

More Tableware from Fenn

by Barry L. Bernas

Introduction

In the Summer 2004 edition of *Bottles and Extras*, I introduced a group of water bottles made to the March 30th 1897 patent granted to William B. Fenn.¹ In the article that follows, I want to continue with the same theme and show more of Mr. Fenn's attractive tableware pieces.

Decanter

Figure 1 is a picture of a decanter. Right off, you will notice the lip region is much different than the same area on a water bottle. Instead of a flared outward design, this example carries a flat lip segment. Also, this piece took a stopper as a top section closure whereas the carafe had none.

On the decanter in **Figure 1**, the outer neck has a notch and band motif. The stopper is faceted with a rounded apex.² A Royal pattern is embossed around the bottom half of the vessel. Its capacity is three pints. On the underside, the base shows a daisy with twenty-four petals.³ The screw band on this specimen is the tin version.

I've found that the necks of the decanters I have inspected had either no markings anywhere on them or one of the below kinds of embossing. On the curved outer surface of the vertical protrusion below the bead, the phrase - PLACE THE RUBBER HERE - has been noted. Similarly, the bottom edge could have one of the trailing phrases inscribed on it: 1) PATD MARCH 30-97; 2) PATD MARCH 30-97 OTHERS PENDING or 3) PERFECTION BOTTLE CO WILKES BARRE PA PAT MARCH 30 97.

Figure 2 is a picture of the four individual sizes known for a decanter in the Royal pattern. You will note they are proportional in stopper size/shape, top section length⁴, screw ring diameter⁵ and bottom contour. Moving from left to right, the base capacities are three, two, one and one-half pint.

The bottom of the decanter in this line was manufactured with other patterns besides the

Royal sample seen in **Figures 1** and **2**. The counterpart outer motifs had the Imperial, Colonial and Optic One designs on them. Only the Royal, Imperial and Optic One styles to the bottom section came in the four sizes depicted in **Figure 2**. The Colonial version was different. It had simply two capacities of either eight or six ounces.

The decanter was advertised for a little over one year. I've located what I believe to be the initial promotion by the Perfection Manufacturing Company of Washington, Pennsylvania. It appeared in the October 23rd, 1902 edition of *Crockery and Glass Journal*. This piece of separating ware was also shown in the first Perfection Glass Company ad in the August 20th, 1903 version of *Crockery and Glass Journal* and in the firm's product catalog - *The Evolution of Table Glass*. With this marketing lineage, it appears the decanter series was manufactured and sold from at least October 1902 up to December 1903 at a minimum.⁶

Creamer

Another piece of William B. Fenn's unique tableware is pictured in **Figure 3**. This specimen is a creamer. It came as part of a set, consisting of three other items.⁷

The creamer was produced only in the Colonial pattern. This regal motif was molded onto both the top and bottom halves of the container. There is no embossing anywhere on this piece of glass. Topped by an elegant cover, most likely made of nickel plated zinc, it has a matching screw band composed of the same metal. The handled bottom section holds eight ounces of liquid.



Figure 3

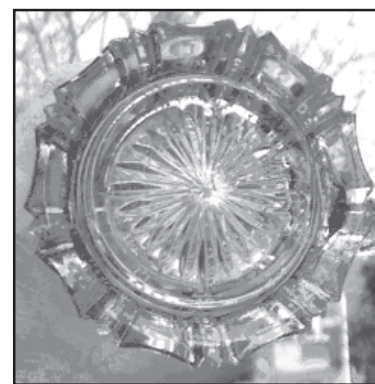


Figure 4

Figure 4 shows the outline of its base and the pattern on it.

The first advertisement I could find for this item appeared in the June 11th, 1903 version of *Crockery and Glass Journal*. It continued to be advertised in consecutive issues of the same periodical through August 13th, 1903.

The sponsor of this promotion was the Perfection Manufacturing Company of Washington, Pennsylvania. I believe this firm was a jobber for glass articles made by the Sterling Glass Company of the same location. Both organizations (Sterling and

Perfection Manufacturing) would be absorbed into the Perfection Glass Company when it was chartered as a Commonwealth corporation on July 9th, 1903.⁸

Crockery and Glass Journal continued to carry a depiction of **Figure 3** in Perfection Glass Company ads beginning with their

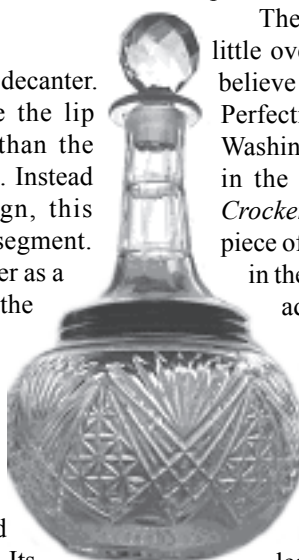


Figure 1

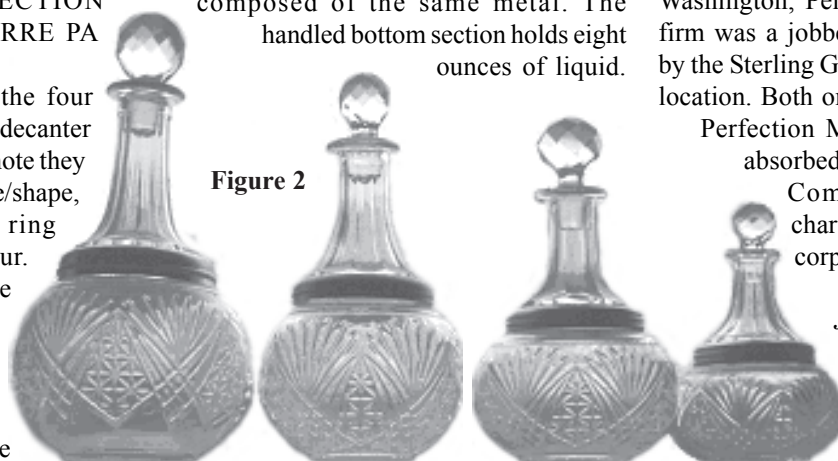


Figure 2

August 20th edition. The last offering for this item was in the November 1903 magazines - *Ladies' Home Journal* and *The Munsey*. Both pronouncements also came from Perfection Glass.⁹

With these advertisements as a guide, the creamer wasn't manufactured for a very long period. Perhaps this example was turned out for about a five month segment of time in 1903. However, promotions can also be deceiving, especially when all of them may not have been located.

Whether the revamped Perfection Glass organization continued its production of this item after December 1903 isn't known. I've located no sales promotions that indicate the creamer was being produced thereafter. However, there were reports of replacement pieces and "separating" were being made well into 1905.¹⁰ So the longevity for this article could have stretched into that year.

Regardless of the production cycle, this piece is quite scarce. I've seen three in ten years of searching.

Syrups

The third piece of William B. Fenn ware to show is a syrup jug. In addition, it doubled as a condensed milk dispenser.

This separating tableware item came in two styles. The first resembled the creamer profile. It is depicted in **Figure 5**. The other kind can be seen in Figure 7.

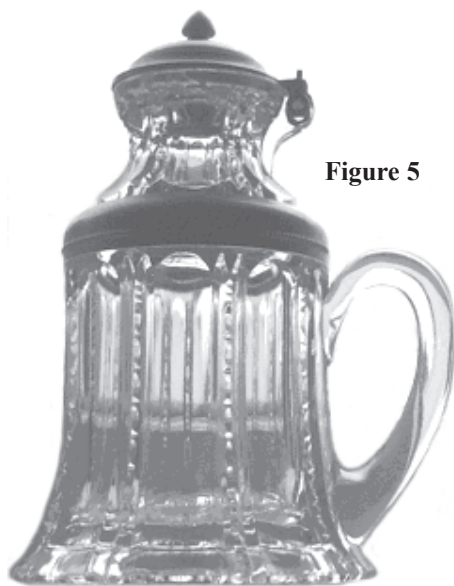


Figure 5

The feature which distinguished a creamer from a syrup/condensed milk jug was the pour spout. In Figure 3, this feature was molded onto the outer top section. For either example in Figure 5 or 7, the same spout is under the cap. **Figure 6** shows this aspect quite nicely.

From the information I've been able to uncover, the syrup container in Figure 5 was made only in the Colonial motif. As with its mate, it enjoyed the same advertising provenance as the creamer in Figure 3. But there was an exception to this quick comparison. Unlike its companion, the piece in Figure 5 also came in a smaller, six ounce size in addition to the eight ounce version pictured.

Nothing whatsoever was embossed along the curved area below the ledge on either example of syrup jug I own. But on the bottom edge, each one had the inscription - PATD MARCH 30 97 OTHERS PENDING - on it.

The Colonial patterned syrup/condensed milk jug is also a scare item to locate in either capacity. Over the same ten year cycle of time, I've come across a solitary example of a six and eight ounce container. The probable short period of production along with the accumulated time interval between then and now have increased the likelihood that few of these items have survived for collectors to appreciate.

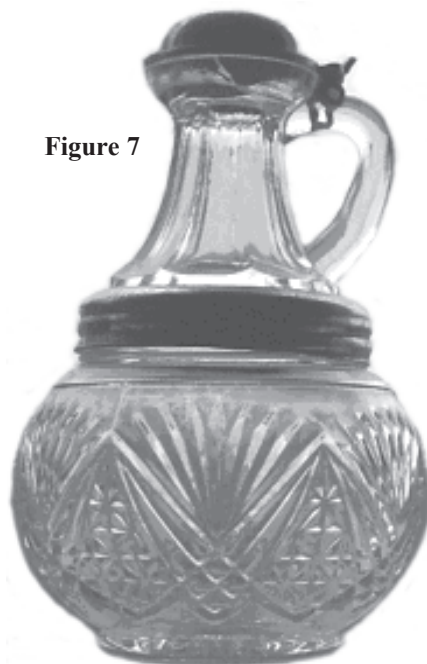


Figure 7

The vessel in **Figure 7** has the Royal design on its base and a panel motif around the top section. As opposed to the ornate metal closure seen on the Colonial dispenser in Figure 5, this cover was simpler in appearance and utilitarian in function. Made of tin, it served the purpose of keeping unwanted guests out of the jug's

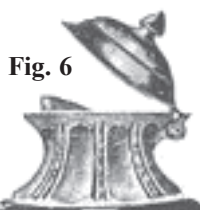


Fig. 6

contents.

This style of syrup or condensed milk container came with the Royal, Imperial and Optic One patterns on the bottom's outer surface. The capacity of the base cavity also had two sizes. These had volumes of eight ounces, as shown in Figure 7, and one pint.

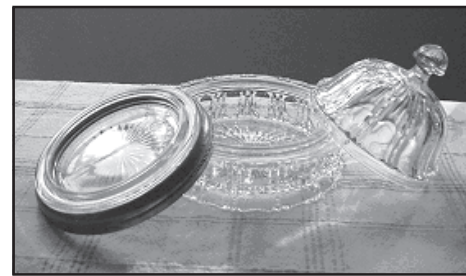
With one exception, markings on the two locations of the top section were the same as listed for the Figure 5 sample. The odd variety had - PATD MARCH 30-91 - embossed on its bottom edge.¹¹

Advertising for the jug in Figure 7 ranged further back in time than its counterpart in Figure 5. The initial promotion I came across for it was in the October 23rd, 1902 edition of *Crockery and Glass Journal*. Henceforth, it appeared on and off in Perfection Manufacturing product announcements throughout early 1903. This item continued to be carried in initial Perfection Glass ads starting in August 1903.¹² Of course, it was in the Perfection catalog - *The Evolution of Table Glass* - which was distributed later in 1903.

A popular item, the style of container in Figure 7 may have been continued in production by Perfection Glass hands past 1903.

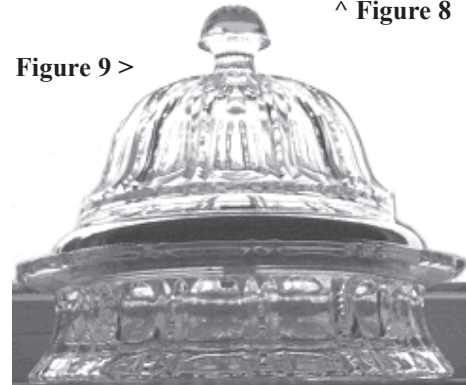
Butter Dish

The next table piece I want to show was also made to William B. Fenn's 1897 concept. Called a chilling butter dish in *The Evolution of Table Glass*, this decorative article came in four pieces. Dissembled in **Figure 8**, the reassembled example follows as **Figure 9**.¹³



^ Figure 8

Figure 9 >



The unassembled version in Figure 8 has a screw ring and circular plate together on the left. In actuality, they are separate articles. In the center is the bottom cavity of the butter dish. On the right is its top.

The item in Figure 9 came solely in the Colonial design. To give you some idea of the butter dish's size, it is 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches in height and 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches across the horizontal ledge below the screw band. It is a heavy piece of glass. The assembled example weighs three pounds and three ounces.

The first mention of a chilling butter dish I could uncover appeared in a Perfection Manufacturing Company promotion. It was in the June 4th, 1903 edition of *Crockery and Glass Journal*. Starting with the June 11th issue of the same publication, this article was shown in an advertisement from Perfection Manufacturing for the next ten weeks. Thereafter, Perfection Glass Company ads in the same journal and other national magazines either displayed or mentioned the chilling butter dish through November 1903.¹⁴

With the above heritage as a basis for a conclusion, this item was made and marketed for a short period of time. I've seen only three examples.

Scalloped Flanged Tumbler

Figure 10 depicts an Imperial design on a tumbler with scalloped flanges sticking outward on the inside of the container just below the lip. This glass was promoted as the hotel model or style 52. If you can believe the write-ups in the trade weeklies about this novel piece of glassware, this article was the rage in early 1903.

The first indication of this type of

tumbler was an ad in the January 8th, 1903 issue of *Crockery and Glass Journal*. From this point through November of the same year, it and other examples in different patterns and styles were actively promoted.¹⁵

Recap

According to comments in trade journals and the 1903 Perfection product guide, workers at the Sterling and Perfection Glass Companies manufactured seventy-six different kinds of tableware. Most of these were of the separating kind but there were other pressed pieces that didn't come apart. In my 2004 article about William B. Fenn's water bottle, Royal, Imperial, Colonial and Optic One/Two patterns were identified for the outer surface on the base of these carafes. By accounting for the capacity varieties for the bottom sections, a total of seven different kinds of water bottles were discussed.

For this companion piece, fourteen decanters, a single creamer, two Colonial and six Royal, Imperial or Optic One jugs, a chilling butter dish and one tumbler were presented.

Of the seventy-six possible candidates, thirty-two examples have been discussed. If you would like further information about the aforementioned articles or have new details to share about this line of glassware, I'd enjoy hearing from you.

Barry

Endnotes

¹ *The William B. Fenn Patented Water Bottle, Made For Perfection*, Barry L. Bernas, *Bottles and Extras*, Summer 2004, pgs. 17-19.

² The other style of stopper would be faceted with a pointed top.

³ *The William B. Fenn Patented Water Bottle, Made For Perfection*, Barry L. Bernas, *Bottles and Extras*, Summer 2004, pg. 18. The left-hand example in Figure 10 from the above reference is a daisy design.

⁴ The outer surface of the top section on each decanter in Figure 2 has the panel style. I'm not sure whether a Colonial patterned top section also exists.

⁵ Both nickel plated zinc and tin bands are shown in Figure 2.

⁶ *Crockery and Glass Journal*, October 23, 1902, pg. 16; Ibid, October 30, 1902, pg. 18; Ibid, November 6, 1902, pg. 16; Ibid, November 13, 1902, pg. 16; Ibid, November 20, 1902, pg. 12; Ibid, August 20, 1903,

pg. 40; Ibid, August 27, 1903, pg. 40 and the Perfection Glass Company's product catalog, *The Evolution of Table Glass*, published circa August to October 1903. There is a possibility the decanter line of ware could have been made earlier than October 1902. I have one example of a top section with the embossing - PERFECTION BOTTLE CO WILKES BARRE PA PAT MARCH 30 97. This wording would indicate this item may have been made prior to September 1902 before the Perfection Bottle Company became the Perfection Manufacturing Company.

⁷ The creamer was one part of a four-piece table set. The other members were a chilling butter dish (discussed later in this article), a spoon holder and a covered sugar.

⁸ Washington County Corporation Book, Volume 2, pgs. 289-291.

⁹ *Crockery and Glass Journal*, June 11, 1903; Ibid, June 18, 1903; Ibid June 25, 1903; Ibid, July 2, 1903; Ibid, July 9, 1903; Ibid, July 16, 1903; Ibid July 23, 1903; Ibid, July 30, 1903; Ibid, August 6, 1903; Ibid, August 13, 1903; Ibid, August 20, 1903; Ibid, August 27, 1903; *Perfection, Another Glasshouse in a Glass Town*, Barry L. Bernas, *Bottles and Extras*, Spring 2005, pgs 56-57; *Perfection Glass Company, One of Many Glass Houses in Washington, Pennsylvania*, Barry L. Bernas, 239 Ridge Avenue, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 2005, pgs. 8-9; *Two Corners in Time*, Barry L. Bernas, *Bottles and Extras*, Winter 2005, pg. 8; *Ladies' Home Journal*, November 1903; *The Munsey*, November 1903 and Washington County Corporation Book, Volume 2, pgs. 289-291.

¹⁰ *Crockery and Glass Journal*, August 11, 1904, pg. 28; Ibid, April 13, 1905, pg. 25 and *Commoner and Glassworker*, August 13, 1904, pg. 1. Between August 1904 and April 1905, I don't believe any tableware items were produced at Perfection's alternate facility, the Republic Glass Manufacturing Company in Moosic, Pennsylvania. This site was used to manufacture selected Perfection Glass articles while the firm's main factory in Washington, Pennsylvania was undergoing an upgrade.

¹¹ The 91 was an obvious pattern maker's error. Instead of that figure, the number 97 should have appeared. Of note, I've found similar errors with the first numeral of 97 as well. The digits 8, 9 and 0 have all been seen.

¹² *Crockery and Glass Journal*, October 23, 1902 through November 20, 1902; November 27, 1902, pg. 3; Ibid, December



Figure 10

4, 1902; Ibid, December 11, 1902; Ibid, December 18, 1902; Ibid, January 1, 1903, pg. 8; Ibid, January 8, 1903, pg. 16; Ibid, January 15, 1903, pg. 18; Ibid, January 22, 1903, pg. 36; Ibid, April 2, 1903, pg. 11; Ibid, May 28, 1903, pg. 29; Ibid, June 4, 1903, pg. 29; Ibid, June 11, 1903 through August 13, 1903; Ibid, August 20, 1903, pg. 40; Ibid, August 27, 1903; Ibid, September 3, 1903, pg. 40; Ibid, September 10, 1903, pg. 40; *Saturday Evening Post*, August 15 1903; Ibid, August 29, 1903; Ibid, September 19, 1903; *McClure's Magazine*, September 1903; *The Munsey*, October 1903 and Ibid, November 1903.

¹³ Figure 8 was extracted from the sellers' ad on the electronic marketplace eBay when I was bidding on the item.

¹⁴ *Crockery and Glass Journal*, June 4, 1903, pg. 29; Ibid, June 11, 1903 through August 13, 1903; Ibid, August 20, 1903, pg. 40; Ibid, August 27, 1903, pg. 40; Ibid, September 3, 1903, pg. 40; Ibid, September 10, 1903, pg. 40; *Saturday Evening Post*, August 15, 1903; Ibid, August 29, 1903; Ibid, September 19, 1903; *McClure's Magazine*, September 1903, pg. 60; *The Munsey*, October 1903 and Ibid, November 1903.

¹⁵ *Crockery and Glass Journal*, January 8, 1903, pg. 52; January 15, 1903, pgs. 18 and 29; Ibid, January 22, 1903, pg. 36; Ibid, April 2, 1903; Ibid, May 28, 1903, pg. 29; Ibid, June 4, 1903, pg. 29; Ibid, June 11, 1903 through August 13, 1903; Ibid, August 20, 1903, pg. 40; Ibid, August 27, 1903, pg. 40; *The Munsey*, November 1903 and *The Evolution of Table Glass*, published circa August to October 1903.

Continued from Page 58.

river banks for Indian relics, I was familiar with the color of skeletal remains. The skull I'd found inside the house was ivory-colored and not nearly as dark as some of the Indian bones I'd found. I concluded these bones were newer and couldn't have been found outside and hidden behind the wall by a wild animal.

I also discarded the notion the bones might have been found by a child in a nearby old cemetery and hidden inside the wall, because there wasn't a cemetery close enough to the house. Evidently someone had put them there on purpose so no one would ever find them. That meant foul play and probably murder. The small size of the skull indicated the victim had to be a child. Four or five inches of dust and trash had covered the bones so that meant the incident had to have happened nearly 100 years ago.

My mind reeling from the discovery, I retreated to the front porch to gather my wits. Sitting in the cool shade, one of my first thoughts was to call the police and report what I had found. I discarded that idea since I didn't think they'd be interested in investigating a 100-year-old murder and I wasn't comfortable with the notion of being scrutinized by them. Besides, what if I was wrong and the remains were more recent? I could just imagine the questions they'd ask me!

With the time fast approaching for Janet to pick us up, Cousin Billy and I loaded up our equipment and old bottles and headed to the rendezvous site. Our elation at finding the bottles was dampened by the discovery of the skull and bones, which I determined to take with me.

Janet was about an hour late and Cousin Billy and I nearly froze, except I was as cold on the inside as the outside because of my grisly discovery. Janet was quite taken aback when I showed her the skull. Being close friends, she could sense that I was upset over the discovery.

During the next couple of months, I read everything that was available about the Furgurson family. Thomas P. Furgurson and his wife had the house built shortly after the end of the Civil War. They became the parents of a son named John, who wed Sarah. In 1906, Sarah gave birth to Thomas, who lived until 1998. I was familiar with Thomas, having met him several times during my two-year tenure at Paul's Food Market in South Pittsburgh from 1977-79.

I took the skull to my family doctor to get an opinion as to its age, gender and perhaps even the cause of death. The doctor, who had

known me for many years and also was familiar with my collecting habits, was quite surprised (to say the least!) to see the skull. He couldn't determine gender or cause of death, but thought the skull as nearly a century old.

In hopes that the bundle of letters I'd found hidden in the house's attic would shed some light on my research, I began reading the ones I'd not perused. One dated 1910 caught my eye. The local Methodist church minister was enquiring into the health of John and Sarah's two small children, baby Thomas and little Christina Lee. That was news to me because I was under the impression that John and Sarah had only the one child, Thomas, who had recently died at the age of 92. I began asking older folks living in the area about her. Inquiries proved fruitless and those who had known Thomas swore they'd never heard of an older sister!

This was a revelation because surely Thomas would have known of an older sister, even had she died as an adolescent or even as a young adult.

Was it Christina's remains I had found behind that wall. If so, who put them there and more importantly, who had killed her? One of her parents? God forbid!

The more I thought about it, the more that possibility had become a reality. Did the people who loved Christina the most end her life and put her into that awful, dark place? If so, how did they explain her disappearance to the minister and their neighbors? The hairs on the back of my neck stood up on their ends as a shudder passed through my body, thinking of the horrible scenario.

I kept Teena (my nickname for Christina) in my dresser drawer for another 11 months. I had no nightmares or experienced any supernatural phenomenon during that time as I searched for a suitable final resting place. I had no intentions of returning her remains to the vile home place where she'd probably met her end.

Instead, I chose the old Methodist church grounds as the only place hallowed enough, the grounds on which she may have played and picked flowers as a little girl.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Except for the ghostly sightings, this is a true story. I have changed a few names and rearranged dates and locations. Today, Teena lies where I buried her remains in April 2002, beneath a huge, 200-year-old oak tree in the Methodist churchyard. Its broad branches serve as a canopy for her final resting place.