



*'Robert Hemengree is head of this household.'*

## GRAY & HEMINGRAY REVISITED

One can almost hear the Gaelic accent of Irish-born Ann Gray, wife of glassblower Ralph Gray, that *may* have influenced assistant marshal Blackburn's phonetic spelling of the surname "Hemengree" (glass manufacturer Robert Hemingray) entered on page 999 of the 1850 Federal Population Census in Cincinnati's ninth ward. Located about ten blocks northeast of Gray's and Hemingray's new glassworks, the residence of Robert and Mary (Carroll) Hemingray also housed Ralph and Ann Gray, Ralph's younger brother Anthony (a glassblower) and Anthony's wife Susan (Carroll) Gray, sister of Mary Hemingray. Adding the five Hemingray children and Susan Finley from Ireland, persons living there numbered twelve. [Cover pen and ink drawing by author David Dale.]

But sometime before the 1850 census was taken, the Gray and Hemingray families resided in a dwelling on Sycamore Street, between Third and Fourth Streets, a half-block east of the glassworks. *Williams' Cincinnati Directory and Advertiser, 1849-50* (printed in 1849) lists Samuel J. Hemingray, Robert's older brother, as a boarder there. Later city directories list the Gray and Hemingray families living in other dwellings in Cincinnati before finally settling in Covington, Kentucky, in 1853.

The 1850 Federal Population Census lists Ralph Gray as glassblower, born in England; Anthony Gray as glassblower, born in Pennsylvania; Robert Hemingray as glass manufacturer, born in Pennsylvania. The following is a sketch, found in the June 6, 1892 edition of the *Muncie Daily Times*, of Robert and Ann Hemingray's marriage in Pittsburgh and Robert's entry into his chosen profession:

*Just fifty years ago [1842] in the then small village of Pittsburgh, Pa. [1840 Federal Population Census placed*

*Pittsburgh population at 35,478], Mr. Robert Hemingray and Miss Mary Carroll were united in marriage. Since that happy event Mr. Hemingray has constantly been engaged in the manufacture of glass. For the past forty years [since 1852] Mr. Hemingray has conducted a flint glass factory at Covington, Ky., where he has resided until a few months ago when he moved to the Magic city [Muncie, Indiana] of the [natural] gas belt. Mr. Hemingray is one of the oldest and probably the best known glass manufacturers in the United States...*

Both the Grays and Hemingrays had strong ties to Pittsburgh and it is probable that they came directly from there to Cincinnati. While little has been published concerning their early glassmaking experience, their rapid growth and success suggests that they were "practical glass men."

"What hath God wrought," was the first message that Samuel F. B. Morse transmitted May 24, 1844, from the U.S. Supreme Courthouse in Washington, D.C. to associate Alfred L. Vail at the B & O Railroad station in Baltimore, Maryland. And in 1848, the same year that the Gray and Hemingray Glassworks was established in Cincinnati, telegraph communications opened between New York City and Chicago. As railroads connected major cities and towns in the U.S. and in foreign countries, more telegraph lines were strung. Constant demand for glass insulators for those lines and later for telephone and power lines, continued well into the twentieth century.

Production of glass insulators for communication and lightning rod installations began early at Gray & Hemingray. Letters of U.S. patent issued between 1850



and 1873 to Cincinnati inventors and manufacturers of both telegraph and lightning rod products include J. Spratt, V. Schrage, W.W. Smith, G. Floyd, and J.H. Weston. (Figure 1.)



(Figure 1.) A variety of lightning rod insulators. (Collection of Glenn Drummond, photograph by David Dale)

By 1850, the population of Cincinnati had grown to 115,438 and had exceeded the size of Pittsburgh, her "Sister City." But long before an attempt was made in 1815 to launch the Cincinnati Glass Works by Hough, Rees & Co., glass had been made in Pittsburgh in great quantities. And though window glass and hollowware produced in Cincinnati was advertised in newspapers and peddled by commission merchants in several towns in the middle and lower Ohio Valley, the glassworks would close.

Englishman David Thomas reports on his journey through the American Middle West during the summer of 1816 in *Travels Through the Western Country*, page 107:

*Works for green glass have lately gone into operation; but some of the articles produced are very imperfect. "We can sympathize [sic] with the proprietors of the new establishment..."*

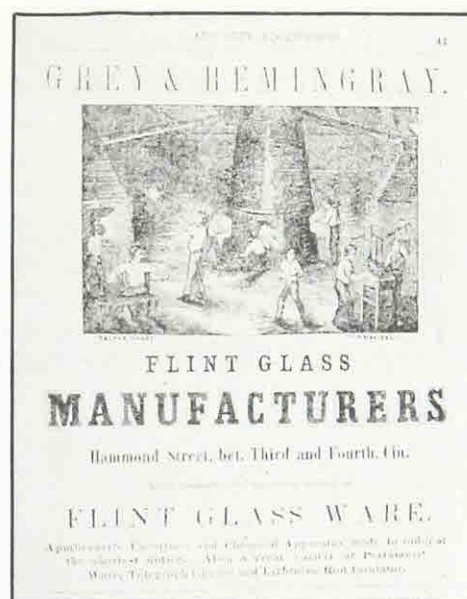
Removed thirty miles upstream from the small village of Moscow, Ohio, equipment from the Cincinnati Glass Works was put back into operation in July 1823 by its former workmen but under the new ownership of Pugh & Teeter. The factory would remain in operation there until 1830 when it was moved to Wheeling, Virginia (now West Virginia) by Henry Teeter who had become sole proprietor. (See Everts, Louis H., *History of Clermont County, Ohio...1880*, p. 373)

Those were times when only the wealthy or most frugal manufacturers would survive. Recent military conflicts and a glut of cheap foreign imports had soured local commerce and had brought much of American industry to a halt. It would be three decades before other glassworks would take hold in Cincinnati.

On April 1, 1848, Ralph Gray and Robert Hemingray signed a five-year lease with George Garretson for the "...use of part of lot number 6 [Ward 1] in

Cincinnati...fronted on Hammond Street between Third and Fourth Streets...between Main and Sycamore Streets [beside the Woodruff Hotel]...." Over the next two years, they would negotiate two additional leases to expand their operations. The manufacture of glass at Hammond Street and at two other locations would continue for 85 years under names "Gray & Hemingray" [1845-1856]; "Gray, Hemingray and Brothers" [1857-1861]; "Gray, Hemingray & Brother" [1861-1864]; "Hemingray, Brothers & Company" [1865-1867]; "R. Hemingray & Company" [1867-1869]; "Hemingray Glass Company, Inc." [1870-1933]. After Owens-Illinois purchased the Muncie, Indiana, plant in 1933, it was operated for another 39 years until closing July 15, 1972.

On a card on page 41 of 1851-1852 *Gray's Cincinnati Business Mirror & City Advertiser*, readers can see first-hand a crude but fascinating woodcut of the interior of the Hammond Street glassworks. (Figure 2.)

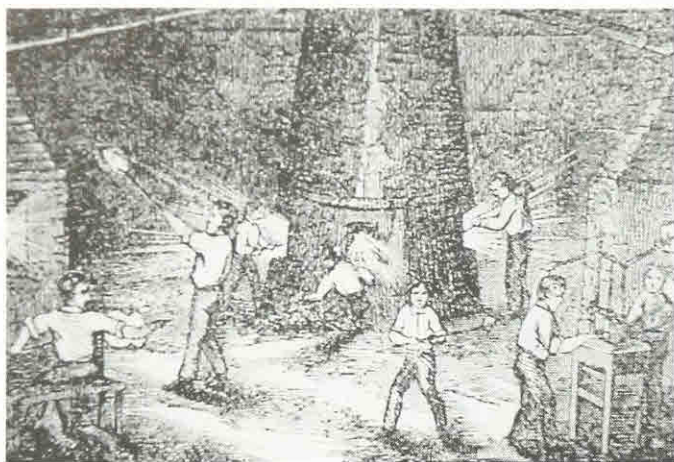


(Figure 2.) Gray & Hemingray's Hammond Street glassworks as pictured in 1851-1852 *Gray's Cincinnati Business Mirror & City Advertiser*. (Courtesy of Cincinnati Historical Society)

Shown are nine workers (Figure 3.) engaged in a variety of activities. At openings around the central furnace and smokestack, gatherers are busy drawing molten "metal" on blowrods; in the right foreground a team of three workers conducts glass-pressing operations; near them is either a kiln-shaped specialty furnace or annealing oven; opposite the press operation sits a gaffer at his workbench tooling a large globe attached to his punty-rod; behind him, at another small furnace or oven, stands a worker facing into its bright opening; a central figure elevates his blowrod with attached vessel taking shape.

The lesser furnaces (or ovens) have vents that angle overhead into the central smokestack; the glassworks structure looks to be 50 feet square and has an





(Figure 3.) Interior of Hemingray's Hammond Street glassworks. (Courtesy of Cincinnati Historical Society)

exposed gable ceiling that vaults up 20 feet to a single peak; heavy exposed wood timbers support a corrugated iron roof, while pole-barn construction holds either corrugated iron or wood slat walls in place; the floor is brick.

It is possible that another glassworks was already established in Cincinnati before that of Gray and Hemingray. Federal population census data indicates that two of Englishman and glass manufacturer John Jukes' children were born in Ohio. Based on their birth dates, it is possible that Jukes and two older sons, who were glassblowers, manufactured glass in Cincinnati in 1844. John Jukes' Cincinnati Flint Glass Works (company named by other historians but yet to be verified through extant records by author) and Gray & Hemingray Glassware are the two Cincinnati glassworks listed on the 1850 Federal Non-population Census. Abstracted from that document are these statistics:

(Page 1) John Jukes [Cincinnati Flint Glass Works]  
Glass Manufacturer

Capital Investment:	\$1,000
Value of 43,820	
Pieces of glassware	
(104,000 lb.) produced:	\$6,240
Value of raw materials	
(including fuel):	\$3,120
Average monthly wage	
(for 8 male hands):	\$ 120

(Page 6) Gray & Hemingray [sic] Glassware

Capital Investment:	\$3,000
Value of 77,500 lots	
of glassware (78,000 lbs):	\$8,500
Value of raw materials	
including fuel:	\$2,340
Average monthly wage	
for 14 male hands:	\$ 952

John Jukes' Cincinnati Flint Glassworks was

located nine blocks east and north of Gray and Hemingray. The latter establishment was in the heart of the commission merchant district, but lacked convenient shipping and receiving accommodations (which would be later remedied). Jukes' glassworks fronted on Lock Street between Fifth and Sixth Streets near the Miami Canal that emptied into the Ohio River, near the Little Miami Railroad and train depot.

To date, it is not known what products were made at Cincinnati Flint Glassworks. The company name suggests hollowware, even window glass. And provided Jukes had a glass press, insulators may have been produced there.

But writer and "Queen City" booster Charles Cist, though never naming Cincinnati Flint Glassworks, stated that the "other" glassworks in town was smaller than Gray & Hemingray. In *Sketches of Cincinnati in 1851*, Cist reports:

*...Gray and Hemingray is on a scale so much inferior in magnitude to those [glassworks] in Pittsburgh, that the statistics given, would conclude this subject, but for the conviction which this writer entertains, that Cincinnati will hereafter lead Pittsburgh in ...glass manufacturers, as we do in everything else...Gray & Hemingray, make tumblers, decanters, packing bottles, lamp glasses, apothecary shop furniture, and generally, most articles manufactured in Pittsburgh. A greater variety of perfumery glass is manufactured in these works...Operations attended here are flint glass, except for insulators, which are made for lightning rods and for telegraph lines, here, and at Pittsburgh; which [the latter] place is entirely supplied from this point.*

In the Volume 7, No. 5., 1904 issue of *Telephony*, Hemingray Glass Company reflects on their success in the manufacture of Hemingray insulators:

*...When it is taken into consideration that the Hemingray Company was established in 1848--more than half a century ago, beginning the manufacture of glass insulators at that time--it can be readily understood why the product of this concern is so well known throughout the country...At the present time the claim is made that Hemingray Glass Company is not alone the largest establishment of its kind in the world, but that its yearly output and sales are more than those of all the other insulator manufacturing industries combined....*

Early success of Gray & Hemingray can be attributed to having produced and marketed a broad base of products that included commercial and domestic hollowware--both blown and pressed--of almost every description. Until the turn of the century, the fruit jar rivaled the production of insulators, as evidenced by directions given by Gray and Hemingray in *The Indianapolis Journal*, July 25, 1855, which discussed their "self-

