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CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF STEUBEN GLASS | EAU DE BEAUTY

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Special to The Leader

EDITOR'S NOTE | *In celebration of the 100th anniversary of Steuben Glass, The Leader is featuring a look at discontinued pieces of Steuben from both eras of the world-renowned art glass business. The Frederick Carder era lasted from 1903-1932, while the Arthur Houghton era began in 1932 and continues to this day. Local historian and Steuben Glass expert Thomas P. Dimitroff provides a look at common themes that tie the two eras together.*

Over the years, several different terms have been used to describe what are today commonly referred to as perfume bottles.

In the past, the different terms did have different meanings. The term "toilet water bottle" was a more generic term referring to a bottle for scented water. A "scent bottle" was for expensive perfumes and a "cologne bottle" was simply larger than a scent bottle.

To add to the confusion, there were also "smelling bottles," which weren't used for perfume at all, but instead contained ammonia to be used when women fainted.

Terminology aside, glass perfume bottles were a part of Frederick Carder's design heritage. In England, during the second half of the 18th century, beautiful glass perfume or cologne bottles were made incorporating sulphides—a silver-looking porcelain-like medallion enclosed in crystal—as decorations.

So it is no surprise Carder later designed perfume bottles at Stevens &



**'Carder Steuben Perfume Bottle' |
Designed by Frederick Carder in 1924**

Photo courtesy of The Rockwell Museum of Western Art

Williams in England during the 1880s. Most of these bottles were of cut crystal or cut cased colored glass.

It also is not surprising Carder continued to design perfume bottles after coming to America in 1903. In fact, between 1903 and 1932, he designed nearly 300 perfume and cologne bottles, not including atomizers. Perhaps as a reflection of changing lifestyles, however, only one perfume bottle is shown in the 1932 Steuben catalog.

The Carder Steuben perfume bottle pictured is Shape No. 6048. It was designed by Carder around 1924.

This bottle is special in several ways. The first is the use of two colors of transparent glass—amethyst for the foot and celeste blue for the body of the perfume. The body also has optic ribbing.

Finally, this perfume bottle has what is called a cintra ball stem and a cintra stopper. Both the ball stem and stopper reflect techniques also used in making paperweights. The perfume bottle is 10.25 inches tall.

One of the City of Corning's lanes—previously alleys—is named Amethyst Lane. It runs westward from Bridge Street between Pulteney and West William streets.

Two of Corning's lanes are named Cintra in honor of this type of glass. Cintra Lane West runs from Field Street to Pine Street between Sunset Drive and West First Street. Cintra Lane East runs from Pine Street to Chemung Street between Denison Parkway East and East First Street.

'Steuben Perfume Bottle' | Designed by Lloyd Atkins in 1956

Man's first efforts to make glass are shrouded in the mists of history. This event most likely occurred as long ago as 2500 B.C. in what was then Mesopotamia, now Iraq. By the 16th century, glass making in Mesopotamia and Egypt had progressed from solid glass beads and pendants to hollow vessels created by core-forming, or winding hot glass strands around a clay core.

Only the rich could afford such glass objects. In "A Short History of Glass," author Chloe Zerwick writes of the early Egyptians: "On the dressing tables of wealthy women stood glass containers of rare ointments, scents,

cosmetics and oils."

Fifteen hundred years later, the Romans discovered glassblowing and revolutionized glass-making.

Because of glassblowing, more beautiful and delicate hollow vessels, including perfume bottles, could be made. Glass vessels to hold various cosmetics, including perfume, have continued to be made and are popular to this very day.

Since Arthur Houghton launched Steuben on its new course, about eight different perfume bottles have been designed and made—most prior to 1955. The latest, the "Aurora Perfume Bottle," was designed in 1994.

The perfume bottle pictured is "Perfume Bottle No. 8117." It was designed by Lloyd Atkins in 1956. This bottle illustrates some of the directions Steuben designs had taken beginning in the 1940s and before.

It is a functional object, yet one of great beauty. As an object, it is designed specifically for glass—and particularly Steuben glass—with its fluidity and clarity.

The heavy-walled, bulbous body of the bottle flows upward to the neck, which wonderfully separates to accommodate the elegant stopper.

The elongated stopper and its beautiful air bubble form a vertical sight line that continues as the dauber enters the bottle. All is enhanced by Steuben crystal's purity and refractive and reflective abilities.

Atkins was the designer of this perfume bottle and served as a gunner in the Army Air Corps during World War II. His plane crashed into the English



**'Steuben Perfume Bottle' | Designed by
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Channel, and he subsequently spent two years in Germany as a prisoner of war.

Then, in 1948, he joined Steuben as a staff designer. His career with Steuben spanned 50 years, during which time he designed many objects in a variety of forms and styles.

In fact, he was one of Steuben's most prolific designers. He also started the now very successful line of hand coolers, small pressed Steuben animal figurines.