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# PAIRPOINT

Two brothers hired to shut the glass factory down found there was too much talent and history to let it go

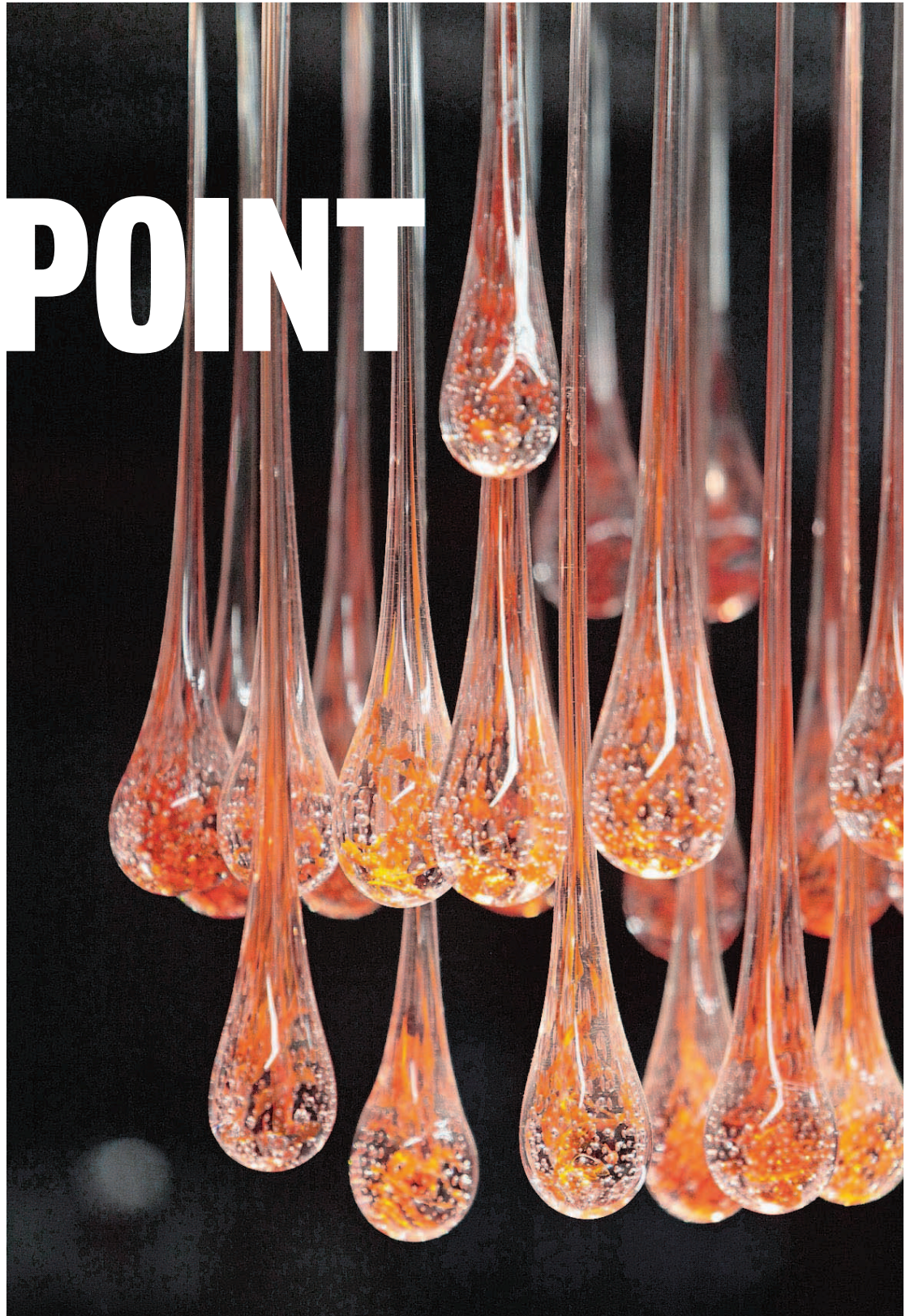
By **Amanda Wastrom**  
Contributing writer

**I**n the shadow of the Sagamore Bridge is a scrappy, nondescript industrial building squeezed in between a gas station and a baseball field – Pairpoint Manufacturing Company, Inc. Most locals probably know it as “the place where they do glassblowing.” I remember visiting Pairpoint when I was 9 or 10 years old. Standing on tiptoes, peering through the windows, I was transfixed by the glowing red glass, raging fire, and the hum, creaks and cranks of the machinery. It was all massive, dangerous, exhilarating.

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**These pieces will be part of a bubble-ball drop chandelier being crafted for a New York casino.**

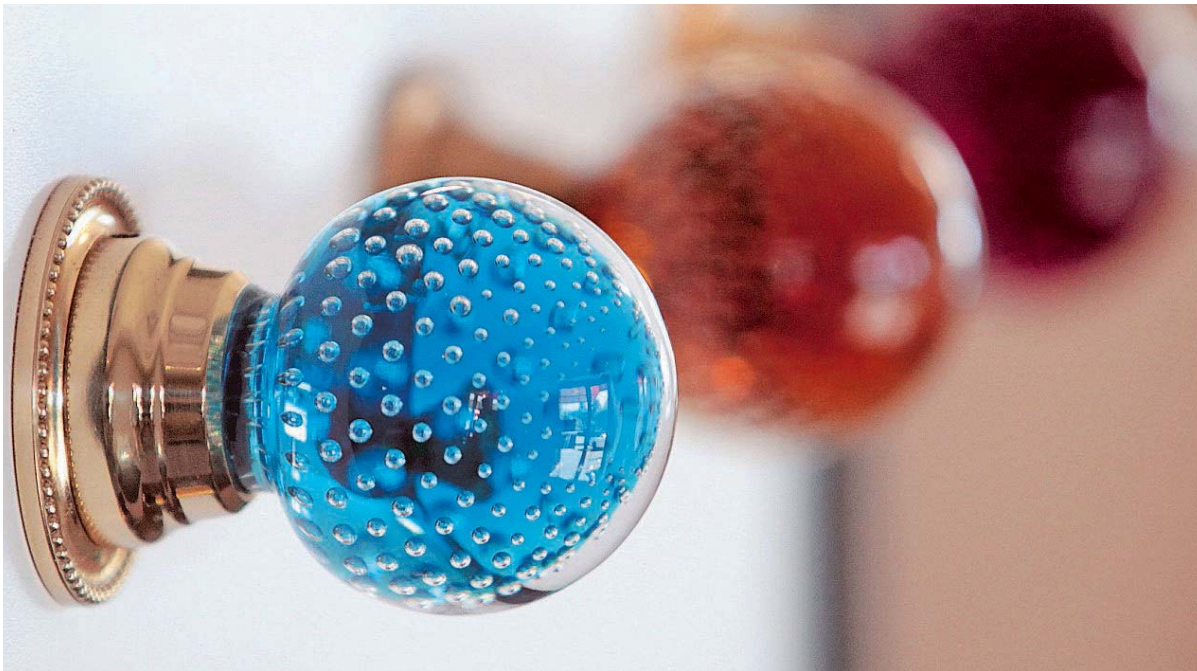
STEVE HAINES/CAPE COD TIMES







**ABOVE:** Samie Mendez, a senior glass blower at Pairpoint, has been with the company for 28 years.



**LEFT:** The Tulumans have reintroduced a Pairpoint signature, the controlled-bubble doorknob. They can be found in many of the Newport mansions.



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### Be an Engaged Healthcare Consumer: Help Prevent Healthcare Errors, Fraud and Abuse

/ Lucilia Prates, MA SMP Program Director October 2016

Did you know that healthcare errors, fraud and abuse cost American taxpayer billions of dollars annually? Or that knowledgeable Medicare beneficiaries, family members and caregivers are the first line of defense in fighting Medicare fraud?

The Massachusetts Senior Medicare Patrol (MA SMP) Program works to promote the engagement of Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, to prevent, detect, and report healthcare errors, fraud and abuse. We conduct regular **free educational sessions** across the state at Councils on Aging, community centers, civic clubs, places of worship and many other organizations to encourage consumers to take a more active role in their healthcare; which at times can feel daunting. We give people the tools to help protect themselves and their loved ones. The MA SMP Program promotes the use of Personal Healthcare Journals to record all medical appointments, diagnostic procedures, prescriptions, etc., and compare journal entries against Medicare Summary Notices (MSN), Explanation of Benefits (EOB) and Medicare health bills, and to report any irregularities to appropriate authorities.

Navigating one's health benefits is often a disheartening task and the complexities of the ever-changing healthcare system can be overwhelming and upsetting at times. It is imperative to be vigilant about your health care and protect yourself and your loved ones from healthcare errors, fraud, abuse, and deceptive marketing schemes. We recommend that you:

- **Protect your Medicare card as you would a credit card.**
- **Detect any irregularities in your medical bills or statements from Medicare or other insurers by always reviewing them for accuracy.**
- **Report any discrepancies/questionable activity to the MA SMP Program.**
- **Trust your intuition. If something does not seem right, check it out!**

The MA SMP Program often receives complaints from beneficiaries who have noticed a bogus charge on their MSNs, EOBs or have received a bill that has no merit. Perhaps, the beneficiary has never been to the health care facility that billed Medicare or the consumer has never been prescribed the durable medical equipment delivered, or they were enticed to enroll in a certain insurance plan. Be an engaged healthcare consumer, help save billions of American taxpayer dollars, and most importantly, be proactive in preventing harm to yourself or to a loved one.

**Invite you to join our team and become a MA SMP Program volunteer!** Educate your peers, family members, caregivers and professionals about the importance of being an engaged healthcare consumer.

**Host or schedule an SMP informational/educational session** at your organization or to request an SMP brochure, SMP Personal Health Care Journal, or to obtain any additional information, please contact the MA SMP Program at 800-892-0890 or visit [www.masmp.org](http://www.masmp.org). We offer sessions and materials in multiple languages.

**Editor's Note:** This article was submitted by Lucilia Prates, statewide director for the MA SMP Program, one of 54 SMP Projects nationwide. **The MA SMP Program is located at Elder Services of Merrimack Valley, Inc., 280 Merrimack Street, Suite 400, Lawrence, MA. To speak to Lucilia Prates call 978-946-1326 or email at [lprates@esmv.org](mailto:lprates@esmv.org).**

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## PAIRPOINT

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I left the shop holding a small purple sun catcher with a mermaid on it. It hung in my bedroom window for many years.

Twenty-five years later, I'm standing in that same shop, looking through the same windows, with a familiar sense of awe. Only, it isn't in response to the fire or the mesmerizing spinning of hot molten glass. This time, it's a story.

The storytellers are two brothers, Gary and Jeff Tulman, the newest owners (since 2015) of Pairpoint. Dressed in get-your-hands-dirty clothes, they have just come from the factory floor where the glassblowing team is in the midst of a major cleanup. Tall and lean, Jeff, is clean cut with a smooth voice and even smoother hair. Gary, rugged, with a lower voice, has the strong, compact energy of a boxer. With a baseball hat pulled tight on his head, he could pass for a commercial fisherman. They are both classic Yankee. Confident. Intelligent. Straightforward. They speak fast, and two men take turns filling in the details of their newest adventure.

Founded in 1837, Pairpoint is America's oldest glass company. Represented in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Museum of Modern Art, to name only three, the 179-year-old company has a cultivated pedigree. "In the 20th century, Pairpoint was known as the top glass producer in the country, if not the world," says Gary. "What separated Pairpoint was its quality and its ability to produce custom colors and custom pieces." The company was known the world over as a leader in craftsmanship, ingenuity, and design in home décor, art glass, and hardware. "There are thousands of pages of history written about the company because the pieces were so cherished and the company was so innovative," says Jeff.

"Over the decades, the brand got a little watered down in the types of products they were producing," says Gary. "They produced a lot of commodity-type pieces, souvenir-type stuff, less expensive so more people could obtain a piece of Pairpoint." For the past twenty years or so, Pairpoint primarily sold sun-catchers and Christmas ornaments,

## Learn more

For more information visit [pairpoint.com](http://pairpoint.com) or stop in at the showroom, 851 Sandwich Road, Sagamore, 508-888-2344

appealing to the local tourist market. Due to changes in the market and an influx of cheaply-produced glass from overseas, it wasn't long before prices for the low-end, mass-produced items fell below Pairpoint's costs to produce the souvenirs. Ultimately, selling tiny glass trinkets to tourists wasn't paying the bills.

In 2014, Pairpoint was bankrupt and its owner had recently passed away. The owner's spouse, uninterested in taking over the business, was unsure of how to proceed. Gary and Jeff were initially brought in to consult on what they thought was a liquidation scenario. What they discovered was the ultimate fixer-upper: a rundown facility, upside-down financials, and low employee morale. But obscured behind these challenges was nearly 200 years of glassmaking history and a team of talented glassblowers.

Turning around a failing business is no easy feat. It requires vision and strategic planning. Gary and Jeff drew directly on their combined experiences as entrepreneurs. "I was our business background that brought us here," says Gary.

"I was taking beat up old companies and making one large one that could run as profitably and efficiently as possible," says Jeff. "It was a no-brainer to apply those same strategies to glass."

The Tulumans grew up in Brooklyn and spent the majority of their lives in the Boston area. They have been coming down to the Cape in the summers since they were kids and Gary recently relocated to Centerville full-time. For the past 15 years, Gary has specialized in local real estate restoration and rehab developments. Jeff ran his own private equity fund and had recently worked on a few business turnarounds. This project seemed ideally suited to their combined talents as entrepreneurs. "I love solving puzzles," says Jeff. "Pairpoint struggled for many, many years and a lot of people thought the company had no value. What's exciting to me is to be able to do something



Jeff, left, and Gary Tulman were initially hired to consult on liquidating the failing Pairpoint business, but they saw potential and bought the company instead. STEVE HAINES/CAPE COD TIMES

that other people haven't been able to accomplish."

Once the Tulmans got involved, there was much to be done and much to learn. They became students of Pairpoint as business, as a team and as a brand. The first six months were spent learning, listening and stabilizing Pairpoint's financials. "We started with the fundamentals," says Jeff. "What happens when someone calls with an order? What were the costs in terms of labor and materials? How do you price things? What makes Pairpoint Pairpoint? They immersed themselves in all things glass: the history, the techniques and the contemporary market. "Upon realizing what Pairpoint was and its history, we realized this was a tremendous opportunity to reawaken the brand and market it to a new generation of customers and luxury buyers," says Gary.

In the year and a half since Gary and Jeff bought Pairpoint, they have been steadily reviving the brand's place in the contemporary glass world. "We have now gone from fixing problems to growing the business and working on some of the ideas that we were excited about from the beginning: growing the team; reaching out to strategic partners; exploring opportunities for new

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## PAIRPOINT

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product lines," says Jeff.

For inspiration, the Tulmans have mined Pairpoint's past. Museums such as the New Bedford Glass Museum offer a veritable encyclopedia of historic designs to use as a starting point. They are focusing on some of the hallmarks of the Pairpoint name: lighting, home décor, art glass, and hardware.

"We are not glass experts. We are not design experts," says Gary. "The real trick is to maintain the old techniques and the charm of hand production and try to marry it to the efficiencies of running a manufacturing business. It's the combination of art and business."

One of their latest projects is the reintroduction of a Pairpoint signature, the controlled-bubble doorknob. Called the "holy grail of doorknobs," it can be found in many of the mansions in Newport and is sought after by antiques collectors and people who do historic restoration. Like a little drop of jewelry on a door, the crystal clear knob twinkles with perfectly sized bubbles frozen inside. The response



Gary Tulman looks over a test arrangement for a chandelier.

has been higher than expected. The company is also completing its first major commission, an 8-by-8-foot chandelier featuring thousands of custom-designed glass teardrops. From design to fabrication, the entire

project is being done in-house.

In the works for the future are plans to redo the exterior, both the front and the back, which overlooks the railroad and Cape Cod Canal. The Tulmans have been working with the Army

Corps of Engineers and other local officials to open up the area behind the Pairpoint property. They are envisioning much more than just a fresh coat of paint. "It would be nice for people to be able to sit down, relax, watch a glass piece being finished, maybe get a bite to eat," says Jeff. Pairpoint is a tourist destination and has been for many years. "We feel we can improve the customer experience. Yes, it's cool to watch glassblowing live, but there are other ways to engage people," says Gary. "The idea (is) to make the Pairpoint experience a Cape Cod experience, marrying the glass with the waterfront and the train."

At the heart of all the buzz is a desire to share Pairpoint's history and the amazing work being done by the guys inside that worn-out factory. "What motivates me is proving that our guys are true artists and deserve the recognition," says Jeff. "The company has immense potential beyond the seasonal products that they have been producing recently."

"We've come a long way but there is still a ways to go," says Gary. "We are really proud of what we have here."

Amanda Wastrom is a freelance writer living in East Sandwich.

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