

Appalachian Glass: Furnace of Meaning and Memory

This edited collection addresses a major gap in current work focused on Appalachia's glass industry. We have catalogs and reference books. We have histories focused on class, labor, and gender. We have histories focused on the rise and demise of glass factories. But the human work of meaning, identity, and memory--in the context of Appalachian glass--has yet to be gathered and shared in book form.

I seek creative nonfiction, memoir, personal essays, hybrid scholarship, oral history, literary journalism, reflective criticism, interviews, and poetry centered on Appalachian glass and the cultures surrounding it. The collection will explore the collectors, families, artists, dealers, thrifters, archivists, and communities who find and create meaning in glass. Submissions from staff and factory workers associated with companies such as Fenton, Blenko, Pilgrim, Viking, and lesser-known glassmakers are also welcome.

Contributors may approach glass as material culture, inheritance, regional identity, memory, domestic ritual, aesthetic obsession, economic decline, craft tradition, or personal archive. Work from collectors, museum professionals, artists, former workers, descendants of workers, creative writers, scholars, and community historians is welcome.

POSSIBLE APPROACHES GROUNDED IN APPALACHIAN GLASS

- Memoirs of collecting Blenko, Fenton, Pilgrim, Viking, or other glass
- Family inheritance stories involving glass objects
- The role of glass in memory, mourning, or family ritual
- Narratives about growing up in glass towns
- The emotional psychology of collecting
- Glass as creative, communal empowerment
- Glass and religion
- Glass cabinets and curio culture
- Creative nonfiction about specific objects or single pieces of glass
- Online collector groups and digital nostalgia
- Road-trip narratives centered on Appalachian glass sites
- Appalachian labor and community identity
- Essays about thrift stores, antique malls, flea markets, estate sales, or glass shows
- Oral histories of glassworkers, decorators, painters, mold makers, or salespeople
- Reflections on factory closures and deindustrialization
- Museum or archival encounters with glass collections
- Immigration and ethnic communities in glass production towns
- Queer, feminist, or disability-centered readings of decorative glass culture
- Mid-century modernism and American consumer identity
- Dealer culture and collector communities
- Ecocritical (environmentalist) approaches to the glass industry
- Documentary literary journalism about surviving glass communities

- Reflections on preserving endangered industrial arts

Note: Work informed by cultural studies is welcome, though the content and style should be moderated in light of an educated but non-academic audience. If you have questions about your proposal, feel free to query at the email address below.

Poem(s) should be no longer than three pages; longer texts should be 3,000 words or less in length.

Deadline: Sept. 1, 2026

By the deadline, use this subject line, "Proposal for Glass Collection," and then email the following in an MS Word attachment to toddcomer@gmail.com:

1. A 500-word abstract, summarizing your submission's form and content
2. A resume/CV summarizing writing and/or glass experience, if possible
3. A 200-word biography, in part, addressing your connection to Appalachia
4. Full-length texts are optional at this stage.

The collection is currently in the proposal stage. Selected abstracts will help shape the final book proposal. First-round decisions will be made within 2-3 weeks of the above deadline.

Editor: Todd A. Comer, PhD