

PRESS RELEASE

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“Made In Johnstown” exhibit opens at Heritage Discovery Center

JOHNSTOWN, Pa. – From beer to barbed wire, cast iron to cut glass, radiators to radios – an amazing variety of products were once manufactured locally. A new temporary exhibit has opened at the Heritage Discovery Center, showcasing these products “Made In Johnstown.”

“While Johnstown is best known for its steel industry, it was a regional manufacturing center in the era before national distribution,” said Richard Burkert, executive director of the Johnstown Area Heritage Association (JAHA). “A surprising range of products used in everyday life were once manufactured here, and the stories of these companies are a fascinating part of Johnstown’s history.”

Most of the items featured in the exhibit have been selected from JAHA’s archive of documents, photographs and artifacts significant to the history of this area. In addition to the products themselves, the exhibit features historic photographs, reproductions of advertisements, and information on the manufacturing firms.

Cut glass

A case of beautiful glassware made by the Allen Cut Glass factory in Johnstown is prominently featured in the exhibit. Popular in the early 20th century, decorative cut glass and later, engraved and etched glass was manufactured by hand. Due to changing tastes and the economic impact of World War I, the factory closed in 1920.

Chairs

W. DeFrehn & Sons manufactured porch swings, chairs and rockers for over a century, operating in its Hornerstown location until the 1970s. The exhibit includes a DeFrehn porch swing and 1960s-era chairs designed for kindergartners.

Stoves

Founded around 1900, the Century Stove and Manufacturing Company produced a wide range of stoves, space heaters, and parts and accessories for heating equipment. Three Century stoves and a gas heater are shown, along with newspaper ads for the company.

Pottery

During the 1800s, pottery was commonly used for household and farming purposes. Johnstown was home to several pottery manufacturers, most notably the Swank Pottery. Later, some firms were able to shift their focus to refractory materials used in manufacturing steel. The exhibit includes a case full of pottery, as well as refractory materials, bricks, a sewer pipe and other products.

Milk Products

In the early 1900s, there were more than a dozen small dairies in Johnstown. The three dairies that survived the longest were Sanitary Dairy, founded in 1902; Galliker's Dairy, which was founded in 1914 and is one of Pennsylvania's largest dairies today; and Alwine's, founded in 1915. The exhibit includes photos, milk bottles and other memorabilia from the area's dairies.

Radiators

The National Radiator Company produced a range of radiators, as well as residential and commercial boilers and fittings for the plumbing and heating trade. The company was sold to the Crowe Corporation in 1961, but radiators it produced are still in use in houses all over Johnstown.

Steel

Johnstown is well-known for its steel manufacturing history. But in addition to steel beams, rails and other products used in heavy industry and construction, Johnstown steel mills manufactured an incredible array of items for use at home or on the farm. Fine mesh chicken wire, tacks and staples, barbed wire, and nails were some of these. The exhibit features pages from the Cambria Steel Company's catalog showing some of these items, as well as examples of the products themselves – including a Flexible Flyer sled with steel runners manufactured here.

Beer

Johnstown had three breweries by 1866. By 1910, that number had increased to six, of which three were in Cambria City. In fact, the Heritage Discovery Center building was constructed in 1907 as the Germania Brewery. Prohibition put an end to the brewery business in 1919, but a few of the larger breweries reopened after Prohibition was repealed. The most successful of these, Goenner Brewery, stayed open until 1954. Beer bottles, historic photos and other brewery memorabilia are part of the exhibit.

“Talking Machines”

One of the more unusual manufacturing firms in Johnstown was the Modernola Talking Machine Company, which produced radios and phonographs. One of its products was an elaborate floor model phonograph with a lamp; an example is featured in the exhibit, along with a portable phonograph.

The exhibit is housed in the second floor gallery of the Frank & Sylvia Pasquerilla Heritage Discovery Center, and admission is included in the museum's regular ticket price of \$6 for adults, \$5 for seniors and \$4 for students. Tickets also include admission to the Johnstown Flood Museum and Wagner-Ritter House & Garden. JAHA members are admitted free. Hours for the Heritage Discovery Center are 10 am-5 pm seven days a week; the museum will be closed on Thanksgiving Day but open through the holiday weekend.

For more information on "Made In Johnstown" and all JAHA museums and programs, visit www.jaha.org.

The Johnstown Area Heritage Association is a non-profit, membership-based organization dedicated to preserving and showcasing Johnstown's unique history to the nation through high-quality educational, cultural and recreational experiences. JAHA owns and operates the Johnstown Flood Museum and the Frank & Sylvia Pasquerilla Heritage Discovery Center, and produces the AmeriServ FolkFest, a 3-day free music and food festival held annually over Labor Day weekend; events commemorating the 1889 Johnstown flood; and a wide variety of additional cultural programming. The Wagner-Ritter House & Garden opened in 2006, and the Johnstown Children's Discovery Museum is under construction. For more information on JAHA programs, museums and events, visit www.jaha.org.