

HOBBIES
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Fairy Lamps By B.H. Leffingwell



COVER

The cover of this issue pictures a part of the Fairy lamp collection of Mr. and Mrs. Martin J. Wehle and their son Kevin and daughter Cindy of Western New York. The lamps in the illustration above are also from the Wehle collections.



Top row:

A miscellaneous group of milk glass lamps and some porcelain miniature lamps.

Second row:

Skeleton lamp
 Green Bull Dog lamp
 Shoe lamp
 Elephant lamp
 Rare Swan open neck lamp
 Novelty brass lamp on sleigh runners.
 American Eagle, shades of green.

Third row:

Miniature "Fire Engine" hand made brass lamp.
 Villa lamp
 Miniature mother-of-pearl lamp with matching ruffled shade, deep blue Diamond Quilted.
 Very rare pottery Pig lamp with inscription.

Fourth row:

Mostly German porcelain lithophane animal, angel, beehive, Baby Face, cat with table, cat-head, and two rare Sandwich miniature lamps in opaque blue. lavender base.

Fifth row:

Lacy's head with hat
Christmas Tree
Veilleuse "castle"
Mary Gregory on cranberry, pickle plated frame, held tea kettle
White porcelain rosebud
Pair of porcelain "roses" on silver plated stands
Signs of Zodiac on silver plated frame, frosted globe with stars, tiny candle cup insert in cranberry (rare)

With the long awaited appearance of Amelia E. MacSwiggan's book "Fairy Lamps, Evening's Glow of Yesteryear," a much needed book on these delicate and colorful candle lamps, a renewed interest by collectors has made itself known. Collectors and dealers are combing advertising, the shops and shows for unusual specimens.

A previous book by Dorothy Tibbetts, published in California in 1951, is out-of-print and difficult to find. It contained excellent illustrations of many various type lamps, some text, and reprints of old catalog pages and ads of the period. The new book has 160 pages, more than 75 illustrations, but collectors and dealers will wish more illustrations had been included.

An inferior reproduction in "Diamond Point" in various colors came on the market a few years ago, and many dealers and collectors lost interest in Fairy lamps. But the new book has rekindled interest, and some prices are already unfortunate-

ly going up. Several questionable points are brought up and discussed in the new book. Not all domes had matching bases, but sat on fancy metal bases of various types, or were supported from the wall on sconce arms attached to the wall.

Mrs. MacSwiggan brings out the fact that while Clarke patented the idea, and leased the manufacture to various distributors, many different people made the bases, in pottery, brass, porcelain, and other materials. The writer has always felt the larger domes had matching bases, or at least a fancy ruffled base of similar coloring; while the smaller domes were used with clear glass candle cup, sitting on some brass or other metal support.

One of the largest privately owned collections in Western New York is that of Mr. and Mrs. Martin J. Wehle, and their son Kevin, and daughter Cindy. The children have found many rare items on their various trips to shops, and are especially keen on ferreting out unusual items which might otherwise have been overlooked. The first purchase was a rose Nailsea lamp with base, and from then on the search got more frantic and interesting, as hitherto unknown specimens were turned up.

It will be seen there are many types not shown in the new book, but no book could probably ever be sure of including every type that was made, as the color range, shape and form, seem to have been endless. Delicate roses of white, white tipped with pink, so thin it is a miracle they have survived, in most cases sit on metal bases. Burmese, decorated or undecorated, are found on "Roman Lamps" with handle, in menu holders, epergnes, combinations of 2 to 8 or 10 in chandeliers on chains; the rather heavy bases for floating flowers, and the ruffled bowl-type bases, as shown in the photos.

The color range is unlimited, rose, pink, yellows, blues and whites predominating. One has 3 oranges, with orange blossoms and leaves, the name Clarke in the pottery base, supports a grass green "threaded" dome. Lithophane shades come in globes, domes, balls, panels set into heat-lamps, lanterns, and the Veilleuse, or night lamps which probably originated in France or Germany. The candle cups in these are china with a handle, in most cases, the container being extremely ornamental, in figures, castles, towers, a really amazing variety. Pierced brass domes set with colored "jewels;" bases with bisque or porcelain figures of children are seldom seen; and one of cut glass strikes the writer as being merely the bowl of a goblet with stem ground off, but this may be proved genuine later on.

Mother-of-Pearl Satin glass, large and small; Rainbow, candy stripe, the so-called "Nailsea" loopings of white over acid finish color domes, all are especially handsome and desirable. One with mirror base, lined with red velvet on brass stem, supports a painted Burmese dome.

The old candles were used in double cups to protect the domes from the heat, some had a plaster casing, some use a floating wick on cork or tin; some had a double wick for brighter light, the range is infinite.

The little Ballerina or "*fairy*" dancing in the bottom of the glass candle cup, gave the name to the product, but without a name they would have been equally loved and popular. A small collection in a window against the light, brings out the true beauty of the form and coloring. One was seen recently with a "coraline" (beads applied to the satiny body) which glistened in a reflected light, and would be most uncommon.

Unfortunately, modern glassmakers have seen fit to copy some of these lamps and collectors should study displays at leading department stores and gift shops. One with a 7" close ruffled bowl-base, opaque white lined with deep rose, had delicately painted rose buds on both dome and base, BUT the give away, it was almost a 1/4" thick, heavy and lacks much of the charm of the truly old. Collectors and dealers should demand guarantee of authenticity when buying, and thus avoid paying high prices for new lamps, and consequent disappointment.