



Tiffin Glass

Factory is gone, but collectors preserve its legacy

By RoNEISHA MULLEN
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TIFFIN — Ruth Hemminger has dedicated the last two and half decades of her life to glass.

Studying glass, collecting glass, and even writing books about glass. But she's only interested in the homegrown stuff made by the men and women of the community in which she lives — Tiffin.

"A lot of it is the pride in

your hometown manufacturing, but it's also the beauty of it," Mrs. Hemminger said. "It's just special things they did, the colors and patterns. You learn to appreciate those things."

Love for the unique designs and colors of Tiffin glass runs deep in the town that bears the same name and where the glass-works were produced for 95 years.

In 1985, five years after the Tiffin Glass Co. factory shut down and a year after the outlet store closed, a small group of collectors formed the Tiffin Glass Collectors Club in hopes of preserving the legacy.

"We wanted to preserve the Tif-



Glass lovers Lyman and Ruth Hemminger.

fin glass. The name," said Mrs. Hemminger, president of the club. "They thought if we don't do this it'll die."

What started as a social group, mainly for show-and-tell, has evolved into a nationwide group of Tiffin glass connoisseurs.

At its peak, the club had more than 300 nation-

al members and about 20 local members attending monthly meetings. National members visit for the club's shows held twice a year. Group activities are funded by dues and donations.

In 1998, the club decided to put its love for Tiffin glass on display.

More than 1,000 Tiffin

creations line the shelves of display cases in the Tiffin Glass Museum and retail store the collectors opened at 25 South Washington St. in the downtown area.

Of the works, cobalt blue vases and stemware are the most eye-catching along with flame-colored bowls, a glass cane, and a 5-foot-tall red glass vase with blue tip.

Along with the popular twilight color, Tiffin's version of lavender, the Palais Versailles design that was one of the glassmaker's most famous patterns is on display at the museum. The crystals are trimmed in 24 karat gold and were used at the wedding of Princess Grace of Monaco and owned by Elvis Presley.

The museum attracts

visitors from all over the country and abroad, including places like Germany and Canada, who stop in to admire the collections of blown glass, cut glass, pressed glass, colored and hand-painted glass.

Club members have pitched in to purchase pieces and collections to add to the museum.

Mrs. Hemminger, 78, is small in stature, but she stands tall on her knowledge and love for Tiffin glass.

"You just know," Mrs. Hemminger said when asked how she can tell a true Tiffin piece. "It's a matter of learning about your hobby, just like you would cars or cameras."

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Above and right: Two of more than 1,000 pieces on display at the Tiffin Glass Museum.



Top of page: The Cherokee Rose pattern glass produced in the early 1940s by Tiffin Glass Company.



The Tiffin Glass Museum is at 25 South Washington St. in downtown Tiffin.



Melody Ladd of Rancho Cordova, Calif., visited the Tiffin museum recently.



Stemware in various designs produced by the now-defunct Tiffin Glass Company.



A piece from the Ritz Carlton.

BLADE PHOTOS
BY JEREMY
WADSWORTH

Right: Pieces of one of the Tiffin glassmaker's most famous patterns, Palais Versailles.

