



STRETCH OUT DISCUSSION

DELUXE EDITION

EARLY PERIOD CUT AND ETCHED STRETCH GLASS

Stretch Out Discussion Call on April 11, 2019



This Stretch Out Discussion focused on the wheel cut, acid etched and glue chipped decorations which were applied to some early period stretch glass. Some of the decorations were applied by the companies producing the stretch glass in their decorating shops. There were two prominent decorating companies who also added their decorations to stretch glass made by various companies. As a result of having various decorating companies we find some decorations on stretch glass produced by several glass companies. However, in the case of decorations applied by a glass producer, generally the decoration only appears on that company's stretch glass.

The speakers for this discussion were Kitty and Russell Umbraco and Dave Shetlar. They are all noted experts on stretch glass having done extensive research and cataloging of stretch glass in addition to publishing books on stretch glass. They are life members of The Stretch Glass Society and Dave is a past Co-President.

Current SGS President, Cal Hackeman, also contributed to the discussion. SGS Vice President, Bob Henkel, moderated the call which was organized by SGS Director Mary Elda Arrington. SGS Secretary, Stephanie Bennett, selected and presented the photos of the stretch glass to be discussed. Members and guests of The Stretch Glass Society participated in the discussion.

For stretch glass there are primarily two decorating companies which were not the companies that manufactured stretch glass. The Wheeling Decorating Company did most of the acid etching we see as bands. We'll see two examples of the Wheeling Decorating Company's etchings during our discussion. Dave mentioned that the Wheeling Decorating Company book by James Webster includes many of the designs the Wheeling Decorating Company used. He noted that Wheeling Decorating designs generally had a very tight design and generally were very rigid in form. The other company that often purchased widely from many of the stretch glass producing companies in the Wheeling, West Virginia area, was the Lotus Glass Co. Dave commented that some of the Lotus Glass Company designs are much more open than the Wheeling Decorating designs. Lotus had designs which were similar to floral designs and were a bit freer and had open spaces in them. For example, the band on this handled server (#1) looks like it has roses, zinnias and possibly daisy designs.



Acid etching uses hydrofluoric acid, which is an interesting acid. It will etch glass. It will not etch through wax. The area of the glass which is to be etched is first masked with a wax resist of the design of what is NOT to be etched. This wax resist will protect these areas of the glass from the acid and thus will not be etched. When the glass was exposed to the hydrofluoric acid, the acid would etch the areas not covered by the wax. Once the etching was completed the wax resist was removed from the glass. Metal plates are also used to create a resist on glass, however it is not known if any metal plates were used to etch stretch glass.

The difference between etching and cutting is that etching uses acid to actually eat into the glass while cutting typically uses a wheel to cut the design into the glass. In both cases, some amount of glass is 'removed' to create the design. Dave has heard that when wheel cutting was done during the early stretch glass period, the cutters used what they called copper wheels. How do you cut through glass with a piece of copper? They actually used a diamond rouge to load the copper wheel. It was actually a diamond cutting material that they used to cut away the glass. There are several types of wheels; some had quite a bit of width.

We will look at decorated stretch glass by manufacturing company. This discussion is limited to wheel cut, acid etched and glue chipped decorations which were applied to early period stretch glass. There were other decorating techniques which were used on both early and late period stretch glass, including painting on the glass. Those will be discussed at another time.

Central

We will begin our tour of decorated stretch glass with the Central Glass Company. When we look at this handled server (#2) we will note that this one has a floral design. The flowers are where the wax resist was applied and the spaces between the flowers are where the wax was missing. They probably also put a resist on the rest of the handled server so that the acid wouldn't affect any of the glass other than in the area where they wanted the acid etch. As mentioned earlier, once the wax resist was in place, they put the hydrofluoric acid on it. Dave has read that there were two ways they did this. One option was to apply the hydrofluoric acid in a liquid form, kind of paint it on. He suspects that is how they did most of these bands. But in some other pieces where they had an overall floral decoration over the entire piece, they would set the whole piece in a fume hood that would have the acid fumes in it and the fumes would etch the whole design. After the acid had etched the design - this could be anywhere from just a few minutes to half an hour, depending upon the concentration of the acid - they would then wash the stretch glass item. They would use a little bit of gasoline or kerosene to remove the wax and then clean it up so that there wasn't any wax residue. Then they would add the gold paint on top of the acid etched area. There were two ways that they applied the gold.



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Dave's feeling for this Central handled server, is that they painted the entire acid etched surface with gold and then they used a rag to wipe off the high spots to leave the flowers without the gold. Only the lower areas of the etched area retained the gold. We will examine some other etchings later in the

discussion where the decorator painted both the design and the etched areas with the gold paint. When Dave was reviewing the Wheeling Decorating Company book, he noticed they have a purple handled server from Central pictured. It is an exact match for this green handled server from Central. As far as he knows this is the only iridescent Central center handled server that is known. Dave believes there are most likely other iridized Central center handled servers to be found. Unfortunately Central's servers look a lot like the center handled servers made by Imperial except that if you look at the base of the handle, the panels of the handle don't go all the way down to the bowls, they stop part way down and then the base is round, not with panels.



Dave doesn't know whether Central actually applied the decoration on this green console set (#3). Apparently the glue chip (or fish glue chip) decoration was a fairly easy thing to do. Basically, it was a very binding glue that you would paint on to a surface of glass. It would dry and then it would be put into an oven. As the glue contracted, it was so tightly adhered to the glass that it would peel off little slivers of the glass. It would create a sort of a frosted look on the glass.

Dave does not think the glue actually came from fish, but the people that apparently used the glue said that when they put it in the oven it smelled like a burnt fish! You can find this kind of glue chip decoration on quite a few items. Dave believes all of the items with glue chip decoration originally had gold paint on them to highlight the decoration. He has seen some pieces of glass where the gold has been rubbed off. Sometimes it's a little bit difficult to realize that there's a glue chip decoration on the piece of glass, but with further examination one will realize that it is there. With the gold missing, it's a little bit harder to see the glue chipped decoration.

There are only a small number of Central stretch glass items known with any decoration. They are considered scarce and hard-to-find.

Diamond

We will now discuss some examples of decorated Diamond stretch glass. Here we have some glass with actual cuts. As we discussed earlier, the cutting wheels were of different widths. The cutting on the little Diamond sherbet with a flower and leaf decoration (#4) was probably done with one of those larger wheels that was able to make fairly smooth petals on the flower and smooth sides on the leaves.



There was another type of wheel which they called a gang wheel. A gang wheel was used in the blue trumpet vase (#5) and the pinched-in crystal vase (#6).



You can especially see it in the blow up. A ganged wheel was apparently anywhere from a half dozen to a dozen little copper discs that were basically held together on a rod with a pin. Each one of those discs, when you would load it up with the cutting material, would make their own little cuts. We often see this with what we call the 'matchstick' decoration. On the matchstick decoration there is a cutting consisting of a straight line with a little ball on one end or both ends. In this case the gang wheel was used to make this cutting.

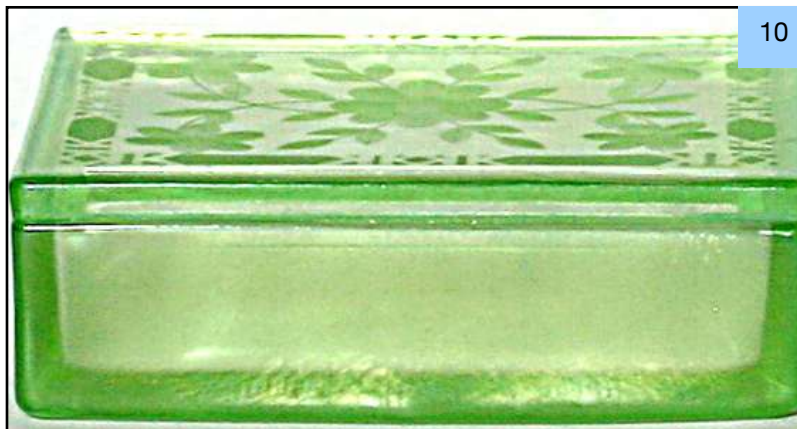
Fenton



We begin with a Fenton ruby cut ovals bowl (#7). There's also a matching ruby candlestick (#8) with a cut oval design in it. Actually, the candlesticks are more common than the bowls, although there is more interest in the candlesticks. Finding a cut ovals bowl is a tough thing to do. Dave has seen three of these cut oval ruby bowls. It is difficult to identify these bowls from a distance since they don't have iridescence on the outside (typical of Fenton ruby stretch glass). Those little cut ovals often don't show up until you get up close. The cut ovals are smooth. Most of these were apparently wheel-cut. The feeling is they also used a buffing wheel to somewhat polish and smooth it down. There is not any evidence that they used a gang wheel.

Cut oval candlesticks and bowls are known in several colors and sizes. Candlesticks were made in both the 8 ½" and 10" heights and in a number of colors including: Celeste Blue, Florentine Green, Grecian Gold, Persian Pearl, Ruby, Topaz and Wisteria. Cut oval bowls are known in Celeste Blue, Grecian Gold, Ruby, Topaz and Wisteria. Some of the bowls are larger and some are smaller, presumably to go with the shorter and taller candlesticks.





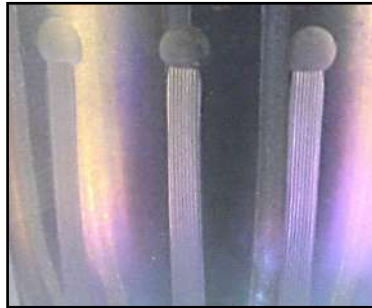
The cigarette boxes pictured are by Fenton and are shown in Topaz (#9) and Florentine Green (#10). These boxes are found with two different decorations and also found with only one of the decorations. The decorating is on the cover only; the actual box is plain in all cases. One decoration

is acid etched. The decoration which forms a band around the perimeter of the cover is acid etched. That design looks like forward Ks and a backward Ks. The design in the interior of the cover is wheel cut and is a floral design. In a number of cases we find the two decorations combined on the same box cover. Dave finds it very interesting that the decorators used two methods on each of these boxes. Dave imagines that the boxes first went to the person that put on the acid etch. Then after that was done, it went over to the cutting shop and they put the floral design in it. The cigarette boxes are known with only the acid etched K design around the outside. They're also found once in a while with no decoration on them whatsoever. Dave and Cal have never seen one that had the flowers without the K around the perimeter. Anytime you find them, even if they've got a little nick on the corner, pick them up. They're not easy to get.

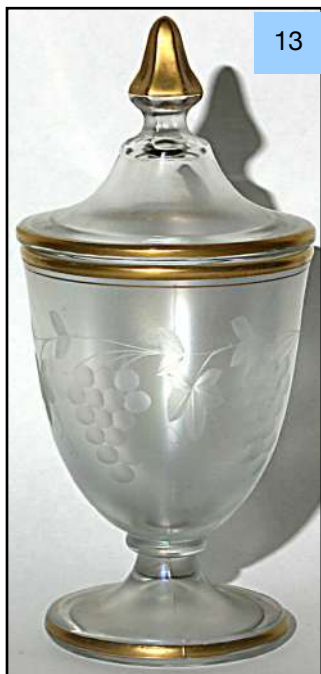


The Fenton Grecian Gold plate (#11) is interesting. When Dave looked at this acid etched design, it looked like a floral design going in both directions around the plate. This appeared to be acid etched, however, when he looked at it with a hand lens, it looked like the etching was fairly rough, as if it had been sand blasted. Dave had a discussion with Frank Fenton about this. Frank smiled and said that they did some sand blasting decorations in some fairly recent production because the hydrochloric acid was almost impossible to use given the current OSHA regulations. If the sand blasting decorations done in the later period (the time when Dave and Frank were having their discussion), are compared to the decoration on this early period plate, the sand blasting is deeper than what was done on this plate. In the end, Dave feels this plate is acid etched. Notice that this is not really a very complicated design compared to the decorations that the Wheeling Decorating Company and the Lotus Glass Company executed in their designs. The decoration on this plate is documented in the Fenton catalogue pages, so we know this is a decoration they did in-house. There are basically two of these acid etched designs. This design, which is the number 2 design, and then there is a number 3 design that has another sort of floral design in the center, as well as in the band around the perimeter of the plate. None of these plates are common. Dave has seen them in topaz, Florentine Green and Grecian Gold. He has heard of one in Celeste Blue. Most of these are getting rather tough to acquire.

For the longest time Dave wondered if this matchstick design (#12) – produced with a gang wheel and having little balls on either one or both ends - was done by the company that produced it or done by a secondary decorating company. This is a fairly common decoration which can be found on both Diamond as well as Fenton stretch glass. Dave has heard that this decoration is also found on non-iridized pieces of glass from other companies. This matchstick design would probably be one of the basic designs that a decorator would do. It probably wasn't patented or exclusive to anyone company.



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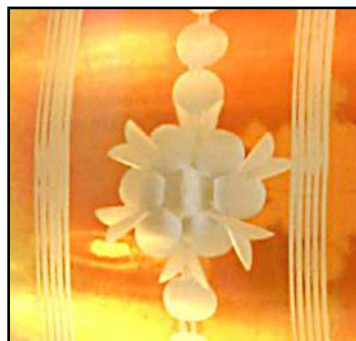
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The most common decoration on the Fenton candy jars is the grape arbor with the grapes (#13). Dave has found two sizes of the grapes. There's the smaller grape and a larger grape. There may have been two different cutters, with one making the grapes smaller and the other cutter making the grapes bigger. Dave suspects they were actually named as different designs.

The small floral design that is on the Grecian Gold candy jar (#14) is a nice one. The decorator used the gang wheel to make a band at the top and the bottom. Then they cut the little circles and the floral design in the middle of the bands.

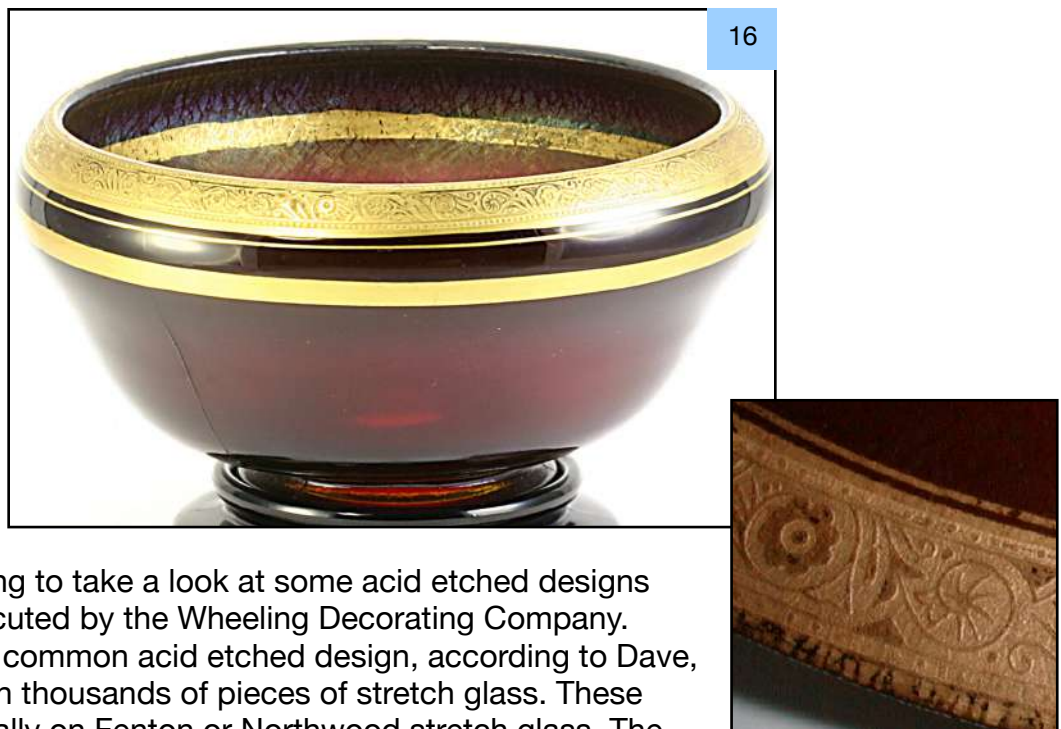
When it comes to the wheel cut decorations on the candy jars, Dave has identified five different ones at this point. The grapes are the most common ones. The matchstick cutting is sometimes obtainable. The other floral decorations are a little bit tougher to acquire.



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Next we look at one of the small Fenton bowls that has the matchstick decoration on it (#15). It's kind of hard to see the little balls at the top of the lines, but they're there if you look closely. If Dave's memory is correct, this one didn't have the little balls at the bottom of the matchstick. If you look through the bowl, do you notice just a slightly different distance between the matchstick decoration? When you talk to anybody that's familiar with these cuttings, the cutting was all done by eye. The cutters did not mark pencil lines on the piece of glass and then cut it. That would have taken too much time. They really did it by sight. As a result, we will end up with some irregularity in the distance between these sets of lines.



Now we are going to take a look at some acid etched designs which were executed by the Wheeling Decorating Company. This is the most common acid etched design, according to Dave, after having seen thousands of pieces of stretch glass. These designs are usually on Fenton or Northwood stretch glass. The collectors of examples of the Wheeling Decorator Company's designs have named this particular design 'The Finger Swirls, Arrows and Flowers' (#16). That's a nice short name for it! The arrows actually look like leaves to Dave. He sees one flower.

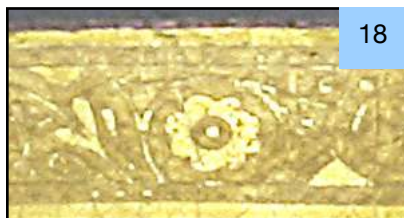
Here's the problem with this design - remember that this design was made by putting a band of wax that had gaps in it on top of the glass. The acid etched into the glass and created the design. The wax sheets were made from etched steel plates onto which they poured wax and then peeled off the sheets. The decorator can apply the wax sheet to the glass in one of two directions – when it is applied one way, the flower is on the left. If the decorator flipped the wax over, the flower will be on the right. Sometimes this confuses collectors because they will see the flower in the band facing in the opposite direction they are expecting. It's not a different design; it's just the result of whether the wax was put on the glass with the flower facing to the right or to the left.



Notice that the decorating companies often made console sets with the same design (#17). These are very elegant, consisting of a matched pair of candleholders and a matching bowl. We usually see these with the colonial style candleholders. The design will generally be on the foot of the candleholders; the matching band will appear around the top edge of the bowl.



Let's look at the difference between the decoration on the punch bowl and the design on the red candleholder. The design is going in opposite directions. The flower is on the right and the curly cue is on the left in the punch bowl decoration (#18). While on the red one, the flower is on the left and the curly cue is on the right (#17).





Dave also cautioned that while most of this gold paint was painted on and then put into an annealing oven or a kiln oven to bake it on, it will still come off easily. If any of these decorated items are very dirty and need to be cleaned, caution is the watchword. Use only the softest of soaps to remove any dirt and don't rub on the design because if you rub it, you're probably going to rub off the gold. The blue candy jar (#19) shows us what happens when the gold decoration is not cleaned carefully.

Imperial

Imperial definitely had its own large cutting shop. Their catalogue pages have dozens of different numbered designs. The problem of these numbered designs is while the company used a specific number, many of the collectors, and in some cases the authors of books, decided to give names to a lot of these decorations. Quite often when you see names in catalogues or price guides, those are not necessarily the names that were used by Imperial. In most cases, Imperial would have used a number to refer to a decoration, rather than a word.

Somebody in the decorating shop decided to jazz up this dark orange vase (#20). This is the only one we've ever seen with this 'thousand eye' effect on it. Because of the way the cut ovals are made and polished, they act as lenses. It allows you to see through and you can see all the cut ovals on the other side. This vase is just a knock out piece of Imperial stretch glass.





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Dave found three of these Pearl Green lamp shades (#21). When it comes to the etched designs in the lamp shades for Imperial, most of these designs are also numbered. This particular decoration is shown on one of the catalogue pages. Kathy Turner, a SGS member and Imperial collector, added, "It is lamp shade #1915 in crystal glass with cutting #102 - Fancy Star." A lot of the designs that are in the Imperial catalogues are on either crystal glass or were cut into acid etched glass. They cut through the iridescence on the stretch colors to execute the design. Kathy added, "This was an elegant cutting that Imperial came out with from 1915 to 1919. It was advertised in a Trade Journal." It was a deeper cutting than you will see on some of the other Imperial shades. It does look like a traditional cut glass design. The cuts are also obviously polished. They're nice smooth cuttings.

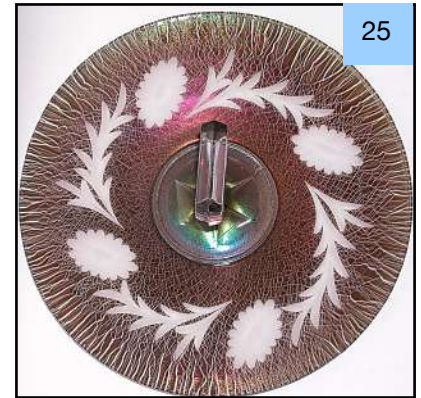
This is a mayonnaise set in Imperial's Blue Ice (#22), also referred to as "Smoke" today. There is a funny story about this one, which was offered for sale on eBay quite a few years ago. The dealer had the plate for sale as one item and had the mayonnaise dish listed several places down in the listing as a separate item. Dave bought the plate but he didn't realize that another stretch glass collector was bidding on it also. While Dave won the auction for the plate, the other collector won the auction for the Mayonnaise. Even to this day, they have a pack: the one who dies first gets the other piece! It is really a knock out piece. It has the same floral and leaf cutting on both the mayo rim and on the rim of the plate. It really pops with that dark smoke iridescence.



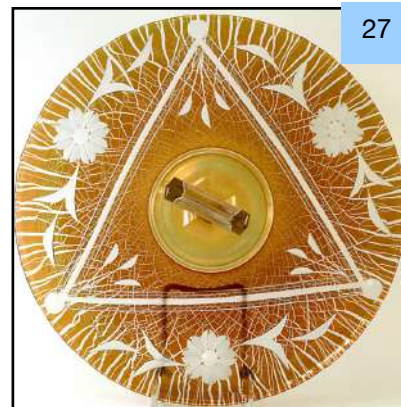
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There is no doubt about it, Imperial was the master of these very complicated swirl cut designs on the under sides of these serving trays. At the 2018 Stretch Glass Society Annual Convention it was fantastic to have all these servers together and see all the nuances in them. Dave has given some of these his own names; Imperial would have referred to them by a design number, but we do not have all the numbers.



Here is one which looks like a fuschia flower (#23). You can see the long stamens hanging down. This one Dave has named chrysanthemum (#24). Here is one which looks like a daisy, but it doesn't have a daisy leaf (#25).



And now we have one which looks pretty much like a coreopsis flower. (#26) Even the leaves look like some of the leaves of the coreopsis flower. Dave feels that these are imaginary flowers that the decorators were cutting. They were probably based on some flowers the cutters or designers had in their gardens, which influenced their designs. Once they created a particular design, and it was accepted by the company, it would be given a number and then it might appear in a catalog. The next design is a triangle with flowers (#27).

The one we often call balloons (#28) is just a bunch of circles joined together with thin lines and more circles. It is an elegant design. At the Convention discussion we learned there are two different numbers of balloons on these pieces. There are some items which have 27 balloons and some have 28 balloons. When you see them they are usually equally spaced and without counting it is impossible to tell the number of balloons. As mentioned earlier, they did these cuttings by sight; there was no design drawn on the glass. Somehow they got all the way around with the balloons being evenly spaced. So far, no one has determined if the cutting with 27 or 28 balloons is harder to find.



Lancaster

We know Lancaster had a wheel cutting shop because of the frequency of wheel cutting on some of the other Lancaster lines of glass. They did not cut very much of their iridized glass. Most of their cutting was on plain crystal glass. This white crystal high footed compote or high footed bowl (#29) is laid out almost flat. Dave feels that this was probably intended to be a cake serving tray. What's unique about this one is that it's got the cut ray designs with the floral designs in between the cut rays. Again it's the only one in stretch glass that he has seen.



Northwood



There are a fair number of Northwood pieces that have glue chip decoration on them. Dave feels that Northwood probably did this in their own decorating shop. Both the Northwood

candleholders and some of the bowls (#30) are known with the glue chip decoration on them, making it possible to assemble a console set.



Northwood apparently sold quite a few pieces of their stretch glass to the Wheeling Decorating Company as blanks and the Wheeling Decorating Company acid etched and decorated them. Here are examples of the nice etched decoration that can be found on them. Northwood's candleholders and bowls and even a few plates are

known with the etched designs. If you look at this small topaz comport (#31), it has the same finger, swirls, arrow, and flowers etching as we saw previously on the Fenton pieces (#32).



Another piece of Northwood stretch glass has sort of an elegance, what looks like a drapery cord running across it. That particular design is another one from the Wheeling Decorating Company. In their infinite wisdom, collectors just named this 'Drapery' (#33). It's a bit lighter than the finger swirl etched design. Cal commented that this design also shows up on Northwood center handled servers. Dave had also seen it on a Fenton handled server.



Conclusion – Next Stretch Out Discussion and 2019 Convention

We will have one more Stretch Out discussion in this series. It will be on Opaque Stretch Glass by US Glass. That discussion will be on May 9th. It will feature their colors of Coral, Old Rose, Red Slag, Mandarin Yellow, Jade, Jade Green, Nile Green, Pearl Gray and Pearl Blue. The 2019 Stretch Glass Convention will be held July 24-26 in Marietta, Ohio. We hope everybody that is on the call will join us for that convention where we will have more discussions and seminars like this with lots of glass on display so that everyone can learn something new about stretch glass.