

# “The Myriad Hues of New Hampshire Glass”

by Michael George



Every autumn, New Hampshire’s foliage explodes into an exhilarating diversity of colors – colors that are subtly and beautifully echoed in the lovely, diverse hues of New Hampshire glass of the 1700s and 1800s. Hundreds of rare and beautiful examples of early New Hampshire glass will be on display in the unprecedented upcoming exhibit “**New Hampshire Glassmakers, 1780-1886,**” a collaborative exhibit by the Historical Society of Temple, the Peterborough Historical Society, and the Historical Society of Cheshire County.

Peterborough Historical Society  
19 Grove Street, Peterborough, NH  
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## TEMPLE (1780-1781)

Glass has been produced in the Granite State since the earliest days of American independence, when Robert Hewes launched his *New England Glassworks* venture in Temple in 1780. The vital natural resources along this rugged terrain were abundant; plenty of hardwood and a mountain of quartz. Hewes’s glass “experiment” was to establish a factory for producing primarily crown glass, along with a scattering of other glass articles. The blend of the local ingredients produced a rich emerald green, the predominant color of glass seen in



Temple glass, including a bullseye window pane, 1780

Temple. Excavations, however, show that test pots produced cobalt, amethyst, aqua, and clear glass as well.

With two disastrous fires only months apart, the Temple venture failed to thrive, and the New England Glassworks closed within two years. Very little Temple glass was produced and even less has survived and been documented. Robert Hewes continued his glass career in South Boston and Pitkin, Connecticut.

## KEENE (1815-1843)

After Hewes abandoned his bold experiment in Temple, glassmaking in New Hampshire languished for more than a generation. At least three factories sprang up in Keene between 1815 and 1843; two between Washington and Gilsum streets and one on Marlboro Street. Thanks to early pioneers like Harry Hall



Blown Three Mold decanters from Keene, NH, 1820s

White, we have documented site work supporting much of the information that we hold true today. In the 1920s, White did extensive excavations at the Marlboro Street factory (Keene Glass Works), uncovering numerous bottles, flasks, and blown three mold glass. Keene produced some of the most attractive and colorful blown three mold glass objects known to collectors. The early Eagle / Masonic flasks (especially the “JKB” flasks) have been found in an incredibly wide range of colors from amethyst to cranberry to lime green, many of which are saturated with striated colors throughout.



A selection of fine colored New Hampshire flasks

In Keene, the art of glassmaking achieves a level of creativity and marketing previously not seen before in America. The colors and techniques are clearly intentional; beyond a doubt, master artisans of Keene’s glasshouses achieved color control during production. “*New Hampshire Glassmakers*” will contain a broad selection of colorful Keene glass, illustrating the beauty and creativity of this fine glassmaking.

**STODDARD (1842-1873)**

The next chapter in New Hampshire glassmaking commenced in Stoddard, a small, heavily wooded town roughly 15 miles northeast of Keene. The glass industry in Stoddard spanned more than three decades and employed hundreds of townspeople, increasing the capacity of the town to more than double the present-day population. There were at least four documented glass businesses in town, producing a unique array from functional utilitarian vessels to elegant works of art.



**Rare medicine bottles from Stoddard, NH, 1850s**

While excavations of the four sites have given us clues as to which bottles were produced at which factory, there is considerable overlap, and most of the bottles blown here are lumped together as "Stoddard." In addition to the marked bottles and flasks, the various Stoddard glasshouses

were the source of inks, blackings, snuffs, spirits, medicines, mineral waters, and figured flasks. Their range of color is striking, primarily in shades of olives and ambers and with extremes



**A selection of New Hampshire inkwells**

from emerald green to citron yellow to blood red. To see these wonderful "earthy" tones brought together in one display, as in the New Hampshire Glassmakers exhibit, is powerfully evocative of the Granite State's brilliant fall foliage.

**SUNCOOK (1839-1850)**

Originally incorporated in Massachusetts as the Chelmsford Glass Company in 1828, this productive window-glass factory moved to the Suncook Village in Pembroke, NH, in 1839. The reason for moving was simply the abundance

of natural resources; wood for fuel and the right sand for good glassmaking. After the move, the factory took the name Pembroke Glass Factory, but it is commonly known among collectors as "Suncook" glass. While the primary output of



**(An exquisitely crafted pitcher made in Suncook,**

Suncook was window-pane glass, a variety of blown table wares and bottles were produced as well. There isn't much diversity when it comes to the color of the glass... quite simply, it is a rich bluish aqua color. Oh, but what a color! This consistency was ideal for the manufacture of window glass, and it also worked well for lovely table wares.

**LYNDEBOROUGH (1866-1886)**

Lyndeborough NH was the home to one of the most productive glass factories in New Hampshire history, the Lyndeborough Glass Company. Lyndeborough glass is a very durable, high quality substance with much fewer impurities and air bubbles. The colors of the glass offer a very dramatic range from a warm orange amber tone, to a vibrant lime or apple green, to a bright robin's-egg blue. Usual production consisted of thick, heavy items such as insulators, battery cases, turtle whimsies, canes, canning jars and demijohns, all resulting in very dense colors. This broad range of color and diversity of glass objects has drawn the attention of many collectors, and the desirability of Lyndeborough glass continues to rise. "New Hampshire Glassmakers, 1780-1886" will feature the most comprehensive grouping of Lyndeborough bottles and history ever assembled -- nearly 100 examples on display! The exhibit will be open from November 13, 2010, to February 19, 2011, at the Peterborough (NH) Historical Society, 19 Grove Street, Peterborough. For more information, visit <http://www.nhglassmakers.com> or email Michael George at [earlyglass@gmail.com](mailto:earlyglass@gmail.com).



**A wide range of colored glass objects produced at the Lyndeborough Glass Company**