

18. THE ALLEN BOOK OF BEADS, by Peter Francis, Jr. (1988, 13:5-7)

Information even about relatively recent beads made in the most important centers is scarce. A few years ago an article on early 20th-century bead catalogues appeared, featuring one called "The Allen Book of Beads" (Liu 1975). This 32-page booklet (priced at 10 cents) was well illustrated, and included informative descriptions of beads currently on the market. It must have been published after 1917, as it refers to Czechoslovakia (p. 27). Liu suggested a probable date in the 1920s. Confirming such a date sheds light on the changes in bead styles in the early part of this century.

Allen's Boston Bead Store was located at 8 Winter Street, a building devoted to garments, furs, and fashion accessories in a district known for shops selling these sorts of goods. *The Boston Directory* first listed Allen's Boston Bead Store in 1920. Its proprietor was Herbert D. Allen, who continued to be listed through 1930. In 1931, it was run by Mrs. Mildred E. Wolk.

From 1932 to 1935, Mrs. Mildred E. Schwartz was named as owner of the store; in 1936 Mrs. Wolk was again in charge. In 1940 the store's name was changed to Allen's Bead Store, still under Mrs. Wolk. This continued through 1956. There is no listing from 1957 to 1959. In 1960 there was an Allen's Bead *Shop*, still with Mrs. Wolk; it specialized in repair work. No shop or store is to be found after that date. It seems likely that Mildred E. Wolk and Mildred E. Schwartz were the same person; she may have changed her name due to a short-lived second marriage or a reversion to her maiden name.

The Allen Book of Beads must have been issued while H.D. Allen was still alive, as he was named president of the store in two places. Thus, the catalogue can be dated between 1920 and 1930, much as Liu suspected. This helps to date beads which are quite different from those on several Venetian bead sample cards of the late 19th century (e.g., Fratelli Giacomuzzi n.d.; Karklins 1982). In general the lamp work is less fine than on older beads. There is an absence of floral or "arabesque" patterns, and more free-form waves. There is also quite a variety of millefiori shapes.

There are still things to be learned from this catalogue. In an "Important Notice," it says the store had published circulars and price lists for the past 15 years. Since the name of the store is the Allen *Boston* Bead Store, might Mr. Allen have started his business elsewhere? Can any of the earlier circulars named in the catalogue be located? There is also a section (p. 27) about glass rings for curtain and shade pulls. Allen had been importing these from China, but "The Chinese are not experts in glass making, so in addition to

being poor colors, they were mostly of opaque glass." He had just begun importing finer translucent ones from the Czechs. These rings are now popular as jewelry elements, and this contemporary insight into their origins calls for more study.

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19. ROCAILLE BEADS, by Peter Francis, Jr. (1988, 12:17-21)

"Rocaille" is a term frequently encountered when dealing with French beads and French bead traders. Its precise meaning has been a subject of discussion by English-speaking bead researchers, with different definitions proposed. The present note is offered to help clear up some of these ambiguities, or at least foster further discussion.

Rocaille in English Bead Literature

The first writer in English to use the term was van der Sleen. When discussing the production of Bapterosses et Cie in Briare, France, he said, "They are very typical cylinder beads, as straight as a military drum, called rocaille beads... in the trade. They are from 5 to 10 mm in length... feldspar is a real constituent of the mass, taking the place of some of the quartz" (Sleen 1967:114-115). A simple sketch shows a short tubular bead.