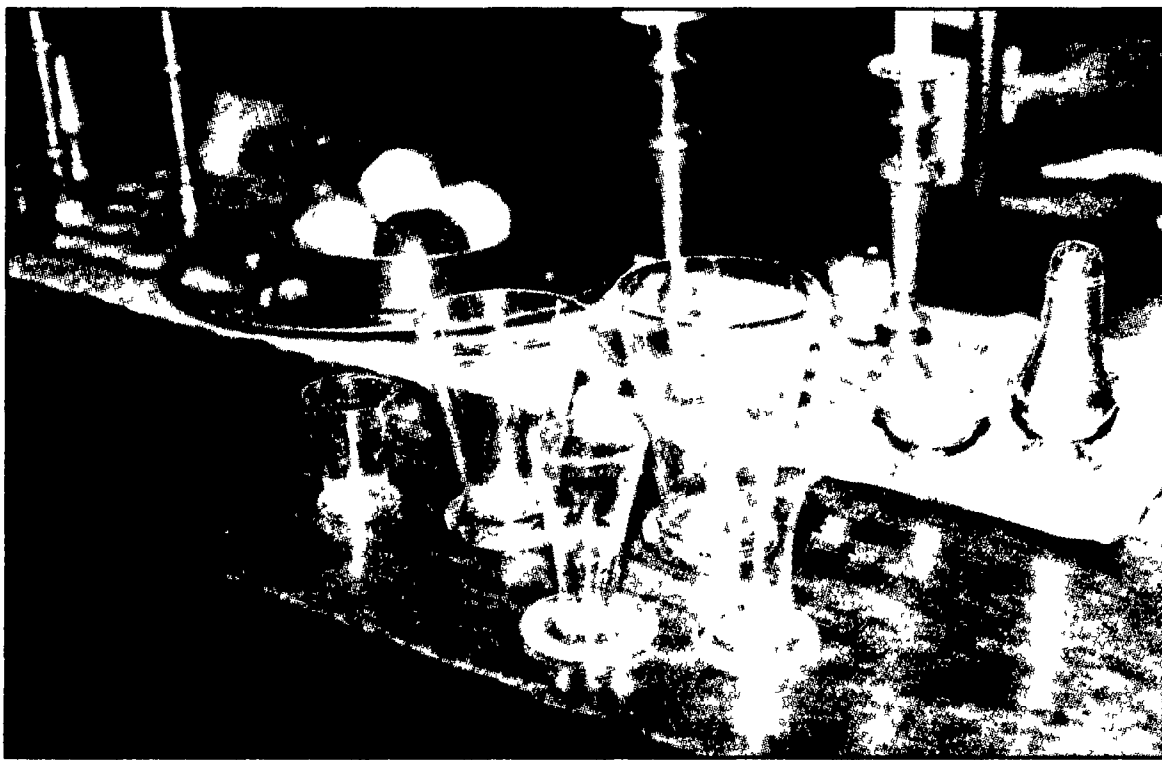


# Lancaster Farming *Antiques Center*



Above, Richard Pencek of Lemont, Centre County, lines up three thumpers and two firing glasses, named for the sound their base made against a tavern's wooden tabletop presumably to get the barmaid's attention for a refill.

An 18th century glassmaker took time to paint a beautiful bird on the glass mug Pencek holds.

## Glassware Collector Preserves Fragile Pieces of History

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*Mifflin Co. Correspondent*  
LEMONT (Centre Co.) — "It's hard to believe anything like this could survive," Richard Pencek says, lifting a very fragile, light-weight clear-glass drinking vessel that was handblown in the 1700s. "It amazes me that it was so utilitarian. They used it in everyday life and in taverns. That it survived is pretty remarkable."

Pencek holds in his hand a rare piece of Stiegel glass made in one of Pennsylvania's first "glass house manufactories" located near Manheim, Lancaster County, and owned by glassmaker Henry William Stiegel.

The rare glass is part of Pencek's collection of lipped bowls, air-twist cordials, paneled flips, bow-and-garland wine glasses, twisted champagne glasses, stoppered decanters, and fluted rinsers, many beautifully engraved or intricately painted. Almost all, whether made in Germany or America, were used in Pennsylvania.

Pencek teaches Early Pennsylvania Decorative Arts and Furniture at Penn State and applies his knowledge and expertise towards collecting antiques from early American life. At his home in Lemont, he reaches for a glass mug that has painted on it a colorful peacock.

"I'm fascinated with the historical aspect. It's remarkable that they took all that time on a drinking vessel. I'm fascinated also because it's 18th century, and we were doing some amazing things at that time, like getting ready for war. It took a lot of

luck for this to have survived. The drinking glass was made so light. It could have been broken when washing it."

Like all antiques, antique glassware gives us a glimpse of what life might have been like two centuries ago. The 1760 glass vessel called a flip held an alcoholic drink made from eggs and sugar.

"Before the Revolution, we averaged 3.5 gallons per person per year. After the Revolution, we were 4.0 per person. Either life was hard or the food bad," Pencek speculates. Maybe both. Nevertheless, glassmakers created works of art by carefully painting on them foliage, animals, and/or human figures or engraving loop and lattice patterns, tulips, or baskets.

"A lot of the painted glassware

came from Germany. As for collectibility, foliage is "C" level, animals "B" level, and figures "A" level. The pieces with animals and human figures painted on them are more rare. They're the hardest to come by."

Pencek chooses his antiques according to preference and intrigue.

"For me, there's aesthetic and historical value. How did it fit into history, the lifestyles, for example, of the Quakers or Pennsylvania Germans?"

To find answers, Pencek reads and challenges his students in class. He's grown to appreciate the network of friends who share his passion for preserving these very fragile pieces of history, making the search for answers as fascinating as the antiques themselves.



A syllabub glass, made during the 1760s, usually held a lemon-flavored dessert or drink of the same name. The twist to the right of the top of this glass indicates that its creator was a right-handed glass blower.



The miniature glass pitcher and bowl shown here arouse curiosity when their origin and purpose can't be traced. Just about everything created during the 18th century served a purpose.



Air-twist cordials, made in 1700, held anything to enlighten one's spirit, such as wine or brandy. The left one features a tulip top.

