium and cadmium sulfide (orange). World famous Fenton milk glass requires fluorine and aluminum and, so far as is known, Fenton is the only major hand glass company which uses pure coin gold to obtain Gold Ruby Glass.



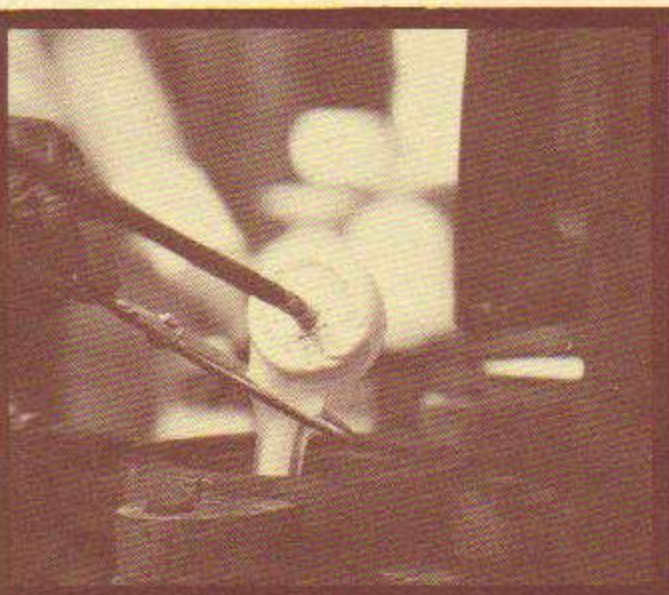


MELTING

Fenton Glass is melted in "pots" and in "day tanks." The refractory clay pots are in a furnace which circulates flames outside the pots but where no flame touches the glass. The day tank, about 3 times the size of a pot, melts glass by fire played directly on the batch. It takes 24-30 hours for a pot melt and 12 hours for a day tank melt. Temperatures of about 2500°F. are required to melt the batch.

THE GATHERER

The gatherer winds molten glass on the end of a hollow blowpipe or the tip of a long steel rod called a punty. He must be expert at judging the proper amount of glass to gather so that each piece of ware gets started on its way neither too heavy nor too thin. The speed at which he turns the punty, together with the size of its tip, determine the amount he gathers. He also must shape the gob properly and drop it in the center of the mould.

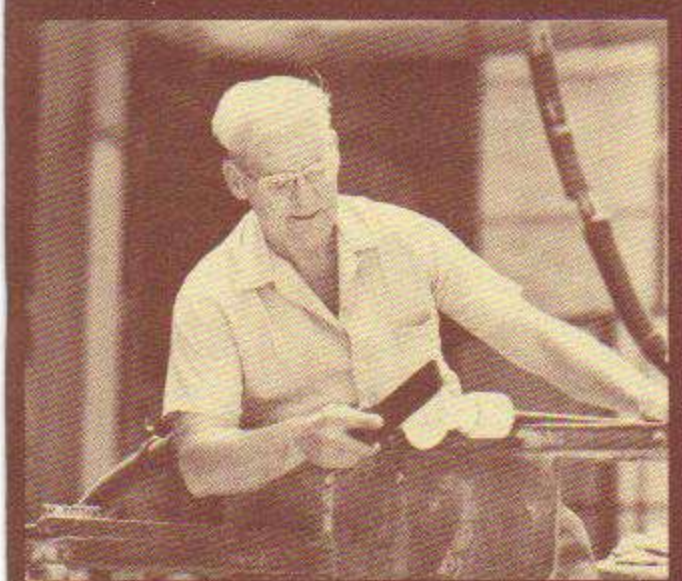


THE PRESSER

Only years of experience can give the presser the sense of feel so important to making hand pressed glass. With his shears, the presser snips off the molten glass dropped into his mould by the gatherer and flips the cut end into the mould to prevent a shear mark. He then pulls the lever and holds it for just the proper time to form the glass. Too much pressure and the glass will shatter, too little and the mould won't fill.

THE BLOWER

After the blocker has shaped, cooled and blown the first bubble of air into the "gather," a carry over boy delivers the gob of glass still on the end of the blowpipe to the blower. After the blower reheats the rough shaped piece in the glory hole, he then rolls it on the flat steel marver plate to obtain a shape similar to that of the blow-mould. Standing on the traditional blower's platform, he blows the hot, viscous piece into its final mould, imparting to the piece its basic shape and pattern.

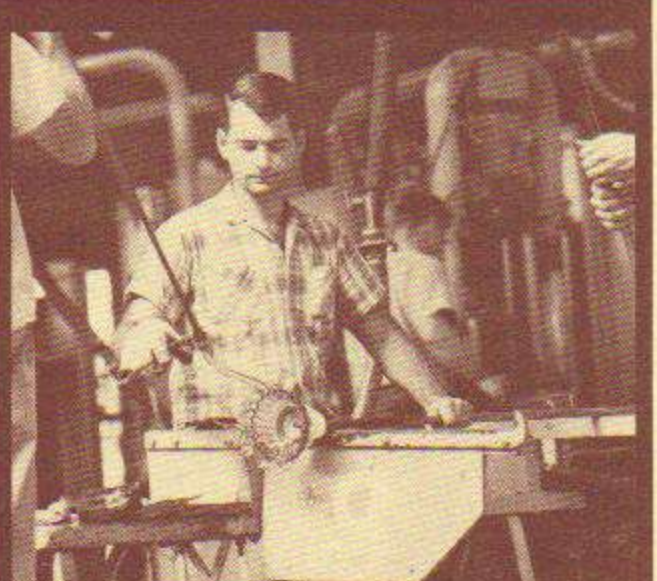


THE FINISHER

The finisher or "gaffer," using the Pucellas, or "tool," and a cherry wood paddle, age old implements of the glass worker's art, forms the piece to its final shape. He flares the glass, crimps it, changes its shape, and straightens the stem on footed pieces. His sense of timing must be honed to a fine edge, for he works the glass as it is on the threshold of becoming immovably chilled. The Fenton Trade Mark depicts a finisher from Medieval times.

THE HANDLER

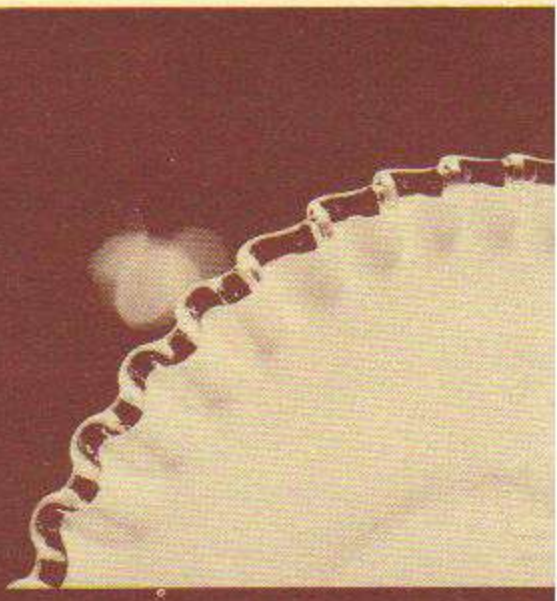
Great skill is required of the craftsmen who put handles on baskets and jugs. In very fast order, the handler attaches a glowing ribbon of glass to a piece, forms a loop and attaches the other end. After crimping the handle, he then works it into a graceful arch, straight and true. The design on the stamp he uses to affix the handle is his alone, and every Fenton handle can be traced to the craftsman who created it.



THE FENTON EDGE

Two techniques in handmade glass for which Fenton has become particularly famous are the crimped edge and Silvercrest or crystal edge. The delicate ruffle of the crimp and double crimp has earned these Fenton pieces a place of special recognition in the art glass world.

Only Fenton's most highly skilled craftsmen can spin the sparkling crystal edge on pure white milk glass to create exclusive Fenton Silvercrest. Although the brilliant crystal seems like a part of the piece, it is added after the milk glass has received its basic shape.



VASE SWINGING

The vase swinger, after reheating the top of a thick walled goblet in the glory hole, swings the glowing glass in soaring arcs until centrifugal force draws the hot glass into a long, slender vase. The final shape of the vase depends on the speed he swings the piece, the time he allows the glass to cool, and the number of revolutions he makes with it. No two Fenton vases are ever alike.

FENTON QUALITY

The quality inspection of each piece of Fenton glass begins the moment it is first formed in the hot metal department. Every worker assumes responsibility for quality checking each piece he handles. Fenton glass may have been checked as many as a dozen or more times before reaching the quality selector who passes the final judgment. The sticker on each piece certifies that it meets the traditional standard required of all fine Fenton handmade glass.

SHIPPING

After Fenton ware receives its seal of quality, it is packed in individually designed "air-pack" boxes. This method of packing eliminates the inconvenience of excelsior and shredded paper and sharply reduces the chance of breakage in shipment. Carried by conveyor to the shipping department, boxed Fenton ware is put in the flow rack inventory control system from which order clerks can readily fill orders from gift shops and department stores throughout the country and from as far away as Australia.

MAKING FENTON GLASS

BATCH is the mixture of raw materials that is fed into a **POT FURNACE** or **DAY TANK FURNACE** where it melts down into glass. The molten glass is removed on a long metal, ceramic tipped, **PUNTY** (or pontil) by the **GATHERER** who drops the gob into the center of a **PRESS MOULD,** after which the **PRESSER** cuts it off with his **SHEARS.** Then, pulling the side lever of his press, he sends the **PLUNGER** into the mould giving shape and pattern to the piece.

In a **BLOW-SHOP** the gatherer winds the molten glass on a hollow **BLOW PIPE** and delivers it to the **BLOCKER** who cools and shapes the gob in a wooden block placed in a tub of soapy water and gives the piece its first bubble of air. The blocker gives the blow pipe to the **BLOWER** who reheats the rough shaped piece in the **GLORY HOLE,** and then rolls it on the flat steel **MARVER** plate to obtain a shape similar to that of the **BLOW - MOULD.** Standing on the traditional blower's platform, he drops the hot, viscous piece into its final mould. He then blows the glass into every recess of the mould, imparting to the piece its basic shape and pattern.

From the moulds, the ware is taken by the **CARRY OVER BOY** to the **WARMING IN BOY,** who places it in a **SNAP** and then in the glory hole until it becomes hot enough to be crimped, flared, or straightened by the **FINISHER** or **GAFFER,** who works the piece with the age old glass making tools, the **PUCELLAS,** or "tool" and the **BUFFER,** a cherry wood paddle. If the piece is to have a handle it is brought to the **HANDLER.** He attaches a glowing ribbon of glass to one side of the piece, snips the molten glass from the gatherer's punty, tamps down the cut end with his **STOMPER,** and quickly works the glowing ribbon into the graceful arch of the Fenton handle.

The piece is then taken by a **CARRY IN BOY** and put into the **LEHR** or annealing furnace to be slowly cooled. This process removes the stress and strain from the glass to prevent it from cracking when it cools to room temperature. **GLASSWARE** is removed from the lehr by **SELECTORS,** who examine each piece carefully for flaws or defects. The ware is separated into three categories known as **FIRST QUALITY, SECONDS,** and **REJECTS.**

The first quality ware receives a Fenton Trademark Label and is **PACKED** in individual cartons and sent by **CONVEYOR** to the **SHIPPING DEPARTMENT,** where it is kept in **FLOW RACKS** from which **ORDER CLERKS** assemble orders to be shipped to customers throughout the United States and many foreign countries. Seconds are taken to the "Gift Shop" to be sold at a reduced price. Rejects, also referred to as **CULLET,** are remelted or taken to the dump and destroyed. Unfinished ware which needs some further refinement is brought to the **FINISHING DEPARTMENT** where it may be sawed, ground and polished, or drilled to meet customer specifications before it is sent to the Shipping Department.