

Early American Midwestern Glass

By Dave Maryo

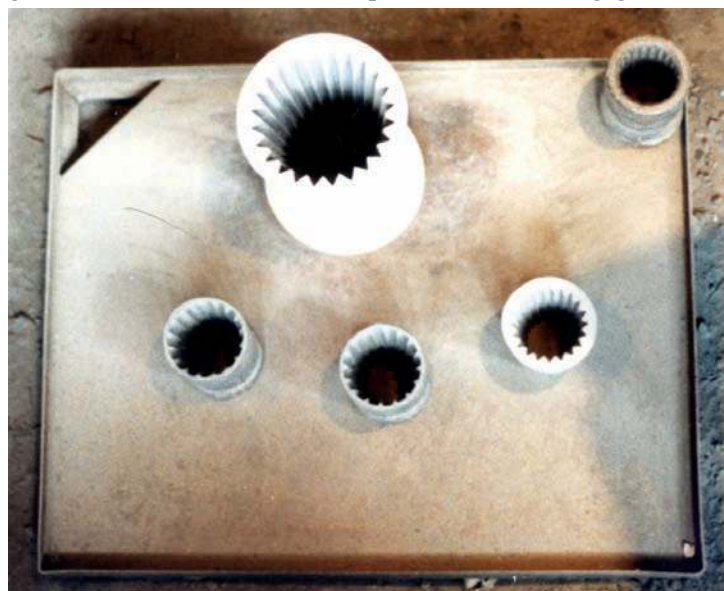
What is early American midwestern glass?

It was made in the first glasshouses of the Ohio River area. The glass was produced in the late 1700s and early 1800s by craftsmen trained in the Stiegel tradition of glass manufacturing. Henry Stiegel was an ambitious man who brought the finest glass blowers and craftsmen from Europe in the 1860s to produce glass in America. Stiegel produced glass in a quality matched only by the finest glass houses in Europe.



Midwest glass manufacturing locations.

After a period of less than 10 years, his business was in financial trouble and closed. This may have been a sad day to lose the factory producing the finest glass in America, but it was the beginning of a unique new style of glass to be made in the Ohio River Valley. Most of Stiegel's craftsmen moved west and trained a new generation of highly skilled glass artisans. These glass makers had the talent to produce outstanding glassware



Midwest pattern dip molds

using the local raw materials in the midwest.

Colors of early midwestern glass were beautiful green, blue and amber using the local sand and ash. The glass produced was usually thinner than the glass made in the New England states.



The high quality glass produced was in brilliant colors with outstanding clarity not often found in American glass of the time. Early midwestern glass factories produced bottles and table ware as well as window glass. Most of the early



midwestern glass was free-blown and shaped rather than using bottle molds. German-style dip molds were used to produce patterns on the glass to be free-blown, but some flasks and other bottles were made using bottle molds.

The free-blown items were the "art glass" of this period of American glass production. Clear glass that was produced in the midwest at this time was not as common as the colored pieces. Pittsburgh glass houses produced the majority of clear glass and some was cut and polished. Early midwestern glass can be a very beautiful piece of art work created by some of the finest glass craftsmen of the time.

Thank you, Mr. Stiegel, for your vision and ambition that allowed early midwestern glass to be highly prized by collectors today.

Sources:

Two Hundred Years of Blown Glass, by Helen and George McKearin, Bonanza Books, 1950.

American Glass, by George and Helen McKearin, Crown Publishers, 1973.

Early American Bottles and Flasks, by Stephen Van Rensselaer, Revised Edition Edited by J. Edmund Edwards. 1971.