

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Clarke's Fairy Lamps

As we read an article in History News published by American Assn. for State and Local History, we noted the mention of fairy lamps. A collection of these lamps was being exhibited in Detroit, Mich., by Dr. and Mrs. Henry D. Stricker, members of the historical society of that city. This name intrigued us and we went on collecting information, of the meaning and history of fairy lamps.

These fairy lamps were candle-lamps manufactured from 1844 through 1910 in England. The Clarke trademark is a fairy on a clear glass base. There were, of course, other candle-lamp manufacturers during that period, among them some imitators of Clarke.

Although Clarke's Pyramid and Fairy Light Co. of Child's Hill, London, England, makers of candles, manufactured the bases themselves, they often "contracted out" the manufacturing of the lamp shades. The shades were as varied as their uses; advertisements advocated their appropriateness at royal affairs as well as at medicinal tables as bronchitis lamps. One particular lamp, the "Burglar's Horror," was featured as a night light protection.

Clarke Fairy Lamps are noted for their beauty and fine art glass. They provide an interesting study in art glass numbering among their types peachblow, burmese nailsea, and others familiar to fans. The burmese lamps are reputed to contain uranium.

After reading about fairy lamps and finding herself intrigued by the term as well as its description, Mrs. Stricker reports that she spent ten years searching before she found her first lamp. More fascinated than ever, the Strickers began collecting in earnest; their collection now contains approximately 90 lamps, making it one of the largest in the world.

Dr. and Mrs. Stricker literally "live with antiques." Their collections range from furniture, dishes to toy banks, but fairy lamps are the favorite.

"We discovered another item in History News which should be of interest on the Peninsula. The item concerns Colonial Williamsburg's six-week summer seminar and the following information.

The author believes that each year a greater number of American families discovers the fun, the interest and the value of historic house tours. Sturbridge Village; Cooperstown, Mount Vernon, and Colonial Williamsburg attract thousands of visitors each year. Restoration and reconstruction projects similar to these are mushrooming at an unprecedented rate and the public is flocking to them as fast as they open their doors.

This summer the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Colonial Williamsburg are sponsoring a Seminar for Historical Administrators to help meet the demand for competently trained personnel to take responsible positions in this new, dynamic field. Behind this demand for personnel is the multiplication of historic restorations throughout the United States and the increased activity among historical agencies in the field of historical interpretation.

The Library of Congress will establish an inventory of important manuscript collections throughout the nation with a grant of \$200,000 received from the Council on Library, Resources, Inc., of Washington, D.C

The inventory will be known as the National Union Catalogue of Manuscript Collections. The dream of historians for three-quarters of a century. It is expected to be of invaluable aid to scholars seeking the "primary" source materials they need for research – in history, literature, economics, science, etc. It will enable them to determine which collections in the United States have bodies of manuscript material written by or to particular persons and organizations or dealing with particular historical periods, places, topics, or events.

It is planned that the Library of Congress will print and sell the catalogue cards describing each collection so that any library in the country may maintain a similar record for its readers.