

A bird's-eye view of early glass

Viewed by Ralph Finch, another bird.

This would have looked good on the Finch Funhouse walls, except ... There is no space on our walls!

Still, I considered it, when back on Feb. 29 the [Jeffrey Evans auction](#) house of Mt. Crawford, Va., sold "[Lot 1057](#), ILLINOIS GLASS COMPANY PRINT, hand-colored lithograph on paper, comprising two vignettes featuring a bird's eye view of the exterior of the factory and the surrounding landscape above an interior view with workers in various stages of glass blowing/making process, all encompassed in a fancy frame border with rosettes to the corner and 'Illinois Glass Company, Wm Eliot Smith Prest' written along the bottom edge. Housed under glass in a wooden frame."

The image measured 13 by 16 inches, and dates to the fourth quarter 19th/early 20th century, and said to be in "very good visual condition with light toning, three visible tears along the lower left side with one near center going 1 inch into the image, frame with some wear and scratches."

It was valued at \$80-\$120, and sold for \$234, which includes the buyer's premium. For more information, go to <http://www.jeffreysevans.com>.

But what the image *doesn't* show is this, found on the Internet (edited):

"Under the lead of Edward Levis and William Eliot Smith in 1873, the Illinois Glass Co. of Alton, Ill., became a fixture to the Alton economy and employed over 3,000 workers within 30 years. This company, however, also developed into the largest employer of children within the state of Illinois. ... Kelley reported on the very conditions the young boys employed by the company endured: exhausting speed, heat, dust with lack of ventilation, night shifts, burns to limbs, and illiteracy. Kelley's reports on the factory detailed the constant speed at which the young boys ran around the factory in sweltering heat, working till as late as 3 a.m. Many of the boys' hands were wrapped in bandages from burns caused by melting glass."

Think of that the next time you pick up a pretty piece of glass ...