

A Story of American Glass

This rural Wayne County community was once the center of glassmaking in the United States

Text and photographs by Cindy Ross

WHEN YOU DRIVE DOWN RURAL ROUTE 6 through White Mills in Wayne County, you're probably not thinking "center of the universe"

when it comes to manufacturing. Yet a large old bluestone factory on the north side of town provides just the barest hint of what once was a thriving industrial village and home to one of America's leading luxury glass companies.

For 50 years, Dorflinger glass was unsurpassed in excellence by any American competitor. During the turn of the 19th century, it supplied tableware for the world's wealthy and influential, including eight U.S. presidents, from Abraham Lincoln to Woodrow Wilson. Since 1921, the factory no longer produces glass, yet Dorflinger glass remains one of Pennsylvania's most fascinating manufacturing stories.

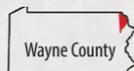
Meet Christian Dorflinger

AS I STAND IN the Dorflinger Factory Museum, I can almost hear the loud grinding of the cutting machines and the

hum of shafts aloft turning the cutting wheels. Old belts rise from the grinding bins to wheels overhead. A large historic photograph of the interior of the factory fills the room's back wall.

This industrial heritage museum opened in 2016 in the restored cutting shop and factory office. A second, older museum, Dorflinger Glass Museum, is housed up the road in the Dorflinger family home. With more than 1,000 glass pieces, including cut, etched, engraved, gilded and enameled crystal, on display, it holds the largest display of Dorflinger glass

Museum curator Kurt Reed explains the process of how tools and machines were used to cut glass, including an overhead line shaft that drove the pulleys to power the cutting wheels. The process has been re-created in the museum and can be seen in the background photo.



Wayne County

in the nation. Together, these two facilities tell the history and craftsmanship of Dorflinger glass. Exhibits at the factory museum portray the glassmaking process, from glassblowing and cutting to engraving and acid etching, and highlight the actual tools and equipment used in the original factory. We begin our tour by watching a rare, six-minute 1916





WHEN YOU GO

The **Dorflinger Factory Museum** is located at 5 Elizabeth St., White Mills. It is open April 15 through December 15, Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m. Admission is \$5 for adults and free for anyone under 18. 570-253-0220;

dorflingerfactorymuseum.com

The **Dorflinger-Suydam Wildlife Sanctuary** is located at 55 Suydam Drive, Honesdale. It is open daily, dawn to dusk, year-round. The glass museum on the property is open from May through October, Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sunday, 1 to 4 p.m. Admission to the museum is adults, \$5; members and seniors, \$4; and youth ages 6-18, \$2. 570-253-1185; dorflinger.org

The **Ledges Hotel** is located at 119 Falls Ave, Hawley. 570-226-1337; ledgeshotel.com

The **Hawley Silk Mill** is located at 8 Silk Mill Drive, Hawley. 570-390-4440; hawleysilkmill.com

film on glass making that was produced by Paramount Pictures for use in vocational schools. It's our first introduction to the early glass manufacturing process.

Afterwards, museum curator Kurt Reed explains the process of using relatively simple tools and machines to create magnificent cut glass. He shows how "blanks"

were created and either cut into glassware or sent to one of 32 other cutting shops. Lead glass is made with up to 40 percent lead oxide, which adds density to the glass, changes the way it refracts light and makes it softer and easier to cut. Sand and water dripping from a large funnel onto the grinding wheel act as an abrasive.

At the height of the factory's operation, children as young as 10 could work as an apprentice, Reed tells us. This is the same age that founder Christian Dorflinger was when he was sent to apprentice at a prominent glass factory in France with his uncle. For the next eight years, Dorflinger learned the glass trade.

He thrived in the work, and encouraged by his talent and drive, his mother decided to emigrate the family to America. A few years later, Dorflinger was 24 and working in a glass factory in Camden, N.J., when he was tasked away from his usual items of prescription bottles and druggist wares to design a decorative glass chimney for a kerosene lamp. Realizing the potential of this new appliance (kerosene had only recently been discovered as a lighting source), he soon after moved to Brooklyn and opened his own glassworks.

He found success in New York and in 1862 purchased a 600-acre farm in

Wayne County as an oasis from city life. The farm sits on a hill, one mile above the Dorflinger Factory Museum, and today the estate has been transformed, through the wills and wishes of his grandson Fred Suydam and his wife, Dorothy, into the Dorflinger-Suydam Wildlife Sanctuary.

The large tract has 5½ miles of trails open to the public, as well as Trout Lake and Suydam Pond. The property also features the family home, which houses the small glass museum, and an outdoor stage located within a white pine forest. The amphitheater hosts the popular Wildflower Concert series featuring a range of musical acts throughout the summer, from big-name bluegrass and modern jazz to brass ensembles, country and rock 'n' roll.

The Evolution of Glass Making

WHEN DORFLINGER DISCOVERED THAT this area of Pennsylvania contained all of the elements he needed to create the finest lead glass, he moved his operation from Brooklyn to a large, modern glass factory in White Mills over a period of several years. He took advantage of the Delaware and Hudson Canal, positioned adjacent to the factory, to ship coal from nearby

(far left) **Glass cutters take a lunch break at the factory.** (top, left) **The Dorflinger Glass Museum, on the grounds of the Dorflinger-Suydam Wildlife Sanctuary, contains one of the largest collections of Dorflinger glass in the country.** (right, top and bottom) **An engraver's table is on display at the Dorflinger Factory Museum with an exceptional Dorflinger cut and engraved goblet depicting the locomotive John B. Smith of the Erie and Wyoming Valley Railroad.** (above, left) **A table is laid with stemware that has glasses for red and white wine, sherry, water and champagne.**

Carbondale to fuel his factory's furnaces. The canal also brought in raw materials and transported his finished goods. Once the railroad was built, paralleling the Lackawaxen River, it became even easier to obtain timber and stone for his factory.

Dorflinger's glass company transformed this quiet spot along the river into an industrial village. Local farm families were eager to work in the factory, including women and children alike. At the peak of its operation, Dorflinger employed 650 people and was the largest enterprise of its type in the county.

The high-quality crystal produced here was coveted by U.S. presidents and could be found on tables in mansions, palaces

and embassies throughout the Gilded Age of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

During the Victorian era, it was not unheard of for cut glassware decorating a formal dining table to be valued at \$30,000. At that time, a punch bowl would be an investment similar to a new car today. The wealthy were expected to set a table with cut glass, including five glasses at each place setting.

Like other industries, glass manufacturing evolved to reflect society's change in taste and availability of material. Simple cuts in glass led to more elaborate, deep cutting of ornate, geometric patterns, known as the "brilliant age." At the beginning of the 20th century, glass etching and more floral designs moved into favor.

During WWI when imported German potash, a necessary ingredient in creating flawlessly clear lead glass, could no longer be obtained in America, Dorflinger created a line of wares made with solid-colored blown glass without decoration to hide any imperfections.

On display at the museum are samples of the 400 to 500 known and patented Dorflinger pieces, including a magnificent, cut-glass, regulation-size baseball bat. Around 40 percent of the collection is rotated annually, and four employees

spend a month each winter washing and polishing all of the pieces.

The Ledges Hotel

GLASS MANUFACTURING RUNS DEEP in Wayne County. At one time, more than 30 glass manufacturers and cutting and decorating shops operated here. We will spend tonight in a building that once housed one of them. The Ledges, located five miles away in Hawley, is now a boutique hotel but it began life in 1890 as the John S. O'Connor American Rich Cut Glass Factory.

According to *The Glass Industry in Wayne County*, it was "one of the most extensive glass-cutting factories in America" and produced some of the most beautiful cut glass using blanks from the Dorflinger factory. The building transitioned to the Maple City Cut Glass Company in 1902, and after that glass operation moved to New York, it housed the H.W. Kimble Silk Company. The standards of workmanship and quality continued with each new product.

The building remained a silk mill throughout most of the 20th century until the final business, the Arrow Throwing Mill operated by Vacca and Sons, closed in 1987. Like the Dorflinger cutting factory, it is built of native, hand-cut bluestone



With former lives as a glass factory and silk mill, the large bluestone building has been repurposed into the Ledges Hotel, which overlooks a precipitous gorge and the Paupack High Falls of Wallenpaupack Creek. Decks have been created between the falls and the hotel to take advantage of the views. (below, left) Many of the hotel's rooms are on two levels, with a spiral staircase used to reach the bedroom.

and is perched on the precipice above Wallenpaupack Creek, which empties into nearby Lackawaxen River.

The glass-sided lodge, which opened in 2013, overlooks a precipitous gorge and the Paupack High Falls, which provided the perfect source to power a growing

glass-cutting business. Internationally acclaimed architect Bohlin Cywinski Jackson of Wilkes-Barre took on the challenging task of converting a National Register-listed building into a 20-room boutique hotel while maintaining its aesthetic qualities.

The repurposed factory has decks attached to its sides for viewing the beauty of the falls. Our room was equipped with a winding, spiral staircase that reached the bedroom. In the evening, lights illuminate the falls in ever-changing colors.

Framed period photographs and maps of the former glass operation and silk mill fill the hotel. In the restaurant, the walls are decorated with original glass mold prints. Furniture has been fashioned from recycled timbers from the nearby Hawley Silk Mill.

The mill, which dates to 1880, is on the National Register of Historic Places and has been repurposed into shops, galleries and a bakery/café. It is definitely worth a visit.

We came to Wayne County to learn the story of glass, and as we depart, we better appreciate and understand the pride of industry that resonates in this northeast corner of our state. 🍷

—Cindy Ross of New Ringgold, Schuylkill County, is a regular contributor.



2019

PHOTO CONTEST

ENTER YOUR
BEST SHOTS

YOUR PHOTO COULD BE SEEN by more than 80,000 readers when you enter it in Pennsylvania's premier photo contest. The contest is open to anyone who doesn't earn a living as a professional photographer. Entrants can submit up to 15 images in any category combination. Make sure your entry is postmarked or uploaded to [Dropbox.com](https://www.dropbox.com) by April 15, 2019.

Winning photos will appear in the July/August 2019, September/October 2019 and/or November/December 2019 issues. After the judges have selected contest winners, the editor will review the finalist images throughout the year for possible use in upcoming issues. If we are interested in running your nonwinning photo(s) in the magazine, we'll contact you to arrange for its one-time use.

A majority of our yearly photo essay content is obtained from entries to this contest.

Prizes awarded in each category:

1st Place:

\$250 cash, a *Pennsylvania Magazine* T-shirt and a one-year subscription

2nd Place:

\$150 cash, a *Pennsylvania Magazine* T-shirt and a one-year subscription

3rd Place:

\$75 cash, a *Pennsylvania Magazine* T-shirt and a one-year subscription

Honorable Mentions:

A *Pennsylvania Magazine* T-shirt and a one-year subscription

Submit your entries electronically

(see [pa-mag.com/2019photo](https://www.pa-mag.com/2019photo)) or mail your photos (on or before April 15, 2019) on a CD or DVD (with a completed fill-in PDF entry form or separate entry form for each image) to:

Pennsylvania Magazine
2019 Photo Contest
P.O. Box 755
Camp Hill, PA 17001-0755

If you'd like confirmation that we've received your mailed entry, use the USPS Delivery Confirmation service option.

Questions? Call the editor at 717-697-4660.

RULES OF THE CONTEST:

- Contest is open to amateur photographers only (those who do not earn a majority [over half] of their income as photographers).
- Enter your electronic files, either online (see the information on our website at [pa-mag.com/2019photo](https://www.pa-mag.com/2019photo)) or by sending your image files (in .TIF or .JPG format) on a CD-ROM or DVD. It would be helpful to include a low-resolution index print of your entries for reference, but it isn't required. Please include description information for each image, either on the entry form or as a listing on a separate sheet of paper.
- Each entrant may submit up to a total of 15 photos in any category combination. Entrants may also include additional images for editorial consideration. There is no fee to enter.
- Entered photos must have been taken recently (from January 1, 2016, to present) by the entrant of a Pennsylvania locale/subject.
- A copy (a scanned image or photocopy is acceptable) of a completed and signed entry form must be included with your mail-submitted disk, or indicate your acceptance of the rules of the contest on the fill-in PDF that you will submit with your entries.
- Keep a copy of your electronic files since submitted CDs/DVDs will not be returned.
- The publisher will exercise reasonable care with entries but cannot be held liable for loss of any entry.
- Judging of the submitted prints will take place in May 2019. Winners will be notified in mid-June, and a listing of the contest winners will appear on [pa-mag.com](https://www.pa-mag.com) in early July 2019, as well as in the July/August 2019 issue. **Each entrant is limited to one prize per category.**
- At the discretion of the editor, each winning photo will be published in one future issue of the magazine and on the magazine's website ([pa-mag.com](https://www.pa-mag.com)) without additional compensation to the entrant. Entrant retains all other rights to the photograph, granting *Pennsylvania Magazine* one-time use rights for display of the winning photo in the magazine and on its website.
- Names and hometowns of all winners will be published in the July/August 2019 issue of the magazine, and announcement materials with this information will be sent to entrants and public media and be posted on the magazine's website.
- Finalist images in the contest will be considered for use (pending approval by the submitting photographer) in a future issue of the magazine. Photographers who agree to use of their nonwinning entries and whose images appear in the magazine will be paid the regular fee for one-time use of an image.
- Judges' decisions are final. 🍷

Entry Form 2019 Photo Contest

(include one signed copy of this form with all of your entries, or use the entry form on our website)

Indicate the number of entries for each category:

_____ **BLACK AND WHITE** (monochromatic images)

_____ **WILDLIFE** (animals, plants and other items of the natural world)

_____ **PENNSYLVANIA TOWNS** (any image related to a city, borough, town, village, etc.)

NAME _____

ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

() _____

DAY or CELL TELEPHONE (only used for photo contest) _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Attach one separate summary sheet for all entries with the following information:

- **Where the photo was taken** (city/area/county).
- **When the photo was taken** (specify month/year).
- **Identify any people/wildlife/objects** in the photo.
- If you'd like to explain any unique circumstances/description for the photo, please attach a separate note.

I certify that I have read the rules of the contest and agree to the conditions as specified.

Signature and date (photos submitted without entry forms are not eligible)