

**Title**

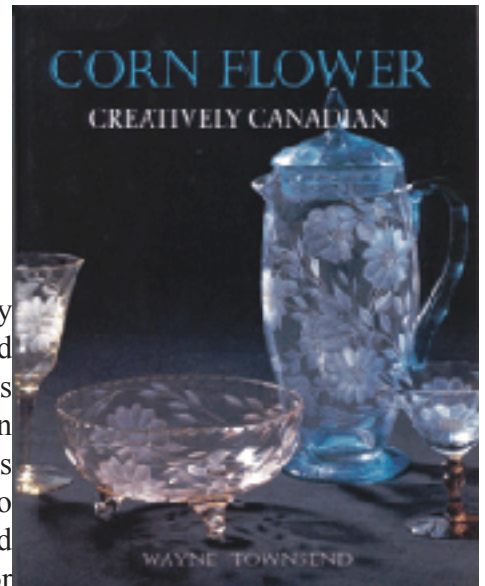
Corn Flower: Creatively Canadian

**Reviewer**

Deborah Quaile in D&D September/October Issue, 2001

**Top Review**

Deep in the recesses of old china cabinets across the countryside usually resides at least one or two examples of Corn Flower, distinctively designed glassware whose pattern has endured for decades. W. J. “Jack” Hughes’s business Corn Flower Ltd. ran from 1914 to 1988, with a floral cut in glass stem and tableware. It was he who created the design, and after his death the family continued operations until 1988. Corn Flower was sold to Canadian working-class families “who wished to add a bit of elegance and craftsmanship to their table, at a price that they could afford,” says author Wayne Townsend. Today, many collectors are the same types of people, for whom Corn Flower holds special and personal memories of family members or events connections that bring the history alive.

**Bottom Review**

Hughes was a Dufferin-County born native (from just outside of the hamlet of Bowling Green, Amaranth Township). Skilled Canadian craftsmen cut his flower design by sandstone wheels onto glassware blanks that were imported from various countries. As far as the author can ascertain, it was never cut into Canadian glass.

Interestingly, the cutting stones were large and cumbersome, contrasting with the fine cuts they created. The stones turned on a revolving spindle on cutting frames, so the cutter learned to hold and move each blank piece with the correct pressure for the right amount of time. Each cut was unique, and in a slightly different location than another; therefore no two pieces of the glassware will match exactly. The same five steps, however, were used to produce each design.

The book is a well-illustrated piece, with many black and white photographs of the family, the variations of glassware, the showroom, a family tree, and reproductions of advertisements and invoices for Corn Flower. Forty-four colour plates constitute a centre spread, where an array of simply but attractively photographed examples of the line reside. The colours of the pieces are gorgeous, from amber, flamingo, topaz and lilac to clear crystal with gold trim. Collectors will certainly refer to this bible of Corn Flower time and again. The book’s purpose is not to offer current pricing for those pieces collected from parents or grandparents, but is a fascinating history and sampling of a proud Canadian company that engineered a timeless design.

“It is impossible to tell the corporate history of Corn Flower without including family history as the two are so intertwined,” Townsend states. “This was an enterprise run in the family home with the family and the business sharing the same phone number. Indeed, the glass cutting factory and the family were only physically a staircase apart for W. J. Hughes and his wife and children. When Jack Hughes died, it was family, his daughter and son-in-law who continued the business. Their warm and vibrant personalities made them as memorable, for many, as the glass they cut and sold.”

It’s obvious that the author loves his subject and this passion and dedication has come through in his informative and interesting writing. Wayne Townsend is Curator of the Dufferin County Museum & Archives, where the Corn Flower collection is housed. More than 450 pieces have been collected by the museum well worth a discovery trip to view. Townsend’s book is available wherever books are sold.

**Footer**

Corn Flower: Creatively Canadian Wayne Townsend ISBN 1-896219-71-3 Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., 2001 Softcover, 256 pgs., \$34.95