



Accurate Appraisals Partnership

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ATTN: Ms. Brenda C

RE: C.F. Monroe Wave Crest Kelva Vase

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Dear Ms. C:

I hope that this following short history of C.F. Monroe & Wave Crest will be helpful.



The history of C.F. Monroe is one of the most interesting in the annals of glass folklore. Until approximately the latter 1970s this fine glass was amazingly neglected; an especially amazing fact as it easily rivals similar articles produced by the Smith Brothers and Mt. Washington Pairpoint Glass Companies in nearby New Bedford, Massachusetts. Decorated Opal ware was at the height of its popularity from 1890 to 1910, and the C. F. Monroe Company was one of the largest finishers of this type glass. In 1877, Charles F. Monroe was hired as a decorator by the Meriden Flint Glass Co. He showed such promise and imagination, that he was frequently sent abroad to study new designs and techniques of European glass manufacturers. Having developed an exceptional sense of style, C.F. Monroe opened his first shop in Meriden, CT. in 1880, located at 36 West Main Street, operating

initially in the format of a European glass importer. Shortly thereafter in 1882, he began his decorating studio, and by 1885 had opened an art academy also in Meriden, that became the C.F. Monroe opal glass decorating works in 1886. The C.F. Monroe Co. was formally incorporated in 1892, and introduced the Wave Crest line that was patented on Oct. 4, of that same year. When the 1890's arrived and the demand for finely decorated glass was its height, the Monroe company was located in several large buildings on the corner of West Main Street and Capitol Avenue, and employed such fine artists as Carl V. Helmschmied, Walter Nilson, J.J. Knoblauch, Joseph Hickish, Carl Puffee, Flora Fiest, Gustave Reinman, Florence Knoblauch, Emil Melchior, and Alma Wenk, Blanche Duval, Gussie Stremelan, Elizabeth Zeibart, and Elizabeth Casey.

The Monroe Co. did not manufacture its own glass; rather, it bought its blanks, undecorated glass, from France, Mt. Washington-Pairpoint and other American glass houses such as Roedefer Glass Co, Bel Air, Ohio, Belle Ware Glass (founded by Helmschmied), Handel, and Keystone. Many of the aforementioned forms can be identified by arched, sculpted and not flat bases and an abundance of Rococo relief. The majority of Monroe pieces may be divided into three main categories; Wave Crest, Nakara, and Kelva, and pieces may be found with one of the other of these three signatures. Many of the pieces were never signed, especially some of the finest pieces. Monroe frequently stated his belief that the glass 'spoke' for itself, and needed no signature. After a number of years producing 100% hand painted florals and designs, in an effort to economize, Monroe began to use high quality transfers to complement the HP process. Wave Crest used a lot of flower transfers, and occasionally scenes and cherubs, coloring over them w/ thick enamel touches to make them look hand done. However, these were used late in the company's history as only (1) transfer piece in the 1900-1901 catalogue.

More scarce than Wave Crest, Nakara is frequently found in quite simple shapes with deep, rich background colors accompanied by beaded and raised enamel rococo scrolls. Beading is a characteristic of Nakara, as an augmentation to the base Nakara pastel background. Although Nakara is usually found with an acid finish, pieces may be encountered with a glossy surface; these are quite rare. Transfers of portraits, scenes, Gibson Girls, and Kate Greenaway figures are extensively used in Nakara pieces. These are quite beautiful, and command high prices. Occasionally portraits and scenes are fully hand decorated.

Apparently very little Kelva was ever produced, as it is quite scarce in the present market. Kelva is generally found in simple classic shapes, and it is always found with its unique, mottled, batik-like background (probably produced by a sponge or crumpled rag dipped in enamel). While Wave Crest and Nakara are found with all types of motifs, Kelva pieces are virtually always found with floral decor. On rare occasions, the same blank was used for all three types of finishes.

While many of Monroe's most commercial pieces were signed, a large number of the finest pieces, especially in the Wave Crest line were not signed. In the opinion of renowned expert Wilfred R. Cohen, in his masterwork "Wave Crest – The Glass of C.F. Monroe", he states that "In my opinion, the signature is totally unnecessary in 99.9% of C.F. Monroe glass, and does not make the piece worth more or less. The glass and decoration are usually so distinctive, to even the early collector, that it can easily be recognized as a piece of C.F. Monroe. As Monroe himself believed, his glass does speak for itself, and no serious student of glass needs a signature, true or otherwise, 'early' or 'late', in identifying the elegancies produced by this fine company.

The details are not entirely clear, however by the start of WWI external pressures were taking a toll on C.F. Monroe. The glass decorating works only survived until 1916, when inexplicably, Monroe took a position as the glass foreman for E. Miller & Co. Glass Works. Stranger yet, C.F. Monroe relinquished the position at E. Miller & Co., subsequently moving to New Hampshire in 1920, then, as though he had never existed, literally disappeared without a trace, becoming merely a footnote in the ageless past.

Your blank has been noted in Wlified Cohen’s “ Wave Crest The Glass of C.F. Monroe” but the example was in a Nakara finish. Your 12” Kelva is in a scarce Fuchsia color with a well recognized C.F. Monroe floral. Your Vase is further validated as, on Kelva items exclusively, the ormolu joiner work was often silver plated. Your vase dates to ca. 1898 – 1903, and contingent upon excellent + condition should command **\$1,300 - \$1,500** in the current market. If this particular vase was offered at one of the high end auction houses on the East coast or New England, it is quite possible that it might bring upwards to \$2,000 with the right audience.

Cordially, John T. Scherz / Head of Research for The Estate Road Show &
Director of The Accurate Appraisals Partnership

