

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Colorful Paperweights

An exhibit of beautiful and colorful paper weights is now on display in Casa Serrano, the headquarters of the Monterey History and Art Association on Pacific street, near Franklin.

These treasures are the proud possessions of Mrs. Barry Jones of Pebble Beach and Mrs. Guernesy Nevius of Carmel. There are fifty in the exhibit which is shown by hostesses every Saturday and Sunday from 1 until 4 o'clock to which the membership and public are invited.

Glass paperweights were among the oddities produced by the glassmakers in the middle of the Nineteenth Century. These ornaments reached the height of their production in England during the Chrystal Palace exhibition in 1851. Though they were not considered of much value, they attracted much attention and have been collected to some extent ever since. Their owners value them for their bright colors, the novelty of their decoration, and the technique displayed.

Alice R. Rollins in her book "Antiques for the Home" writes: "Originally paperweights were attributed to Venice where, as early as the sixteenth century, millefiori patterns were used for vases, plates, and other pieces. The art was revised by glassmakers of France and the method of making the ware was later introduced into England and the United States by French workmen.

"The best English paperweights were made between 1840 and 1850 and came from Bristol, Birmingham, Stourbridge, and Nailsea. The latticinio patterns were introduced at Nailsea. by French workmen. This design was built up of white threads similar to cotton twists of wineglass stems made during the Eighteenth Century. Sometimes the design is found in the paperweights."

The American-made product was very popular and abundant between 1860 and 1880. Paperweights were made at East Cambridge and Sandwich, Massachusetts, and at New Jersey factories, and at Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. The paperweights produced during this period are those which are in demand today.

"Millefiori, which is an Italian word meaning a thousand flowers, is a name sometimes given to these glass objects. In creating the pattern, according to 'Antiques for the Home,' workmen made rods or canes of white

and colored glass, grouped them together in molds to form the desired designs, then heated them in the furnace until they fused. While they were still malleable, a pontil was attached, at each end and they were pulled out thin, the design remaining in its original form. The rods were then cut in slices. Each little slice made a distinct design, and the workman could use as many of them as he had patterns or room for arranging each as on a cushion top. A ball of clear glass was fused on top of these flowerets to form a bun or dome top."

In addition to being used in paperweights, millefiori also appears in other glass pieces such as inkwells, door-stops, door knobs, bureau and mirror knobs, letter seals, marble, ornamental balls, the bottom of scent - bottle stoppers, walking canes, knives, forks and spoons.