

Fact Sheet about Early American Pattern Glass (EAPG)

--Early American Pattern Glass, also known as simply "pattern glass", is pressed glass tableware (& some related novelty glass items) made in America during the Victorian period ca 1850-1910, in "sets" such that all of the pieces in the set matched in design.

--These sets of dishes were made by hundreds of glass factories. The number of patterns has been estimated to be as high as 3000 however in some of those patterns only a few forms (items) were made. The number of patterns made in full sets was probably closer to 1000.

--Despite our romantic notions about these times, life was very difficult for these Victorian Era ladies who endured the Civil War, reconstruction, Westward Expansion, & dread diseases and who enjoyed none of our modern "conveniences" such as running water or electricity.

--EAPG was manufactured in beautiful clear crystal glass & in a limited number of colors, including sapphire blue, 'apple' green, vaseline (canary), amber, and later some cobalt blue, deep amethyst and emerald green colored glass. It was never created in a light purple color.

-- In the 1860s the formula for most EAPG began to change with glass companies using soda lime instead of lead oxide because, as the story goes, lead was needed for other purposes during the Civil War. Actually, soda lime in the 'new' formula cost 1/5th as much as lead. Manganese dioxide, was used as a decoloring agent until WW I when selenium was substituted.

--Glass made from this formula (called "soda lime" or "non-flint" glass) is now known to discolor or turn purple when exposed to UV rays such as from the sun or a germicidal lamp. Because of this tendency to discolor and because EAPG that has discolored is highly devalued as an antique, it is recommended that the glass not be displayed or stored near a sunny window.

--In recent years EAPG which has become discolored has become popular for a couple of reasons. 1 - people like the light purple color and 2 - some believe that buying a light purple piece of glass insures that they have purchased a genuine American antique.

--The FACT is that some glass makers are now making glass dishes in a color that simulates the "sun purple" color of light amethyst so the color is no longer a guarantee of age of the glass.

--Responding to the market for light amethyst glass, some are now hastening the color change in EAPG by exposing thousands & thousands of pieces to germicidal UV lamps or even to radiation.

--The FACT is that this color change is irreversible and with every color altered piece of EAPG, a piece of historical American glass is greatly devalued and essentially lost as a treasure.

--The Early American Pattern Glass Society ascribes to the notion that we who possess genuine antiques are merely temporary stewards and are obliged to preserve each precious piece of memorabilia for future generations to also enjoy and pass on in its original, unaltered state.

For more information about EAPG go to www.PatternGlass.com

