

## Remarks on publication „Gräfllich Schaffgotsch’sche Josephinenhütte”

Marek Kordasiewicz, © 2006

In the year 2005 the publishing house Georg und Peter Höttl, Glasmuseum Passau brought out a German-language publication “Gräfllich Schaffgotsch’sche Josephinenhütte. Kunstglasfabrik in Schreiberhau und Franz Pohl 1842-1900” written by Stefania Żelasko.

Currently, this is the most comprehensive work on Josephinenhütte<sup>1</sup> glassworks and the first attempt to encompass the whole of glassworks’ and its founder Franz Pohl’s activity within the years 1842-1900. This publication aroused high expectations amongst the readers being interested in this subject in particular that achievements of Lower-Silesian glassmaking were wrongly ascribed to Bohemian glassworks by most of works which have been published to date on this topic.

The book makes an excellent appearance matching the previous publications brought out by the Museum of Glass in Passau.<sup>2</sup>

Rich iconographic material as well as good-quality photographs of the described wares constitute important and good points of this book. Just few shortcomings damage the perfect image of the whole publication.<sup>3</sup>

On nearly 400 pages we can find the following information included in the subsequent chapters:

- history of glass industry in Silesia starting from the Middle Ages with information on main glassmakers’ families
- history of the 19<sup>th</sup> century spiritual and material culture in Kotlina Jeleniogórska
- life and activity of Franz Pohl
- Josephinenhütte in Szklarska Poręba – the origin of glassworks, workers and purchasers of wares
- glass technologies in Josephinenhütte
- a catalogue of wares provided with photographs and descriptions
- extensive annex including archival materials worked out by the author, bibliography of the subject, descriptions of archival materials, illustrations, towns and a summary.

As it was declared by the Author during her public performances preceding publication of this book, it is a result of her doctoral dissertation. Therefore, scientific attitude towards the subject could be expected as well as very rich documentation to support information and argumentation presented therein.

A reader may be, in fact, satisfied with analysis of archival sources since the materials which document the history of Franz Pohl’s family have been researched in an exquisitely detailed way. The materials regarding workers, artists and other people connected with Josephinenhütte and materials documenting trade relations, which were established with purchasers of wares and suppliers of raw materials as well as technologies and patents, of

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<sup>1</sup> The name proposed and consequently, introduced by the author - „huta Josephine” - instead of Polish colloquial version “huta Józefina” seems to be also inaccurate. The correct name shall be “huta Józefiny” since this is the name of the glassworks which we obtain after translating it into Polish language.

<sup>2</sup> It refers to 7-volume work “Das Böhmisches Glas” published by Passauer Glasmuseum.

<sup>3</sup> For example a map dated back to 1816 on page 35, where some of the localities were marked by the author in places which are far from their factual location, and Josephinenhütte did not exist at that time.

which Franz Pohl was the author have been also presented as precisely as possible. The Author has included in her work both the known archival materials already-quoted in previous publications and sources which have not been cited to date in professional literature.<sup>4</sup> Still, the main difficulty in attributing correctly wares produced by glassworks in Silesia and Bohemia is caused by incomplete archival materials concerning glassmaking not only in Josephinenhütte, but also in majority of the 19<sup>th</sup> century glassworks in these areas. Due to the above, it is still impossible to attribute unequivocally much of glass originated in Riesengebirge.

The Author tried to prove the originality of glass technology being applied in Josephinenhütte on the basis of archival materials and glass wares presented on over 300 photographs in the catalogue. All presented glass wares are provided with precise descriptions, including possibly exact dates of their origin, author of the design, makers and decorators.

Attention is drawn, however, by lack of documentation to support such precise attributions. Whereas the origin of glass from Josephinenhütte may be still inferred from such a premise as mould, a characteristic technique applied or a specific type of glass, giving the name of the design's author or glassmaker who made the ware requires to be documented unequivocally. Since the quoted materials the Author refers to do not provide such evidence, the basis of argumentation and unequivocal character of attributions made by the Author raise serious doubts. A reader asks himself/herself whether there are any archival sources known to the Author which enabled her to make such unequivocal attributions although they have not been revealed in this publication? Only the original template books from glassworks or other publications presenting the wares could provide such information. Unfortunately, the sources the Author refers to are mainly not of such character.

It is hard to refute or confirm attributions given by the author with regard to majority of glass wares presented in this book. Nevertheless, unequivocal verification of the author's statements is of possibility in respect of a small group of wares made in Riesengebirge glassworks,<sup>5</sup> including Josephinenhütte, which are exceptionally important due to the technology applied. It refers to glass wares performed in filigree and millefiori techniques. Owing to the progress being made in research and available publications<sup>6</sup> we are equipped with sufficient knowledge to provide the presented glass wares and materials with correct

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<sup>4</sup> Archival materials of much importance used by the Author in respect of the glassworks Carlsthal and Josephinenhütte had been described by dr. Przemysław Wiater in his extensive article "The Past Glassworks Karlstal – Orle", Rocznik Jeleniogórski, volume XXXII, 2000.

One of the most important documents written by Franz Pohl which have been used by the Author are the following manuscripts kept in Municipal Archives in Wrocław:

- „Neue wichtige und sehr nützliche Mittheilungen für Glasfabriken”, which were quoted for the first time in the publication “Glass Paperweights. The Heritage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Riesengebirge and Isergebirge Glassworks”, Marek Kordasiewicz, published by AMKOR, Zabrze 2002.

- “Schriften des ehemal. Glashütten-Direktors Franz Pohl aus Schreiberhau für die Jahre 1835 bis 1881”, described for the first time by the Author in Schriften des Passauer Glasmuseums, Band 4, Passau 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Prior to Josephinenhütte on the Silesian side of Riesengebirge there were two glassworks in Hoffnungsthal and Carlsthal settlements which affected the revival and development of filigree and millefiori techniques to high extent. These two glassworks manufactured glass by using all advanced techniques also during existence of Josephinenhütte. Other glassworks located in the Bohemian side of Riesengebirge produced filigree, incrustation and millefiori glass as well.

<sup>6</sup> Special attention shall be paid to articles and informations on this subject contained in yearly publications of PCA Bulletin from the last decade as well as to rich literature which is mainly available in English language. Comprehensive bibliography regarding this subject is available on website: [www.paperweight.org](http://www.paperweight.org).

attribution. Such verification, unfortunately, works to disadvantage of this book and reliability of information presented therein, which will be shown on the selected examples below:

Vase decorated with filigree and millefiori (the catalogue item no.54) is described by the Author as an object made in Josephinenhütte about 1845. Considering the type of millefiori and shape strictly linked with Venetian prototypes it could, actually, be dated back to very early years of F. Pohl's activity. Therefore, it seems to be more probable that it was manufactured in Carlsthal glassworks,<sup>7</sup> rather than in Josephinenhütte. The type of millefiori applied, however, does not unequivocally specify the place of its origin and raises doubts which may be dispelled only after meticulous analysis of all types of millefiori used for its production.

Some serious doubts may be also raised with regard to the date of origin of milk-pot given by the Author, i.e. the period of 1845-48 (the catalogue item no.55). Millefiori applied therein is typical for Carlsthal glassworks, which is confirmed by the performed excavations and previous publications, and archival materials from Carlsthal glassworks<sup>8</sup> too. Consequently, neither dating nor attribution of both objects mentioned above are documented enough by the Author.

The next exhibit – white and green marbled glass with embedded millefiori elements (the catalogue item no.96) was made by French glassworks Baccarat since the types of the applied millefiori are characteristic for Baccarat only. Therefore, ascribing the authorship of the design for this glass to Franz Pohl by the Author is completely untrue.

Similar situation appears in case of the millefiori vase – the catalogue item 97, where the Author also provides the name of Franz Pohl as the designer and ascribes this object to Josephinenhütte. In fact, there are known two specimen of this vase which are housed in Berlin and Petersburg. The analysis of millefiori applied in their production indicates unequivocally that they were made by Baccarat glassworks in France and currently no doubts are cast in respect thereof.<sup>9</sup>

Also, there is no shred of truth in attribution provided by the Author for the millefiori plate (the catalogue item no.165). By analyzing millefiori used in this glass we can prove this object to be manufactured in Baccarat glassworks.<sup>10</sup> Information given by the Author that

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<sup>7</sup> It is worth remembering that in most of sources dated back to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with regard to the activities of this glassworks its original name is given as “Carlsthal” whereas the Author uses the name “Karlstal” in her publication. This name can be encountered sometimes in materials from the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the glassworks already stopped existing in this settlement.

It does not seem to be a good solution, especially that the time limit of this publication is the year 1900. In documents and publications from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries one can more often come across the name “Karlsthal”, but documents dated back to the glassworks' activity mention the original name “Carlsthal”.

<sup>8</sup> “Glass Paperweights. The Heritage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Riesengebirge and Isergebirge Glassworks.”, Marek Kordasiewicz, published by AMKOR, Zabrze 2002, pages 29-32.

<sup>9</sup> Lecture on this subject was delivered by one of the leading authorities on the 19<sup>th</sup> century paperweights and millefiori glass - George Kules at PCA Convention, Appleton, Wisconsin, USA in 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Type and colour of the used millefiori irrefutably indicate Baccarat glassworks, and they are not – as it is stated by the Author- “typical for Josephinenhütte”. This plate was previously sold at Sotheby's auction (Olympia, London, 29 June 2004, Lot# 297) with the following attribution: “object made by the Baccarat or St. Louis glassworks”. An identical one together with other glass ware from original set were already described in literature (PCA Bulletin 1979, page 39) with correct attribution as an objects of Baccarat glassworks. Other glass ware of this type are presented in the publication: Baccarat. Paperweights and Related Glass 1820-1860, Paperweight Press, Santa Cruz 1990.

Franz Pohl was the author of this design, Alois Seidel made it, and millefiori are “typical for Josephinenhütte” shall be deemed as a statement without any factual support. What seems to be interesting, such a plate could not be presented on a worldwide exhibition in London in 1851 (as it is suggested by the Author), since Baccarat glassworks did not participate in it.

Carafe - the catalogue item no.216- contrary to this what is suggested by the Author does not contain millefiori that is characteristic for Josephinenhütte, but millefiori reminds wares produced by French glassworks St. Mandé or by dr. W.E. Fuß in Lower-Silesian Hoffnungsthal glassworks in the 30-ies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The attempt the Author makes to connect the applied millefiori with plaques from Carlsthal glassworks does not actually support the thesis that Franz Pohl was the author of this design and its attribution to Josephinenhütte.<sup>11</sup>

Analysis of millefiori glass may be a perfect tool for providing correct attribution to many wares being made of it. However, it requires sound knowledge and experience. As for this publication and bibliography presented therein it can be noticed that the Author acquired her knowledge about millefiori mainly from the book “The Encyclopedia of Glass Paperweights” by Paul Hollister and she did not make allowance for the recently published materials in this field. Undoubtedly, the “Encyclopedia” is one of the leading works and includes lots of basic and still valid information on paperweights as well as techniques applied in respect thereof. However, basing mainly on even-so-excellent book does not assure gaining of sufficient knowledge for scientific analysis of the subject.

The example of light-hearted attitude taken by the Author is her attempt to call into question the attributions of some of the glass wares which are given by Hollister. The Author suggests (page 84, footnote 32) that the paperweight described by Hollister (“The Encyclopedia...”, Col.Fig.25) was not manufactured by St. Louis glassworks. She also argues that (page 84., footnote 37) the next paperweight described by him (“The Encyclopedia...”, Col.Fig.59) was not made by Clichy glassworks, but Josephinenhütte. Furthermore, the Author argues that (page 85, footnote 41) paperweights which were said by Hollister to be made in Baccarat glassworks (“The Encyclopedia...”, Col.Fig.7 and Col.Fig.19) were, in fact, produced by Josephinenhütte.

In all these cases the argumentation provided by the Author shall be regarded as completely wrong. The attribution given by Hollister is correct and beyond doubts in all mentioned cases, despite of fact that it passed almost 40 years since the Hollister’s encyclopedia was published.

The quoted facts compel us, unfortunately, to assume a critical position towards this book. However, willingness to re-establish the due position of Josephine’s glassworks in the light of hitherto brought out publications on glass from Riesengebirge is to be regarded to the Author’s advantage. Yet, the groundless theories formulated by the Author cast a shadow on reliability of the whole publication and consequently, it shall be critically assessed by experts and connoisseurs of the 19<sup>th</sup> century glass. Being aware of that a reader will be able to make a proper use of archival materials which the book still shall be valued for. Hopes can be only cherished that the scientific reliability will win in the next publications of the Author.

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<sup>11</sup> Lecture given in Cambridge in May 2004 by M.Kordasiewicz. Basing on the found 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph of millefiori glass collection the literalness of the inscription glued onto one of millefiori plaques in etui with inscription “Millefiori Carlsthal”, housed by Museum Karkonoskie in Jelenia Góra, can be irrefutably confirmed. It provides confirmation, that it originated from the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century in Florence and contradicts some of theories presented to date. Relevant information is included in the article of M.Kordasiewicz titled “Silesian heritage. New clues in the paperweight world.”, Paperweight Collectors Association Bulletin, 2004.