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**WVJIT invests \$100,000 in The Fenton Group**  
*Funds to help revitalize iconic art glass manufacturer*

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — New funding and new ownership may revive a productive future for 107-year-old Fenton Art Glass Company in Williamstown.

With a signing ceremony for an investment of \$100,000, the state's venture capital firm West Virginia Jobs Investment Trust (WVJIT) closed its first round of funding in The Fenton Group on March 7. In 2012, the Fenton Group (doing business as USGlass Inc.) acquired the assets of the Fenton Art Glass Company in Williamstown.

The financing through the West Virginian Capital Access Program (WVCAP) provides for operating capital, marketing and advertising support.

"The funds will be used to reinvigorate Fenton's factory operations and refresh its marketing efforts," said Keith Burdette, cabinet secretary for the West Virginia Department of Commerce. "Fenton Art Glass has been a fixture in Wood County since 1905. In addition to the direct jobs that supported the employees and their families, the company had been a tourist destination, attracting visitors to the community and to the state."

"WVJIT is delighted to become a partner in the next phase of Fenton Glass and USGlass" said Andrew Zulauf, executive director of WVJIT. "The investment meets our social mission of creating new jobs in West Virginia. We believe the new business model and management team lead by Mr. Bem will revitalize the local area and compete nationally and globally."

Owned by the Fenton family for generations, the company struggled in recent years with rising costs and declining sales. In 2011, Fenton shut down its main furnace, stopping production of its classic lines of art glass. The gift shop remained in operation.

"The intention is to revitalize the American glass art craft as well as maintain and rejuvenate the local industrial community," said Gene Bem, CEO of USGlass. "The Fenton Group looks to re-introduce the legacy of the Fenton Art Glass Company, appealing to the growing number of metropolitan consumers while maintaining Fenton Art Glass' historical glassmaking traditions and its American-made brand."

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