

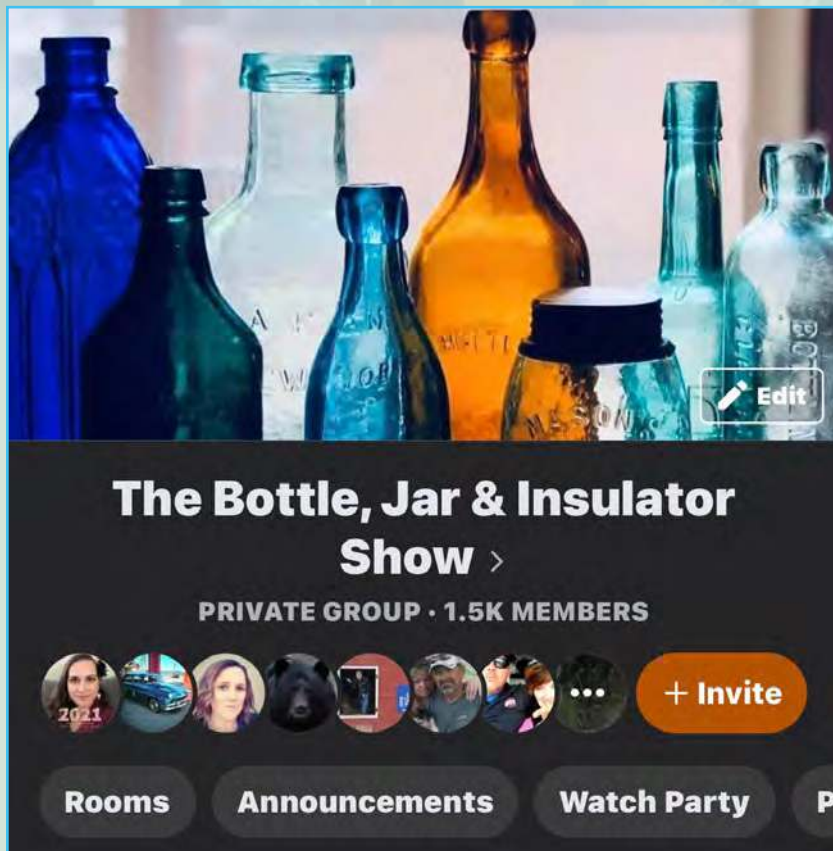
# Adapting the Hobby in the Era of COVID-19 and Social Distancing

By Dr. Nathan J. Gordon

The rapid spread of COVID-19 and extensive social distancing, indisputably transformed and devastated countless facets of modern-day life across the world at the start of 2020. One such example is the inability to easily gather together for large social events, such as antique bottle and jar shows. Like so many other hobbies across the United States, regional and national regulations and restrictions have drastically altered the way we enjoy and conduct collector hobbies.

Antique stores, flea markets and swap meets have been forced to close for extensive periods of time, some put out of business, and most have been restrained by mask-wearing and in-store customer capacity limits.

While online classifieds like Craigslist and Facebook Market have remained seemingly steady, these seller platforms at times lose their face-to-face and handshake-deal aspects due to social distancing, secluding the buyer from the traditional experience and their aptitude to look the seller in the eye. While E-commerce websites like eBay and Etsy have seemingly increased with the sales of antique collectables, so too has traditional pricing. Rare bottles and jars often double or triple their standard selling values on eBay, probably due to an influx of quarantined watchers and



Screenshot of The Bottle, Jar & Insulator Show group

buyers. Most notably, bottle and jar shows nationwide were canceled in 2020 and continue to be canceled in 2021.

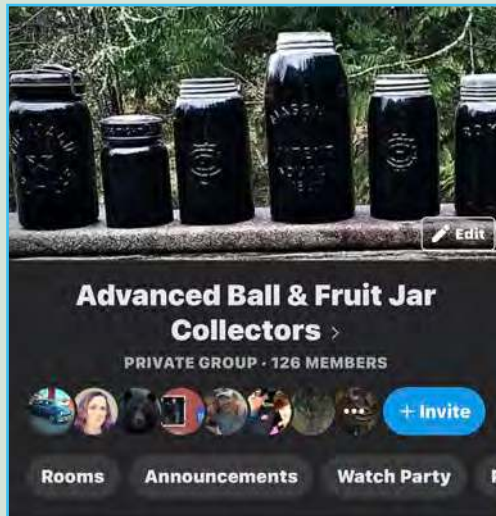
With so many changes to our cherished hobbies, we have been forced to either accept the loss and hope for a brighter pandemic-free future, or adapt and modify the ways in which we collect and relish bottles, jars and other related collectables. Facebook groups have become a prime example of adaptation and a vital resource for the hobby during the pandemic. A number of jar, bottle and insulator collectors have come together to reshape and improve the collectors experience of buying, selling, interacting and having exciting experiences on Facebook. Virtual shows started last

year, online auctions have amplified and flourished, and even a virtual jar club has commenced, all for the betterment of the antique glass community during the trials of COVID-19.

Last March, The Bottle, Jar & Insulator Show group was established, the first of its kind. The objective of this Facebook group was to bring the traditional bottle, jar, and/or insulator show experience to the collectors' homes during quarantine. Initially, a new show began each weekend at 11:00 AM EST on Saturdays.



Screenshot of We'relive Antiques & Collectables Auctions group



Screenshot of Advanced Ball & Fruit Jar Collectors group



The Virtual Jar Show schedule



My family antiquing with face masks

Members of the group were allowed to put sale or display tables together for free at home. During the week, prior to the weekend show, members would take photos and/or videos of their table(s), add a description with seller guidelines and post the table(s) to the group for pending approval by the administrators or moderators. The post-pending feature of the group was utilized to hold all tables until 11:00 AM on Saturday morning, so they could all be released simultaneously, just like you are entering a conventional show. From Saturday to Monday, the tables remained posted and by Tuesday morning, all tables were deleted to essen-



We'reLive Antiques & Collectables Auctions virtual/in person auction from the Muncie Fruit Jar Show 2020

tially empty the room out for the following week.

For several months, the show was rather successful, although there was admittedly more interest by jar collectors than bottle and insulator enthusiasts. Over time, the group transitioned into a continual posting format, meaning that tables were permitted at any moment during the week and no longer controlled by a Saturday deadline and deleted and removed from the group feed. This year, The Bottle, Jar & Insulator Show group is further adapting



The Virtual Jar Show sale table by Roland Bard

and experimenting by holding additional online specialty specific events and quarterly shows. The first ever Virtual Jar Show was announced in December 2020 and held from January 13-17, 2021. There was an outpouring of support by antique jar collectors, with over 30 tables participating in the event. Most vendors had significant success through this online format, many mentioning that they sold just as much as they have in past face-to-face bottle and jar shows. The Virtual Jar Show also hosted a Zoom show and tell meeting on January 15. The virtual meeting experiment was successful enough that the Advanced Ball & Fruit Jar Collectors group will now be holding monthly virtual club meetings every second Saturday of the month at 8:00 PM EST.

The Bottle, Jar & Insulator Show group is currently reaching out to bottle and insulator collectors to garner interest in holding specific weeklong virtual bottle and insulator shows this year. The administrators and moderators of the group, Jim Gordon, Ruth Gordon, Dave Waris, Jenn Hurley, Anna Dodge and myself, are inviting related glass hobby organizations and clubs to host their events in this group with zero charge. Temporary moderators can easily be added to the group so they can organize and run their own virtual shows during their scheduled and allotted time period. With canceled

bottle, jar and insulator shows everywhere, this is an attractive resource that will allow show organizers to reclaim their shows by moving them online and adapting with the current circumstances surrounding COVID-19.



The Virtual Jar Show sale table by Jerry Ikeda

It is important to also note that The Bottle, Jar & Insulator Show held the first Virtual Jar Show in conjunction with another popular Facebook group, We'reLive Antiques & Collectables Auctions, a daily virtual auction group created by Joel Landcastle that allows its members to hold their own live auctions. As of late, the group has primarily concentrated on antique bottles, jars and insulators. The vast majority of the auctions take place at 7:00 PM EST, although there is the occasional pop-up auction during the day. For The

Virtual Jar Show on Saturday, January 15, We'reLive Antiques & Collectables Auctions held their first ever daylong Auction-a-thon, where a number of bottle and jar collector members did adjoining hourly live auctions. During the pandemic, We'reLive Antiques & Collectables Auctions has had record attendance and auctions, quickly becoming an efficacious and desirable tool of pandemic adaptation for collectors.

While the administrators and moderators of these Facebook



The Virtual Jar Show sale table by Tamara Williammee.



The Virtual Jar Show display by Paul Hulkovich

groups fully recognize that no virtual experience can ever replace the majesty and excitement of a face-to-face show, auction or meeting, it is their aspiration that these virtual platforms will continue to keep the hobby alive and thriving during these tumultuous times. Despite the frustrations and losses from cancelled events, these virtual experiences have afforded the hobby with unprecedented opportunities of inclusivity. Collectors far and wide, who were once unable to attend distance shows, auctions and club meetings and might have been what some refer to as

“closet collectors,” now have a chance to connect with the larger community. Everyone surely misses gathering together, walking the showroom, holding antique bottles, jars and insulators in their hands, seeing the glistening colors of the historic blown glass with the natural eye and talking with our near-and-dear collector friends without the barrier of face masks. Times have changed and we have adapted for now, but we all look forward to a brighter tomorrow of normalcy in our favorite hobbies.

