

# HISTORY OF THE SEBRING GLASSWORKS/COMPANY

SEBRING FLORIDA 1972- 1975

By Dwight A. Pettit Jr.

This is my own personal story about how the Sebring Glassworks/Company came about in Sebring, Florida in my own words. I am the Son and Nephew of the Glasswork's co-founders (two brothers) Russell James Pettit and Dwight A. Pettit Sr. But first I must give you some background on the family's history in Glass making and working in the fine art of glass making and operating an Old World European style Glasshouse.



*The Orange Globe reporting on The Sebring Glass Works with Dwight at the blowpipe*

Florida Keys and moved up to Plano, Illinois to be close to my Grandma and Uncle Dick and Aunt Pat. We were there for four years until my Uncle Jim called my dad and asked him to come back to Florida and open up and run another Old World style glassworks in Sebring Florida in 1972.

My father Dwight Sr. (a commercial artist) along with my Uncle Jim, older Brother Anthony, myself (Dwight Jr.), and younger Brother Dana built a glass house with funding by the owner/operator and glass maker Mr. Lester Cunningham on the Island Big Pine Key in the Florida Keys known as the Big Pine Key Glass Works in the mid 1960's. This was the first glass house in Florida's history. We worked and ran the house with and for Mr. Lester Cunningham until 1969 when the owner decided to go on vacation and shut the factory down. Later, we left the



*Some of the gorgeous glass produced at Sebring*



*Sebring Glass House didn't go unnoticed by the local media. The author, Dwight is shown at left right.*

We moved to Sebring in September of 1972 and started to build the new glass house on US Hwy 27 North just outside of Sebring. By January of 1973 we were up and running. My dad and I made every thing from Perfume Paperweights; ashtrays, bud & Flower vases, paperweights from button size all the way to door stop size. We made almost 2,000 or more glass artifacts in the two years we were up and running. It was a wonderful time for me because it was the second time in my life I was able to make glass artifacts with with my father. I believe the first bottle and paperweight I made was when I was eight years old down at the Big Pine Key Glass Works and the last one was when I was 17 years old in December of 1974.

Due to the oil embargo of the early/mid 1970's we had to close the factory down. It became too expensive to run and operate 24/7. January of 1975 I sat there for five days and watched another furnace/pot shutdown until it had finally cooled down enough to turn the furnace blower off. It was very devastating for me to close down two glass houses in my lifetime. I cried for many days about the loss. To this day and even now as I am writing this story it is making me cry just to think about shutting down both of those houses. But I must admit being a glassmaker and glass blower, I am very thankful for the experience and knowledge I achieved at these two glass houses, and I will take this with me through the rest of my life. It is one thing to be able to collect glass of any kind whether it is glassware or antique bottles, but it is a whole New World when you can say that you personally know how it is made. Today I only collect case gins and Demijohns from circa 1600- 1900. I have been doing this since I was six years old growing up in the Florida Keys during the 1950's and 1960's. There is not a day that goes by that I do not think about those long hot days working in both glass houses with my dad. The furnace was a whopping 2300 degrees and the glass house ran 24/7. You just cannot shut it down and walk away for a day or two.



*One of the many paperweights made by the Sebring Glass Works*

I thank you for reading and hope that every one enjoyed the story. If anyone should or would like to discuss the glass house(s) by all means feel free to EMAIL me at

[pettit9119@bellsouth.net](mailto:pettit9119@bellsouth.net). My name is Dwight Pettit and I love to talk glass making and collecting bottles. Thank you very much and may every one have many happy years collecting and hunting bottles!