

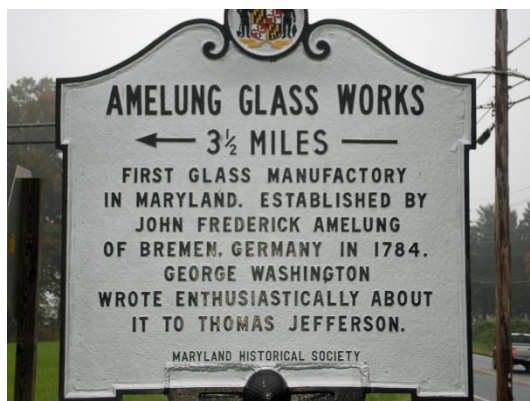
A Brief Tour of Glass Making History in Frederick County, MD

Originally published in part by the FNP in the October 14 print edition.

As often happens in investigating local history, one comes across layers of stories. That happened to me as I've been researching the history of John Trout along Park Mills Road near Urbana. Luckily for me, I met [Bob Fout](#), professional genealogist and local historian who offered to give me a colonial tour of the area near where John Trout lived.

One doesn't turn down an invitation by Bob Fout to take a personal tour. Just dress accordingly!

Bob Fout stands at the intersection of Genealogy Way and Indiana Jones Boulevard. He likes to collect history facts, but he prefers being out in the field finding them. He's a history adventurer, and unafraid of nature or man-made obstacles. Just the kind of person you want to tour with to see history that has been lost. Touring with Bob is no fickle-hearted endeavor.



So Bob offered to give me the personal tour of Amelung glass works, also known as the New Bremen Glass Manufactory. You've seen the sign at 355 and the intersection of Park Mills Road for sure.

If you just followed the sign as it indicates for 3 ½ miles on Park Mills Road you would find...nothing. Come to find out, there's not much left to see – unless you're with Bob Fout of course!

In colonial America, England was trying to inhibit the young Republic from manufacturing what it needed.

English policies discouraged skilled tradesmen from migrating to America, but after the Revolutionary War in 1783 conditions favored new enterprises.

Around 1784 John Frederick Amelung emigrated from Bremen, Germany with 68 people to start his glass making business.ⁱ He had been working with his brother managing a glasshouse in Germany under the Duke of Brunswick.ⁱⁱ He brought with him several craftsmen and support people to establish the town of New Bremen, now along Mt. Ephraim Road. These tradesmen were indentured for three years to pay for their passage in labor. Amelung provided housing and some small salary for their care.ⁱⁱⁱ The site was considered ideal due to the plentiful supply of lumber as well as water from Bennett Creek – both resources important to the making of glass.

Despite the Maryland Historical Society sign, a glass factory existed in Frederick County beginning around 1778 run by Conrad Foltz and partners, also from Germany.^{iv}

Two key events occurred between 1784 and 1785: Amelung arrived in Frederick County and Conrad Foltz died. Amelung purchased land along Bennett Creek and the Monocacy River, which included the old Foltz property and glassmaking factory. He moved in and started producing glass at this already established



A Brief Tour of Glass Making History in Frederick County, MD

factory while he was building his own factory over the hill.^v

If you drive along Monocacy Bottom Road during the winter you can still make out what may be part of the Foltz furnace. According to Fout this stone wall was well-hidden until 1972 when Hurricane Agnes blew through the county with enough force and flooding to clear away the brambles that clung to the aging foundation.

New Bremen, the village Amelung settled, had at one time houses lining both sides of Mt. Ephraim Road from Park Mills Road past Stewarts Hill Road – about 2 miles long. Amelung eventually amassed about 3,000 acres for his enterprise, and it is reported to have employed between 400-500 people at its height of operations.^{vi} Amelung developed a reputation for producing some of the finest engraved glass in America at the time.



There is one house still standing today – hidden on a steep hill behind the brambly bushes and overgrown poison ivy vines. (Here is another good reason to go in the winter!)

The siding likely isn't original, but the log beams and the stone foundation appear like they might be. The house has been re-wired with electricity at some point, although it is now collapsing inward due to age and neglect. According to Fout, it is typical German construction – 2 stories with the second floor being all one room. New Bremen villagers lived in similar style houses – in fact, at least 30 had been built to accommodate Amelung's village.



Amelung mansion still stands, and fortunately has been refurbished and is being used as a private residence today. Interestingly enough it is named Mount Vina by Amelung himself. Think Mount Vernon, Monticello, Montpelier.....

At its height, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and

James Madison were all aware of Amelung's estate and Glass Manufactory, so it appears he was no stranger to hob-knobbing with the political movers and shakers of the day.^{vii} It is thought that one or all three of them may have visited his mansion but no proof of that has been found.^{viii} It is known that he visited George Washington at Mount Vernon, and



A Brief Tour of Glass Making History in Frederick County, MD

being inspired, helped organize the Fleecy Dale Masonic Lodge, named after the Fleecy Dale Woolen Mill nearby.^{ix} The New Bremen Glass Manufactory sprawled a quarter mile down the hill from his estate, along Bennett Creek.



Part of Amelung's empire still remains in the form of his old tavern on Mt. Ephraim Road.^x One can well imagine the respite a traveler got in this beautiful stone tavern, which is now used as a residence.

Unfortunately, Amelung's enterprise did not last long. He went bankrupt for a variety of reasons. German bankers financed part of his initial operation.^{xi} When Amelung moved to America, the prices he charged for his glass had to support a large staff as well as slaves to run the Estate. Unfortunately, he had an uphill battle against cheaper glass imports, and eventually, his expenses exceeded his sales. He made two appeals to the Government for aid; one was granted. One was not.^{xii}

Also, former Governor Thomas Johnson purchased property with a glass factory near Opossumtown Pike and Tuscarora Creek, Aetna Glassworks^{xiii}, as well as property on Bush Creek known as Johnson's Glassworks, which may have provided Amelung some competition.^{xiv}

Last, Amelung's first factory was destroyed by fire (a hazard in the glass making business), so he struggled financially to rebuild. In the end, this combination of events proved too much and in a short space of time - by 1795 in fact - the New Bremen Glass Manufactory failed.^{xv}

Amelung's son, John Frederick Magnus Amelung, took over the remaining glass business further down Mt. Ephraim Road where a third factory had already been built. Eventually the Adam Kohlenberg family, also glassmakers from Germany and part of Amelung's original villagers, bought this property from Magnus.^{xvi} In fact, other craftsmen brought to America by Amelung seem to have dispersed to various other glassmaking facilities after New Bremen's bankruptcy.^{xvii} Unfortunately it appears by 1808 all glassworks in Frederick County ceased production except Kohlenberg Glassworks.^{xviii} Justus Kohlenberg, Adam's son, continued the Kohlenberg Glassworks tradition, but he died in 1826 at the tender age of 41.^{xix}

Here enters Bob Fout's personal history: the Kohlenbergs are his ancestors. Along Mt. Ephraim Road there is now a residence atop the hill where the Kohlenberg glass factory once stood. Across the adjacent ridge once stood the Kohlenberg house and cemetery that have since been lost to time. However, Fout was lucky enough in the early 80s to speak to the owners of this house and root around the former foundation area of the glass factory. He turned up shards of broken glass and "slag" - material leftover from the making of glass that binds to rock. The melted glass that adhered to the stone makes rock look shiny. Fout tenderly carted around his show and tell and pulled out these pieces as we stood on the road near the site. These scraps are a genealogical treasure, which true history buffs would appreciate.

A Brief Tour of Glass Making History in Frederick County, MD

Fout also made sure to point out to me the intersection of Stewart's Lane and Mt. Ephraim Road. It is an unassuming woody intersection directly on Bear Branch Creek, a tributary of Bennett Creek. One can hardly imagine Bear Branch Academy sitting atop this site, but this one room school house did just that from 1839-1889 until it was moved to its current location on Flint Hill Road. Incidentally, according to Fout, Flint Hill gets its name from the flint glass that was produced in the glass-making factories of the day.



Of course as we're driving up and down Park Mills Road, I'm picturing what it was like in John Andrew Trout's day. By the time Trout's parents, John Trout and Elizabeth Madery, married in 1839, many of the former glass making factories were still standing, but they were used as wool producing factories – a valuable commodity during the Civil War. By that time, the glass manufacturing reputation had faded, and the area remained known only as Fleecy Dale.^{xx}

There ended our tour. I had a deeper appreciation of the import of glass factories in early Frederick County and a better understanding of the Park Mills area prior to the Trout family and the Civil War.

If you think you are related to any of the villagers in the Amelung community, you might consider giving [Bob Fout](#) a call, or visiting the [Historical Society of Frederick County](#).

A Brief Tour of Glass Making History in Frederick County, MD

END NOTES:

- ⁱ (Jones, 1972)
ⁱⁱ (Whitehouse, 2012), p. 92
ⁱⁱⁱ (Quynn, 1948), p.157
^{iv} (Reed, 1985)
^v (Fout, Tour of Frederick County Glass Work Sites with Sarah Webb, 2013)
^{vi} (Quynn, 1948), 173
^{vii} (Quynn, 1948), p. 173
^{viii} (Quynn, 1948), p. 171
^{ix} (Delaplaine, 1971)
^x (Fout, Tour of Frederick County Glass Work Sites with Sarah Webb, 2013)
^{xi} (Quynn, 1948), p. 156
^{xii} (Quynn, 1948), p. 168
^{xiii} (Reed, 1985)
^{xiv} (Fout, Correspondance, 2013)
^{xv} (Quynn, 1948), p. 175; (Fout, Tour of Frederick County Glass Work Sites with Sarah Webb, 2013)
^{xvi} (Reed, 1985), (Fout, Tour of Frederick County Glass Work Sites with Sarah Webb, 2013)
^{xvii} (Quynn, 1948), 175-177, (Fout, Tour of Frederick County Glass Work Sites with Sarah Webb, 2013)
^{xviii} (Fout, Correspondance, 2013), (Reed, 1985)
^{xix} (Fout, Correspondance, 2013)
^{xx} (Milford, 1952), (Fout, Tour of Frederick County Glass Work Sites with Sarah Webb, 2013)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Delaplaine, E. S. (1971, Jan 23, 29 Feb 5, 13). *The News, Frederick, Maryland*. Retrieved October 7, 2013, from www.ancestry.com.
- Fout, B. (2013, October). Correspondance. (S. Webb, Interviewer)
- Fout, B. (2013, February). Tour of Frederick County Glass Work Sites with Sarah Webb. (S. Webb, Interviewer) Frederick, Maryland.
- Jones, P. (1972). *National Historical Trust Application for Amelung House*. Annapolis: Maryland Historical Trust.
- Milford, H. N. (1952, March). Amelung and His Bremen Glass Wares. *Maryland Historical Magazine*, pp. 1-10.
- Quynn, D. M. (1948, September). Johann Friedrich Amelung at New Bremen. *Maryland Historical Magazine*, pp. 155-179.
- Reed, A. L. (1985). Chronology of Glassmaking in Frederick County Maryland. In A. Reed, & M. L. Burns, *In and Out of Frederick Town Colonial Occupations*. M.L. Burns.
- Whitehouse, D. (2012). *Glass A Short History*. Washington DC: Smithsonian Books.