

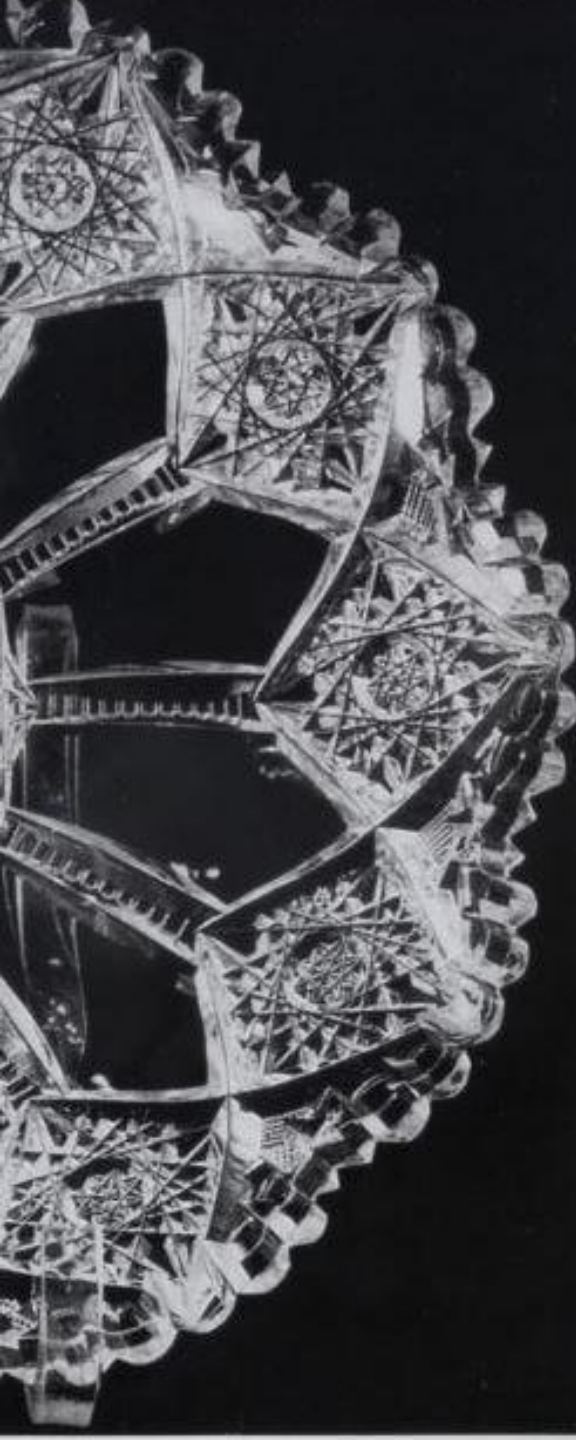
# *A Brief History of American Brilliant Cut Glass*

***Glass is one of the most ancient products of civilization.***

It was first manufactured more than 2000 years before the start of the Roman Empire. By 1500 B.C. it was being used in decorative vessels. Its double existence as a utilitarian resource and as a source of wonderment has continued through the centuries. In the nineteenth century, cut glass became a highly regarded luxury. It was considered a status symbol to have English, Irish or continental cut glass. In 1876 the tide turned. The United States celebrated its 100th birthday with a huge Centennial Exposition held in Philadelphia. The major attraction at this exposition was the display of American Rich Cut Glass. Thus began the brilliant period of cut glass.

Under the newly built Eiffel Tower at the World Exposition of 1889 in Paris, an American company was awarded the top prize for cut glass. With the brilliance of the glass, elegance of design and the intricate cuttings, the T. G. Hawkes Company won the prestigious Grand Prize. This established American brilliant cut glass as the finest in the world. In 1893, Libbey Glass Company made brilliant cut glass widely popular with its magnificent pavilion at the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago. They set up a complete glass blowing and cutting shop. The Libbey pavilion was one of the biggest hits at the fair.

For 40 years (1876 – 1916) American Brilliant Cut Glass dominated the world market. Glass makers such as C. Dorflinger & Sons in Pennsylvania, Corning Glass Works in New York, Libbey Glass Company in Toledo, Ohio, the New England Glass Co. and others produced glass blanks that have never been surpassed for clarity



and brilliance. Cutting firms expanded and grew. J. Hoare & Co., T. G. Hawkes & Company, Tuthill Cut Glass Company, T.B. Clark & Co. and the J. D. Bergen Co. were but a few of the companies that hand cut this brilliant glass. As the talent of the cutters progressed, the patterns became more elaborate and intricate. The demand and appreciation for American Brilliant Cut Glass expanded throughout the United States.

With the outbreak of World War I a basic material for the creation of glass became scarce when lead was needed for bullets rather than glass. Public taste had turned to simpler, less costly wares. The labor unrest that infected the glass industry and the war in Europe which curtailed the importation of crucial ingredients for glass making were also major factors. Gradually, and inevitably, the manufacturers closed their shops, the artisans turned to other pursuits, and the glittering glass disappeared into the attic.

### **Formation and Function of the American Cut Glass Association**

In 1978, one hundred and two years after the Philadelphia Centennial, forty people whose common bond was a love and appreciation of American Brilliant Cut Glass met in Indianapolis, Indiana to form a non-profit organization. Their purpose was to foster knowledge and appreciation of American Brilliant Cut Glass as a distinct art form; for historic preservation of cut glass as an early American art form; to create a record of some of the outstanding works of art; and to provide a place where it may be seen, honored and respected; to provide information to members; and to provide opportunities for personal contact through annual meetings and other communications.

Twenty five years after that original group met, the American Cut Glass Association (ACGA) has grown from the original 85 charter members to almost 2300. The association's main ideals remain the same: education, knowledge, and promotion of this American art form.

In the last three decades this rich cut glass has been recognized as a legitimate and unique expression of art in the United States. The American Cut Glass Association, therefore, is an organization which is evolving from a "collectors" society to an organization which has the responsibility to help preserve and advance the study of this important American art form.

In the past decade, ACGA has made giant strides. Volunteers have assembled and issued numerous catalog reprints from various cut glass companies and continue to do so as such information becomes available. Intensive research is ongoing at The Corning Museum of Glass and elsewhere, and we now have begun the long-term task of assembling the ACGA Collection.





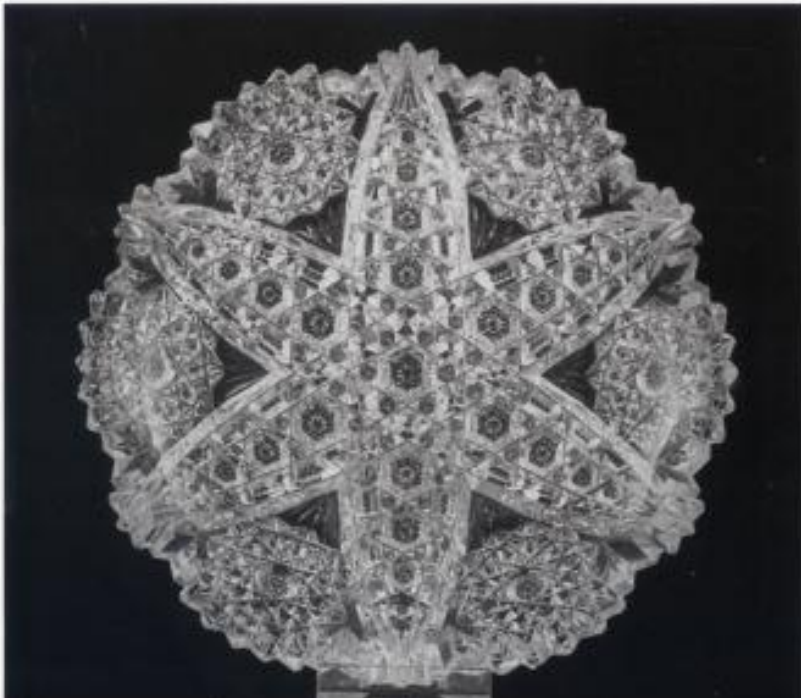
## ACGA and the MSC Forsyth Center Galleries

The ACGA wanted to explore the idea of a permanent exhibition site where members and interested parties could donate and view American Brilliant Cut Glass. The Lone Star Chapter of the ACGA in Texas had a very successful exhibition of cut glass at the MSC Forsyth Center Galleries located on the campus of Texas A&M University. The Galleries, which house more than 1100 pieces of English and French cameo glass, American Art Nouveau glass and much more, did not have an American Brilliant Period cut glass collection. The Galleries' Mission Statement, in part, is to support the research, presentation and understanding of American and English art and cut glass. Therefore, it seemed that the goals of the Galleries and ACGA would complement each other.

After extensive study and negotiations, ACGA and the Galleries have partnered to form the ACGA Collection, with ACGA accepting the glass and holding title, while the MSC Forsyth Center Galleries act as the repository and managers of the collection.

The next phase of the ACGA dream had two parts. The first, acquiring the glass and other artifacts is becoming a reality. There are currently more than 160 pieces in the ACGA Collection, and more in the gathering stage; also several private collectors have named ACGA in their wills as recipients of their glass. The Collection also now encompasses 61 original cutting tools.

The second part involves the actuality of a major traveling exhibit. The ACGA has presently identified over twenty museums in the United States that have expressed an interest in a traveling display of American Brilliant Cut Glass. In order to travel and set up exhibits, a sound fiscal base on which to build is necessary. To that end a group of ACGA members have formed a Development Committee whose goal is to collect funds in order to continue the quest of promoting and educating the public on American Brilliant Cut Glass through these exhibits.





You can obtain information about becoming a member of the association by visiting our website on the Internet which is [www.cutglass.org](http://www.cutglass.org). Or send your inquiry to ACGA Executive Secretary, P.O. Box 482, Ramona, CA 92065-0482

## Become a Member of the American Cut Glass Association

The American Cut Glass Association, Inc. is organized for charitable, educational and scientific purposes. The objectives of the Association include "the advancement of knowledge about and appreciation for cut glass as an art form" (reprints of catalogs from the old cut glass houses); "for historic preservation of cut glass as an early American art form" (ACGA collection at the MSC Forsyth Center Galleries); "to create a record of some of the outstanding works of art" (the Hobstar) and "to provide a place where it may be seen, honored and respected" (museum displays, annual conventions and chapter meetings).

