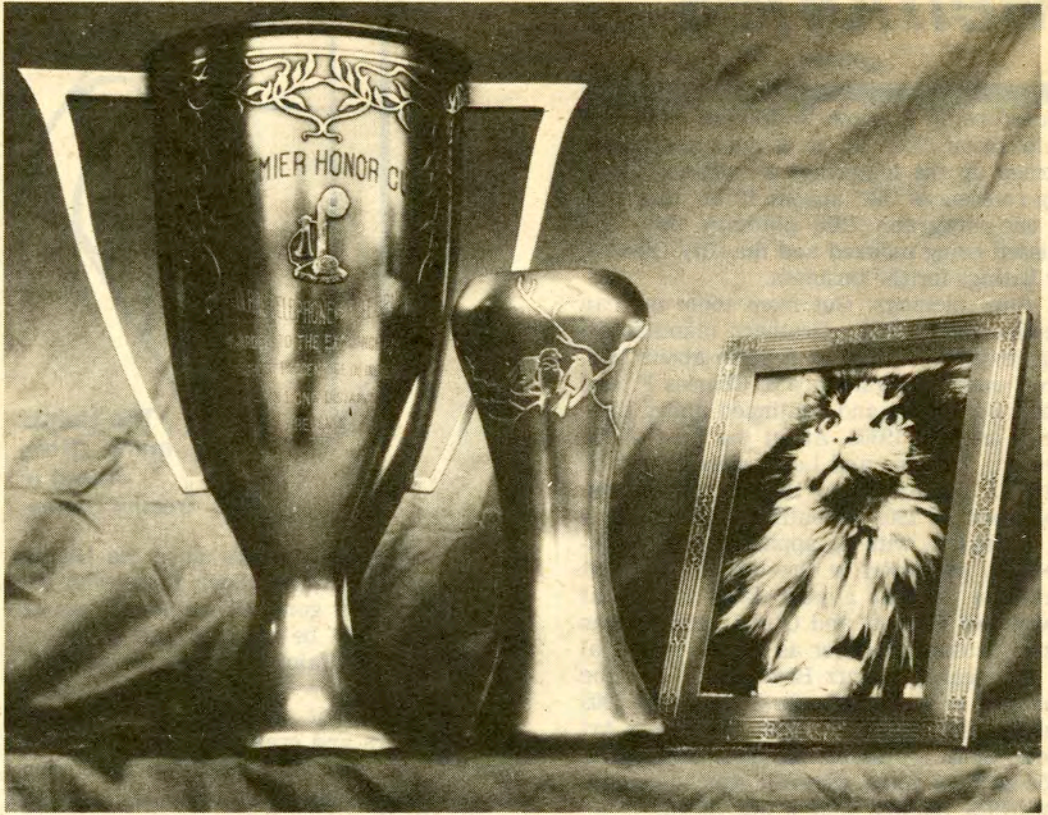


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Buffalo
News
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A Nearly Forgotten Maker of Memories

By DAVE WHITE

A WRITER FOR the Smithsonian magazine was gathering material for an article on antiques authors Ralph and Terry Kovel, whose column appears every Saturday in *The News*. He wandered with them through the giant Renninger's flea market in Pennsylvania Dutch country. At one table Ralph stopped, negotiated and paid \$25 for an old trophy inscribed to the winner of the "Bang and Go Back Race," whatever that was. Discussing the purchase later, Ralph is quoted as saying, "That trophy cup I bought is marked 'Heintz Art' and is very nice."

"Is it worth \$25?" the interviewer asks.

"It is to me, and sooner or later it will be to everybody."

Right on, Ralph. The products of the Heintz Art Metal Shop of Buffalo are indeed very nice, very collectible and frequently offered for sale not only in the Buffalo area but all over the country. It came as a shock, therefore, to find what appears to be an almost complete absence of information about the Heintz shop and its craftsmen here in their hometown. Maybe we can do something about that regrettable situation.

A typical piece of Heintz Art Metal consists of a heavy object, usually of cop-

pery bronze, with flat sterling silver decoration applied to the surface. The Heintz Art Metal Shop mark, the superimposed letters HAMS in a diamond, generally is impressed into the bottom or back of the piece. Among the Heintz products were cigarette boxes, ashtrays, bowls, vases, lamps, picture frames and trophies, some of which can be spotted in the trophy cases of older schools and clubs in Western New York.

On both cylindrical items, formed by the metal spinning process, and on angular ones, the craftsmanship is superb. It's virtually impossible to find a seam, and the silver overlays are cut with great delicacy and applied without a crinkle or a speck of solder showing.

Shown in the photo above are three examples. The 13-inch trophy on the left, found in Wells Beach, Maine, is the 'Premier Honor Cup' awarded by the old Federal Telephone & Telegraph Co. in 1914-16 to the upstate New York exchanges having the most long-distance revenue. Let's hear it for Rushford, Prattsburg, Cherry Creek, Niagara Falls, Gowanda and Orchard Park. That's a picture frame on the right and a vase in the center. All three are testimony to the variations of detail work used in the silver overlay.

So far so good. It's when we turn to the historical background that the gaps in the

Continued on Page 16

over

Maker of Memories

continued from Page 15

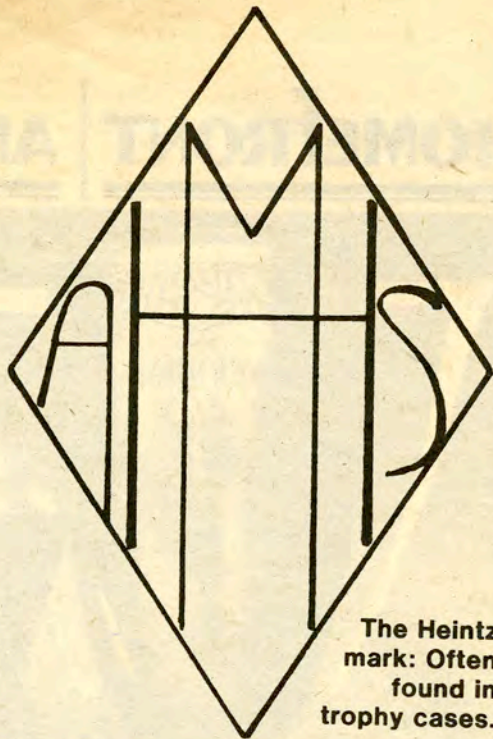
record begin to show. A diligent hunt with help from close to a dozen researchers turned up the following: a couple of passing references that appear to be incorrect, a one-paragraph 1918 obituary that had missed being indexed and the City Directory listings for the business.

Slim pickings. But from them we can deduce this: Heintz Brothers manufacturing jewelers started in Buffalo about 1876, grew under the guidance of Charles F. and Louis J. Heintz, and continued under their heirs into the 1930s. About the turn of the century, Charles and Louis were joined by Otto L. and Edwin A. Heintz, relationship unknown. In 1902 an outfit called the Arts & Crafts Co., with no apparent Heintz connection, appeared in the directory at 391 Franklin St. But a year later it was at Swan and Ellicott and Otto L. Heintz was listed as the proprietor as well as principal in the nearby Heintz Brothers. The name changed to the Art Crafts Shop in the 1905 listing, and finally, in 1906, the Heintz Art Metal Shop. In 1908 the address changed to 1354-62 West Ave., where it was to remain until 1929, the last year it was listed.

The lone little obituary found was that of Otto L. Heintz, who died in 1918 at the age of 41. In the years that followed, George A. Goold, Charles W. White, Thomas W. Dickson and Edwin A. Heintz served at various times as officers of the company. In the 1929 listing, the shop had moved from West Avenue to 1358 Main St., and the following year it was gone.

That's the extent of the record uncovered so far. No advertisements have turned up. No newspaper articles. No product catalogs. Nothing. One descendant of a Heintz craftsman was found but could recall no details that might add to the picture.

The search goes on. Perhaps it's just a case of not having looked in the right place yet. One lead being checked out through the U.S. Patent Office is the patent date of August 27, 1912, that appears on many examples. But time is running out. It has



The Heintz mark: Often found in trophy cases.

been more than 50 years since the Heintz shop closed its doors. Soon those who recall it will be gone, valuable scraps of information will be trashed, and an interesting bit of Buffalo's heritage will be lost. We'll never know what the shop looked like, how much it produced, the names of the designers and craftsmen and how they worked, or what the numbers and other marks on the pieces mean.

So it's time to call for a rescue mission by readers of The News. Is there a Heintz collector out there who can solve some of the many puzzles? Can someone cite a reference that has been overlooked? Is there anyone who worked there, or went there as a customer, or perhaps a descendant of the Heintz family or one of the other officers who can help?

Any clues will be gratefully received. Send them to Homefront/Antiques, Art Department, The Buffalo News, Box 100, Buffalo, N.Y. 14240. The results will become a permanent part of the city's recorded history. Both the Historical Society and the Main Library have expressed interest in the findings.

And of course we'll let our readers know what new light is shed on the subject. Who knows? We might even find out what a "Bang and Go Back Race" is. ●

DAVE WHITE is News picture editor.

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