

A Beginner's Guide to Antique Glass by Kay Tucker

If you are an "experienced" collector of antique glassware, you can stop reading now. This article is NOT for you. We felt that an article needed to be written to welcome new collectors, especially after the convention, and hopefully answer some of their questions. With that in mind, we'll deal with some of the concerns and questions we hear as dealers from our new customers.

First and foremost is an explanation of what constitutes Depression Era Glassware. Actually, American antique glassware goes back much earlier than the depression. Early American Pattern glass got its start in the early 1800's with the invention of the hand pressing machine. This machine allowed manufacturers to make many of the same items while maintaining uniformity and consistency in the pieces. This process also used less glass, making manufacturing cheaper and increasing production dramatically.

The glass made during this period is usually referred to as Early American Pattern Glass or Early American Pressed Glass-but it is also sometimes referred to as "Poor Man's Cut Glass". It was during this time period that the middle class began to emerge and the lady of the house could now set a beautiful table using pressed glass that fit into her budget.

The two best reference books on EAPG are both written by Danny Cornelius and Don Jones. The first, *American Pattern Glass Table Sets*, was published in 2000; and *Early American Pattern Glass Cake Stands & Serving Pieces*, came out in 2002, both published by Collector Books.



Carnival Glass comes next chronologically. It gets its name, because you could literally win it at a "carnival". I can remember my Dad telling me about pitching coins at the carnival to try to win a piece of glass for his mother!

This glassware was mass produced between 1905 and 1930. Its trademark iridized look was achieved by spraying the surface of the glass before firing. Because of this spraying process, there are variations in the depth of color depending upon who did the spraying, whether or not it was the end of the shift, etc. For the most part this glass was pressed, although some pieces were hand formed when removed from the mold.

Unlike Depression and Elegant Glassware, Carnival was never intended to be "table setting" type of glassware. The emphasis was on accent pieces, such as candlesticks, pitcher and tumbler sets, bowls, bon-bons, vases, and candy dishes. All of these came in a multitude of patterns, shapes, and colors. While the most common color many associate with Carnival glass is marigold, a wide variety of other colors are available. These include amethyst, purple, blue, green, various shades of opalescent, pastels, and aqua just to name a few.



Several good reference books are available on Carnival Glass. Two of the best are the *Standard Encyclopedia of Carnival Glass*, 11th edition, by Mike Carwile and the accompanying price guide, *Standard Encyclopedia of Carnival Glass Price Guide*, 16th edition, also by Mike Carwile.

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

We need to point out that Depression Glass, Elegant Glass, and Kitchen Glassware were all produced at the same time. Depression Glass is commonly referred to as the colored glassware that was mass produced during the 1930's. In fact, it encompasses a longer time period than that. Earlier patterns began production in the late 1920's, and continued into the 1940's. It was inexpensive machine-made, pressed glass.

Many collections were started with "premium" pieces--dinner night at the movies, glass with an oil change, or as a bonus in flour, cereal and oatmeal boxes. Additional pieces could be purchased at the local dime store or through the mail with coupons collected from a specific manufacturer. Depression Glass was made in every conceivable shape, style, and pattern. Most of the emphasis was on dinnerware sets, which included full table place settings as well as bowls, pitchers, cookie jars, and candy dishes.

While Depression Glass is noted for pink and green, it was produced in a wide variety of colors. These include amber, yellow, cobalt blue, light blue, ultramarine, crystal, black, red, white, and some opalescent colors. Each pattern is unique in terms of what pieces were available. There are some smaller patterns, such as Aurora, which was only produced in 7 pieces. This can be contrasted with pink Mayfair, which has almost 60 pieces. However, Mayfair was also produced in blue, green, and yellow, and pieces in those colors are much harder to find and more expensive. You may hear dealers refer to Depression Glass with "A-Z" or "Adam to Windsor" patterns. This is a reference to the fact that there were many, many patterns produced, and they range from "Adam" to "Windsor" alphabetically.



While there are many books on Depression Glass, they fall into three categories. Books have been published covering a specific manufacturer, all pieces in one color, and overall encyclopedias with price guides. If you're trying to research a piece you just can't find, look in *Colored Glassware of the Depression Era, Book 2*, by Hazel Marie Weatherman. It was published in 1974, and is considered by most of the dealers as the "bible of the industry". It won't give you a value for your piece of glass, but you may be able to identify that mystery bowl in the cupboard. However, it is out of print and difficult to find. For the "A-Z" patterns, *Mauzy's Depression Glass, A Photographic Reference and Price Guide* is the current standard. Barbara and Jim Mauzy travel the country doing shows and research in an effort to keep their prices current. The latest edition is the 7th, published in 2011.



The 40's-50's-60's Glassware category was originated by Gene Florence to cover those patterns which have all the characteristics of Depression Glass, but which were produced later. These characteristics include the fact that this glassware was mass produced, cheaply made, and pressed from a mold.

As is true with Depression Glass, colors include pink, green, yellow, crystal, red, blue, amethyst just to name a few. Also, as a parallel to Depression Glass, there are many different companies that produced glass at this time. Many of these companies are the same as those of the Depression Era. Fire-King dinnerware patterns almost all fall within this time period.

Elegant Glassware companies also fall into this time frame. For example, although Cambridge Rose Point started production in 1936, it continued to be made until 1953. Several

of the Elegant etched patterns do fall entirely within these three decades. Fostoria's "Buttercup" and "Corsage", Fenton's crest series, New Martinsville's "Prelude", and Heisey's "Rose" are just a few examples you've find in *Collectible Glassware of the 40's-50's-60's*, by Gene Florence.

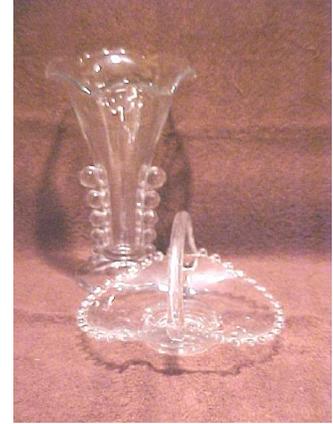


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(Continued from page 10)

As he is no longer doing shows or researching and publishing books, the most recent 10th edition, published in 2009, will be his last.

As we previously stated, Elegant Glassware was produced during the same time period as Depression Glass. However, that's were the similarity ends. Depression Glass was mass produced, with little care taken to ensure "quality control". Elegant Glass was largely hand-worked, sometimes blown, acid etched quality glass. There are several major manufacturers who account for the majority of the glass made during this time. These include Cambridge, Heisey, Fostoria, Tiffin, and Imperial. Other companies involved, but to a lesser extent, were Duncan Miller, Fenton, Morgantown, Central, and New Martinsville.



Because all of these manufacturers have books written exclusively about them, we've decided to only list two that cover many of them. *Elegant Glass, Early, Depression, and Beyond*, by Debbie and Randy Coe is out with its third edition, published in 2007, from Schiffer publishing; and *Elegant Glassware of the Depression Era*, by Gene and Cathy Florence was published by Collector Books. This is the thirteenth and last edition, published in 2008, due to the retirement of the Florence's.

If any category of glassware is self-explanatory, it has to be kitchen glassware! It was designed to be very functional and used in the kitchen, as opposed to other varieties that could be used to set a table or decorate your home. Found in all colors, the major manufacturers were Anchor-Hocking, Fry, Hazel-Atlas, Jeannette, McKee, and Pyrex. All of these companies also produced glassware that falls into other categories, primarily Depression.

Anchor-Hocking is responsible for the sapphire blue casseroles, bowls, pie plates, and refrigerator containers as well as many decorated bowl sets including tulips, and Gay-Fad. Hazel-Atlas is best known for blue, crystal, green, and pink criss-cross butter dishes, reamers, bowls, and refrigerator dishes. Jeannette introduced measuring cup sets, butter dishes, bowls, and refrigerator sets in ultramarine, pink, and crystal. McKee was primarily responsible for individual casseroles with covers, measuring cups, coffee pots, and a distinctive heart-shaped pie plates



and casseroles. Pyrex is most recognized for mixing bowl sets. They also produced covered casseroles, measuring cups, and refrigerator sets.

In addition to many of the items listed above, other pieces were also in production. These include batter jugs and bowls, canisters, cruets, ice buckets, knives, ladles, napkin holders, range sets, rolling pins, salt boxes, spice shaker sets, straw holders, and water bottles. Although kitchen glassware is available in many colors, the two most often thought of are blue and jadite. Blue tones include chaline, peacock, cobalt,

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

and delphite. Jadite became quite popular when Martha Stewart used it on her television show. In fact, Ms. Stewart put out her own line of jadite kitchen ware, so make sure you know what you're buying.

Several reference books are available for specific manufacturers or colors used in the kitchen. The two best "overall" guides are *Mauzy's Kitchen Glass*, published by Barbara and Jim Mauzy in 2004 from Schiffer Publishing, and *Kitchen Glassware of the Depression Years*, seventh edition, by Gene and Cathy Florence, published in 2009 by Collector Books.

If you're thinking about starting a collection but are afraid of buying a reproduction, rest assured. Most reproductions are well documented as soon as they come out. If you consider the thousands of piece of glassware produced, only a small percentage have been reproduced. Authors Barbara & Jim Mauzy and Gene & Cathy Florence list all reproduction information in their books, along with tips to distinguish between the original and the new. To give you the best example we can think of, Florence's four books on Depression, Elegant, 40's-50's-60's, and Kitchen Glassware contain 1015 pages of pictures and information on glassware. Of that total, only 17 pages show and explain reproductions. Barbara & Jim Mauzy show their reproduction information with each pattern, so that type of comparison is difficult for them. Many patterns that are listed in the "reproduction section" may be only one piece in one color. NO pattern, in its entirety, has been reproduced. There just isn't as much as many people think. If you're unsure, you have to do the research and/or trust the reputation of the dealer you're buying from.

The next issue facing a new collector is quite simply, what to collect? We get asked this question at least twice a year. You, as a collector, have multiple options. You can collect a specific item in multiple patterns and colors. There are people who collect cookie jars, pitchers, cordials, cups & saucers, creamers & sugars, shot glasses, reamers, and salt & pepper shakers to name a few. These people (and that would include us—we're the creamers & sugars variety) collect just their items, but in every color and pattern. Some people collect one place setting in a variety of patterns and colors. These collectors enjoy the look of a dinner table that doesn't match, but provides variety to spur conversation among their dinner guests. The third major group are the people who collect a specific pattern or patterns. For the most part, these people will collect every piece a pattern has, in a service for 4, 6, 8 or 12.

In all cases, each collector has decisions to make. Are you going to use your glass? Be aware that it was never intended to go in a dishwasher. Many people use the less valuable pieces for family dinners, and keep the more expensive pieces on the shelf. Some people display their collections, but don't use any of it. How much space is available? If you live in an apartment, a pitcher collection may not be the most practical option. Some people solve part of this problem by rotating the glass—displaying only a portion of it at a time. Service for 12 is wonderful, but how much money do you have? Most patterns have a "killer" piece or two—very expensive parts of the collection. Do you want everything? Not all patterns have every type of piece. For example, if you want a cookie or candy jar, there isn't one available in Cherry Blossom. Modern tone has no pitcher, and pink Cameo has far fewer pieces than green Cameo.

Our best advice is to either buy a book or take one out of your local library and do some research. Use the books previously listed as a guide. Decide if you want to collect specific pieces in all patterns, place settings, or patterns. Narrow down your choices to three or four patterns by looking at the pieces available, their cost, and the overall look and shape of the pieces. Now you're ready to go to a glass show and make your final decisions. You need to talk to the dealers, find out how hard it's going to be to find a specific pattern or piece, and look carefully at the color, shapes, and prices.

Now you're ready to begin!! Start by buying one of the more expensive pieces. These pieces go up in price faster than the cheaper ones. Less expensive pieces are always going to be available. Keep a list of what you've purchased and what you're looking for. In that way, you won't end up duplicating anything. Educate your friends and relatives about your collection. Birthday and Christmas presents are great, IF they know what they're looking for.

There are many venues available to you to add to your growing "obsession". Glass shows will provide you with the best variety of glass and the most accurate information about that glass. You can log onto the NDGA website for a list of shows. Try incorporating one into your vacation plans. Some patterns or pieces are more available in different areas. Stop at antique malls, go to local shops, and flea markets. However, BE AWARE! Not all information on labels is accurate. YOU need to be educated on your collection. Just because a label says it's a Princess relish does make it one. What is a specific piece worth? You need to have a list with you. Check online as well. The same cautions apply. If you're shopping on ebay, not all information is accurate. If you're on a site that is a reputable glass dealer's, your information is going to be correct.

Keep in mind that values and availability are not static. Fluctuations occur all the time. Collecting tends to be cyclic. What was "hot" five years ago may be difficult to find now. In any case, the fun is in the hunt! This is true even for dealers. We all still come to a show to see what other dealers have up for sale. We are in awe of some of the items that are available. And yes, most of the dealers are still collectors. We can still get that "kid on Christmas morning" feeling when we spot something to add to our collection. Believe me, there's nothing that can compare to finding something you've been searching for. So, in conclusion, WELCOME!! We're so glad you've decided to join us in this never-ending quest. You're hooked now, and we hope you have as much fun collecting as we've had.