

The Signature Cane “J 1848”.

Marek Kordasiewicz © 2006

The “J 1848” cane is the only known signature cane in the classic Silesian millefiori paperweights. According to analysis presented in one of my previous works¹ this cane appears only in type I Silesian millefiori paperweights [Figure 1].



Figure 1. “j 1848” signature cane.

For several years of their research scholars were confused if the “j” letter cane encased there is an initial of the glassmaker, glassworks name or simply the abbreviation of the German “Jahr” word.

Considering simple redundant “Jahr” for the meaning of the “j” letter, from historical point of view it could be explained as used to commemorate the 1848 Revolution, which took place in several European countries, including Silesian territory in 1848. Anyway, it seems to be rather unlikely, that the owner of glassworks commemorated this way the

1848 Revolution, which was aimed against landlords and factories’ owners.

If the “j” letter would be the initial of the glassmaker’s or the glassworks’ name, it should be written as a capital letter “J”.



Figure 2. “J 1848” signature cane “project”.

In fact, if we consider the German language rules, the “Jahr” word should be also written starting from the capital “J” letter, as all German nouns are.

In this case both above explanations seem to be uncertain.

In my opinion there is simple explanation for some doubts of other scholars and curious millefiori paperweight collectors.

I’ve made simple change in “j 1848” cane construction [Figure 2] to show the Readers how the capital “J” letter would appear without the dot on the top.

¹ Kordasiewicz, Marek ©2004: Silesian Millefiori Paperweights. Paperweight Collectors Association Inc. Bulletin 2005.

As we see, in this case the “J” letter could be easily mistaken with distorted “T”, mirrored “L” or distorted number “1”.

In my opinion, the millefiori maker added dot on the top of the capital “J” letter to prove it’s really “J”.

If we get closer to the shape of the letter type used in the “J 1848” signature cane, we may be sure, that maker of this cane used Serif type of fonts. For understanding the difference lets compare the Serif and Sans-Serif fonts with “J” and “j” letters:

Serif capital letter: **J**

Serif small letter: **j**

Sans serif capital letter: **J**

Sans serif small letter: **j**

The above comparison ensures us, that the “J 1848” cane maker used “J” serif capital letter with dot added on the top to point clearly that it’s really “J”, not “T” or other letter, which could remind simple “J” distorted during paperweight or cane production process.

According to this observation, both explanations are possible (“Jahr” or initial of the glassmaker’s or glassworks’ name), but considering other analysis of glass, canes and types of ware produced, it seems to be more probable, that mystery “j” letter is an initial of the Silesian Josephinenhütte. It seems to be even more probable, as in the mid-19th century Josephinenhütte was the only glassworks in the world, which name started on “J”.

To make this article complete, we should also mention about another date cane “1848” without any letter, which sometimes appears

in type I Silesian millefiori paperweights [Figure 3].



Figure 3. “1848” Silesian date cane.

This complex cane is rarely seen in the Silesian paperweights.

We can suppose, that the year 1848 was an important date in the Silesian type I paperweights production. If the glassmaker intention would be to commemorate the Revolution, we should expect the “1848” date cane to be more popular than the “J 1848” cane. In fact both “1848” and “J 1848” canes are rare and only couple paperweights with “1848” date cane are known.

We should consider also, that paperweights were bought mainly by the reach part of society which was mainly against the revolution. In this case we should be rather skeptical with such an “Revolutionary” explanation of the 1848 date appearing in the classic Silesian paperweights.

We still remain unable to give 100% sure explanation of the “J 1848” signature cane as well as the “1848” date cane meaning, but I hope this article get us closer to the proper understanding of this matter.