



# The New Bedford Museum of Glass NEWSLETTER



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Summer 2011

## Something Old: Ancient Glass Donation Received

by Laura A. Coffin

A group of seven Mediterranean glass vessels dating as far back as 600 B.C. represents the most recent addition to the Museum collection, a generous gift from glass collector Eric Streiner of NYC. Five of the vessels are eastern Mediterranean core-formed and two are Roman blown glass. One of the latter is an unusual form described as a double unguentarium, essentially two blown bubbles worked together into a single bottle with two chambers, neck cavities and mouth apertures (Fig. 3). All of the vessels are extraordinary, however, simply for having survived the millennia intact!

The core-forming process, first developed in the mid-16th century B.C. (a long time ago!), is one of the oldest methods for creating a glass vessel. These vessels were made by gathering a layer of glass

**Figure 1** (below). Received at the same time as the Streiner ancient glass donation is a collection of 86 reference books about ancient glass gifted to NBMOG by Museum director Kirk J. Nelson. The books include many hard-to-find titles and serve to establish the NBMOG library as the leading resource of its kind in New England.



around a mold or “core” of dried mud. Once the glass had cooled, the core was carefully picked out, leaving a hollow in the center of the glass. Before they cooled, the vessels often were decorated by wrapping a thread of hot glass in an open spiral around the body. By rolling the vessel against a flat surface, the threads were smoothed into the surface. Raking a pointed tool up and down the side of the vessel would then drag the colored thread lines into an attractive feather, wave or herringbone design. American glassmaker Louis C. Tiffany later emulated the technique in the production of his famous Art Nouveau-style “Favrile” ware.

**Figure 3** (right). Double unguentarium, Roman, 2nd–early 3rd century A.D., H: 4 1/4”, NBMOG acc. 2011.042. This small blown glass bottle was used to hold toilet preparations such as oil or scent. Another example of a double-bodied bottle is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC (acc. X.21.206), while examples of ancient double-bodied glass pitchers are preserved in the collections of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, the Newark Museum, the Louvre, Paris, and the Musées et Monuments Départementaux de la Seine-Marseille, Rouen, France. For the most extreme expression of this construction technique, consider the pitcher (acc. GR.1881.4–6.1) in the collection of the British Museum, London, that has THREE body cavities!

**Figure 2** (above). Four core-formed vessels of eastern Mediterranean origin, used for holding perfume or oil; (left to right): amphoriskos, 6–4th century B.C., H: 3 13/16”, acc. 2011.036; amphoriskos, 2nd–1st century B.C., H: 5 1/2”, acc. 2011.041; alabastron, 3rd–2nd century B.C., H: 3 9/16”, acc. 2011.037; alabastron, 2nd–1st century B.C., H: 4 1/2”, acc. 2011.040; gift of Eric Streiner.

The process of glassblowing was developed some 1,500 years later, about the 50 B.C., coinciding roughly (continued on p. 4)





## ...and Something New!

On May 29th, Assistant Director Laura A. Coffin and Jacob W. Hoss welcomed Miryam Sophia Hoss into the world at the Falmouth Hospital. Miryam was born a healthy 7 lbs 1 oz. Already a glass enthusiast, her collection includes a crystal Daum teddy bear and several Thronton Burgess cup plates!

## Museum to Celebrate Anniversary

The New Bedford Museum of Glass will be having its first-year anniversary on Thursday, September 15th, from 6–8 PM. It will be an evening of wine and celebration with a gallery presentation at 7 PM. The event is open to the public and all are invited to attend. It is worth noting that the anniversary celebration has been scheduled to coincide with the Sandwich Glass Show weekend, so anyone traveling to the area will have the opportunity to attend both events.

## Bus Trip Planned to Corning

This October 3–5 NBMOG will sponsor a three-day bus trip from New Bedford to Corning to see The Corning Museum of Glass and its magnificent special exhibition of Mt. Washington & Pairpoint glass! Reservations cost \$400 per individual or \$600 for a couple sharing a room, and cover both transportation and hotel. Please contact the Museum for details. Seating is limited.



## New Bedford Glass at Corning

Earlier this summer NBMOG member Carl F. Barron joined CMOG curator of American glass Jane Shadel Spillman (above) for a tour of Corning's new special exhibition. Mt. Washington and Pairpoint glass, which rivaled Tiffany and Steuben in its heyday during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is the subject of this spectacular display. The exhibition highlights the changing taste of America's elite through a broad range of products designed by one of the country's longest-running art glass companies. On view from May 19 – December 31, 2011, Mt. Washington and Pairpoint Glass: From the Gilded Age to the Roaring Twenties will introduce audiences to this important player in American art glass history.

"Although the companies pioneered a range of novel and creative glass styles that experimented with texture, decoration, pattern and color, they have not garnered the same level of recognition as their contemporaries," says Jane Shadel Spillman, curator of American glass. "Through more than 150 objects, this exhibition will showcase the companies' role as purveyors of innovative luxury items in a period of exuberant growth and prosperity in the United States."

The exhibition focuses on the companies' distinctive output from the years 1880–1930, including: Mt. Washington art glass, characterized by innovation in style and technique; Mt. Washington cut glass; art glass and cut glass kerosene lamps; Pairpoint lamps; and Pairpoint glass made in the decade prior to the Great Depression, when the company expanded its market offerings with highly-decorative tableware and lighting made of both colored and colorless transparent glass.

## Corning Publishes Vol. 2 of Wilson's Epic Study

Released to coincide with the opening of their special exhibition, The Corning Museum of Glass has published volume 2 of the late Kenneth M. Wilson's monumental work *Mt. Washington & Pairpoint Glass*. The volume is co-authored by Corning's curator of American glass, Jane Shadel Spillman, and features a chapter on the Smith Brothers decorating firm written by NBMOG executive director Kirk J. Nelson. A number of important examples from the NBMOG collection are illustrated. Please call the NBMOG gift shop at 508-984-1666 to place your order.

**Left:** Royal Flemish vase featured on the cover of the new Wilson/Spillman book; Mt. Washington, 1893–1895. Collection of Barbara Olsen, on loan to The Corning Museum of Glass.



# High Tides and Wave Crest take New Bedford by Storm!

by Laura A. Coffin

Never mind Hurricane Irene! Four wonderful examples of C.F. Monroe decorated ware have made their way to New Bedford, thanks to a gift from author Wilfred R. Cohen and his wife Dolly. Mr. Cohen records the history of the Monroe company in his 1987 book *Wave Crest: The Glass of C.F. Monroe*. The Monroe decorating business operated in Meriden, CT between 1892 and 1916. The firm did not manufacture its own glass, however, but imported blanks from as far away as France and as close as New Bedford's Mt. Washington and Pairpoint companies. These blanks were elaborately decorated in Meriden by C.F. Monroe artists.

The most recognizable examples of C.F. Monroe ware are the covered dresser and jewel boxes. One from the Cohen gift (continued on p. 4)

**Figure 4** (top left): Cigar holder, printed "KELVA / TRADE / MARK" on underside; Meriden, CT, ca. 1900; H: 2 5/8"; acc. 2011.022; gift of Wilfred & Dolly Cohen.

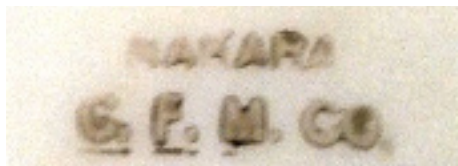


**Figure 5** (top right): Vase with metal foot, printed with the Wave Crest shield-shaped Trade Mark design on underside; Meriden, CT, ca. 1900; H: 12 1/4"; acc. 2011.021; gift of Wilfred & Dolly Cohen.



**Figure 6** (right): Covered handkerchief box, printed with the Wave Crest shield-shaped Trade Mark design on underside; Meriden, CT, ca. 1900; L: 7"; acc. 2011.024; gift of Wilfred & Dolly Cohen.

**Figure 7** (below): Covered jewel box, printed "NAKARA / C.F.M.Co." on underside; Meriden, CT, ca. 1900; D: 3 3/8"; acc. 2011.023; gift of Wilfred & Dolly Cohen.





**Figure 8** (above). Blown flask, Roman, mid-late 4th century A.D., H: 5 1/2", acc. 2011.038; gift of Eric Streiner.

(Ancient cont. from p. 1) with the beginning of the Roman Empire. This technological advance made the production of glass vessels faster and less expensive. Roman blown glass generally has thinner walls than core-formed glass and tends to show more signs of decomposition. Both Roman vessels from the Streiner gift have acquired the characteristic rough surface and beautiful iridescence caused by slow decay. Louis C. Tiffany and Frederick Carder of Steuben both were inspired by this natural effect and sought to reproduce it in their art glass.

It is worth a visit to the Museum see these and other marvels from an ancient time. Like Mr. Tiffany and Mr. Carder just a short century ago, you, too, might find yourself inspired!

**Figure 9** (below). Core-formed aryballos (bottle for scent or oil), eastern Mediterranean, late 6th–5th century B.C., H: 1 15/16", acc. 2011.039; gift of Eric Streiner.



(Wave Crest cont. from p. 3) is a dusty blue decorated handkerchief box featuring the molded "Helmschmied Swirl" shape designed for Monroe by Carl V. Helmschmied, a former decorator at the Mt. Washington works of New Bedford (Figure 6). The box is marked "Wave Crest," the most common Monroe line.

Another line by Monroe is Nakara. The same blanks often were used for the two lines, so distinctions center on the character of the decoration. In his book, Cohen associates the Nakara line with more vibrant background colors and with decorations of enamel beading and rococo scrolls. Transfer prints also were used. A small powder-blue Nakara jewel box features the transfer design of two putti on its cover (Figure 7).

A third and particularly rare line is Kelva. The most distinctive characteristic of this line is the mottled background coloration. Examples often bear the same beaded designs as Nakara, but if the background is mottled, the piece is designated Kelva. A cigar



holder from the Cohen gift has a cylindrical shape with a mottled blue-gray background and pink floral decoration (Figure 4). The rim of the piece is decorated with a ring of enamel beading.

C. F. Monroe also produced cut glass beginning in 1903. It is not a ware for which the company is widely known, and identification can be difficult. The only outward resemblance to C.F. Monroe's more typical opal items are the general shapes of the dresser boxes and the metalwork on the collars and clasps. According to Cohen, sometimes the sterling rims can be found with signatures near the clasps. The Cohens have thoughtfully included a Monroe cut glass box with their fine donation (Figure 10).

**Figure 10** (above). Covered jewel box, rich cut decoration; Meriden, CT, ca. 1910; D: 4 1/2", acc. 2011.020; gift of Wilfred & Dolly Cohen.



## American Pattern Glass Benefit Drawing

Twenty-five pieces of early American pressed pattern glass, a donation by Ralph Manna, are being raffled off to benefit the Museum. Tickets are available in the gift shop in quantities of ten tickets for \$5 or one hundred tickets for \$20. They may all go towards one item or be distributed as desired. The drawing takes place on January 1st, 2012. Check out our website at [www.nbmog.org](http://www.nbmog.org) for pictures and descriptions of each item, or stop by and see them in person!

## NBMOG Wish List!

Your new glass museum is asking for support to help it through these troubled economic times. Please contact us in response to the following list of items needed as we work to establish the museum and pursue our educational mission. We are looking for:

- Volunteers!
- Consignments for the shop
- Books & newsletters for the library
- Glass for the museum collection
- Cash register for the shop
- DVD player for the galleries
- Digital camera and/or tripod
- New members

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