

"Clyde! Where Are You?"

By John Spellman



John Spellman pictured with his favorite lettered flask from the Clyde Glassworks, NY.

It was 1967 when a friend of mine dug in an old dump along the New York Central Railroad in Savannah, New York. He found a Chicago insulator, miscellaneous medicine bottles and two amber half pint flasks with E. Son and H on the bottle of the bottle. I immediately recognized that embossing as the owners of the Clyde Glass Works, Clyde, New York circa 1890: William Ely, his son Charles Ely and George Hoyt. I bought both bottles for \$4.00 and thus began a collecting hobby that still brings together great friends, beautiful glass and wonderful glass shows even after 42 years of collecting experience.

In 1968, I joined the Genesee Valley Bottle Collectors Association at their May monthly Meeting which was then held at the Klem Road School in Webster, New York. At that meeting I bought three glass items from Dr. Burton Spiller for \$168.00 on a six month contract; A Olive Green Quart Flask, an aqua Blue Quart Flask, and a Lions Head Decanter with stopper. Both flasks had the "Clyde Glass Works - Clyde, NY" on the side. At that time I was making \$68.00 at Star Markets in Rochester, New York.

By 1971, I had joined the Empire State Bottle Collectors Association in Syracuse, NY and began to attend the meetings and shows in Syracuse. Savannah was located 54 miles east of Rochester, 34 miles west of Syracuse and only 7 miles East of Clyde, so it very natural for me to concentrate on the

Clyde Glass Company.

In fall of 1974 I married Carol Ann Buisch from Lyons, New York. She too was enthusiastic about history, antiques and Clyde Glass. I could not have been happier.

I had heard about a cobalt blue fruit jar being kept in a safe by Alphonse Nicoletta, a local history buff.

In 1976 I had the opportunity to attend his estate sale when the cobalt blue jar was sold for \$3,100.00 to Richard VanderLinde. At that same auction I was able to buy a few Clyde Glass Bottles, and clear Clyde Fruit Jars, along with some antique Farm Tools.

As my collection continued to grow and in the 1980's I began to produce exhibits on the Clyde Glass Works at the Bottle Shows held by the Rochester, Syracuse, Ithaca and Utica Bottle Clubs. Carol with her educational background and my historical information, we were able to create several different displays that resulted in many awards-Best of Show, Most Educational and People's Choice.

Because so many collectors had taught me about bottle collecting, in the spring of 1988, I decided to share my knowledge by working with Steve Groat from Clyde, New York to create a video on the Clyde Glass Company. Bottle collectors are always interested in learning about glass, the glass houses and the even all the stories of how they found their special glass pieces. The video has made it way into the archives of the Corning Glass Company along with the United States Smithsonian.

In 1988, the bottle collecting community bubbled over



Award Winning Clyde Glass Exhibit in 1994



Steak and Bottles at the Meat Market, July 1994

again with the Floyd Johnson auction. Floyd had worked at Eastman Kodak as a tour guide for many years and was an avid collector, many pieces from the Clyde Glass Works. Floyd had been a avid collector, buying many items but most were stored in his home and he never drew attention to his collection. I had gotten to know Floyd with the Genesee Valley Bottle Club and learned much from Floyd in regards to the Clyde Glass Company. I was able to buy several Whimsies attributed to the Clyde Glassworks; one being a two gallon Flared Demijohn, Open Pontil, with a white swirled throughout the jar. I went home from that auction with a car full of treasures.

Auctions were not the only place where I gained items for my collection. In July 1991, I received a call from a neighbor, Jim Watkins. He owned a house on the corner of High and Seneca Street in Savannah. He has seen a amber bottle with Clyde written on it hidden in the floor joist in his cellar. He went upstairs and punched a hole in his bathroom wall and was able to retrieve a nice 12 ounce Clyde Bottle with complete stopper. After he gave it to me, his wife did not speak to me for two months.

One of my fondest memories were the picnics we had at Homestead Meats, the meat market which I owned from 1984 to 1995. Carol and I would invite the members from the Syracuse, Rochester, Utica and Ithaca Bottle Clubs. I would cook the steaks and they would line up all around the big tent with their trucks and cars full of boxes of bottles. We would eat great food and talk bottles from noon to dusk.

In 2002 Carol and I had the privilege to serve on the committee with Barb Schwarting for the FOHBC

National Show in Syracuse. We were responsible for the Show Booklet. We were proud to have an exhibit showing off our Clyde Glass Works Collection. And I

was the guest speaker for the Banquet, portraying Dr. William Sweeting of the Flag Salt Remedy Company in Savannah. There were lots of laughs along with an interesting and historical background. At that same meeting, I was presented the Federation True Story Award for the article that I wrote on "For Once in a Blue Jar".

For almost ten years we also served as the co-Chairmen for the Empire State Bottle Collectors Spring Show in the Syracuse Area.

At the height of my collection, I had close to five hundred different pieces of Clyde Glass Works Products.

In the years between 2004 and 2006 I sold most of my Clyde Glass Collection to Chris Bellizzi from Clyde and Dick Kelley (Mr. Peppermint) from Lyons, New York. Carol and I were thankful for the collection which served as a great investment package. Because of it, we were able to remodel our kitchen and bathroom with a whirlpool bathtub for those joints which plead for such loving care.

I still collect Warner's, Kilmer's, undertaking items and local Savannah History. We both thank you for the many good times, memories and for the countless friends we have made from across the United States.

From Savannah, New York, we wish you the best in bottle collecting ahead.

John and Carol Spellman



The Cobalt Fruit Jar, Clyde, New York. Sold in 2001 for \$17,500.00