



STRETCH GLASS REVIEW

Center Handled Servers

Stretch Out Discussion Call on May 11, 2023



Center Handled Servers were very popular during the years when stretch glass was initially created by nine American glass companies beginning in 1912. In that year, the Imperial Glass Company (Imperial) of Bellaire, OH introduced crizzled lamp shades; these were the initial offering of what is today known as 'stretch glass.' It was only a few years (in 1916) until both the Fenton Art Glass Company (Fenton) and H. Northwood & Company (Northwood) introduced a relatively new shape of glass designed to serve sandwiches, cookies, nuts or fruit at luncheons and on other occasions. Soon other glass companies joined in producing stretch glass and eventually eight of the nine companies offering stretch glass produced at least one version of a center handled server. As a result, some center handled servers are quite plentiful in the resale market today. However, there are some which are much more difficult to find and a few which are considered rare.

Before we look at the center handled servers which were made, it is helpful to understand the shape of the mold in which they were made. The handle is at the bottom of the mold and on top of it is a bowl shape with the opening opposite the handle. Once the hot glass is placed in this mold, a plunger is lowered into the mold pushing the glass into the handle mold and pushing the rest of the glass up to form the sides of a bowl. Generally, the producers utilized a plain plunger, that is one that was smooth, however, in a few cases, Fenton switched to a plunger with the diamond optic design on it. One might think of the molded shape as being that of an umbrella which has been blown upwards by the wind. When the server is removed from the mold, the 'snap' is around the handle. The server will be carried by the handle throughout the iridizing and re-shaping process. After the server has been iridized and re-heated in the glory hole, it is given to the finisher to be re-shaped into the shape with which we are familiar. The bowl above the handle must be pulled down to be flat. At this stage, the plate or bowl is under the handle as seen in the finished item. This is no small feat, requiring the finisher to move a great deal of the glass in comparison to the shape of the glass as molded.

Center handled servers continued to be produced during the Depression-era and beyond, albeit without iridescence. Today, those entertaining at home are likely to include one or more center handled servers on their buffet or luncheon table confirming how practical and beautiful they are. This Stretch Glass Review will explore the various sizes, shapes and colors in which stretch glass center handled servers were made nearly a century ago as well as take a look at how they are being incorporated into entertaining today.

Central

The Central Glass Works in Wheeling, WV, was a relatively small contributor to the stretch glass offered for sale in the 1920s. They offered one center handled server as shown here. Because they did not produce massive amounts of stretch glass, these are quite challenging to find today. Stretch glass researcher and author, Dave Shetlar, has only one stretch glass Central center handled server in his extensive collection of stretch glass. The green one (#1) has a floral etching around the edge of the plate. The other server (#2) is also by Central, but it does not have any stretch effect; instead, it is opalescent with a plain marigold iridescence. Note that Central's center handled server has a "shovel handle," which we will also see on center handled servers by other companies. Note the stem of the handle is straight as it comes down to join the plate. There is no ring or marking at the bottom of the shovel handle.



Diamond

Diamond Glass-ware Company was located in Indiana, PA and made 2 handled servers. Like Central, they made one with a shovel handle (#3). Notice the shovel sits on a high column. There is a very long stem before the handle gets started. There is a small ring at the bottom of the stem. If the server has a shovel handle with a small ring and a tall stem, it is by Diamond. These servers are only known in green and blue stretch glass.



Diamond also made a heart handled server. This handle is much smaller than the one found on the Imperial heart handled server, which will be discussed later. Notice there is a small ring right at the bottom of the heart before you get to the stem (#4). These servers are known in blue, green and marigold.

The marigold iridescence is typical of what we see from most of the stretch glass manufacturers when they used marigold iridescence in their line of stretch glass. Marigold does not typically have an excellent stretch effect. That is true of this Diamond marigold heart handled server. There is only a little stretch effect on this one (#5), but it did provide shoppers with a third color choice.



Fenton

The Fenton Art Glass Company in Williamstown, WV, produced more than a few center handled servers in various sizes and shapes. The largest ones, similar to the others by their competitors, were marketed as sandwich or cookie servers. They can be differentiated from those by other companies by their loop handles. The sides of loop handles where they meet the center of the servers are straight; there is no ring at any point on the handles.

From the larger mold, they made three basic shapes. The standard server with a mostly flat or slightly curved upward tray appears to be the one of which they made the most, based on the number available in today's resale market. Here it is pictured in Tangerine (#6), but it is also known in many of the other colors made by Fenton during this time period.



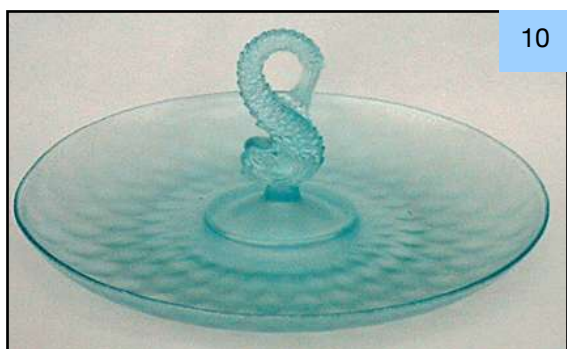
Fenton also finished their center handled server with an edge which is cupped in (#7). This version is somewhat harder to find than the flat server and is not known in as many colors. It has been suggested this was for serving nuts or possibly candies.

The Celeste Blue server (#8) is considered a fruit tray; this shape is hard to find. Notice the sides of the server are now brought up and slightly flared out.

All of these center handled servers are wonderful additions to a buffet or dessert table today, just as they were during the 1920's.



Fenton also made a couple of other handled servers. One of the more desirable ones has a dolphin handle. This can either be in a sandwich tray or could be cupped up as a fruit tray.



Note that two of the dolphin-handled servers pictured are plain (#9,11) while the third has a diamond optic impression on the underside of the tray. (#10) Interestingly, the ones that are plain and were made in the 1920's are more difficult to obtain in today's market. The ones that have diamond optic on the underside are easier to find, however, all dolphin handled servers are scarce and are a significant 'find.'

The Wisteria dolphin handled server (#11) was made for The Stretch Glass Society as a souvenir for our 1998 convention. Fenton used the original mold and as a result this dolphin handled server may be identical to the others made much earlier. The mold had been discovered in the Fenton mold inventory by Jim Measel. The Stretch Glass Society contracted with Fenton to make this shape in Dark Wisteria, a color in which it had not ever been made.

Since Fenton had not made this dolphin handled server for almost a hundred years, the workers did not know exactly how to make it, especially when it came to re-shaping the "bowl" into a plate. In addition, they had not been given an example of what was produced in the 1920s. As a result approximately half of the 1998 production, had a 'hat' with a dolphin on top because they did not completely flatten the bowl into a plate. They left some of the base of the 'bowl' from the mold in place, creating a dome in the center of the server directly under the dolphin handle. The server pictured is one of the ones that they re-shaped correctly. After they made the Wisteria dolphin handled servers for the SGS, Fenton produced the same server in Aqua Opalescent. By this time, they had learned to make them with a flat plate under the dolphin handle. Most of the Aqua Opalescent dolphin handled servers were done correctly by flattening down the bowl and turning it up just a bit on the outer edge.

Fenton also made two oval servers, neither of which is readily available to collectors today. Apparently, this shape was not made in large quantities by Fenton. The width of the larger oval server (#12) is the same size as the round server, but the side width is a little bit smaller. These are not simply a re-shaping of the round servers, there would have been a mold for the oval server. These typically are found in Velva Rose and Tangerine, but are also known in Celeste Blue. Any of the oval servers are quite a bit more challenging to find.



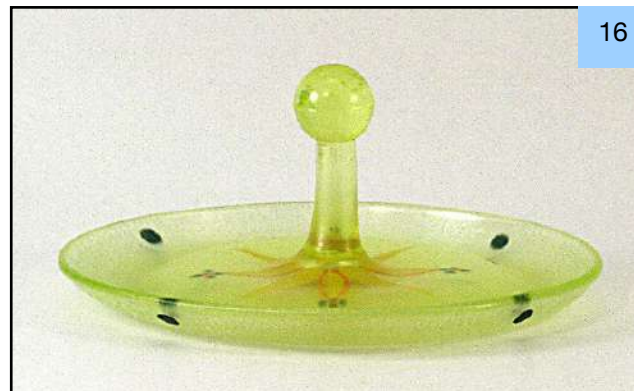
The second oval server by Fenton was marketed as a handled butterball tray (#13). In addition to the oval butterball tray, they also made a round one (#14). Both have the same open handle which is more like a shovel handle than the loop handle on their other servers. The butterball trays - they made round ones and oval ones - are highly sought after by collectors and are not plentiful in the resale market. Recently, there were two found on eBay, one was Velva Rose and the other was Celeste Blue. These also occasionally show up in auctions. The round ones are more available than the oval ones.



Fenton also made a butterball tray with a dolphin handle (#15) which is smaller than the larger dolphin handled trays. These are scarce to rare and are known in Celeste Blue, Velva Rose and Florentine Green. One of the Celeste Blue examples retains its original Fenton Art Glass paper label from the 1920s.



Stretch glass was made and marketed to appeal to those who were entertaining at home as well as looking for colorful glass to incorporate into their home decorating.



Luncheons featuring iced tea or lemonade were popular at the time and Fenton offered a lemon tray (#16) for serving slices or wedges of lemons. The tray has a handle in the middle with a small ball at the top of the handle. The most common lemon tray is topaz, followed by Celeste Blue. They are known also in Florentine Green, Velva Rose and Tangerine. An example in Wistaria was recently found. The topaz lemon server is frequently decorated as shown here; other colors may have decorations as well, however, decorations on other than topaz are unusual. The lemon trays are just as useful today as they were one hundred years ago and they are sure to elicit comments from you guests if you have one on your bar with lemon slices.

Imperial



Imperial made a shovel handled server. Notice that as the shovel handle comes down to the bowl or plate, it joins to a six-sided panel base instead of coming down to a round base. This is a unique design among the stretch glass companies and enables one to readily identify center handled servers by Imperial.

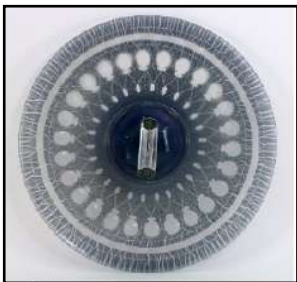
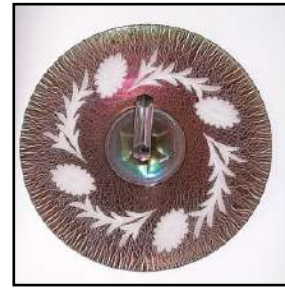
Imperial produced many of their center handled servers. They were made in their three primary colors – Blue Ice (#17), which is a greyish blue color, sometimes called smoke in carnival glass; Rose Ice (#18), which is a marigold color; and Iris Ice (#19), which is crystal or colorless glass with white iridescence. Because the color of the iridescence contributes greatly to the final color of the center handled tray, there can be significant variation within these three colors.



Imperial had its own cutting shop and they created a number of cuttings, which were then applied to their servers. We are aware of at least fourteen different cuttings. The cuttings are quite varied and were originally differentiated from each other by numbers. Today's collectors have given names to some of the cuttings. The Blue Ice and Rose Ice servers have what is referred to as the 'balloons' cutting (#17, 18).

Other cuttings can be found on similar center handled servers. Note also that there is a flat sandwich or cookie tray and there is also a fruit server, with the edge flared up. The third tray has the daisy and ball cutting (#19).

Here are a number of Imperial's servers with various cuttings.



Imperial also made a server with a heart handle. This is a much more elegant heart handled server than Diamond produced. The heart is much larger and takes up a bigger space. The Imperial heart handled server has eight sides and was available as a flat sandwich tray (#20) as well as a cupped fruit tray (#21). These are only known in Iris Ice and a pink color. The pink will either have marigold iridescence or smoke iridescence on it. In some cases, Imperial also applied decals and gold decorations.



This is a candleholder bowl (#22), also made by Imperial. In this particular case, the handle actually has a candle holder at the top of it. These are considered to be moderately available in Iris Ice and Rose Ice. However, the Amethyst Ice and Blue Ice examples are more difficult to find. Typically, these are more like the fruit bowl shape as opposed to the sandwich shape.

Jeannette



Wide shovel handle

Narrow shovel handle



Jeannette Glass Company in Jeannette, PA, was another smaller company which produced stretch glass and offered two different center handled servers, both with a version of the shovel handle (#23,24). Jeannette's handle has a fairly long stem. Whereas the Diamond server stem went straight down to the base, the Jeannette server has a small ring down

at the base. Because of this small ring, it is easy to distinguish between servers made by Diamond and Jeannette. In addition, there are no Jeannette servers known in any color other than marigold. This is in contrast to Diamond where the heart handled server is the only known marigold server made by Diamond. Notice there is one marigold server by Jeannette which does not have any stretch effect on it (#25); it does have a floral design with tiny balls which has been cut into the glass. This is not stretch glass, but it is similar to the other narrow shovel handled server, which has wonderful stretch effect. Both of these have the narrower shovel handle and there is a star in the middle of the underside of the plate.



Lancaster

The Lancaster Glass Company in Lancaster, OH, produced a rather distinctive line of stretch glass. Their stretch glass is usually easily distinguished from that which was produced by other companies because of their painted decorations.

Lancaster Center Handled servers also are easily distinguished by their handle. The Lancaster shovel handle is very heavy and wider than the others. Lancaster called this color Aztec (#26).



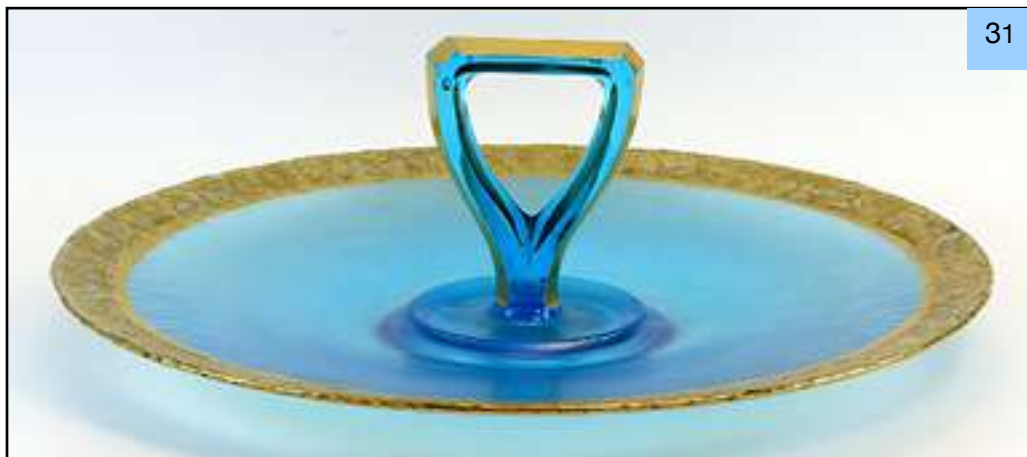
A similar server is shown in their Iris Ice color, both with (#27) and without Lancaster's painted decoration (#28).

In this case, the undecorated Iris Ice server is the more difficult one to find today.



Northwood

Northwood servers also have a shovel handle, however, when compared to the Diamond shovel handle, the Diamond one has a much longer stem. The Northwood one has a very short stem. Neither has a ring at the bottom of the stem. Northwood servers are typically found in Topaz and blue; there are some very rare ones in Russet. Notice that Northwood did cup some of their servers (#29). Cupped ones are very tough to find. Most of them are of the sandwich shape (#30). Some Northwood servers have an applied gold decoration on the edge (#31).



U.S. Glass

The United States Glass Company was a conglomeration of glass companies. Different types of glass were made at their various glass factories. In Factory K (King Glass) and Factory R (Tiffin Glass) they are believed to have produced stretch glass. While the two companies operated separately, there is evidence that they shared molds so it is not usually possible to determine which factory produced a particular pieces of stretch glass. They produced two center handled servers, both with a version of shovel handle. Their shovel handle design is half way between a loop handle and a shovel handle. It's not straight across the top and it is not really a nice smooth curved loop. There is a small ring at the bottom of the stem. Together, a rounded shovel handle with a small ring indicates the maker to be U.S. Glass.



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These servers are a bit smaller than the others. US Glass apparently produced lots of these because they are easily found today. The most available colors are crystal, blue and topaz.

In addition to these more available colors, examples exist in olive green (#32) and wisteria and in some of the painted lines.

Cumula is pictured here (#33). We are not aware of any US Glass stretch glass servers being shaped into the cupped up fruit server shape.



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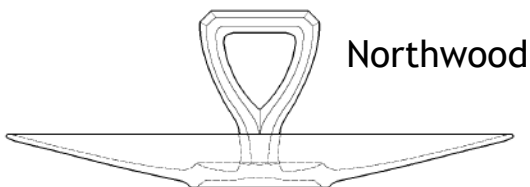
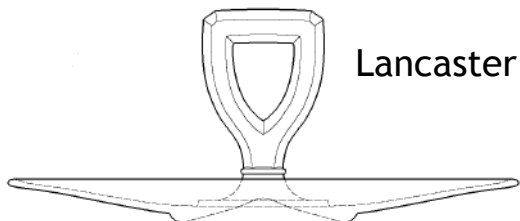
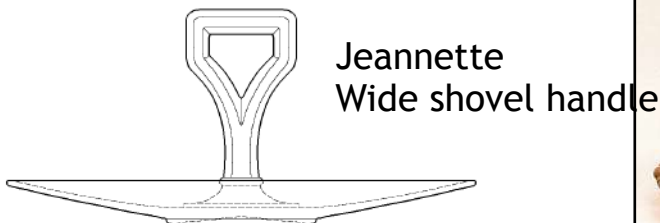
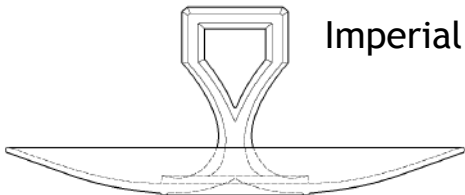
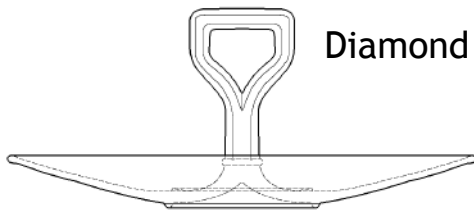


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U.S. Glass produced a line of stretch glass which has paired rays that end in points (#34). This was line #310 and it is referred to by that line number even today. There are #310 handled servers known in the pink and green. These are fairly obtainable in both of these colors.

In the event it is important to determine the maker of a center handled server with a shovel-shaped handle, this page should be helpful since it shows the various companies interpretation of the shovel handle. Looking at the line drawings the differences become even more evident. We hope this 'cheat-sheet' will come in handy if identification is needed.

Comparison of Shovel-Shaped Handles



When it is time to use a center handled server for cookies, sandwiches, or anything else (the dolphin server was once used for cold shrimp in a buffet), the maker is of little consequence. There may be a desire for a particular color server and there are numerous colors available in stretch glass – blue, green, topaz, wisteria, tangerine, pink, and white. We encourage you to consider using a stretch glass center handled server at your next event.

We invite you to join us for these Stretch Out Discussions to learn more about stretch glass and to network with other collectors and stretch glass enthusiasts. Information on the Discussions will be available on stretchglassociety.org.



Thank you for your interest in this Stretch Glass Review prepared from our recent Stretch Out Discussion. This Review captured the comments by several stretch glass experts and the participants during our Stretch Out Discussion. For those who participated in the live discussion, this was a refresher of what we discussed with some additional information. If you were not able to join us for the live discussion, this Review allowed you to experience the discussion and enhance your understanding of the stretch glass we discussed. Stretch Glass Reviews from many of our discussions are available at stretchglassociety.org and are a valuable source of information about stretch glass.

Stretch Out Discussions provide an opportunity for anyone interested in stretch glass to increase their knowledge and appreciation of stretch glass as well as to share their stretch glass with others. The Discussions are generally organized around a central theme – a color, a company, a shape, etc. Some Discussions are led by our team of experts and others are a “Show & Tell” format during which participants take the lead by sharing stretch glass from their collections consistent with the announced theme. In both cases, the organizers provide an album of relevant stretch glass photos in advance of the Discussion. The Discussions take place via Zoom, making it possible for us to see and hear each other almost as if we were in an in-person setting.



Stretch Out Discussions were conceived by Past President Tim Cantrell as a means of continuing the robust exchanges about stretch glass which occur during our Annual Conventions. Tim felt we should share discoveries, information and help each other learn about stretch glass more often than once a year. The first Stretch Out Discussion was held in February, 2014.



Stretch Out Discussions are organized by Mary Elda Arrington, a member of the Board of Directors of The Stretch Glass Society. Stephanie Bennett, a past Officer and Director, selects and presents the photos of the stretch glass to be discussed. The Discussions are often moderated by Robert Henkel, a past Officer and current Director. Cal Hackeman, past President, and Mary Elda Arrington prepare the Stretch Glass Reviews.

Our team of stretch glass experts consists of

- Dave Shetlar, co-author of American Iridescent Stretch Glass, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Stretch Glass Society, is a frequent speaker and writer on stretch glass. He and his wife, Renée, began collecting stretch glass in the 1980s and continue to have an avid interest in research, new discoveries and documenting stretch glass. They are past Co-Presidents and Life Members of The Stretch Glass Society.
- Russell & Kitty Umbraco, are the authors of Iridescent Stretch Glass. They have been long-time collectors of stretch glass and have been active researchers and promoters of stretch glass as a unique American glass type. They are Life Members of The Stretch Glass Society.
- Sarah Plummer, formerly an authorized Fenton dealer, is a recognized authority on Late Period (1980-2010) stretch glass. Sarah is a former member of the Board of Directors of the National Fenton Glass Society and The Stretch Glass Society.
- Cal Hackeman is a collector and reseller of stretch glass for over 30 years. He is a frequent speaker on stretch glass and is a past President and current officer of The Stretch Glass Society.

You may contact any of our experts via info@stretchglassociety.org. We will be pleased to provide complimentary identification of your stretch glass if you send photos and measurements to us at info@stretchglassociety.org.

The Stretch Glass Society operates as a 501(c)(3) charity. Annual Memberships are available to support our on-going efforts to promote and preserve stretch glass as a unique American type of glassware. Please visit www.stretchglassociety.org to join or contribute to The Society. You will also find us on Facebook where we invite you to 'like' our page or join the Stretch Glass Society Facebook group. Please join us and share your interest in stretch glass.

We hope you found this Stretch Glass Review educational and encouraging as you enjoy, collect, research, buy and sell stretch glass. We look forward to you joining us live for a future Stretch Out Discussion.