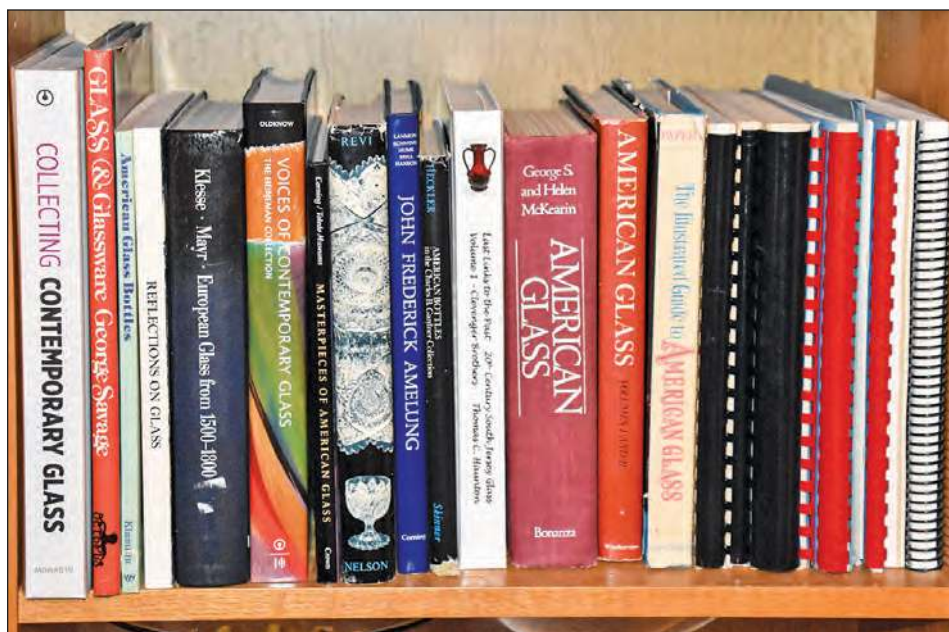


Stocking a Glass Collecting Library

By Kevin A. Sives



I know, we're in a digital age. No one writes letters. No one reads books (unless they're eBooks). My two daily papers appear magically each morning on my tablet. I get dozens of texts and emails a day on my phone, but rarely a telephone call. So, what am I talking about when I write an article (yes, for a printed publication) about stocking a library with "old fashioned" books?

Because I have shelves and shelves of books, and I still buy them frequently. Collecting bottles and early glass requires a library of actual, printed-on-paper, books. Before you brand me as a Luddite, please read on.

Certainly, there is plenty of information about bottles and early glass available on-line. And some of it is actually accurate! But we collect things that have been collected for over a hundred years and documented in books for just about as long. So, to ignore these books is to ignore the contributions of an entire generation or two of researchers. And even now, new glass and bottle books are being printed all the time — research continues to move forward.

Now I'm not saying that all the books on my shelves are 100% accurate, especially

the older ones, because surely new discoveries and scholarship has added so much to our knowledge. However, some of these early books picture collections of glass that could never be assembled today, even in some of the finest museum collections in the world.

So where to begin? I had an extensive look at my library and have categorized my books into four Groups. Each Group is more specific than the one above. My book collection (yes, more than three books are a collection) is organized as:

Group I - General glass books (books about all different categories of glass in the same volume).

Group II - Books about specific categories of glass (e.g., bottles, cut glass, etc.).

Group III - Books about a specific sub-category of glass (e.g., bitters bottles) or manufacturers or manufacturing centers (e.g., Hawkes cut glass, or glass made in Pittsburgh).

Group IV - Books illustrating one museum or private collection.

I'll discuss each Group in some detail below and give a few examples of some of the key books I have in each.

Group I - General Glass Books

As the name implies, these books cover many categories of glass in one book. They don't go into too much depth about any one category. One example of Group I books would be price guides; short on detail, but long on areas covered. But having a few of these books on your shelf is a good idea, especially if you encounter something you've not seen before, either on-line or out in the collecting world.

Perhaps the best example in this Group is *American Glass* by George & Helen McKearin. As the title says, it covers American glass from Jamestown to Sandwich. Free-blown, mold-blown, pressed. Bottles, flasks, tableware, vases. You name it, it's discussed and illustrated with thousands of images. And for flask and blown-three-mold collectors, the charts and numbering schemes are indispensable.

Of course, it was written in 1941, so the pictures are certainly not up to our Ultra High-Definition standards of today. And some of the assertions in the book have not survived later scholarship. But it's a book that needs to be on your shelf. Especially when you see the phrase "pictured in McKearin" in auction listings.

I was a docent at the Corning Museum of Glass in Corning, New York, for several years, and that truly expanded my appreciation for glass beyond what I already collected. So now my shelves probably have more of these types of books than the average bottle collector. But here are some books in this Group that would appeal to everyone reading this article:

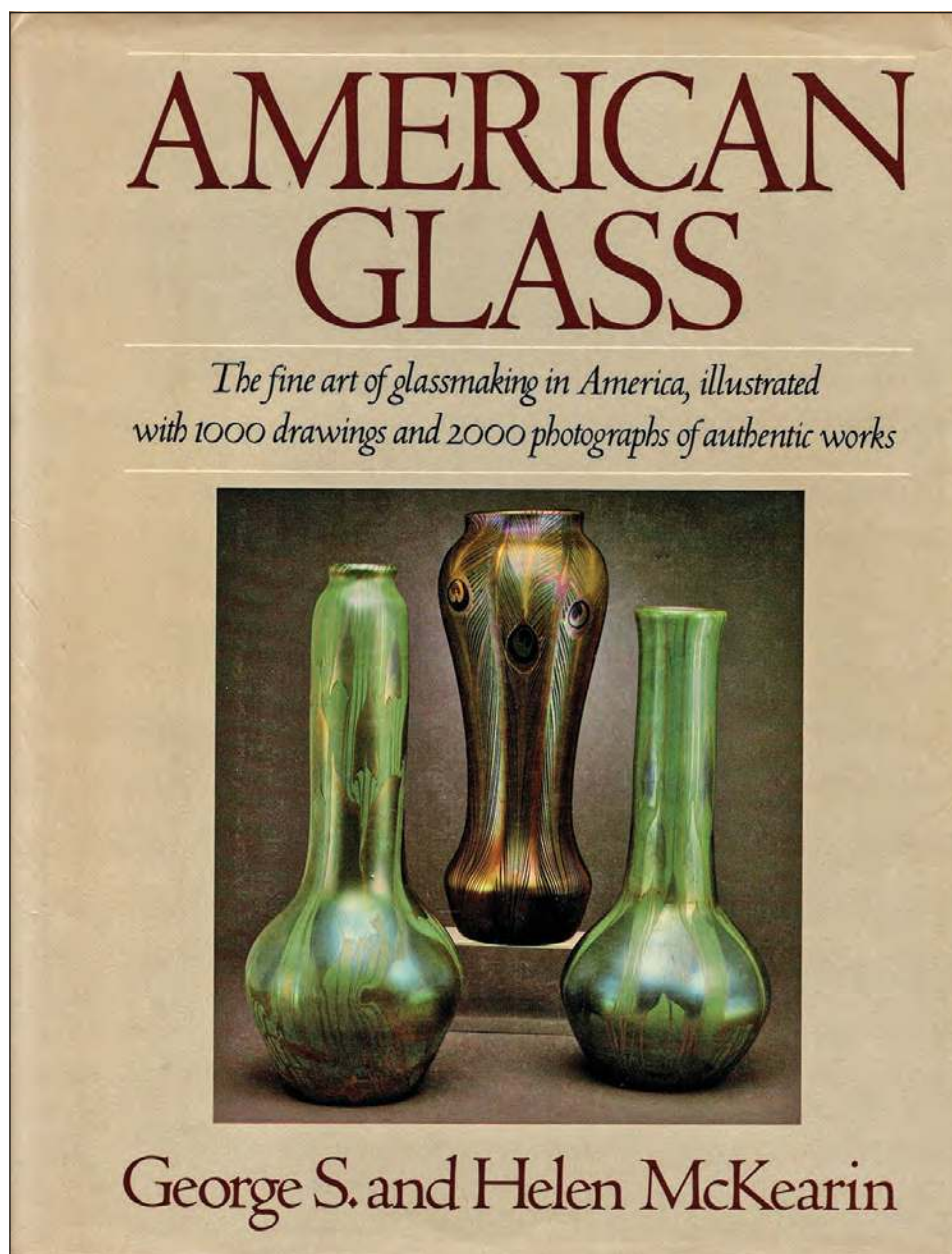
- *American Historical Glass*, by Stephanie M. Lindsey.
- *Victorian Glass*, by Ruth Webb Lee.
- *The Illustrated Guide to American Glass*, by Emma Papert and William Fons.
- *An Illustrated Dictionary of Glass*, by Harold Newman.

And these are just a few of the dozens of books in this category that line my bookshelves.

Group II - Books about Specific Categories of Glass

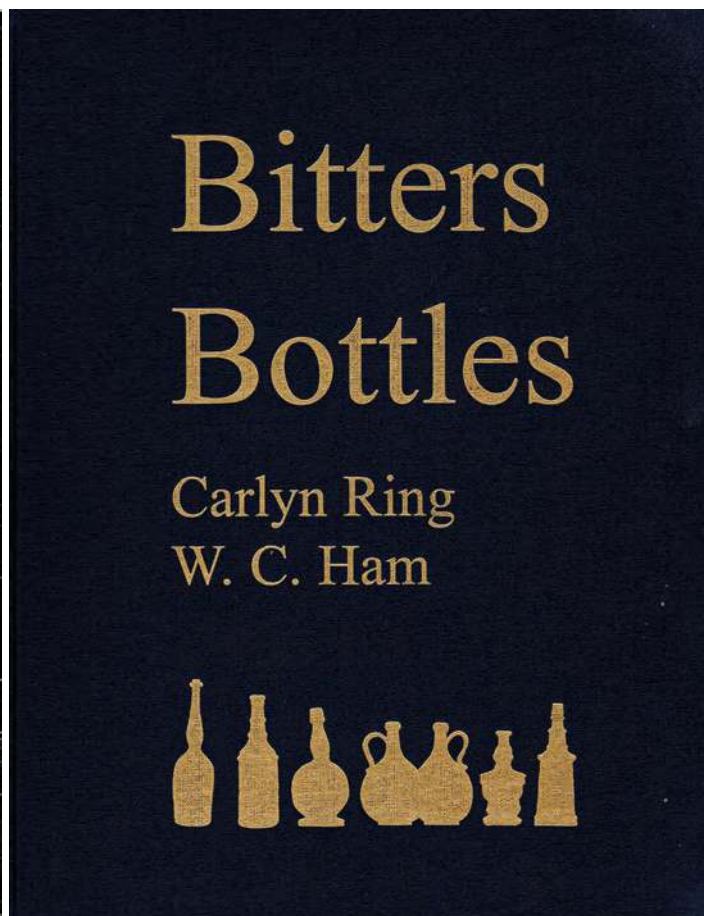
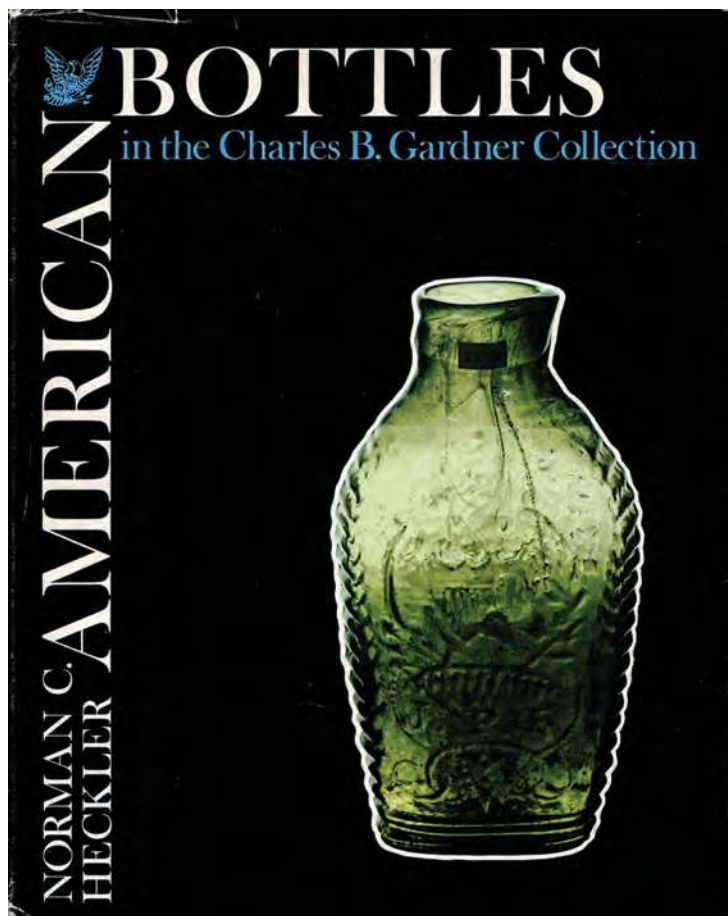
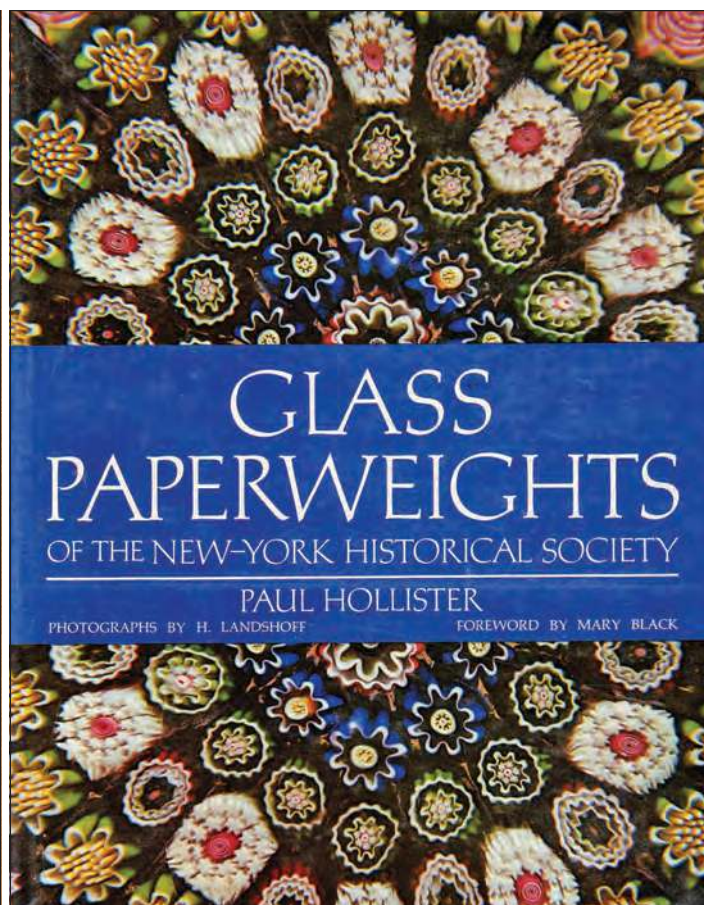
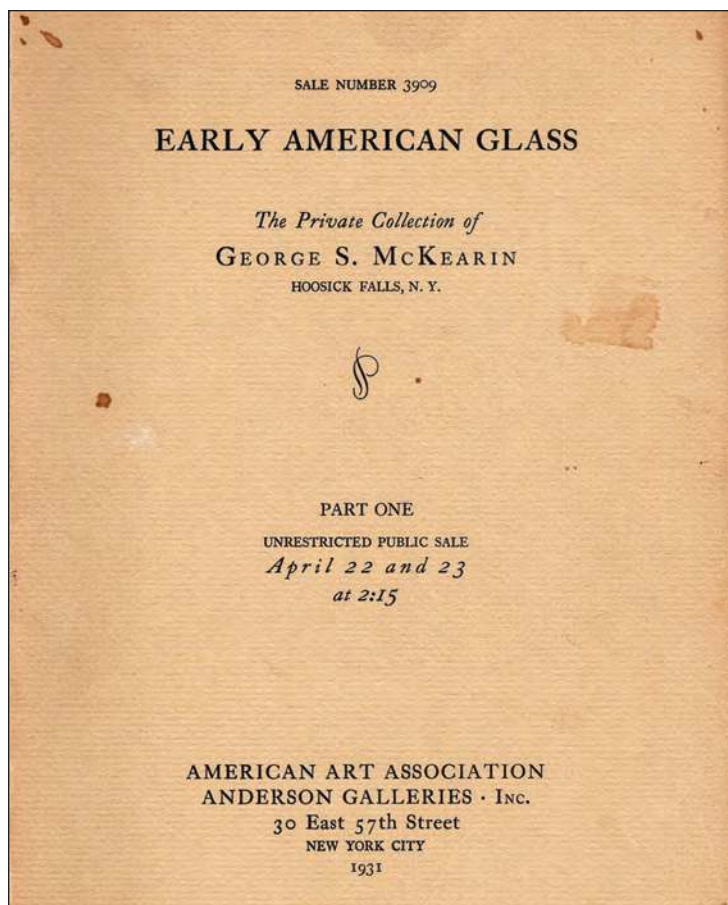
The books I have in Group II are more specific than Group I. So instead of discussing all “glass,” books in this Group only address a specific type of glass, such as bottles or cut glass. But they still fall far short of the level of detail that many of us want, because most of us don’t collect all types of bottles. But having a few of these books to fill your shelves is a good idea.

There are many collectors, me included, that first saw something in a book like this that sparked our interest and developed into an area that we started collecting ourselves. I dare anyone to pick up a copy of *American Bottles and Flasks and Their Ancestry* by Helen McKearin and Kenneth Wilson or *200 Years of American Blown Glass* by Helen and George McKearin and not find something that they suddenly want to add to their display case!



THIS PAGE: The classic *American Glass* by George S. and Helen McKearin and a row of books on a shelf in Kevin's library.

FOLLOWING PAGE: Four celebrated works from various Groups.



Over the years, I have accumulated books about cut glass (*Cut and Engraved Glass 1771 – 1905* by Dorothy Daniel), paperweights (*The Dictionary of Glass Paperweights* by Paul J. Dunlop), cup plates (*American Glass Cup Plates* by Ruth Webb Lee and James H. Rose), and British and European glass (*English Glass for the Collector, 1660 – 1860* by G. Bernard Hughes). I'd be willing to bet that you can't think of a specific category of glass that doesn't have at least a few books dedicated to it.

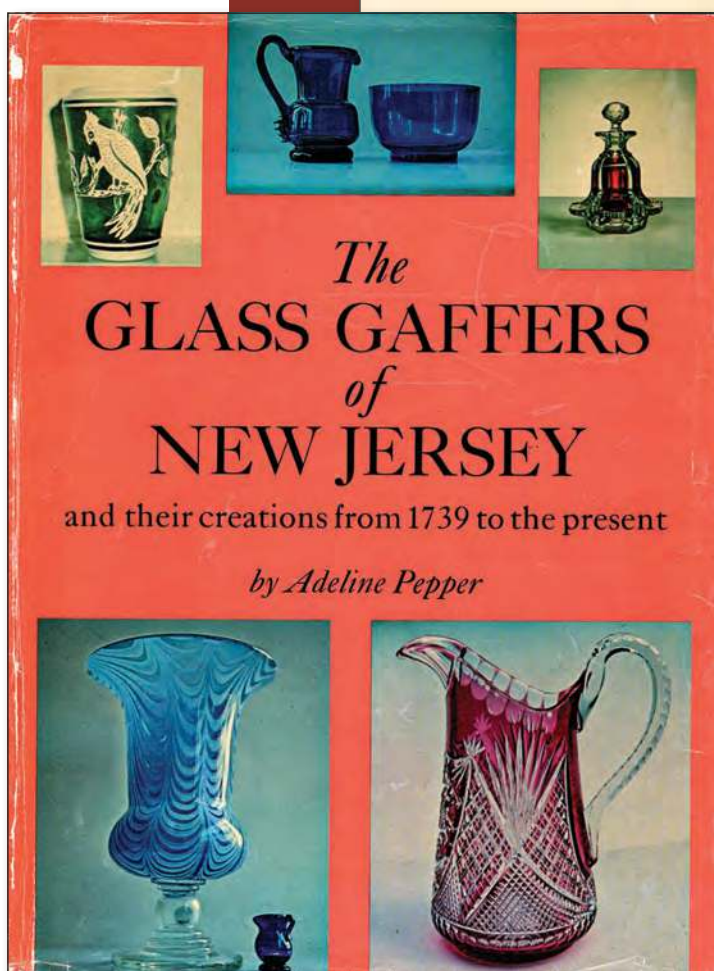
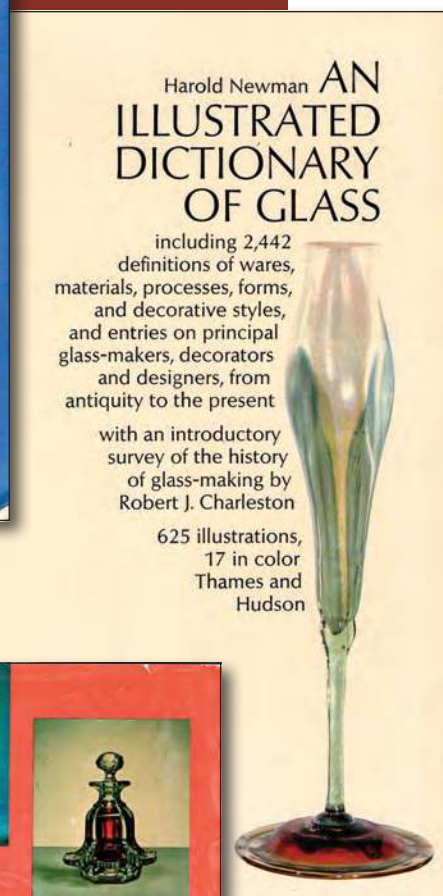
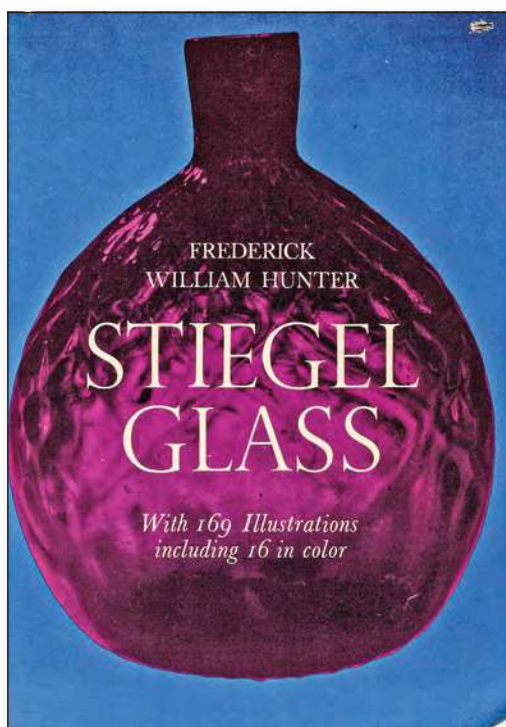
When I purchase books in this category, I typically read them from cover to cover, I study the pictures, and for some of them, I even take notes. When I'm out at shows, shops, and auctions, everything I've learned from these books is stored away somewhere in the back of my brain, just in case I encounter something that's way underpriced. Heck, I even keep a few of these books in a box in the trunk of my car, just in case! You never know when that little bit of extra knowledge might come in handy.

Group III - Books about a Specific Sub-category or Manufacturer or Manufacturing Areas

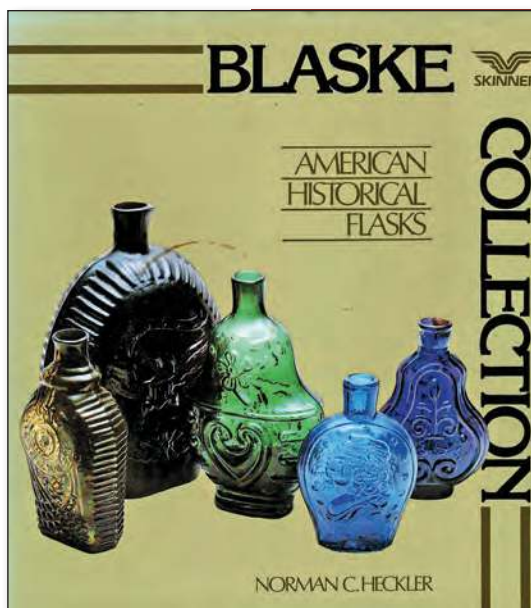
Drilling down even further, we go from books about glass, to books about categories of glass (such as bottles), to books about specific sub-category of glass (such as bitters bottles) or manufacturers or manufacturing centers (Sandwich or "South Jersey").

My guess is that your library will probably be mostly composed of these types of books. I know mine is. It's great to read about glass in general, or even a book about all categories of bottles, but if I'm researching something, I go to this section of my books.

Do you collect bitters? Then you'll probably have *Bitters Bottles (and Supplements)* by Carlyn Ring and Bill Ham on your shelves. Are fruit jars your thing? Then you'll probably have *The Fruit Jar Works (Vol 1 & 2)* by Alice Creswick, and several of the *Red Book* series by Creswick or Douglas M.

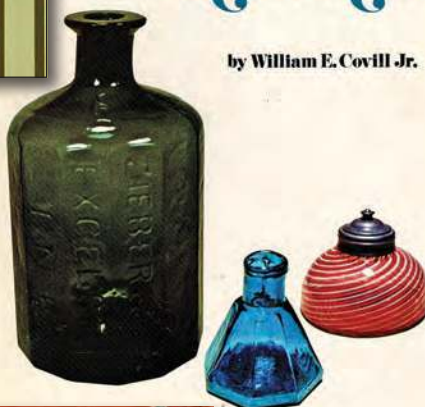


THIS PAGE:
Three more
indispensible
books on glass.



Ink bottles and inkwells

by William E. Covill Jr.



Leybourne, Jr. Inks? Having a copy of *Ink Bottles and Inkwells*, by William E. Covill, Jr. is a good place to start.

Or perhaps are you interested in glass by a particular manufacturer or from a certain manufacturing center?

Are you interested in Stiegel (*Stiegel Glass* by F. W. Hunter), Pittsburgh (*Pittsburgh Glass 1797 – 1891* by Lowell Innes), or New Jersey (*The Glass Gaffers of New Jersey* by Arlene Pepper). How about Sandwich? *The Glass Industry in Sandwich* (all five volumes) by Raymond E. Barlow and Joan E. Kaiser is a set of books you need on your shelves.

There are books for anything you collect. And if not, then why don't you write one?

Group IV - Books Highlighting Museum or Private Collections.

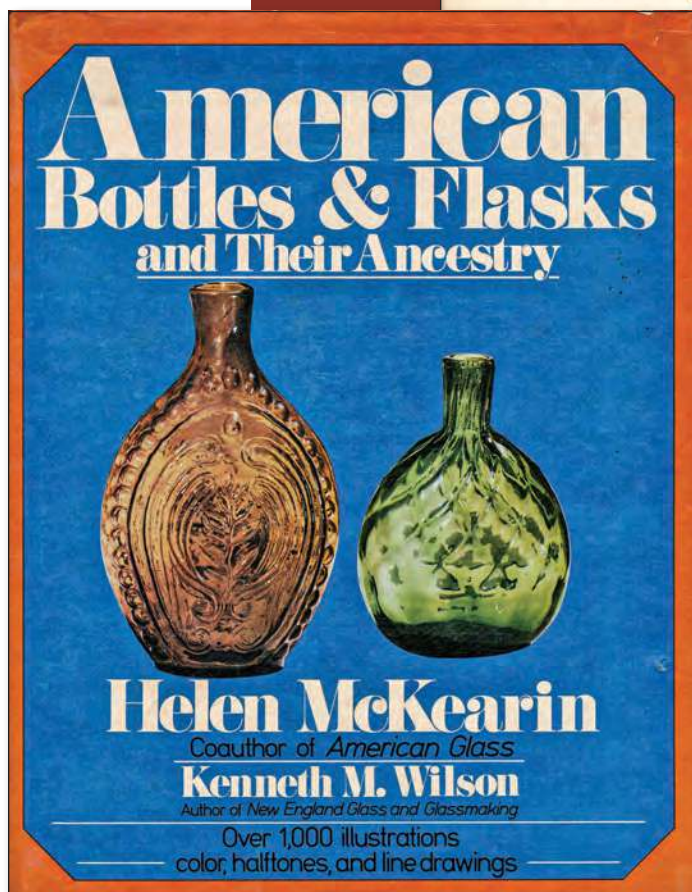
This final Group of books highlights a specific museum or private collection (yes, including auction catalogs). We started with "glass," next we went to "bottles," then we went to "flasks," and now we're at "Edmund and Jayne Blaske's Flasks."

Books in this Group are the about as close to coffee table books as we glass and bottle collectors can have!

You can see the Toledo Museum of Art's collection in *American Glass 1760 – 1930*, by Kenneth Wilson. Or the *Glass Paperweights of the New York Historical Society* by Paul Hollister. Or *Glass in Early America: Selections from the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum* by Arlene Palmer.

How about those Blaske's flasks? There's *Blaske Collection: The Edmund & Jayne Blaske Collection of American Historical Flasks* by Norman C. Heckler. Would you like to see what Charlie Gardner owned? Then check out *American Bottles in the Charles B. Gardner Collection* by Norman C. Heckler. Or even the incredible McKearin collection? Take a peek at *Early American Glass: The Private Collection of*

THIS PAGE:
Bottle and
glass
collecting
books come
in every
imaginable
category.



George S. McKearin, sale catalog by American Art Association, Part One (April 22 and 23, 1931) and Part Two (January 6 and 7, 1932).

For me, books in this Group are the eye candy. If you want to hook a new collector, loan them a few of these types of books, and you've got a collector for life.

Summary

I've given you a quick overview of the types of books you might want to put on your bookshelves. There is no way to give a comprehensive list of the books you should include in your library, because just like your other collections, your book choices are a personal thing.

And luckily, many of the older glass and bottle books are very inexpensive, so you don't have to pass up a good bottle to start a bottle book collection. On the used books sites, right now, you can purchase *American Glass* by George and Helen McKearin for \$3.00, and *American Bottles and Flasks and Their Ancestry* by Helen McKearin and Kenneth Wilson for well under \$20.00. By spending under \$25.00, you could have over a thousand pages of information and several thousand photographs from some of the 20th century's greatest collectors and researchers!

Interesting to me is that even in our social media world, most glass and bottle sites are filled with queries like "does anyone know anything about this bottle or piece of glass?" And most times, the answer people post include a book title, book quotes, page numbers, and even photos of the book page itself.

I'll end with a quick anecdote. Whenever I'm asked for my opinion about a certain piece of glass or bottle, after I've given my answer, the second question is usually "How did you know that?" And my follow-up answer is always the same. "You should see my bookshelves at home."

RIGHT: There are never too many books on glass.

