

AMERICAN HANDLED WHISKEY JUGS

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Johan Pastor, American Glass Gallery



These attractive, distinctive bottles, prevalent during the mid-1800s, were one of the last bastions of what was a once very manual process of finishing a free blown or even mold-blown bottle. Handled pieces rose to fashion predominantly as containers for various types of spirits, however, they can occasionally be found on other types of bottles as well.



In some cases, the addition of the handle created what collectors today would term a "whimsy," an off-hand or fanciful piece not meant for mass production. This was generally done by the gaffer at the end of the day, oftentimes to either show his skill, or to create a personalized object for himself or family. In the majority of cases however, the handled bottles were production items created to serve both utilitarian and decorative purposes.





When one considers the process of creating the handle, attaching it, and often tooling the lower curl, it obviously added several steps to the production of each piece. It necessitated a higher degree of skill on the part of the glassblower and added valuable time to the production of each bottle. This extra time and expense would have undoubtedly been passed along to the merchant which helps to explain their relative scarcity and why they likely fell out of favour.

An interesting grouping of handled spirits type bottles is shown on plate 48, of *American Bottle & Flasks and Their Ancestry*, (McKearin & Wilson); see pages 194 and 195. Today, these handled containers make a very attractive and interesting category. Many of them are still quite affordable and represent a

good value for the collector. When you combine the various handle treatments (plain, "strap" or flat band, curled, tooled rigaree, etc.), with the varying shapes and sizes of bottles to which they were attached, and the almost endless color variations, it creates a very pleasing and spectacular array of bottles.

