

NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE *(must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)*

Street address: 1700-06 N Howard St

Postal code: 19122

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: The Decorating Plant of Gillinder & Sons' Franklin Flint Glass Works

Current/Common Name: Columbia Silk Dyeing Company, Inc.

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

☒ Building

☐ Structure

☐ Site

☐ Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: ☐ excellent ☐ good ☒ fair ☐ poor ☐ ruins

Occupancy: ☐ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☒ unknown

Current use: Unknown

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1876 to 1914

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: c. 1876; enlarged c. 1895-1901

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Unknown

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Unknown

Original owner: Gillinder & Sons

Other significant persons: Unknown

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- ☐ (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- ☐ (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- ☐ (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- ☐ (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- ☐ (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- ☐ (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- ☐ (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- ☒ (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

9. NOMINATOR

Organization Keeping Society of Philadelphia Date 10/2/2019

Name with Title Oscar Beisert, architectural historian Email keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org

Street Address 1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320 Telephone 717-602-5002

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19107

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 10/2/2019

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 5/14/2020

Date of Notice Issuance: 5/15/2020

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Columbia Silk Dyeing Co., Inc.

Address: 1718-30 N Howard St

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19122

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 6/17/2020

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 7/10/2020

Date of Final Action: 7/10/2020, Criterion J

☒ Designated ☐ Rejected

12/7/18

NOMINATION

FOR THE

PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



Figure 1. The south elevation of Building 1: Decorating Block, facing onto Columbia Avenue. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

THE DECORATING PLANT

BUILT c 1872–1876

✦

GILLINDER & SONS’

THE FRANKLIN FLINT GLASS WORKS

✦

1700-06 N. HOWARD STREET
KENSINGTON
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, Fall 2019 – Page 1
The Decorating Plant of Gillinder & Sons’ Franklin Flint Glass Works
1700-06 N. Howard Street, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



Figure 2. The boundary for the proposed designation is delineated in red. Source: City of Philadelphia, 2019.

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for the designation of the subject property is as follows:

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, SITUATE at the intersection of the northerly side of Cecil B. Moore Avenue (formerly Columbia Avenue) and the westerly side of N. Howard Street in the City of Philadelphia.

CONTAINING in front or breadth on the said N. Howard Street 65 feet, 6-3/8 inches and extending in length or depth westwardly at right angles to the said N. Howard Street 95 feet, 6 inches to Waterloo Street; thence extending southwardly along the easterly side of said Waterloo Street 30 feet, 7-5/8 inches to the said Cecil B. Moore Avenue; thence extending Eastwardly along the Northerly side of the said Cecil B. Moore Avenue 101 feet, 8-7/8 inches to the N. Howard Street and place of beginning.

BEING No. 1700-06 N. Howard Street.

Map Registry No. 014N220052

OPA Account No. 881076100



Figure 3. The south elevation of Building 1: Decorating Block at the corner of Columbia Avenue and N. Howard Street in Kensington. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019. Figure 4. Looking north at the south elevation of the subject property. Source: Pictometry, Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2019.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Formerly part of the Franklin Flint Glass Works, the former Decorating Plant is a rare surviving industrial building related to the glass industry in the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia. The building consists of three component parts that comprise the subject property: 1. Decorating Block (c1872–76), 2. Stable (c1872–76), and 3. Shed Addition (c1895–1901).



Figure 5. The northeast elevation of Building 1: Decorating Block at the corner of Columbia Avenue and N. Howard Street. Figure 6. The northeast elevation of Building 1: Decorating Block facing onto N. Howard Street. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.



Figure 7. The south elevation of Building 1: Decorating Block. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

In keeping with the ubiquitous built environment of Philadelphia, the subject property is of red brick, masonry construction and comprised of three historic components. The original building is constructed in an L-shaped plan with the largest building component is the three-story Decorating Block at the northwest corner of Cecil B. Moore Avenue and N. Howard Street with a Stable, the smaller component, an ell-like structure appended to the north end of the west elevation of Decorating Block. The building features a low-pitched, gable-front roof that is defined by an arched corbeled cornice that extends to the east and west elevations of the Decorating Block. The primary elevation of the Decorating Block faces south onto Cecil B. Moore Avenue and features five symmetrically-placed apertures per floor. The first floor features a pedestrian door, accessed by steps at each side and flanked by two windows, which align with the infilled windows of the raised basement below. Two rows of five windows span the second and third floors. As a transition from the south elevation to the east elevation, the point or corner of the building is scalloped to make a flat face or southeast elevation, a feature created by continuous brickwork. This elevation features ghost signage, the origins of which are unknown. The east elevation has a symmetrical fenestration of seven apertures per floor, all of which are windows, aside from the northern most bays which appears to have originally been designed as loading bays. The windows in both the south and east elevations are delineated by segmental brick arched lintels and stone sills, being infilled with metal sheathing. The west elevation of the main block features an irregular fenestration, the first floor of which is concealed by the Shed Addition. The windows in the second

and third floor are also delineated by segmental brick arches which have been infilled with metal sheathing.



Figure 8. Top: The west elevation of the Buildings 2: Stable and 3: Shed Addition. Figure 9. Bottom: The south elevation of the Buildings 2: Stable and 3: Shed Addition. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

The Stable is a three-story, red brick rectangular ell-like structure that appends the north end of the Decorating Block's west elevation, extending west to Waterloo Street. The south elevation spans seven bays, facing onto Cecil B. Moore Avenue, the first and second floors of which are obscured by the Shed Addition. The third floor's apertures retain their original, symmetrical fenestration with windows defined by segmental arches and infilled with metal sheathing. The west elevation of the Stable is a narrow elevation confined to one bay in width with a single window opening per floor.

The L-shape is infilled by the one-story, red brick Shed Addition that is relatively non-descript and features a vehicle bay near the south elevation of the Main Block.

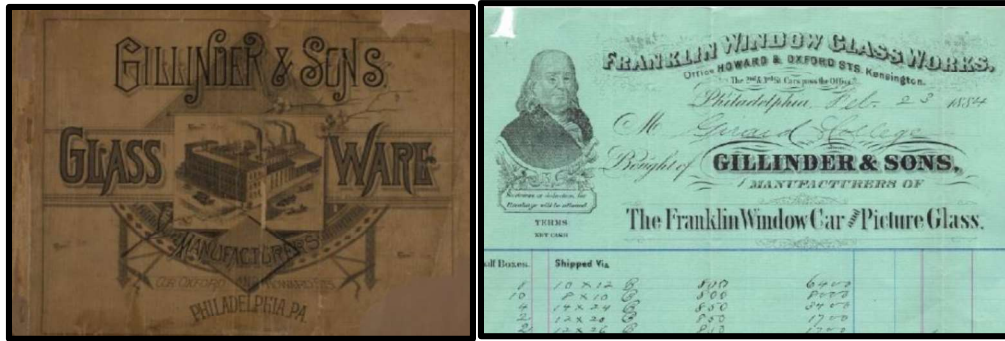


Figure 10. Trade Catalogue of Gillinder and Sons, Philadelphia, showing their works at Oxford and Howard Street in Kensington, c1880–89. Source: Corning Museum of Glass. Figure 11. An invoice from the Franklin Window Glass Works of Gillinder & Sons, c1884, which was located just one block from the subject property. Source: Museum of American Glass in West Virginia. Figure 12. Below left: A glass paperweight manufactured in the 1870s by Gillinder & Sons. Source: the-webmasters-antiques.com. Figure 13. Below right: A Vaseline, Uranium glass footed berry bowl in the shape of a leaf manufactured in the 1880s by Gillinder & Sons. Source: Etsy.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Known historically as the Franklin Flint Glass Works of Gillinder & Sons, the former Decorating Plant at 1700–06 N. Howard Street is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The subject property satisfies the following Criteria for Designation, as enumerated in Section 14–1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.¹

The period of significance dates from the time the Decorating Plant was first constructed as a factory building c1872–76 as part of the Franklin Flint Glass Works through the time that Gillinder & Sons closed the subject property in 1914.²



¹ The subject property may be significant under additional Criteria, but the nominator elected to focus on Criterion J due to limited resources. There may also be additional significance related to subsequent owners and uses of the subject property.

² Deed: Henry Braner, et. al., 7 October 1872, Philadelphia Deed Book J.A.H., No. 288, p. 491, City Archives of Philadelphia (hereafter CAP); Deed: Theodore Hermann, et. al., 21 October 1876, Philadelphia Deed Book D.H.L., No. 66, p. 32, CAP; and Deed: Gillinder and Sons, Inc., 20 February 1914, Philadelphia Deed Book E.L.T., No. 320, p. 490, City Archives of Philadelphia, CAP.

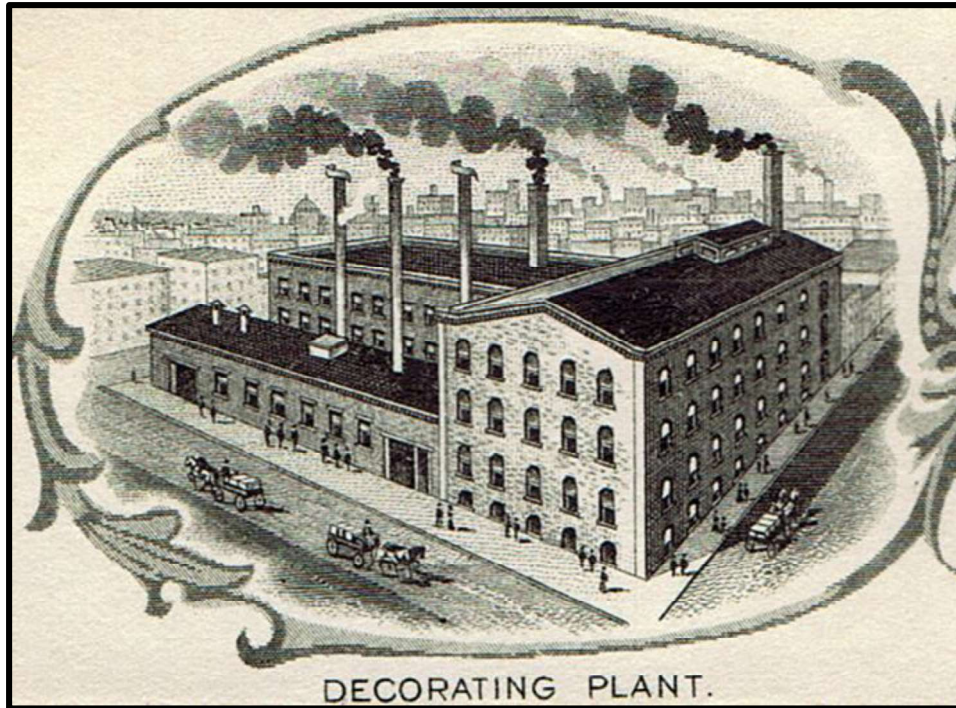


Figure 14. The Decorating Plant of Gillinder & Sons' Franklin Flint Glass Works, the subject property. Source: The Museum of American Glass in West Virginia. Figure 15. The same view in 2019. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

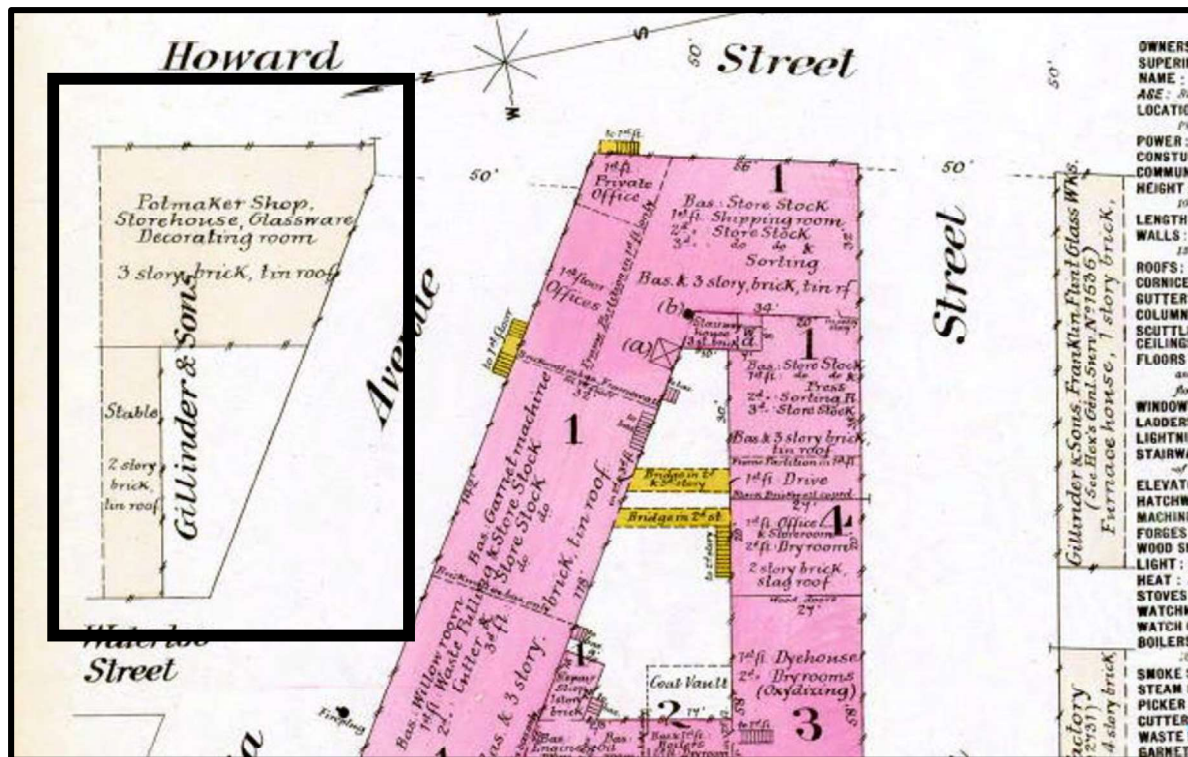


Figure 16. The 1896 Hexamer General Survey of the O'Neill Brothers' Road Road Supplies Factory, showing the subject property on left, labeled Gillinder & Sons. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

CRITERION J

The Decorating Plant of Gillinder & Sons' Franklin Flint Glass Works is a significant industrial and mill building representative of the heritage of manufacturing and decorating Flint and other glassware from c1876 to 1914, exemplifying the cultural, economic, political, social, and historical heritage of the glass industry in Philadelphia and the working people that comprised the Kensington community. Founded initially by William Thynne Gillinder (1823–1871) in the first years of the 1860s, the eminent Philadelphia glass manufacturer, the Franklin Flint Glass Works is the foundational business of a multi-generational tradition that survives to the present, being known throughout its history as Gillinder & Sons and later Gillinder & Bros, surviving in their c1930s factory at Port Jervis, New York to-date. Originally the firm specialized in the manufacture of Flint glassware, producing all manner of decorative and useful glass products. William T. Gillinder also patented a tool in 1865 that, coupled with the advancement of machinery, ultimately improved the efficiency of glass manufacturing in the 1870s. His contributions also included a patent for the firm's signature "Star" pattern design, which was produced in a full line of table glassware in crystal.³

³ Albert Christian Revi, *American Press Glass and Figure Bottles* (New York: Nelson, 1964), 164.

By 1867, Gillinder & Sons was one of the most significant glass manufacturers in Philadelphia, employing nearly 200 workers.⁴ When the subject property was purchased in 1876, the company had recently commissioned an elaborate industrial glass house on the grounds of the Centennial Exhibition in West Philadelphia, where the Gillinders showcased their manufacturing process to tourists, making personalized souvenirs for Exhibition attendants (Figures 12, 13, and 15). After the subject buildings on the property were constructed, it appears they have served as an ancillary facility to the larger Franklin Flint Glass Works a block away. The Decorating Plant, as it came to be called, also provided additional space for potmaking and storage. Interestingly, the building served both ends of the manufacturing process. One popular and well-known product of Gillinder make were the fancy single- and double-globe lamps that adorned middle class houses of the Victorian era. The manufacture of these chimneys (Figure 21), globes (Figure 21). and other glass products required a “complex sequence of tasks, some grubby, other delicate.” Potmaking was the creation of large clay vessels, “from which the glass blower scooped the fiery syrup,” and “making these pots was the first step at Gillinders.”⁵ The pots then went on to the larger Franklin Flint Glass Works, returning to the Decorating Plant at the end of the process. The final step in the required the decorators to execute the various floral patterns and motifs that dominated Victorian fashions of the day, requiring a “windowed and gas-light loft” like the subject property.⁶ The decorating plant not only meant painting, but also acid-etching, engraving, and cutting.⁷



Figure 17. Franklin Flint Glass Works, Philadelphia, including the subject property on left. Source: The Museum of American Glass in West Virginia.

Like many other industrial complexes in the neighborhood, the subject building had its own recognizable presence, as it does today, at the northwest corner of Cecil B. Moore Avenue (then Columbia Avenue) and North Howard Street, appearing as an individual mill building. Decorating plants were increasingly common in the context of manufacturers of decorative glassware. Along

⁴ Jack McCarthy, “Glassmakers and Glass Manufacturing in Philadelphia” in *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*. <<https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/glassmakers-and-glass-manufacturing/>> Accessed on 16 September 2019.

⁵ Philip Scranton, and Walter Licht, *Work Sights, Industrial Philadelphia, 1890–1950* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 75–77.

⁶ Scranton and Licht, *Work Sights, Industrial Philadelphia*, 75–77.

⁷ Edward J. Sozanski, “History under glass,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 26 August 1994, 55.

with Gillinder & Sons, the following companies added decorating plants as distinctive components to their operations: the Burghley & Tyrrell Co. of Chicago, Illinois; the Knox Glass Bottle Co. of Mississippi; the L.E. Smith Glass Co. of Jeannette, Pennsylvania.⁸ However, not all companies had their own decorating plant as these companies often contracted firms that were solely dedicated decorating glassware. Even larger enterprises like the Corning Glass Co. commissioned other firms to complete this work. Corning hired a New Jersey decorating plant to decorate “clear glass balls” for Christmas tree ornaments, which the contractor “slivered inside, lacquered and hand decorated.” Corning went on to become the world’s largest producer of tree ornaments.⁹ However, from c1876 to 1914, Gillinder & Sons had their own Decorating Plant that served their manufacturing operations.

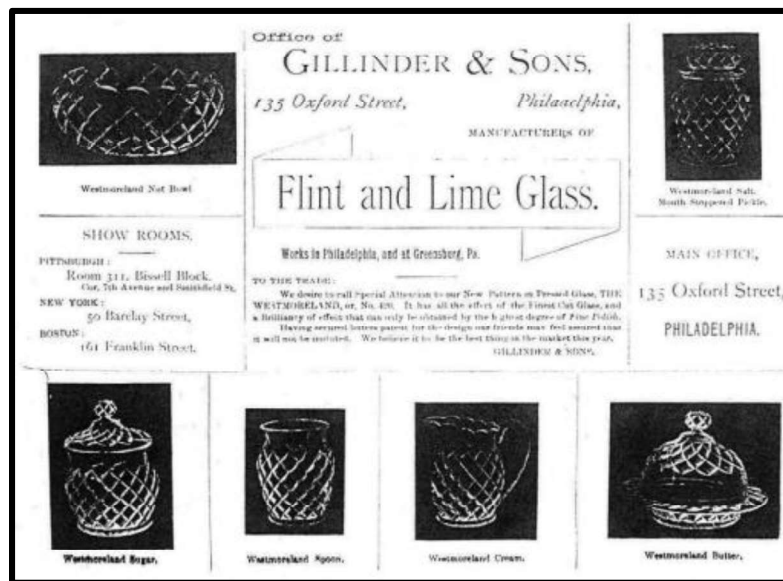


Figure 18. Advertisement for “Flint and Lime Glass” by Gillinder & Sons, Philadelphia, c1889. Source: Hawkins, Jay, *Glasshouses and Glass Manufacturers of the Pittsburgh Region: 1795–1910* (iUniverse, 2009), 234.

During the formative period of Gillinder’s business, the national value of glass products (other than window glass) increased dramatically, rising 116 percent from \$7,063,785 in 1860 to \$15,238,953 in 1880.¹⁰ In the context of the local glassmaking community of the second half of the nineteenth century, Philadelphia was home to 12 producers of flint and green hollow glassware by 1883, which collectively employed 2,834 workers—1,423 men, 353 women, and 1,058 youths. This sector of the glassmaking industry had a total product value of \$2,724,900. Of the glass

⁸ Information on the Burley & Tyrrell Co. came from the following source: Catalogue of the Burley & Torrell Co. (Chicago: c1910), 3. < <https://www.cmog.org/sites/default/files/collections/10/10AB2859-AE9F-44C4-954F-9DCDDCD8193E.pdf>> Accessed on 17 September 2019. Source: Corning Museum of Glass. <http://bottleinfo.historicbottles.com/pdffiles/KnoxGlass.pdf>

⁹ “Germans Introduced Ornaments But Woolworth Made Them Popular,” Unknown publication. Unknown date. Source: https://havegermanwilltravel.com/documents/n-z/hgwt_tree-decorations06.pdf Accessed on 17 September 2019.

¹⁰ Pearce Davis, *The Development of the American Glass Industry* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1949), 151.

cutters, decorators, and strainers, there were 20 establishments in Philadelphia, collectively employing a total of 253 workers with a total product value of \$379,500.¹¹ By this time Gillinder & Sons employed 425 workers to manufacture their wide variety of glassware.¹²



Figure 19. Left: Gillinder & Sons manufactured this pressed glass souvenir, which was sold to tourists at the Centennial Exhibition of Philadelphia in 1876. Figure 20. Right: Gillinder & Sons manufactured this set of six compotes with an etched buffalo, deer, and cabin motif c1879. Source: www.ebay.com.

As shown in the statistics above, Gillinder had several local competitors engaged in the manufacture of glassware, including “blown and hollow wares, gas-light shades, and ornamental blown articles.”¹³ One competitor, the Jefferson Flint Glass Works, owned and operated by Rohrbacher & Hormann, manufactured “Flint glassware, Lamp Chimneys, Globes, etc.” (Figure 21) at their c1882 mill at the Lehigh Avenue and Salmon Street.¹⁴ One of Gillinder’s older, local competitor’s H.C. Fox & Sons employed 275 people by 1884 at the Flint Glass Works, a facility built between 1856 and 1883 on the southeast side of Sutherland Avenue (later Schuylkill Avenue) adjacent to U.S. Naval Asylum at the northeast.¹⁵ The West Philadelphia Flint Glass Works employed around 300 people in 1885 and operated a multi-building plant in the 3300 block of Market Street.¹⁶ Gill & Murray, at York Avenue and Thompson Street, employed roughly 120 persons and produced similar products, specializing in engraving and cutting.¹⁷ While these are only a few examples of the eleven competitors in Philadelphia, none of these firms employed more than Gillinder & Sons by the 1880s.

¹¹ Lorin Blodget, *Census of Manufacturers of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Dickson & Gilling, 1883), 117.

¹² “Franklin Flint Glass Works, Gillinder & Sons, Plate 1535,” Hexamer General Surveys, Vol. 16, (Ernest Hexamer, 1880).

¹³ Blodget, *Census of Manufacturers of Philadelphia*, 78.

¹⁴ “Jefferson Flint Glass Works, Rohrbacher, Frederick & Ferdinand Hormann, Plate 1654,” Hexamer General Surveys, Volume 17. (Ernest Hexamer, 1882). Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network, <https://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/view-image.cfm/HGSv17.1654> Accessed on 17 September 2019. This property is partly extant, as of 2019.

¹⁵ “H.C. Fox & Sons, Flint Glass Works, Plate 1855,” Hexamer General Surveys, Volume 20. (Ernest Hexamer, 1884). Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network. <<https://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/view-image.cfm/HGSv20.1855>> Accessed 17 September 2019. This property is no longer extant.

¹⁶ “West Philada. Flint Glass Works, Gustavus Storm, Plate 1903,” Hexamer General Surveys, Volume 20, (Ernest Hexamer, 1885). Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network. < <https://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/view-image.cfm/HGSv20.1902>> Accessed 17 September 2019. This property is no longer extant.

¹⁷ Blodget, *Census of Manufacturers of Philadelphia*, 78.

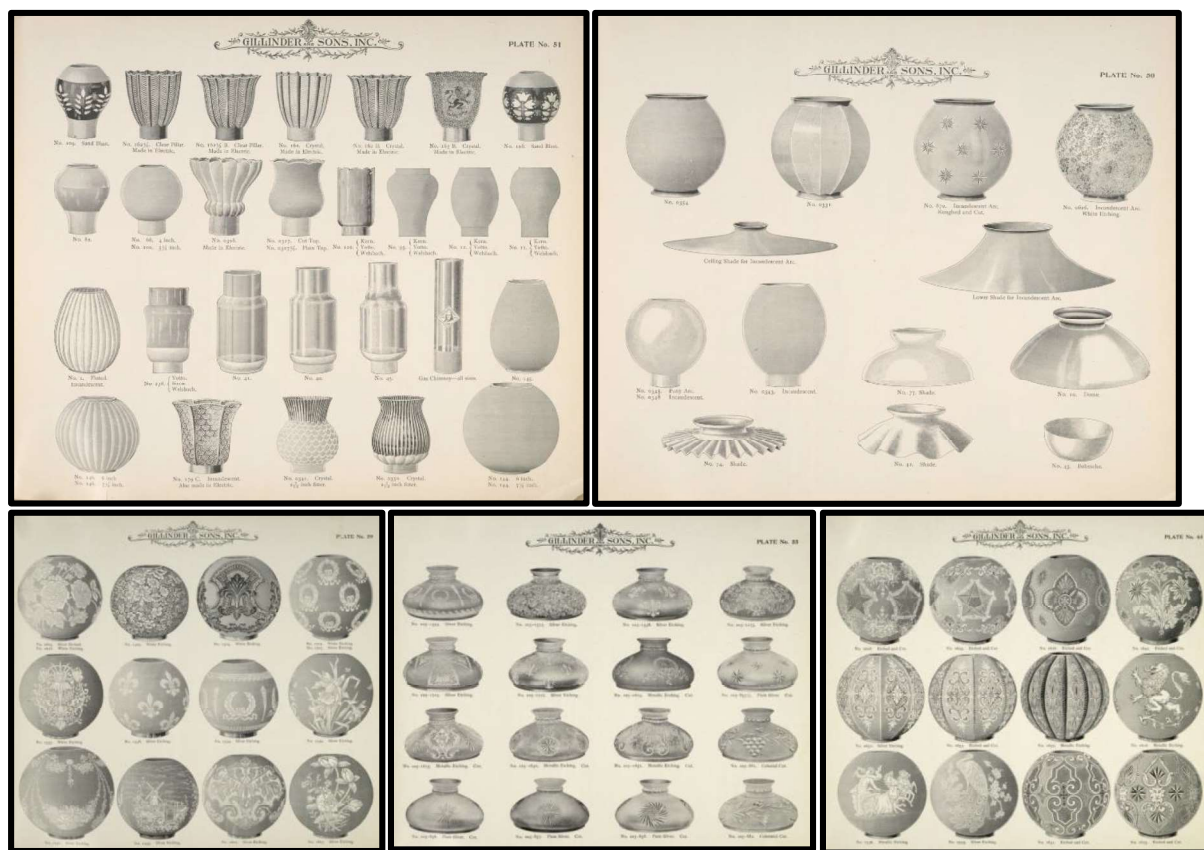


Figure 21. Plates from Catalogue No. 9, Gillinder & Sons, Inc., Philadelphia, c1908-13, showing the globes and chimneys that were decorated at the subject property. Source: New York Public Library.

Due to a multitude of factors, including, but not limited to the cost of production and tariffs, Philadelphia's glass industry had greatly diminished by 1909. Only four manufacturing firms survived, employing approximately 1,112, less than half of the 2,834 workers in 1883. Despite this decline, the industry still possessed capital valued at \$1,252,000, paying out \$559,000 with an output of \$1,367,000 in products that year. When the Philadelphia Commercial Museum made the study that produced this information, the institution specifically referenced the venerable Gillinder & Sons as "one of the pioneers in the United States to manufacture glass for lighting purposes."¹⁸

Modern recognition of Gillinder's eminence in the American glass industry has surfaced on so many occasions in recent history through the addition of their antiqued glassware to museum collections and temporary exhibits. The Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, and even Martha Stewart are just a few institutions of great prominence that have Gillinder glass in their collections. In 1994, an exhibition at Wheat Village in Millville, New Jersey, presented more than 100 glass objects that represented the timeline of Gillinder & Sons' accomplishments in the glass industry, including the following glass types: cut, engraved, pressed,

¹⁸ John James Macfarlane, *Manufacturing in Philadelphia, 1683–1912: With Photographs of Some of the Leading Industrial...* (Philadelphia Commercial Museum, 1912), 101.

colored and opal (now called milk), and other popular patterns. The objects included cameo glass, produced by layering different colors and then etching with acid; cut and engraved glass, including large bowls, celery vases, compotes, and goblets; millefiori paperweights, one of which featured Queen Victoria, made in the 1860s; pressed glass in various forms with a raised diamond pattern; pressed ware in colors, including yellow-green glass called Vaseline and of Amberina; and slivered glass doorknobs.¹⁹



Figure 22. Neatly dressed employees of Gillinder & Sons work in the Decorating Plant of the Franklin Flint Glass Works, a stream of natural light aiding their task. Source: Scranton, Philip, and Walter Licht, *Work Sights, Industrial Philadelphia, 1890–1950* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 75–77.

From the time of its construction through 1914, the subject property served Gillinder & Sons as the Decorating Plant, representing an integral component of the glass manufacturing process. The building is one of the few survivors of the glass manufacturing industry in Philadelphia, and is significant under Criterion J, as related to the cultural, economic, social and historical heritage of the community.

¹⁹ Sozanski, “History under glass,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 26 August 1994, 55.



Figure 23. Left and center: William T. Gillinder. Source: On left: Cindy Prickett via <Ancestry.com> Accessed on 24 September 2019. On right: <http://paperweight.org/conventions/03_convention/MarshallDeutschHandOut.pdf> Accessed on 23 September 2019. Figure 24. Right: Elizabeth Emery Gillinder. Source: bhost76 via <Ancestry.com> Accessed on 24 September 2019.

Historic Context: The History of Gillinder & Sons, Inc.

Born on January 6, 1823 to William Gillinder (1797–1858) and Hannah Thynne (1797–1839) at Gateshead, County Durham, England, William Thynne Gillinder, the successful Philadelphia glass manufacturer, began working in the industry at eight years old, an early start that led him to a gaffer's position by sixteen.²⁰ Where exactly Gillinder originally received his training remains unclear, but research by Alan Thornton, glass historian, suggests that it was at the Mexborough Flint Glass Works, as William and his elder brother Thomas Gillinder were living at Mexborough in Yorkshire County in 1841. He married Elizabeth Emery in January 1842 in the town of Rotherham which was home to numerous glass manufactories.²¹ Elizabeth was the daughter of James Emery (1795–1874), originally from Staffordshire, England, and Mary Wood (1799–1861)—no doubt the same James Emery who notably manufactured crude Pratt-type ware in a Pottery at Mexborough.²² The couple would go on to have eleven children—Agnes Gillinder (1842–1882); James A. Gillinder (1844–1903); Frederick Robert Gillinder (1845–1906); Elizabeth Gillinder (1847–1938); William Henry Gillinder (1850–1850); Flora Gillinder (1853–1854); Florence Gillinder (1854–1929); Marianna Gillinder (1861–1930); Edgar Alfred Gillinder (1864–1929); and Ella Blanche Gillinder (1866–1957), several of whom would enter the American glass industry.²³

By 1849, Gillinder was living roughly 90 miles from Mexborough in Birmingham, one of the great industrial centers of England, where he was the editor of the *Flint Glass Makers* magazine, the trade journal for the National Flint Glass Makers Sick and Friendly Society.²⁴ Gillinder also

²⁰ *England, Births and Christenings, 1538–1975* (Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013).

²¹ Prickett Family Tree. Source: <Ancestry.com> Accessed on 24 September 2019.

²² John Lewis, and Griselda Lewis, *Pratt Ware: English and Scottish Relief Decorated and Underglaze Coloured Earthenware, 1780–1840* (Antique Collectors Club, 2006), 72.

²³ Prickett Family Tree. Source: <Ancestry.com> Accessed on 24 September 2019.

²⁴ *Flint Glass Makers Magazine* vol. 1 (1849–1857). Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick.

represented the Birmingham glassmaking district in the National Flint Glass Makers Friendly Society of Great Britain and Ireland.²⁵ Listed as “Glass Blower” in the 1851 England Census, William and his family then lived in Aston near Birmingham.²⁶ A self-proclaimed “operative glass maker,” Gillinder was quite mobile as an agent of the Friendly Society during this period, and was definitely studying the operations of various glass works, which would ultimately lead to a publishing a book, *Treatise on The Art of Glass Making, containing 272 Practical Receipts, for Flint, Coloured, Crown, German Sheet, Plate and Bottom Glass* in 1851.²⁷ The book details the planning and preparation of a “Glass Manufactory and was successful enough to require the printing of a second edition in 1854 ”²⁸



Figure 25. Left: Bennett's Queensware Factory, Baltimore, Maryland. Source: Bennett Pottery Company Records. Figure 26. Right: Edwin Bennett. Source: Bennett Pottery Company Records.

Despite his relative renown and success in England, Gillinder and his family emigrated to the United States about 1854, likely to work for the New England Glass Company in Cambridge, Massachusetts, however this tenure was short-lived.²⁹ He also resided briefly in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, then Baltimore, Maryland, and, eventually, Pittsburgh again.³⁰ In fact, in 1860, William even tried his hand at farming in Indiana, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, where he and his family in an agrarian setting. However, with a net worth of approximately \$2,400, farming did

²⁵ Taylor, Gay LeCleire, Gillinder Millefiore Paperweights. (Paperweight Collectors Association, Inc.). <http://paperweight.org/conventions/03_convention/GayTaylorHandOut.pdf> Accessed on 23 September 2019.

²⁶ *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1851*. Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), 1851.

²⁷ According to Alan Thornton, glass historian, William T. Gillinder lived at the following addresses in the Birmingham area: in 1850 he is at 4 Spring Vale Terrace, which was near the glass factories of Rice Harris in Sheepcote Street and Joseph Green's Etna Glass Works at 42–44 Broad Street; in September 1851 at 29 Watery Lane, during which time and moving forward he was near Bacchus & Sons' Union Works at 3–4 Dartmouth Street, James Stevens at 153 Dartmouth Street and very close to William Gammon & Sons' Belmont Glass Works in Great Brook Street; in April 1852 at 1 Lupin Street; and in May 1853 at Buda Cottage, Vauxhall Lane.

²⁸ William T. Gillinder, *Treatise on The Art of Glass Making, containing 272 Practical Receipts, for Flint, Coloured, Crown, German Sheet, Plate and Bottom Glass*. (Bloomsbury, Birmingham: S. Russel and W. Gillinder, 1851).

²⁹ Gay LeCleire Taylor, *Gillinder Glass: Story of a Company* (Millville, New Jersey: Museum of American Glass at Wheaton Village, 1994), 4.

³⁰ According to various accounts of William T. Gillinder's life and the research of Alan Thornton, glass historian, who completed an unpublished biographical sketch.

not suffice his occupational ideals.³¹ At some point after this he met or reunited with Edwin Bennett (1818–1908), the eminent English-born potter and manufacturer originally from Newhall in Derbyshire County. Bennett’s Queensware Factory in Baltimore was established c1846, and, after series of partnerships, became known as the Edwin Bennett Pottery Company, surviving until 1936.³² In 1850, one iteration of Bennett’s firm was established in a partnership with his brother William Bennett, who owned a pottery in Ohio, forming E.&W. Bennett, manufacturing yellow and Rockingham wares as well as other colored glass. However, in 1856, on account of a breakdown in health, William Bennett withdrew from the business, and his brother carried on alone.³³

The origins of William T. Gillinder’s Philadelphia establishment appear in the documentation of the United States Internal Revenue Service’s (U.S. IRS) Tax Assessment List for September 1862 through June 1863, in which “Wm T. Gillinder” is established at the corner of Howard and Oxford Streets in Kensington. He was listed as a manufacturer of “Flint Glassware” with a total valuation of \$3,728.25.³⁴ This documentation is confirmed by the 1863 City Directory, in which “William T. Gillinder [sic.]” is listed as operating a “flint glass manufactory” at Oxford and Howard Streets. He and his family were then living at 1424 N. 6th Street.³⁵ Gillinder’s initial *success is shown in the U.S. IRS’s Tax Assessment List of July 1863–June 1864, in which* “William Gillinder & Co.” is valued at \$5,644.52.³⁶ Gillinder relationship with Edwin Bennett resurfaces around this time, as the two formed the partnership, Gillinder & Bennett, “flintglassmanufacturers [sic.],” as listed in the 1864, and 1865 Philadelphia City Directories, maintaining the Oxford and Howard location in Kensington. Gillinder’s sons, James A. and Frederick R. were both listed as clerks with their father’s business at the time.³⁷ When Gillinder re-entered the glass industry, Philadelphia was home to between twenty and twenty-two glass manufacturers, as per the city directories of the mid-1860s. Interestingly, beyond decorative works, the Gillinder-Bennett partnership produced several patents for various “fruit jar” designs, one of which was dated August 5, 1865.³⁸ Both Gillinder and Bennett would go on to create several more “improvements” for fruit jars and fruit jar lids that were patented. While there is no primary explanation, it appears that Gillinder & Bennett commissioned A.R. Samuel, the Philadelphia jar maker, to manufacture the “Franklin Fruit Jar” on their 1865 patent. Samuel’s operation just so happened to be immediately across the street from Gillinder & Bennett in Kensington.³⁹

³¹ 1860 U.S. census, population schedule. NARA microfilm publication M653, 1,438 rolls. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.

³² Bennett Pottery Company Records, 1844–1881, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

³³ *Baltimore: Biography* (Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1912), 857–58.

³⁴ *Records of the Internal Revenue Service*. Record Group 58. The National Archives at Washington, DC.

³⁵ Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822–1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

³⁶ *Records of the Internal Revenue Service*. Record Group 58.

³⁷ Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822–1995* [database on-line].

³⁸ Patent No. 49256: Fruit Jar. Source: https://www.bottlepickers.com/bottle_articles314.htm Accessed on 24 September 2019.

³⁹ Bill Lockhart, Jim Sears, and Beau Schriever, *A.R. Samuel, the Philadelphia Jar Maker* (Society for Historical Archaeology, 2013). < <https://sha.org/bottle/pdf/ARSamuel.pdf> > Accessed on 24 September 2019.



Figure 27. William T. Gillinder and, his son, James Gillinder. Source: Cindy Prickett via <Ancestry.com> Accessed on 24 September 2019. Figure 28. Right: Descendants of William T. Gillinder at George's Hill, 6 July 1889. Top row (as labeled): Uncle Harry (Henry Gillinder), Dad (E. Bennet), Mr. Dixon, Grandpa Gillinder (James A. Gillinder), and Grandma (Martha B. Gillinder). Middle row (as labeled): Aunt Mary Anna (Gillinder), Aunty Mary (Gillinder), Aunt Elizabeth (Gillinder), Aunt Agnes (Gillinder), Aunt Blanch (Gillinder), Aunt Florence (Gillinder), Aunt Bessie (Gillinder), and Uncle Edgar (Edgar Gillinder). Bottom row (as labeled): Howard Bennett, Uncle Jim (James Gillinder), Uncle Fred (Frederick Gillinder), and Tom Dunning. Source: bhost76 via <Ancestry.com> Accessed on 24 September 2019.

The physical establishment of the Franklin Flint Glass Works at the northwest corner of W. Oxford and N. Howard Streets occurred in 1865 with the construction of Buildings 1: Glass House; 2: Leers Mixing, Making Moulds, & Storage; Mixing; 3: Blacksmith Shop; 5: Office & Storage; and 7: Storage.⁴⁰ Prior to the construction of the facility site was housed a vinegar factory as late as 1862.⁴¹ This coincides with Gillinder & Bennett's listing at "135 Oxford" in the 1867 and 1868 Philadelphia City Directories. The partnership appeared in Philadelphia City Directories until the occasion of William T. Gillinder's death in 1871.

⁴⁰ The enumeration of buildings is mirrors that presented in the Hexamer General Surveys of 1875, and 1880.

⁴¹ "Franklin Flint Glass Works, Gillinder & Sons, Plate Nos. 949–950," Hexamer General Surveys. (E. Hexamer, 1875). Source: <https://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/view-image.cfm/HGSv10%2E0949%2D950> Accessed on 24 September 2019.

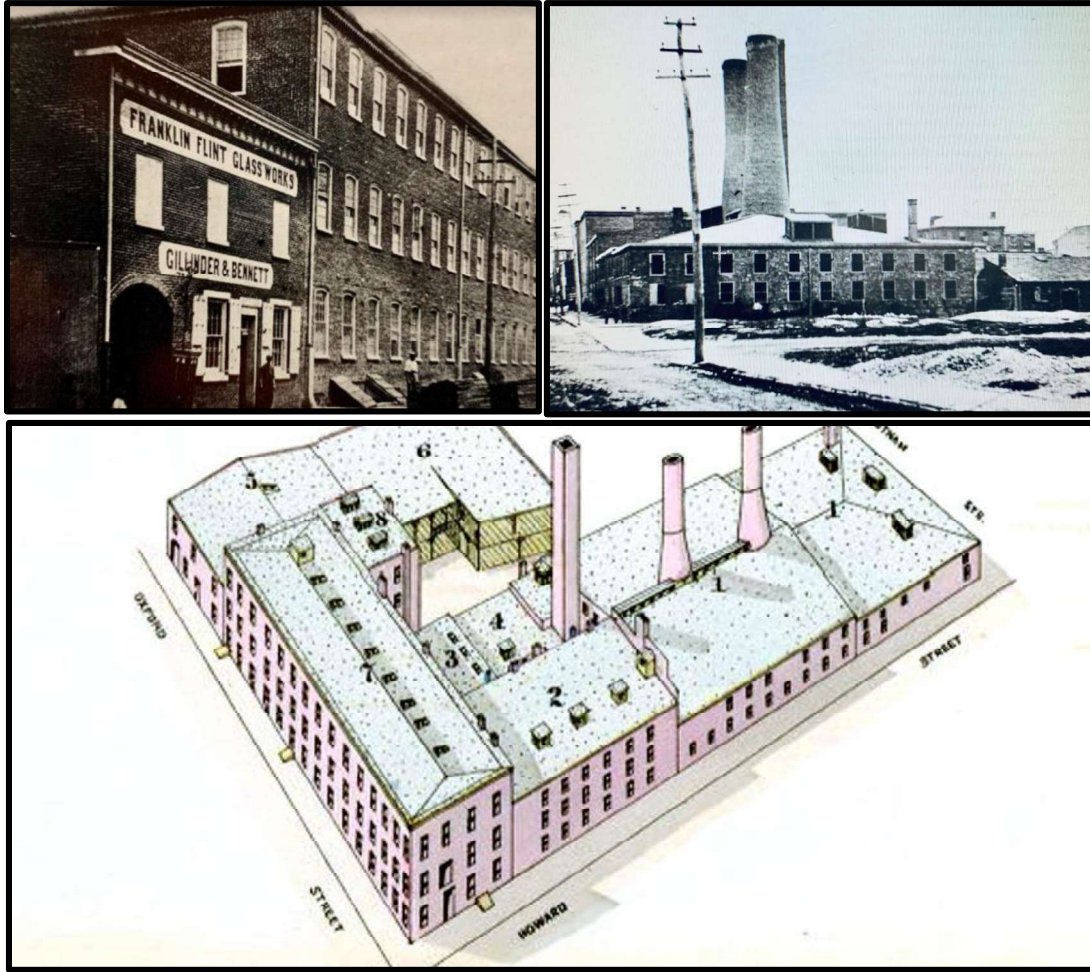


Figure 29. Top left: A nineteenth century view of the Oxford Street elevation of the Franklin Flint Glass Works, looking from the southwest corner of the complex. A black arrow from this photograph indicates its place on Figure 31. Source: Taylor, Gay LeCleire, *Gillinder Glass: Story of a Company*. (Millville, New Jersey: Museum of American Glass at Wheaton Village, 1994), 4. Figure 30. A nineteenth century view of the Franklin Flint Glass Works, showing the complex looking south from a vantage point north of Putnam Street, showing Howard Street on left. Source: The Museum of American Glass at Wheaton Village. Figure 31. “Franklin Flint Glass Works, Gillinder & Sons, Plates 949–950,” Hexamer General Surveys. (E. Hexamer, 1875). <Source: <https://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/view-image.cfm/HGSv10%2E0949%2D950>> Accessed on 24 September 2019.

The partnership of Gillinder & Bennett dissolved no later than 1871, as the firm then became known generally as Gillinder & Sons. Both William Gillinder’s sons James A. and Frederick were the primary partners and directors of the firm, carrying the business to the next phase of their development. In 1875, Gillinder & Sons enlarged the Franklin Flint Glass Works with the construction of Buildings 6: Storage and Stables and 7: Storing Glassware in Packages, Mixing Leer, Selecting Packing and Storing Rooms, Sivering and Ware Rooms, and Iron Mould Maker Shop, Cutting Shop, and Sampler.⁴²

⁴² “Franklin Flint Glass Works, Gillinder & Sons, Plate Nos. 949–950,” Hexamer General Surveys. (E. Hexamer, 1875). Source: <https://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/view-image.cfm/HGSv10%2E0949%2D950> Accessed



Figure 32. Left: Gillinder & Sons' Glass Works in the Centennial Exhibition Grounds. Source: New York Public Library. Figure 33. Right: Glass Slipper, made by Gillinder & Sons at the time of the Centennial Exhibition, c1876. Source: Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Perhaps the company's most advantageous decision came in 1876 when Gillinder & Sons became a feature of the Centennial Exhibition. They built a "glass house" at the Centennial Exhibition grounds in West Philadelphia, where they manufactured and sold pressed glassware onsite, including canoes, little glass slippers, toothpick holders, paperweights, and small statues. Over a century later, Edward J. Sozanski, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* Art Critic, described the building as follows in 1994:

It wasn't just a demonstration shed, either – it was a 96-by-109-foot building with six melting pots. Every day, Gillinder craftsmen demonstrated the techniques of blowing and pressing glass, and decorating by acid-etching, engraving and cutting.

One part of the building was a shop where visitors could buy souvenirs made on the spot. The objects could even be personalized with names and dates.⁴³

Gillinder & Sons were doing so well at the Centennial Exhibition that James and Frederick purchased the subject property to expand operations on October 21, 1876 from Theodore and Louisa Herrmann, textile dyers, for \$800. The new facility was located one block from the original complex at the northwest corner of Columbia Avenue (later Cecil B. Moore Avenue) and N. Hancock Street. It is unclear whether a new building was constructed on the property or if an extant building constructed between 1872 and 1876 was refurbished for their uses. Eventually known as the "Decorating Plant," the subject building was used early on for decorating glass, the hand building of pots for glass making, and storage.⁴⁴

on 24 September 2019.⁴² The enumeration of buildings is mirrors that presented in the Hexamer General Surveys of 1875, and 1880.

⁴³ Sozanski, "History under glass," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 26 August 1994, 55.

⁴⁴ "O'Neill Brothers' Rail Road Supplies Factory," Hexamer General Surveys. (E. Hexamer, 1895). Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

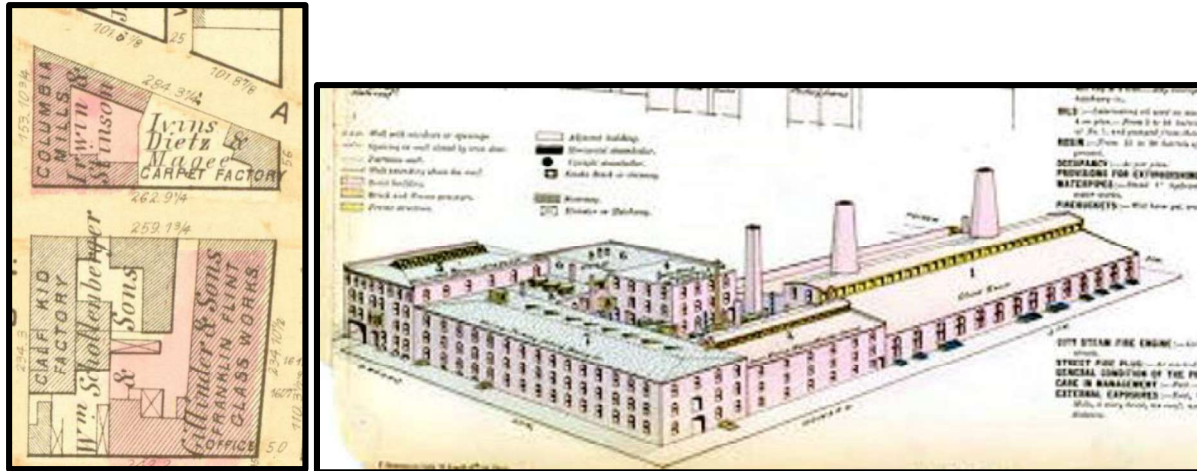


Figure 34. Left: 1875 City of Philadelphia Atlas, Vol. 6, by G.M. Hopkins, showing the Franklin Flint Glass Works at the bottom and the vacant lot of the subject property at the top (circled). Figure 35. Right: 1880 Hexamer General Survey of the “Franklin Flint Glass Works” at the northwest corner of Oxford and Howard Streets in Kensington. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistoryNetwork.

Gillinder & Sons would go on to rebuild Buildings 1 and 2 in 1877 and raze Building 5 in 1880.⁴⁵ At this time the firm employed 450 hands, including 250 men, 175 boys and 25 girls, in the manufacture of “Flint Glassware.” The company was so well known during the 1870s that Governor Hartranft of Pennsylvania, General Henry M. Hoyt, and Honorable Mayor Stokely toured the city on November 1, 1878, visiting important manufacturers, including Gillinder & Sons.⁴⁶



Figure 36. Left: Gillinder & Sons manufactured this non-lead, pressed glass bust of William Shakespeare in the 1870s. Source: www.ebay.com. Figure 37. Center: Gillinder & Sons manufactured this non-lead, pressed glass with acid frosted decoration of a vignette of running deer, buffalo, and log cabin in a landscape between 1875 and 1880. Source: Accession Number 89.4.97, Corning Museum of Glass. Figure 38. Right: Gillinder & Sons manufactured this non-lead pressed celery glass with tooled, acid-etched decoration between 1880 and 1881. Source: Access Number 93.4.53, Corning Museum of Glass.

⁴⁵ “Franklin Flint Glass Works, Gillinder & Sons, Plate 1535,” Hexamer General Surveys, Vol. 16, (Ernest Hexamer, 1880).

⁴⁶ “Hoyt and Hartranft.” *The Times*, 2 November 1878, 1.

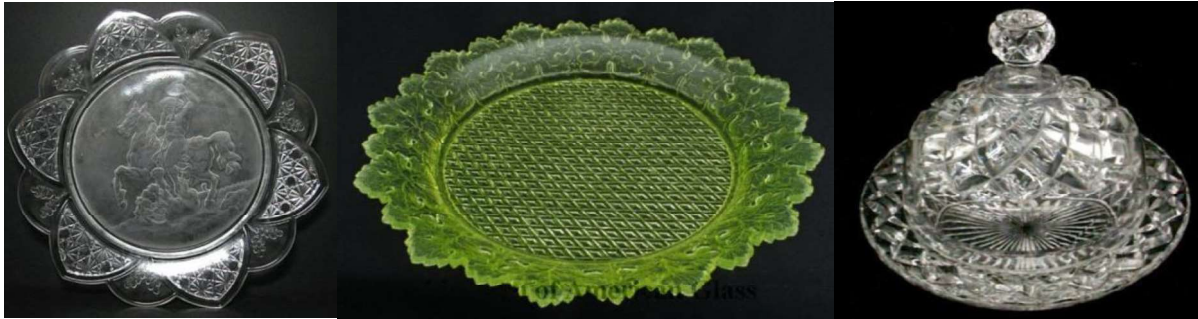


Figure 39. Left: Gillinder & Son manufactured this warrior pattern plate between 1882 and 1890, which is an example of colorless, pressed glass with acid-etched decoration. Source: Accession Number 2006.4.6, Corning Museum of Glass. Figure 40. Middle: Gillinder & Sons manufactured this Maple leaf serving plate with diamond center in the 1880s. Source: Catalog Number: 2017.111.198, the West Virginia Museum of American Glass. Figure 41. Right: Gillinder & Sons manufactured this colorless, non-lead, pressed glass covered butter dish between 1889 and 1907. Source: Accession Number 74.4.3, Corning Museum of Glass.

In 1883 Gillinder & Sons established a secondary factory for the production of window glass at Tacony. The Franklin Window Glass Company was a new industrial complex of six buildings and structures that stood along the State Road above Hellerman Street.⁴⁷ The Tacony plant appears to have been sold or discontinued in 1888.⁴⁸ That same year, Gillinder & Sons established a new ten-acre glass works in the City of Greensburg, Westmoreland County near Pittsburgh on November 5, 1888. This expanded the firm's pressed glass manufacturing operations westward, taking advantage of the abundance of natural gas as a fuel source in the area. Gillinder & Sons managed their Greensburg property for three years until it was bought by the U.S. Glass Company.⁴⁹

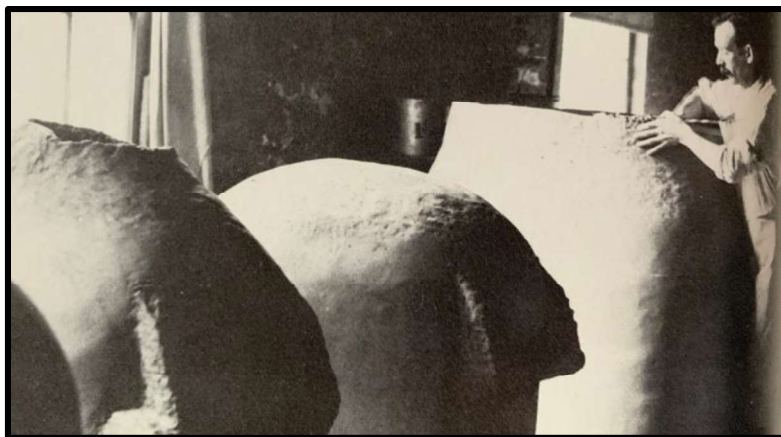


Figure 42. An employee of Gillinder & Sons engages in the potmaking step of the manufacturing process. Source: Scranton, Philip, and Walter Licht, *Work Sights, Industrial Philadelphia, 1890–1950*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 75–77.

⁴⁷ “Franklin Window Glass Works, Gillinder & Sons, Plate 1842,” Hexamer General Surveys, Volume 19. (Ernest Hexamer, 1884), <https://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/view-image.cfm/HGSv19.1842> Accessed on 16 September 2019. This property is no longer extant.

⁴⁸ Albert Christian Revi, *American Press Glass and Figure Bottles* (New York: Nelson, 1964), 164.

⁴⁹ Jay Hawkins, *Glasshouses and Glass Manufacturers of the Pittsburgh Region: 1795–1910* (iUniverse, 2009), 234.

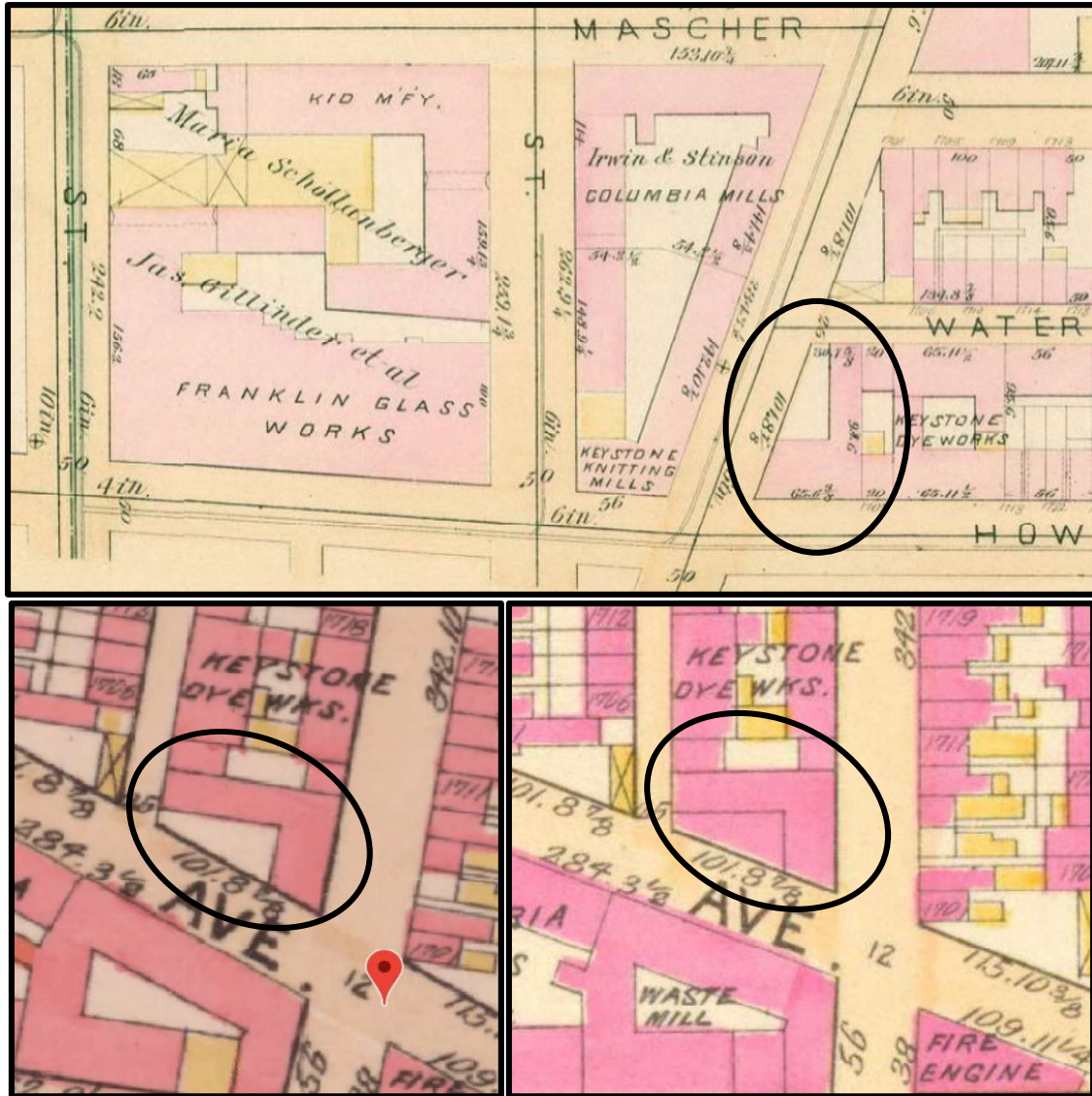


Figure 43. Top: 1887 Philadelphia Atlas by G.W. Bromley. Figure 44. Bottom: Left: 1895 Philadelphia Atlas by G.W. Bromley. Figure 45. Bottom: Right: 1901 Philadelphia Atlas by G.W. Bromley. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

At the turn of the twentieth century the Franklin Flint Glass Works, including the Decorating Plant, was still going strong. In fact, the one-story addition was added to the subject property between 1895 and 1901.⁵⁰ During this time the Decorating Plant was largely focused on painting, acid-etching, engraving, and cutting glassware.⁵¹ From 1909 to 1913, the firm focused its Decorating Plant operations on chimneys, globes, and shades for early electric and gas lighting fixtures, which are illustrated under Figure 21. The decorating of these lighting products by Gillinder employees is shown in Figure 22.

⁵⁰ 1895 Philadelphia Atlas by G.W. Bromley.; and 1901 Philadelphia Atlas by G.W. Bromley.

⁵¹ Edward J. Sozanski, "History under glass," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 26 August 1994, 55.



Figure 46. Trade card for Gillinder & Sons, with a color image of the branch factory at the National Export Exposition, Philadelphia, September 14th until November 30th, 1899. Source: Catalog Number 2015.3.427, The Museum of American Glass in West Virginia.

Another important display of Gillinder & Sons' glassware occurred at the National Export Exposition at Philadelphia from September 14 to November 30, 1899. The purpose of the event was "for the advancement of American manufacturers and the extension of export trade."⁵² For what was referred to as "The First National Exposition of the Manufactures of the United States," Gillinder & Sons built yet another temporary, but fanciful factory building on the Esplanade of the Exposition, where the dream glassworks employed their glassblowers to engage in glass dress, glass bonnet, spinning, weaving, cutting, blowing glass. Admission to Gillinder & Sons cost fifteen cents and included a souvenir (Figure 46).

⁵²⁵² *The National Export Exposition for the advancement of American Manufacturers and the Extension of the Manufactures of the United States* (Philadelphia: Department of Publicity and Promotion, National Export Exposition, 1899).



Figure 47. Two advertisements and a bust of Benjamin Franklin, products manufactured by Gillinder & Sons.
Source: <http://www.eapgs.org/patterns/maker-details.php?idx=59>. Accessed on 25 September 2019.



Figure 48. Left: James Gillinder, c1895. Source: Depew, Chauncey Mitchell, *One Hundred Years of American Commerce, 1795–1895* (New York: D.O. Haynes & Co., 1895), 276. Figure 49. Middle: Frederick Robert Gillinder outside the Franklin Flint Glass Works, c1900. Source: donnadaltrey via <Ancestry.com> Accessed on 24 September 2019. Figure 50. Right: Edgar Gillinder in his office at the Franklin Flint Glass Works, c1900. Source: JoEllenMaus44 via Short Family Tree via <Ancestry.com> Accessed on 24 September 2019.

James A. Gillinder had served as president of Gillinder & Sons since his father's death in 1871, and it was undoubtedly the combined efforts of his brother Frederick R. Gillinder and himself that made a company a great success in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Along with running his family's business, he was a "leading Methodist, member of the Union League and Manufacturers' Club, president of the Norris Square Building and Loan Association and Vice President of the Flint Glass Manufacturers' Association of the United States."⁵³ After a short illness, James A. Gillinder died on March 5, 1903, his funeral was held at his residence at 1509 Oxford Street.⁵⁴ Two years later, Frederick R. Gillinder also died on March 2, 1905. At the time of his death, he was President of Gillinder & Sons, as well as of the National Association of Manufacturers of Pressed and Blown Glassware.⁵⁵ Edgar A. Gillinder was the last surviving son of William T. Gillinder after his brother Frederick's death in 1905. He had always been a contributing member of the family, being known as "E.A. Gillinder" in his production of patents such as the "process of manufacturing double surface glass reflectors," dated April 15, 1890.⁵⁶ In fact, in 1900, Edgar A. Gillinder established a second or possibly third venture at Tacony, the E.A. Gillinder Glass Co., which was eventually absorbed into the larger family business in 1902. At this time, the Gillinder plants had approximately forty-one pots, sixteen of which were at Tacony.⁵⁷ After the death of his brother, Edgar A. Gillinder served as Vice President of Gillinder & Sons, the position of President going to his nephew William T. Gillinder.⁵⁸

⁵³ "James Gillinder Buried," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10 March 1903, 16.

⁵⁴ "Glass Manufacturer Dead," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 7 March 1903, 9.

⁵⁵ "The Loss of Frederick R. Gillinder," *Glass and Pottery World*, March 1905, 38.

⁵⁶ Patent No. 425,939, "Process of Manufacturing Double Surface Glass Reflectors, 15 April 1890. Source: <https://patents.google.com/patent/US425939A/en> Access 25 September 2019.

⁵⁷ "General Glass Notes," *Illustrated Glass and Pottery World*, September 1902, 13.

⁵⁸ *The Washington Herald*, 29 February 1912, 22.

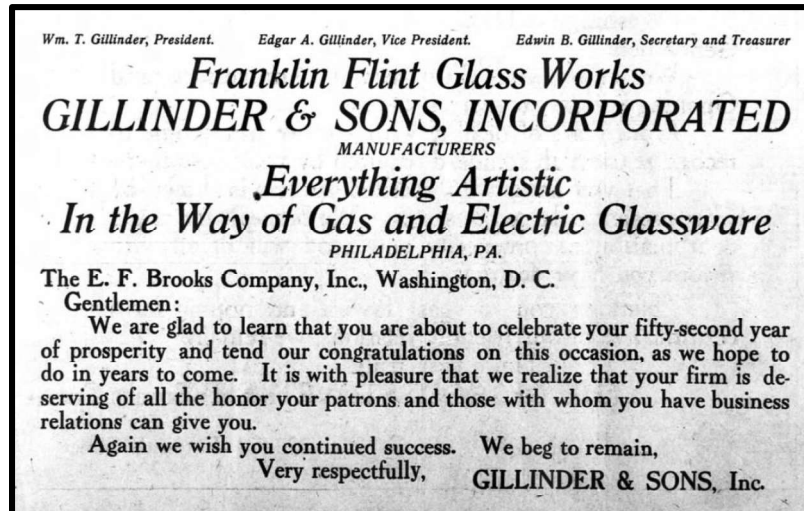


Figure 51. An advertisement for the Franklin Flint Glass Works, Gillinder & Sons, Inc. Source: *The Washington Herald*, 29 February 1912, 22.

In 1912, the third generation—grandsons of the founder, William T. Gillinder, Edwin Bennett Gillinder, and James Gillinder, purchased both the Orange Flint Glass Works in Port Jervis, New York, also known as Bronx & Ryal Glass Company, where they established and operated Gillinder & Brothers. The firm would continue to manufacture “specially developed glass products for the developing electric light industry.” The Decorating Plant, the subject property, closed in 1914, and their Philadelphia operations were discontinued in the 1930s. Gillinder & Brothers of Port Jervis survives to-date.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sponsored by a generous friend of historic preservation in Philadelphia, the subject property is being nominated by the Keeping Society of Philadelphia with Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist, as the primary author with assistance from J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian, and Kelly E. Wiles, Architectural Historian.

The level of research compiled for this nomination would not have been possible without the digital collections and additional resources provided by the Corning Museum of Glass; Diane Wood, Curatorial Assistant of the Museum of American Glass in Millville, New Jersey; and Tom Felt, Director of the Museum of American Glass in West Virginia.

The following repositories and sites were used to create this nomination:

Ancestry.com

Corning Museum of Glass

Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network

Museum of American Glass, Millville, New Jersey

Museum of American Glass in West Virginia

New York Public Library Digital Collections

Newspapers.com

Proquest Historical Newspapers

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February 28, 2020

Robert Thomas, Chair
c/o Jon Farnham, Director
Philadelphia Historical Commission
1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, Pa 19102

Re: The Decorating Plant of Gillinder & Sons, Franklin Flint Glass Works
1700-06 N Howard Street
Philadelphia, Pa

As Director of the West Virginia Museum of American Glass, Ltd., and as a glass historian, I am writing to emphasize the unique importance of the Gillinder and Sons Decorating Plant in Philadelphia. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the United States was preeminent in glass manufacture and Gillinder is one of the oldest and most prominent names in the industry. From 1861 and its establishment as the Franklin Flint Glass Works until 1930, Gillinder and Sons produced many of the most iconic and sought-after patterns in American glass, found today not only in many private collections, but also in museums such as ours. While the variety of glass produced by Gillinder was extraordinary, some of their finest offerings were their decorated opal glass novelties and lamps. They also specialized in etched and hand cut lighting glassware. This puts into context the importance of the Decorating Plant. It is tragic that the main Gillinder factory was demolished, taking with it the sense of history that it played in the rise and unfortunate decline of a major American industry. It is my hope that at least the Decorating Plant can avoid this fate and that it be allowed to remain as a testament to one of the major glass manufacturers in the United States.

Tom Felt, Director
West Virginia Museum of American Glass, Ltd.
230 Main Avenue
Weston, WV 26452
(304) 269-5006

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