

## Dating the manufacture of antique sulphide and intaglio paperweights©

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In "Identification Strategies for Antique Sulphide Paperweights"(1), we reviewed methods to identify subjects whose images were incrustated in antique sulphide paperweights. Finding the source medal used to create the sulphide cameo was the most reliable method. Herein, we illustrate that this method may be unreliable for assigning a year of manufacture to an antique sulphide or intaglio paperweight.

### London's Crystal Palace of 1851 and Clichy sulphide paperweights

The Great Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations was held at the Crystal Palace in London, England. The Exhibition opened May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1851 and closed October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1851. More than 6 million visitors attended the Exhibition, and more than 13,000 exhibitors displayed raw materials, machinery, manufactured items, and fine art. Success of the 1851 Exhibition was not only the design and creation of the Crystal Palace itself, but also the display of products from around the world that inspired local and regional craftsman and increased commerce between nations.

Considering the magnitude of this grand event of 1851, it is surprising that few paperweights were mentioned in period literature. As Hollister comments, there were simply too many other items clamoring for attention (2). Nonetheless, several types of Crystal Palace paperweights exist. Some contain a sulphide from Allen & Moore medals; several different medals were used to make Crystal Palace sulphides. Figure 1 displays two different styles of 1851 Crystal Palace sulphide paperweights and a corresponding source medal for the second paperweight. Each of these items is dated 1851. Other examples are illustrated in "Paperweights and the Crystal Place" (3).



Figure 1 - 1851 Crystal Palace Paperweights and corresponding 1851 medal

Joseph Maës and *Cristalleries de Clichy* exhibited at London's 1851 Crystal Palace, whereas the French glasshouses Baccarat and St. Louis did not. Our previous research suggests that sulphide paperweights with 1851 Crystal Palace medal motifs were manufactured by Clichy for the Exposition (3). Another 1851 paperweight style features an oval sulphide plaque of the Crystal Palace, and the inscriptions "Building for the Great Exhibition of Industry for All Nations in London 1851" and "A.B. A Paris," all highlighted with blue mineral ink. The reverse of the sulphide is impressed "Martoret." It is probable that these uncommon paperweights were also made by Clichy (6).

Regardless, there was no known mention of Clichy paperweights at the 1851 Great Exhibition in period literature. Considering the brief interval that the Great Exhibition was open, we speculate that a glass paperweight with a sulphide of the 1851 Crystal Palace would have had limited appeal to prospective customers after the Exhibition closed. The only officially approved souvenir available on the Exhibition grounds was a token featuring Prince Albert. Nonetheless, we hypothesize that this type of sulphide paperweight was made and sold exclusively to attendees of the historic Exhibition (albeit in small numbers), although the sales themselves probably occurred away from the official Exhibition grounds. We have not identified evidence that such paperweights were made or used as presentation pieces.

### **New York's Crystal Palace of 1853 and Clichy sulphide paperweights**

The success of London's Exhibition also inspired the creation of a similar Crystal Palace and exposition in New York in 1853 (Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations). New York's Crystal Palace exposition opened on July 14, 1853. The exposition attracted more than a million visitors before it closed on November 1, 1854. There were exhibitors from around the world. French vendors included Maës of *Cristalleries de Clichy* and Mssr. La Hoshe from *A L'Escalier de Cristal*, an exclusive Paris shop in which paperweights and other fine glass articles were sold. Maës was noted in several period publications for the beautiful paperweights he brought to the 1853 exposition. In Day in the New York Crystal Palace and How to Make the Most of It, the authors stated:

*"We turn now, to inspect numerous and very beautiful specimens of manufactures from the glass works of Maes, at Clichy. The assortment embraces every known variety of glass-ware, and the examples of decorated glass are particularly attractive. Here are vases, resembling the finest painted porcelain, paper-weights of crystal, with medallion ornaments, portraits, and bas-reliefs in silver; door-knobs, and finger plates.... "* (4).

The American Farmers Magazine (p. 296) published this perspective:

*"Next is the Crystallerie de Clichy, from Paris, of course, and very beautiful. We have here the most elegant collection of paper-weights we have ever seen. Some represent flowers, others portraits, and some groups of persons..."* (5).

Maës, a businessman, must have invested a significant amount of time and money to attend the New York Crystal Palace exposition in 1853. He also brought beautiful paperweights to the exposition. As a businessman, we postulate that the sulphide paperweights Maës brought would have depicted persons familiar to the American public, and thus Maës and his paperweights would have attracted future customers in North America. One sulphide paperweight subject that Maës probably brought was that of Benjamin Franklin. In a review of 67 antique sulphide paperweights, it was reported that the paperweight of Franklin (Fig. 2) has a specific gravity and an ultraviolet illumination pattern typical of Clichy paperweights (6). The use of blue mineral ink to spell out Franklin's name on the sulphide guaranteed that he would be recognized. In contrast, a similar Franklin medal was minted in 1818, before *Cristalleries de Clichy* was established and before sulphide glass paperweights were conceived.



**Figure 2 – Clichy sulphide paperweight of Benjamin Franklin and corresponding 1818 medal**

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate three important concepts. The first is that some sulphide paperweights were produced to correspond to a specific event. This would partly explain why sulphide paperweights from the Crystal Palace of 1851 were produced from medals of the same year. Secondly, sulphide paperweights were relatively easy to produce for target markets. Thirdly, the date of the medal does not necessarily support dating the manufacture of the corresponding paperweight(s).

### **New England Glass Company and intaglio paperweights**

Another approach to identifying the approximate date of an antique paperweight is to find period documentation. New England Glass Company made intaglio paperweights in a hexagonal configuration. One design features the portraits of Victoria and Albert. The motif was taken from the a Council Medal of the Great Exhibition of 1851 (Fig. 3) (3). According to several experts, the medal date is consistent with the date of manufacture of the paperweights. On the other hand, literature from 1857 (7) states:

*“Engraving on Glass – Among the new things in glass manufacture, the New England Glass Company have recently produced some very elegant samples of ornamental paper weights, engraved with heads of persons known to fame. This style of glass engraving is called “Intaglio Engraving,” and is adapted to all articles of glass-ware both useful and ornamental . . . Boston papers say that it will soon be extensively manufactured by the New England Glass Company, in various forms. Among the engraved paper weights may be found portraits of Amos and Abbott Lawrence, Daniel Webster, Lafayette, Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, Millard Fillmore, Henry Clay, and others.”*

Both Clichy and New England Glass Company manufactured and sold paperweights and other glass items. Accordingly, it is plausible that these companies manufactured and sold some “special order” paperweights that promoted or commemorated noteworthy events. In the case of London’s 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition, the event was the Exhibition itself, and paperweights were made to sell to attendees. The Crystal Palace of 1853 provided an opportunity for Maës to bring paperweights and other Clichy glass objects to New York in a context that would be meaningful to the American public. Period publications indicated that sulphide (“bas-reliefs in silver”) paperweights were manufactured, and it is plausible that Franklin, Washington, President Zachary Taylor (1849-1850), Marquis de Lafayette (an American citizen), and other Americans would have been represented in such paperweights. It is very likely that Clichy manufactured

these paperweights. New England Glass Company is not known to have produced any sulphide paperweights, but instead produced intaglio paperweights that included Americans such as the brothers Amos and Abbott Lawrence, prominent New Englanders known for philanthropy and business enterprises (Figure 3); Daniel Webster, a representative of New Hampshire and Massachusetts for 40 years in national politics; and President Millard Fillmore (1850-1853).



**Figure 3 – New England Glass Company intaglio paperweight of Victoria and Albert from 1851 Council Medal and Amos and Abbott Lawrence**

### Conclusion

Identifying the source medal for an antique sulphide or intaglio paperweight is the best approach to identifying its subject. Herein, we provide two examples in which the date on the sulphide (1851 Crystal Palace) is consistent with the probable date of the paperweight's manufacture. In two other examples, the production date of an antique sulphide paperweight (Franklin) and an intaglio paperweight (Victoria and Albert) could be incorrectly presumed to be associated with dates on corresponding medals. These conclusions must be interpreted in the context of less timely communications, publications, and transport of manufactured goods in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century than today. This could account for some disparities in actual and reported dates of manufacture found in 19<sup>th</sup> Century literature. Although medals provide a design source for antique sulphide and intaglio paperweights and appropriate dates for some sulphide paperweights, the approximate dates of manufacture of many such paperweights must consider manufacture dates inferred from period publications.

### Notes

- (1) Tad McKeon and Jim Barton, *Identification Strategies for Antique Sulphide Paperweights*, Paperweight Collectors Association Newsletter #159, Quarter 3, 2005.
- (2) Paul Hollister, *The Encyclopedia of Glass Paperweights* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1969), p.42.
- (3) Tad McKeon and Jim Barton, "Paperweights and the 1851 Crystal Palace," *Annual Bulletin of the Paperweight Collectors Association, Inc.*, 2004, pp. 5-17.
- (4) Richards, William C, *A Day in the New York Crystal Palace and How to Make the Most of It* (New York: Putnam Co., 1853), p. 142.
- (5) American Farmers Magazine, Vol. 6, Part 1, Published by Myron Finch, New York, 1853, p. 296.
- (6) Jim Barton and Tad McKeon, "Antique French and "French-like" Sulphide Paperweights," *Annual Bulletin of the Paperweight Collectors Association, Inc.*, 2006, pp. 19-28
- (7) Western Literary Messenger Family Magazine of Literature, Science, Art, Morality, and General Intelligence, Vol. 27, Published by Thomas & Lathrops, Buffalo, 1857, p.215.