

Louisville Glass Factories of the 19th Century - Part 1

by David Whitten

The history of the Louisville glass industry has been a somewhat overlooked subject, never before having been researched in any considerable depth. There were at least seven glass factories that operated in Louisville during the period from 1850 to 1901. Six of them were principally bottle houses, and one produced plate and window glass. In this article I will try to piece together some of the basic info I've been able to uncover on each of these operations. However, I'll be the first to admit that the following summary of the subject is far from complete. Attempts to find information are difficult since much of the most accurate material can only be found by laboriously searching through early newspapers recorded on microfilm, a search which might be compared to looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack.

Earlier research attempts include three articles published in *MAGAZINE ANTIQUES*. They include an article on the Kentucky Glass Works written by glass historian Harry Hall White which appeared in the February 1926 issue (pgs. 85-88); a brief article entitled "Early Kentucky Glass" by Jane Keller Caldwell in the November 1947 issue; and another titled "Nineteenth Century Kentucky Glass" by Henry Charles Edelen which was published in the April 1974 issue (pgs. 825-829). The White article was almost entirely concerned with the first documented factory in Louisville (the Kentucky Glass Works) and he did not discuss later firms. Caldwell's article contains little additional info of real substance, and although a selection of glass items are pictured which she purports to be from Louisville (and most of them probably are), she nevertheless gives no indication as to exactly how she arrived at that conclusion. The Edelen article includes some info on later companies, and illustrates a variety of items made by several Louisville firms, but includes incorrect data concerning some of the manufacturer mark attributions.

Subsequent researchers/authors (including Rhea Mansfield Knittle, Helen McKearin and Julian Toulouse) have rehashed (for the most part) information found in White's *MA* article. A brief chapter

in *Early American Bottles and Flasks* by Stephen Van Rennselaer, a reference published around the same time as White's article (1926), includes portions which are obvious re-phrasings of some of White's paragraphs, so whether or not Rennselaer conducted any original research seems open to question.

Before delving into the Louisville factories, I should also note that there were two glass factories located in the city of New Albany, Indiana, just across the Ohio River from Louisville. They included the New Albany Glass Works, in business from approximately 1866 to 1872, and the Star Glass Works, in business from 1869 to 1880.

The New Albany Glass Works, a bottle house, was first formed under the firm name "J.B.Ford & Company", with John B. Ford the principal investor. Later changes in ownership resulted in the company becoming known for a brief time as "Montgomery, Ford & Company". By 1867 the factory was being called the New Albany Glass Works, and in approximately 1872 the operation had ceased and the buildings were sold to W.C.DePauw to become part of the Star Glass Works, located immediately upriver.

An amber ale-type bottle exists with "NEW ALBANY GLASS WORKS" embossed in a circle on the base. This bottle seems to be very scarce, as I have only seen one example. (Perhaps more will come out of the woodwork after this appears in print!)

Star Glass Works (or Company) was formed in 1869 by John B. Ford (yes, the same entrepreneur who had started NAGW, above) and W. C. DePauw for the purpose of manufacturing rough and polished plate glass, window glass, and fruit jars. Ford successfully produced the first plate glass in the United States here at New Albany in 1870, since until that time virtually all plate



Base mark of the Star Glass Works,
New Albany, Indiana.

glass used in the U.S. had been imported from Europe, chiefly from France and England. Although W.C.DePauw was part-owner early in the history of Star, by 1872 he had become president of the company.

Sometime before 1880 the Star Glass Company became known as W. C. DePauw Glass Company (DePauw's American Plate Glass Works), and operated under that name until June of 1893, when the Panic of 1893 took its toll and the plant was shut down. Subsequent sporadic attempts during the next two or three years to revive the works failed, and the property (along with another DePauw plant at Alexandria, Indiana) was finally sold by the receiver to the Union Trust Company of Indianapolis in May of 1898.

Star Glass is most widely known to collectors for their wax sealer fruit jars lettered "STAR GLASS CO./NEW ALBANY, IND." across the front. Other bottles, including strap-side flasks and ales, are known from the local area that are marked with a boldly embossed five-point star on the base, and these can be safely attributed to Star.

Besides producing tremendous quantities of plate and window glass, "Mason's Patent" fruit jars were made here in large numbers, and the later examples (after c.1880) are marked with the typical "NOV 30th 1858" patent date on the front, but in addition carry the embossed lettering "W.C.D." on the base. They are found in several sizes and in a range of attractive colors.

Many of the glassblowers involved in the Louisville factories were also involved at various times with those in New Albany, and some of the products from both sides of the river, such as the wax sealer jars, show strong similarities in appearance.

Another factory known as the Ford Plate Glass Works (1877-1880), renamed Jeffersonville Plate Glass Works (1880-c.1884), operated on the riverfront in nearby Jeffersonville, Indiana, but no bottles or jars were produced there. The former location of that glassworks is now occupied by Jeffboat, Inc., a barge and towboat-building firm, a subsidiary of American Commercial Lines.

These Indiana factories deserve in-depth articles devoted to each of them --- but since my main focus is on Louisville firms, perhaps another researcher can tackle that task and shed more light on them in the future!

Concerning the very earliest instance of glass manufacture in Louisville, a

glasshouse said to be operating in Louisville was briefly mentioned in Cramer Zadok's travelogue *The Navigator*, circa 1814, but there are no other sources I have found to date which definitely corroborate the existence of such an operation. Although I believe it is likely that it did exist, it was presumably short-lived and probably would have been a producer of the typical "black glass" bottles made for local distribution. It is also slightly possible that it could have been a glass-cutting operation that imported glass "blanks" from Pittsburgh or European sources. (There was a glass-cutting firm that existed in Louisville for many years beginning in the 1840s, and the glass used originated from Pittsburgh).

Below, I have listed each factory according to the actual site where it was located in Louisville. Several of these factories operated under more than one firm name, so I feel it can be more clearly understood if I list each site (Site #1 thru Site #7) by its actual physical location.

SITE No. 1: SE Corner of Franklin & Clay Streets (variously listed as Clay & Washington, 119 Clay, etc).

Kentucky Glass Works (1850-c.1855)

Louisville Glass Works (c.1855-1873)

The first instance of glass manufacturing that we have concrete evidence of began in Louisville in 1850 with the formation of the Kentucky Glass Works, which in later years (at least by 1855) had become more commonly known as the Louisville Glass Works. A group of glassblowers including John Stanger, William Doyle, Joseph Ramsey, Jr., Leopold Gottlieb, John Zell, Israel Patterson and several others were involved with this operation when it first opened. The Census of 1850 records a total of 50 workers employed, 21 of them glassblowers. The original firm name was "Taylor, Stanger, Ramsey & Company", as listed in an ad which first appeared in the August 12, 1850 issue of *The Louisville Morning Courier*. This partnership lasted but for a short time, as on November 28th of the same year a notice appeared which indicated the company had been re-organized under the name "Douglass & Taylor," with James Taylor (an Englishman) and businessman George L. Douglass now the principal partners in the business. However, Stanger and most of the other glassblowers continued to be employed there

as before. The factory was casually known as the "Douglass Glass Works" for a brief period of time in the early 1850s, and is listed under that name in the 1851 Louisville city directory.

This particular firm is NOT the source of bottles and jars marked "KY.G.W" and "KY.G.W.Co.," contrary to a common misconception popularized by Julian Toulouse in his classic reference book *Bottle Makers and their Marks* (1971). Those marks appear on bottles that date generally from the 1880s, not the 1850s, and bottles which bear those marks were made by a later factory, the Kentucky Glass Works Company (to be covered in Part 3), which was located about two miles to the south of the site of the original Kentucky Glass Works.

The Kentucky Glass Works of the 1850-1855 period did not mark any wares with their glasshouse name or initials. Very little is known concerning which bottles found in collections were actually made there in the earliest years. One type which does likely date from the early period is the bottle with the lettering "KENTUCKY" vertically embossed on the side, similar in shape to the imported London Mustard bottles. There are two known versions of this bottle, one of which carries the spelling "KENTUCKEY". The mold was later altered to correct the spelling and this alteration can be seen on close scrutiny.

Some of the earliest pontiled versions of the "John J. Smith" bottle likely date from this era as well. Any pre-1850 versions of that bottle would probably have been made by a Pittsburgh glasshouse, however, as the product (Smith's Tonic Syrup) was being advertised as early as the 1840s.

Several of the unmarked eagle flasks, (GII-23 through GII-26), as well as the similarly shaped "FARLEY & TAYLOR/RICHMOND KY" flask (GII-27) were

probably made here in the early 1850s.

The blob soda marked "J.W. GARRISON/ BULLET STREET/ LOUISVILLE" is a possible product of the Kentucky Glass Works, likely dating from the 1850s. However, those bottles may also date from somewhat later, after the plant became known as the Louisville Glass Works.

John Stanger

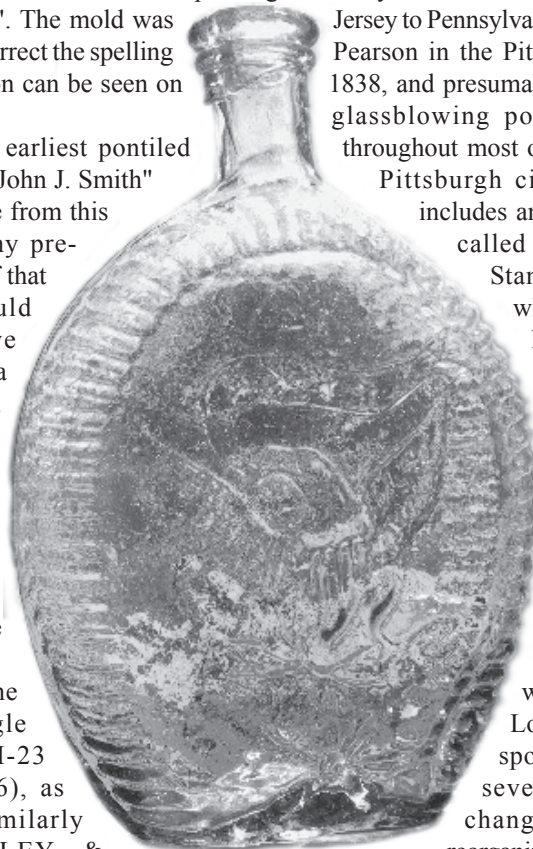
John H. Stanger was born in New Jersey in about 1814. He was almost certainly a grandson of one of the original seven glassblowing Stanger brothers who emigrated from Dornhagen, Germany to the U.S. with their parents and a sister in 1768.

As mentioned earlier, he was one of the principal proprietors when the Kentucky Glass Works first started in operation, and his name would re-appear often during the following 30+ years of Louisville glass manufacturing history. (His father was probably either Lewis Stanger, or John Stanger, both of the Glassboro, New Jersey area who were second-generation glassblowers of the emigrant Stanger clan. I've been unable to positively confirm this genealogy, however.)

John Stanger was the most important person involved in the glass business of 19th century Louisville. After moving from New Jersey to Pennsylvania, he married Hannah Pearson in the Pittsburgh area in about 1838, and presumably worked in various glassblowing positions in that city throughout most of the 1840s. An 1848

Pittsburgh city directory listing includes an entry for a company called "Simpson, Leake & Stanger" (or Stenger) in which John Stanger may have been one of the persons involved.

He and his family moved to Louisville in 1849 or early 1850. At Louisville, he seemed to have held the position of unofficial chief glassblower, and was to remain involved with the Kentucky/ Louisville Glass Works sporadically throughout several proprietor name changes and firm reorganizations, serving as plant foreman there as late as 1869 and 1870.



GII-26 double eagle flask from Louisville Glass Works.

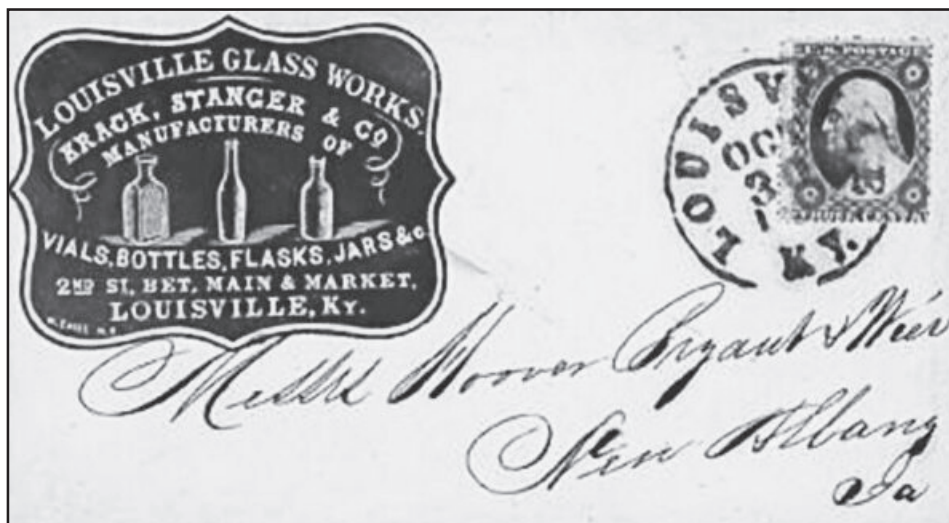
By 1871, John Stanger had left the Louisville Glass Works to become superintendent of the window glass department of the Star Glass Company (Works) in New Albany, Indiana. He was employed at Star from about 1871 until 1877, and then started up a new operation in Louisville called Southern Glass Company. (to be discussed in Part 2). After leaving Southern in 1879, he went on to become superintendent of the newly formed Kentucky Glass Works Company, located on 4th & 'C' Streets, beginning in the summer of 1879. That stint lasted for only a few months until he "retired" on December 9, 1879. After his retirement from the KY.G.W.CO. he moved back to New Albany and again held the position of superintendent at DePauw's American Plate Glass Company (formerly Star Glass) for a period of time in the early 1880s, apparently until about 1884.

John and his wife, Hannah, had seven children, three boys and four girls. They included John, Jr., Rebecca, Joseph M. (Markel), Jane, Eliza (or Lida), Buenavista, and Thomas. All three sons were intimately involved in the business and both John Jr. and Markel eventually served as either foremen or superintendents in later glass factories. John Stanger, Sr. passed away on November 3, 1887 in New Albany, Indiana where he had made his home in the later years of his life. His wife had preceded him in death on May 8, 1886. Stanger's funeral was held on Saturday, November 5, 1887 at his home on Dewey Street, and burial took place at Fairview Cemetery in New Albany.

Firm Names

Over the years a succession of business firms operated the Kentucky Glass Works/ Louisville Glass Works, and below is a list of the ones that I am aware of. There might have been other, short-lived proprietor reorganizations that are not recorded here, but the major ownership/management changes are chronicled as follows:

1. Taylor, Stanger, Ramsey & Company (1850). This lasted only a few months.
2. Douglass & Taylor (1850-c.1855). Listed as the "Douglass Glass Works" in 1851 city directory.
3. Douglass, Rutherford & Company (1855-1856)
4. Stanger, Doyle & Co. (c.1856)
5. Krack, Stanger & Co. (1856-c.1864)
6. J.A.Krack & Co. (c.1864- Feb 1, 1866)
7. Krack & Reed (Feb.1, 1866- 1869)



1859 Louisville Glass Works - Krack, Stanger & Co. envelope.



GII-33 Louisville Glass Works amber ribbed eagle flask (above) with close-up of mark (below).



8. Krack, Reed & Co. (1869-1871)
9. L.S. Reed & Brother (1871-c.1873)

Dr. John. A. Krack, who owned a local pharmacy from 1852 to 1857, purchased an interest in the glassworks in 1856 and continued as a part-owner until at least 1871. He had initially become involved in the glassworks in order to help supply bottles for his druggist business.

Tidbits of information on the Louisville Glass Works occur here and there in various publications of the time period, but are not numerous or easily found. For instance, as noted in a publication entitled *Report of Exhibition Committee of Kentucky Mechanics Institute* published in 1856, page 13-14, the Louisville Glass Works (at that time under the firm name "Stanger, Doyle & Co.") exhibited bottles ranging from a huge carboy that held 20 gallons, to a vial that held a mere 1/2 dram. Quoting: "We consider the specimens of glass, exhibited by Stanger, Doyle, & Co., as worthy of a premium, but they were entered too late."

An ad appeared for Krack & Reed on Aug.4, 1866 in the *LOUISVILLE INDUSTRIAL & COMMERCIAL GAZETTE* advertising fruit jars: "We are manufacturing 3 different styles of Glass fruit jars - viz: Screw Top; Tin Top; Cork Top. Orders Solicited - Krack & Reed, 41 Bullitt St, Lou."

This would indicate (respectively) the "MASON'S / PATENT / NOV. 30TH 1858" jars; the wax sealer jars; and a third, more unusual type similar to the "Kline Patent" jars. No 1858 patent or wax sealer jars are known to exist which have been positively identified as products of the Louisville Glass Works, so most likely those produced



"Thos. A. Hurley" tonic bottle - probable product of the Louisville Glass Works, circa 1865

were unmarked, or marked with just a mold number or letter on the base.

An early type of fruit jar exists (with an iron pontiled base) which has been found with the "LOUISVILLE/KY./GLASS WORKS" embossing on the face. Presumably this jar dates from approximately the 1855 to 1870 period and is the type referred to in their ad as a "cork top."

An article published in the *LOUISVILLE INDUSTRIAL & COMMERCIAL GAZETTE* issue of February 3, 1866 stated that 35 hands were employed at that time. It was also reported that the sand for making the glass was being obtained from nearby Elizabethtown in Hardin County, Kentucky.

At that same time the Louisville Glass Works was involved in filling a large order of pressed glass telegraph insulators for the Southwestern Telegraph Company. The identification of exactly what type(s) of insulators those were is not known at this time, but I suspect they would most likely be one of the threadless types, including either the CD 731 ("Compromise" type popular in the 1865-1870 period) or the CD 738. Southwestern Telegraph owned lines that extended throughout portions of Ky., Tenn., Ala., Miss. and La., so there are, no doubt, insulators now in collectors' hands which are as-yet-unattributed products of this factory.

This is the site where several types of flasks embossed "LOUISVILLE KY / GLASS WORKS" were produced, including the popular "scroll" or "violin flasks", the "double eagles" and the "ribbed flasks". A considerable range of colors are found which indicates they were made in some abundance, and over fairly long stretches of time.

According to an article published in the *COMMONER & GLASSWORKER* issue of May 30, 1903 (discovered by Hemingray Glass Company researcher Bob Stahr, who kindly copied it for me), the Louisville Glass Works produced a wide variety of popular flasks and other bottles of the period during which it was in business. Information for the article seems to rely on testimony supplied by an elderly glassblower once employed at the Louisville Glass Works (although the exact period of time being referred

to is not stated). 40 workers, including 20 blowers and 20 other hands were employed, with a 7-pot furnace. Items reportedly produced include versions of the Pike's Peak flasks, the Clasp'd Hands/Shield flasks, the "Not for Joe" flasks with the picture of a girl on a bicycle in amber glass, "log cabin bitters bottles" with "1862" blown in the glass" (presumably St. Drakes Bitters bottles), and several others. Since some of these flasks (especially the Pike's Peaks) are found in dozens of mold variants, it would be difficult or impossible to know at this late date which exact molds were used at Louisville. An exception may be the "Not for Joe" flasks. There are only three known variants, and one is marked with "A. & D.H.C.," a Pittsburgh glasshouse. The other two are unidentified and are certainly likely to be products of the Louisville Glass Works.

Although Toulouse (1971:323) states that the Louisville Glass Works used the marks "L.G.CO." and "L.G.W.," I believe this is incorrect. Nineteenth century-era bottles marked with an "L.G.CO." on the base are somewhat later products and most, if not all, of those bottles were produced by either the Lindell Glass Company, St. Louis, Mo. (c.1875-c.1880s) or Lyndeboro Glass Company, South Lyndeboro, N.H. (1866-1886). Contrary to Toulouse's assertion, the Louisville Glass Works never used the term "Company" in their name as far as I have been able to determine. The most commonly found bottles with the L.G.CO. marking are generic amber blob-top beer bottles which probably contained beer produced in St. Louis. Those are almost certainly Lindell products. Flasks with a similar marking (but usually arranged in a circle on the base) are frequently found in the east, especially in the states of N.H., Vt., and Mass., and these have long been attributed to Lyndeboro by area collectors.

Toulouse also lists another mark, "LKYGW", which I believe to be a fantasy mark. If any collectors have actually seen an item with this mark, I would be very interested in documenting it.

The Louisville Glass Works was closed permanently by 1873, evidently as a result of the recession of that year, and never re-opened. In 1874 a plate glass works opened elsewhere in the city with a similar name (Louisville Plate Glass Works - discussed later). Earlier researchers have misunderstood that factory to be a continuation of the Louisville Glass Works. It was not, and made no bottles or jars that I am aware of.

The site of the original Kentucky Glass Works factory has been razed three or four times since the 1870s and is now occupied with industrial buildings of a much later vintage. The actual site of the factory is almost directly across the street, and slightly south of, the newly created Louisville "Extreme Park" (built in 2001) which is used by skateboarding enthusiasts.



GII-36 Louisville Glass Works ribbed eagle flask marked "LOUISVILLE KY/GLASS WORKS", dating from the c.1855-1870 period. Photo courtesy of Jeff Noordsy.



GIX-9 Louisville Glass Works scroll flask.

SITE No. 2: 576 & 577 Fulton Street
(between Wayne & Adams, across from
Towhead Island)

Falls City Glass Works (1864-1865)
(aka Stanger & Doyle & Co.)

An ad in the Louisville *DAILY DEMOCRAT* first appeared December 19, 1864, and was repeated several times in the ensuing weeks:

"Falls City Glass Works -- Stanger & Doyle & Co. -- Manufacturers of Coal Oil Lamp Chimneys; White Prescription Vials, etc; -- Also Window Glass & Flasks. -- Factory on Fulton St, above Adams, opposite Island. Louisville, KY"

NOTE: This was NOT the same factory as "Stanger, Doyle & Co." of 1856 which was merely one of the firm names of the Louisville Glass Works located on Clay & Franklin Streets. And although the name is similar, do not confuse this earlier factory with the Falls City Glass Company (discussed later), a firm which operated in the period of 1884 to 1892.

This was a separate enterprise that was listed CONCURRENTLY with the Krack, Stanger & Co. factory listing in the 1865 Louisville City Directory. Apparently glassblowers John Stanger & Charles Doyle disengaged themselves from the Louisville Glass Works (then known as Krack, Stanger & Co) for a short time and tried to succeed on their own at another factory location.

Apparently the experiment did not prosper!

(Although John Stanger seems to have ceased to remain involved, by late 1864, in the "official" capacity as a co-proprietor of the Louisville Glass Works, and the name "Stanger" was removed from the company name around that time, Stanger did not part ways permanently with Krack as is incorrectly asserted by Harry Hall White in his article on Kentucky glass, but continued to be involved sporadically with Krack and the Louisville Glass Works throughout this period of time, at least up until about 1870).

No information is available on possible marks used by this firm, if any. It is quite probable that no glassware was marked.

No traces of the buildings which once stood at this location are now in evidence. This general area (once known as "The Point") was especially hard-hit during the Ohio River flood of 1937. Eventually, much of the area was abandoned and some of the streets obliterated, with no evidence of their existence now visible to the casual observer.

In the next issue, Part 2 will cover the Louisville Plate Glass Works, Southern Glass Works/Company and the Louisville Glass Works Company.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Hemingray Glass Co. researcher/historian Bob Stahr for generously sharing articles he found in early issues of the glass trade periodicals *COMMONER & GLASSWORKER*, *NATIONAL GLASS BUDGET*, and *CHINA, GLASS & LAMPS*. His assistance is very kindly appreciated.

Also, thanks to Greg Spurgeon and Jeff Noordsy for permission to use some of their photos.

For more comprehensive, detailed information on Louisville Glass Works flasks and their variants, I would heartily recommend consulting *American Bottles & Flasks and their Ancestry* by Helen McKearin and Kenneth M. Wilson (Crown Publishers, Inc., 1978).

Several references I found to be useful that are not already mentioned within the text would include *The Glass Industry of New Albany* by Gerald O. Haffner (1983); *Louisville's Early Medicine Bottles* by Gene Blasi (1992); *Indiana Glass Factory Notes* by Dick Roller (1992), and *Louisville Breweries: A History of the Brewing Industry in Louisville, Kentucky, New Albany and Jeffersonville, Indiana* by Peter R. Guetig and Conrad D. Selle (1995).

Some information has been gleaned



Unmarked Louisville Glass Works half-pint ribbed whiskey flask, circa 1855-1865. This example is 6 inches in height, and bears an iron pontil mark on the base.

from various issues of Louisville newspapers, as well as Caron's Louisville City Directories, U.S. Census data and other sources.

David Whitten, of Clarksville, Indiana, collects antique glass insulators as well as bottles, with a special interest in Louisville-made products. He is also interested in the field of manufacturer's marks found on American bottles as well as on other types of glassware. Contact him at drw90459@iglou.com.



Very scarce Louisville Glass Works jar, circa 1860s, with iron pontil mark on base. This jar was probably fitted with a cork closure. Listed in the fruit jar *Redbook* as jar #1543-1.

(Line drawing by Howard Creswick. Used with permission from Douglas M. Leybourne, Jr.)