

# Out of the Past

## Cut Glass and Other Lamps by Libbey

By Carl U. Fauster

After the New England Glass Company moved from Cambridge, Mass., to Toledo, in 1888, and changed its name to Libbey Glass Company, catalogs of its products were issued with some regularity until about 1910.

These were catalogs of cut glass, usually undated, but they can be identified as to the approximate year by the patterns illustrated. The earliest of these catalogs was issued about 1893. Most fortunately, copies are preserved in the Toledo Museum of Art, given to that library by Libbey Glass Company in 1961.

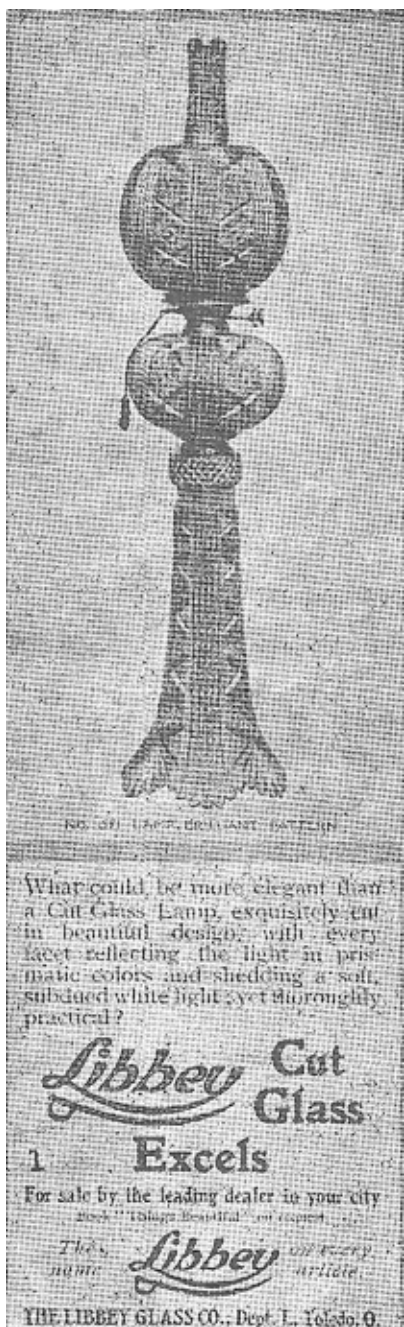
Since none of these cut glass catalogs illustrate lamps of any style, it is



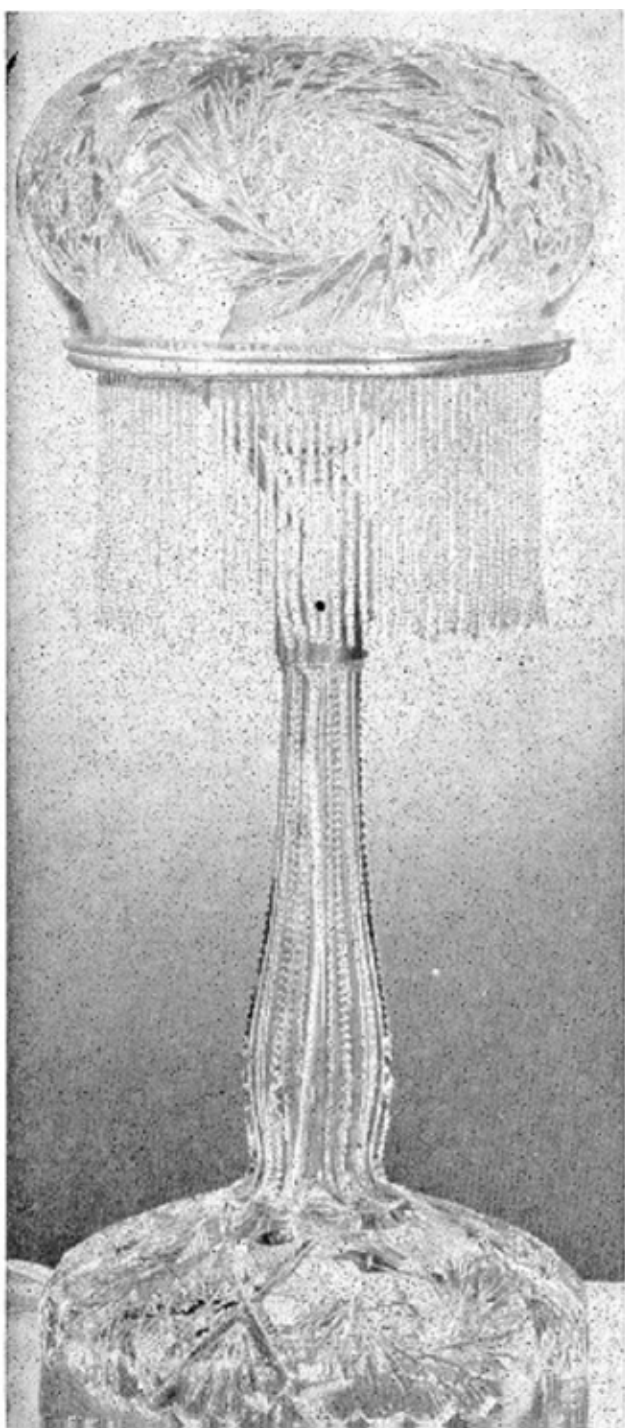
2. Two elaborately cut lamps made as exhibition pieces for the Libbey cut glass collection displayed at the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904. Each is a three piece assembly of base, fluid bowl, and globe. The taller lamp is complete with cut-glass chimney, and measures 40 inches without the chimney. These lamps are in the collection of the Toledo Museum of Art.

concluded that lamps were not stock items. Yet we know they were made and even featured in Libbey magazine advertisements.

For example, in the Ladies Home Journal for November 1902, the "No. 571" lamp in the "Brilliant" pattern is illustrated. This would be an



1. A rare example of magazine advertisement featuring a Libbey cut glass lamp appeared in the November, 1902, issue of Ladies Home Journal. It is identified as "No. 571 Lamp, Brilliant Pattern", one of the most popular patterns of the "Brilliant Period" (1880-1905) when Libbey operated the largest cut glass factory in America. Height of this table lamp was about 40 inches. No retail price was mentioned.



**3. This smaller 15" desk or table lamp was probably a special presentation piece made by the Libbey Glass Company about 1908 for William F. Donovan, long time officer of the company. It is unique in that the base and hollow stem permitted wiring for electric light bulb. The lamp was in the Donovan family until the death of Mr. Donovan's son in 1957, but has been unaccounted for since.**

impressive 40 inches in height, assembled in three pieces. These consisted of base, bowl, and globe. The bowl contained the illuminating fluid, and between

the bowl and the globe was the adjustable wick fitment. As a final touch of elegance, the chimney itself was thick glass with an intricate cutting. The price of the lamp is not disclosed, but the advertisements state "The name Libbey on every article" and shows the trade mark with the sword. A lamp quite similar to this "No. 571" is in the collection of the Toledo Museum.

Existing photographs of the Libbey exhibit at the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904 show two of these massive 40-inch cut-glass table lamps. In addition, probably made especially as an exhibition piece, is a cut-glass floor lamp measuring 53 3/4 inches in height, without the chimney.

This impressive piece is assembled from four



**4. Two of the four style lamps made by the Donald Biever Company of Philadelphia using glass of the Libbey Modern American series, designed by Edwin W. Fuerst in 1940. A total of only 150 such lamps were made before World War II restrictions terminated production.**

**One of the straight-sided spiral optic styles, shown at right, is in the author's collection. Photo is part of a window display of Indianapolis jeweler, Chas. Mayer Company, taken in 1941.**

pieces - a base, an upright column, a bowl, and a globe, plus the cut chimney. This piece was presented to the Toledo Museum by Libbey in 1951.

Of slightly later vintage because it was wired and fitted for an electric light bulb, is a smaller 15" dressing table or desk lamp. The base was

undoubtedly adapted from a hollow-stemmed compote, inverted and topped by a shallow globe with a metal fringe from which hung a glass-beaded fringe. The cutting is executed expertly in a variation of hobstars and wheat.

The lamp originally was in the home of, and may have been made expressly for, William F. Donovan, a long-time associate of Edward Drummond Libbey. Mr. Donovan served as an officer and director of the Libbey Glass Company.

His daughter, Mrs. Donovan Parrell of Loudonville, N. Y., writes, "The lamp must have been made circa 1908, as we built our Winthrop Street house about 1906, and I remember the lamp as a youngster and through my teens in that house."

In 1951 the lamp was exhibited by the Toledo Museum for its special Libbey Glass exhibition, on loan from Mr. Donovan's son, William P. Donovan, Jr. However, the lamp has been unaccounted for since his death in 1967. The last lamps ever to be made by Libbey were the very few that were produced during the era of Libbey's Modern American series in the early 1940's. As with the earlier cut-glass lamps, they were never cataloged nor illustrated in advertisements.

The reason was that Libbey did not sell the completed lamp, but rather sold the glass components to the lamp manufacturer, the J. Donald Biever Company of Philadelphia. Biever produced a line of fine quality lamps at the time, but has since gone out of business. Unfortunately, but understandably, the glass components were not identified with the Libbey signature.

Designer of the Modern American series, Edwin W. Fuerst, recently recalled the essential details of these lamps. He said, "Regarding the lamp bases, there were four styles, but I believe we only were able to furnish quantities on three of these. My memory of the retail prices of the completed lamps is that they were to range from \$26 to \$80. I am sure we never made more than the

5. Captioned "The Chief Charm of the Table", this Libbey Cut Glass advertisement is from a 1906 issue of Century Magazine. The centerpiece could be either a lamp commercially produced or merely a decorative addition for the cut glass shown on the table. The lamp base is flute cut like a candlestick, and the shade appears to be frosted with an etched gold key design.

original quantities, as I have noted."

Still existing factory drawings of the four lamp bases are dated 1940. Only one production run was made of three of these four styles before war restrictions on the use of lead terminated production of all the Libbey Modern American series, the last time hand-crafted glass ever was made at the Libbey

time hand-crafted glass ever was made at the Libbey factory.

Longhand notations referred to by Mr. Fuerst were in his personal copy of the Modern American catalog. These indicate the single production run produced 59 only of base "No. 1207," a 9 1/2-inch straight optic base; 41 only of base "No. 1208," a 10 1/2-inch spiral optic piece; and 50 only of base "No. 1210," a 9 3/4-inch tall and 8-inch diameter bulbous shape. The fourth style never was produced beyond the sample.

Mention should be made of lamps Libbey produced in their Maize glass, so popular just before and right after the factory moved West. Dr. Arthur G. Peterson's article on this famous glass in HOBBIES for February, 1969, reprinted an advertisement by the W. L. Libbey & Son Company in an 1889 trade journal. It showed three styles of Maize lamps.

Still another style lamp is illustrated in a Libbey advertisement in The Century magazine of 1906. Captioned "The Chief Charm of the Table," it illustrates a candlestick-type lamp and blown-glass

shade with frosted and etched design and hanging threaded strings of beaded glass.

Collectors would be well advised to look for lamps that might have had their origin at the famous Libbey glass factory in Toledo. They are not always easy to identify and they are extremely rare because so few were produced.

Lamps that are signed, or otherwise can be proved to be Libbey, are usually scarce. Therefore they are sought highly by museums as well as advanced private collectors.

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